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OCTOBER
1934

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PENCIL POINTS

Volume XV

October, 1934

Number 10

Should an Architect Look at Real Estate Speculation?

By Walter Ross

No more striking object of physical wealth exists than an architectural creation. The more massive it is, the more ornate, the more it spreads over the ground, the higher it reaches into the sky, the greater its appeal. Added to some portion of civic pride, the average man views it principally from the angle of its utility and the service it may render to the community. He believes it should contribute to the cost of maintaining the government for the protection it receives in proportion to the wealth invested in it. The assessor naturally measures it as a prime source of taxable wealth. He shares with most of us a belief in the justice and necessity of appraising it for its greatest possible tax yield.

Does the architect view his part in this contribution to the wealth of the community in the same light? Is the general concept sound that a structure, as such, is a proper subject for taxation based on cost and earning power? What proper selfish interest has the architect in an approach to a fundamental governmental and economic treatment of the problem? If sufficient reasons are offered to show that current practice is detrimental to his professional welfare and to his earning power, what should the architect do about it?

I

At the outset it should be set forth that no question of morals is involved. This is an inquiry based on a scientific approach to the subject. The most important factor in the value, the present use, and the future welfare of a structure, is its location. No one of the people, nor even a few of their number, give to a location its possibilities for use and its present and future worth in money. The erection of a building of itself does not add to the rental value of the ground. Such being the case, a distinction must be made between the treatment of the site and the improvement in measuring what each contributes to the welfare of the community and in deciding what each should contribute to the support of government.

The holder of a site should be given all possible encouragement to develop it to his own and to the community's best advantage. The government, which is the people, should be given credit for all of the public

services it has made accessible to it. The title holder should enjoy all possible financial benefits recoverable from his own enterprise and efforts, and no more. The government should collect, in terms of money, the value of all the services it, and it alone, contributes to the site.

II

All wealth must be created. It results from the application of labor and capital to land, using this term in its broadest sense, which includes all forms of locations and other natural resources. The rental value of a location is not wealth. Value automatically arises with the natural increase in the numbers of the people and their gregarious proclivities and activities. There has, however, grown up, through the centuries, a background of public opinion that all forms of wealth are proper subjects of taxation. Recognition has largely been lost of the fact that land, in common with air, light, and water, is a natural heritage; that land is not man made; that it is limited in quantity; that the greatest freedom of access to all four alike is essential to life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness.

This background of public opinion that governments, to meet their financial requirements, should tax all evidences of wealth ignores the fact that land is not wealth and that the rental value of a site is always measured by the value of the governmental services available to it. Taxation connotes the taking away from some one a part of that which he has gained in his own right. One individual can use but a small share of all governmental services. They are enjoyed collectively. Hence, if only the values created by governmental services are used for the support of government no one can be unjustly treated by the process of its collection. An additional unfairness, growing out of our present taxation methods, lies in the fact that most forms of wealth now taxed represent capital derived from net income, the sources of which have already contributed liberally to the tax revenues. Taxing bodies also, when hard pressed, resort to all possible devices of taxing evidences of wealth in a way that the taxpayer does not begin to realize how much of his industry and capital are being penalized. As the old

saying goes: "Pluck the goose so it will yield the most feathers with the least squawking."

III

Land-holding, particularly in city centers, is now a virtual monopoly control. The drift of the agrarian population to industrial centers intensifies the monopoly value. The holder of a location can peg up his selling or leasing price to the point of all the traffic will bear, both now and for a considerable time projected into the future. These conditions hold, whether he pays this unearned revenue to himself, as both lessor and lessee. They are more readily appreciated if the holder leases the site to some one else to use. The conditions of a depression period may temporarily discount these economic assertions. The present increasing improvement in general business conditions enforces their truth. The first evidence of the sun shining in the valley of industrial despair is a pæan of praise sung by the *coq d'or* of land speculation to the rising values of real estate. Since old buildings cannot well increase in value, this means only a rise in "real property" values.

Our present practices put a premium on speculation in site values. Speculation predicates a disastrous achievement in an anticipated harvest of new values. If a location holder were compelled to pay taxes on the basis of his selling or asking price, there would be the customary squeal of outrage from overtaxed real estate owners. Such treatment would be held as a menace to prosperity. If a site holder were informed by the taxing body that the rental value he was asking of an intending purchaser or lessee had not been contributed by any act of his, few of them would be convinced of the justice of such an argument. If the siteholders were told that the rental value of their sites is the sum of the economic values due to the presence of all of the people tributary to it (roughly estimated, as it has been, at an average of \$1,000 for every man, woman, and child tributary to it) and to the wealth creating value of their combined commercial and industrial activities, they would remain cold to such a plea. Then, as a final point, if today's land holders were informed that the community was prepared and would take over the entire economic rental value of such site, even if it is proposed to allow the improvements to go free of all tax burdens, a cry would go up to high heaven of an attempted robbery of values that rightfully belong to the individual.

Government must perpetuate itself, and it must have revenue to do so. It is axiomatic, however, that no one pays to the support of government one penny more than he is legally compelled to pay. There would then be no object in setting a high price on a piece of property if the community is organized to take over, year by year, the rental value appertaining to it. As neither the present land holder nor his successor in its use or ownership could count on taking over, as he does now, the lion's share of the future earnings of a proposed development, the chief measure of which would be the increase in land values at-

tached to the location, speculative eras in real estate would die without hope of resurrection.

IV

With land speculation out of the way it would be easy to approximate the true economic value of an opportunity to do business at a given location. There would not be bidding by one speculator against another. There would be no booms. There might at first be some over building. No one can foretell the fate of a development planned for a life of usefulness of fifty years or longer. It is more likely there would be conservatism in planning both as to dimensions and to lavish ornamentation. There might not be so many buildings; there surely would be buildings better suited to the needs of the district and to their place in the sun. If the rental value of the site tended to increase because the building is no longer taxed, the permanent elimination of the taxes on all improvements would readily offset this possible deterrent. The holder of under-improved or unimproved land would be pinched. The amount a promotor now has to pay the location-owning Cæsar, including a share of its probable earnings compounded for the next twenty years, would not be, perforce, a permanent drag on the future earnings of the investment.

An improvement does not add to the value of the site on which it is erected. When it has demonstrated its economic and commercial worth it attracts like or complementary activities and brings more people to the district. There is thus created an investment interest in the district. A demand for similar structures is created. The rental value of the surrounding properties attains new levels. Employment is increased. Of course, the assessor today has an eagle eye for all of this sort of thing.

The cry of the big bad wolf is often raised when taking taxes off improvements is suggested. The hue and cry of an era of speculative building is raised and denounced. The over-building era, that culminated in 1929, is the answer to the fear that people will lose their heads more frequently when taxes are taken off improvements and a location holder must pay the full rental value of the site whether he uses it or not. Uncurbed speculation contributed to that debacle. Why, under a more intelligent system of economic procedure, more buildings should be erected unless the prospective user of them is convinced that he can secure an adequate return from his labor and capital, is not plain.

V

For the architect, a period of speculation in real estate invariably leads back and forth from a feast to a famine. During the feast time practically all architects share in the speculative program. A portion of the business usually gets into the office of architects of the highest standing. The larger share goes to firms more susceptible to meeting the desires of the professional promoters. A speculative era unbalances the building construction program. It makes for rapidly in-

creasing prices of materials, and more especially of labor. It expands credit to the straining point. It makes for unsound appraisals of the land values, the physical structure, and the earnings of prospective enterprise. Large profits for the few spell heavy losses for the many.

Speculation tends toward the erection of freakish structures. These early prove their lack of earning power. It puts the whip in the hands of the site holders. They make unreasonable demands of those who are willing to pay well for questionable services and speculative opportunities. Where building is done in a rush there is skimping of good work. The flashiest of materials, irrespective of quality and endurance, are used. The covering up of all possible defects is winked at. All those connected with such enterprises suffer morally and financially from the inevitable crash of a speculative era.

If one talks out loud about these things, fear is instantly aroused that an attempt is being made to undermine the investment market. The safety of first, second, and third mortgages; bonds secured mainly by fictitious real estate values; mortgage bond underwritings and the less frequently used land title certificates alike will all be threatened.

VI

The architect may, to his own advantage, challenge the theory that the increasing cost of land is a token of abiding prosperity. With an eye to his own interest he will know that the investment in an improvement is made up of the cost of the location and the capital used to complete the structure. A factor in all undertakings is the limit of the sum to be spent. It follows that by so much of the money invested as goes into the ground is the amount limited that can be spent on the building. For selfish reasons, therefore, the architect is especially interested in keeping down the land cost. The share of the capital invested in the land is really more of a frozen asset than the amount placed in the building. To ease the burden of fixed capital, resort is had to an interest-bearing mortgage. The building on a leasehold is always further handicapped by time, by the reversion privilege, and by the heavy depreciation of the building. The ratio of the amount paid for the use of the bare land becomes an important factor. With the taking of the rental value of the land by the community, land cost will go down. There will be no need for interest payments on speculative values. The lease rental terms will naturally decrease with the cost of the land.

VII

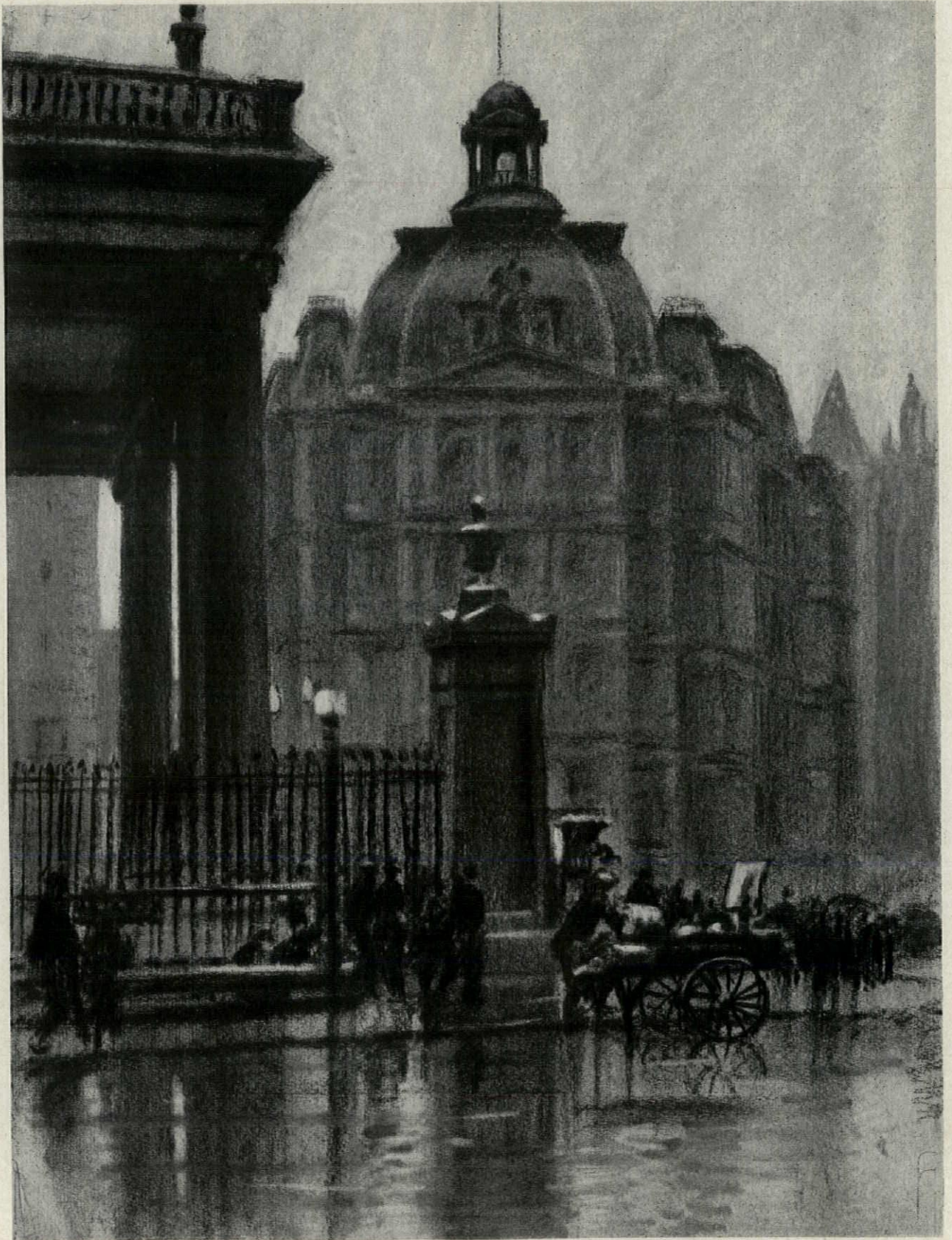
Modernization is all the rage now. It is being pro-

voked, agitated, propagandized all hours of the day and night. Few modernization or remodeling jobs of industrial or commercial properties would be undertaken were it not for the tendency to use less space in congested areas. Increasing land values rapidly follow concentration of business centers. Lessees must always shoulder the expense of remodeling with present or deferred payments. The manufacturer, merchandiser, or commercial agent must do business where opportunity to carry on is best. He is forced to take a chance on the terms of the site owner. Experience teaches that the location owners seldom take the initiative in razing an old building. They are slow to erect new structures to save the obsolescence of a district. They do not have the foresight and courage of the industrialist who periodically discards inefficient machinery for more efficient types. The site holder prefers to let the tenant patch and patch until—well, the district shifts. The site holder advocates zoning because of his belief that zoning creates and holds anticipated values. They seem not to be able to learn the lesson that once a site is no longer in the rising tide of increasing values the opening of a new district will sap away forever its original values.

Remodeling is an expression of protest to investing in a new building. The site holder knows that all the assessor will see will be the new parts of the structure and he will make liberal allowance for the "enterprise" of the owner. That part of the original structure which the necessary four walls protect will still be assessed at the depreciated value of an obsolescent structure. The architect will get some consolation and pay out of a remodeling job. He oftentimes, under such conditions, has to bring into play his greatest ingenuity. But it will always be a remodeling job, and the created whole will really have no one author. The contract and the fee will be equally unsatisfying. The possibility of maintaining high land values, with little risk to the holder of the site, together with the penalty levied on new improvements bespeak interest in remodeling as against the erection of new structures. A selfish lack of courage makes for an ever-increasing drift to improvements on leaseholds, in which the outsider bears the risk of development.

VIII

Should not the architect be actively interested in bringing about a change in the background of public opinion; in overthrowing the orthodox concept of the relation of speculation in land to his own interests and in a just governmental procedure in public finance in relation to the welfare of all?



OLD FEDERAL BUILDING AND POST OFFICE, NEW YORK
FROM A CHARCOAL DRAWING ON GRAY PAPER BY E. P. CHRYSTIE

"The Upper Ground"

Being Essays in Criticism

By H. Van Buren Magonigle, D. Arch., F. A. I. A., A. N. A.

"'Take the upper ground in manœurin', Terence,' I sez, 'an' you'll be a gin'ral yet,' sez I. An' wid that I wint up to the flat mud roof av the house, and looked over the par'pet, threadin' delicate."
R. K. "My Lord the Elephant."

V

I've had a shock! When I opened the *American Architect* for July there was the Parthenon! One gets so expectant nowadays of the Absolutely New that anything like this is disconcertingly reactionary. It was one of the many beautiful photographs taken by Charles Harris Whitaker in Greece a while ago, illustrating his article "Builders in Search of a Civilization" which I find less convincing than his photographs.

Knowing Mr. Whitaker as well as I do I am not surprised to find him taking the view he does, ranging himself on the side of the dear delightful sweaty horny-handed son of toil—but not too near, on account of what the darky called "de effluvium." This view is that the credit for the perfections of the Parthenon should be given, not to the men who had submitted themselves to the rigorous and protracted training of the Greek architect, but to "the long procession of faithful building craftsmen" who worked under "the men whose names have come down to us by the very imperfect historical method — Calliocrates, Ictinus . . . twisted

and distorted to suit the vanities of a profession or the theories of culture." Well, yielding to the vanities of a profession, may I say that "the very imperfect historical method" (whatever Mr. Whitaker may mean by that) is at least as good as the guesses of the diletante.

Of course Mr. Whitaker is a writer, of a sociological bent, not an architect; like Mr. Lewis Mumford who also writes glibly and dogmatically about architecture, he is one of the heirs of the preposterous Ruskinian theses with a little dab of William Morris. It makes such lay critics very cross to tell them that they are in the very nature of art, forever outsiders; they are always dragging social philosophies and moralities of various brands into the simple practices of a craft. Architecture, like painting and sculpture, is the product of the craft itself to a degree undreamed of by the layman. Here, no doubt, I am again ex-

hibiting "the vanities of a profession," and I regret that I have neither time nor space just now to develop the thesis.

We find in the article such statements as this: "Thus the spirit of 'modern architecture' is merely the attempted rebirth of the instinct of workmanship." I deny this statement. It is my privilege to know many craftsmen intimately, far better than Mr. Whitaker and over many more years of really close association, and I say that the instinct of workmanship needs no rebirth—it has been here all the time. It is one of my quarrels with the "modern" stuff that it has none of the quality we associate with the best in craftsmanship; often it has a certain hard and brittle mechanical perfection, but of real quality not an atom; and my very many friends among the craftsmen feel exactly as I do about it: the good ones hate the "modern" stuff; they love quality and want a chance to produce it.

I am glad to be able to be in agreement with Mr. Whitaker in this: that we must return to the spirit in which the Greek architect worked — which I

claim to be the search for that Quality that is one of the elements of beauty, one of its attributes, and without which beauty does not exist.

Mr. Whitaker photographs his subjects with skill and judgment and a fine sense of composition, and there is a luminosity about the original prints that most of the reproductions here fail to render.

* * * *

Lawrence Grant White has an article in the July *Architecture* on the Brothers Asam, architects, painters, and sculptors who flourished in Bavaria at the same time as the Brothers Adam in England; when I say flourished I mean it quite literally, for they were unbridled practitioners of the Baroque. One cannot but admire the breadth of view which permits Mr. White, with his so different background, to analyze these excesses of imagination and find their virtues.

* * * *

From *American Architect*, July, 1934



THE PARTHENON

From a Photograph by Charles Harris Whitaker

From *Architecture*, July, 1934



WEST BATH HOUSE, JONES' BEACH, L. I.

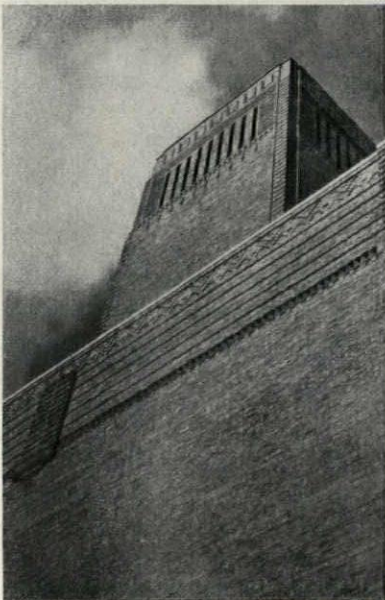
H. A. Magoon, Architect
for the Long Island State Park Commission

Jones' Beach is illustrated quite fully in the same number. It is a State Park on Long Island, so admirably planned, so wisely situated for its purpose, and so controlled and policed that decent people find it possible to go there and enjoy themselves without being offended by the vulgarities of places typified by the name Coney Island. A fastidious friend who went there the other day said he had not believed it possible that there could be such a place anywhere near New York. At last New York has in Robert Moses a Park Commissioner of vision, ability, and courage.

The Beach is 34 miles from the city, which automatically eliminates most of the riff-raff that infests the beaches near by. The planning is admirable, the architecture suitable, fresh without being bizarre, done in permanent materials, stone and brick—a fact which saves the place from the tawdry cheap-jack atmosphere of the usual sea-shore resort.

Credit for the design is given to Mr. H. A. Magoon, of the Department of Architecture, Long Island State Park Commission.

From *Architectural Review*, London



EXHAUST SHAFT, MERSEY TUNNEL, LIVERPOOL

* * *

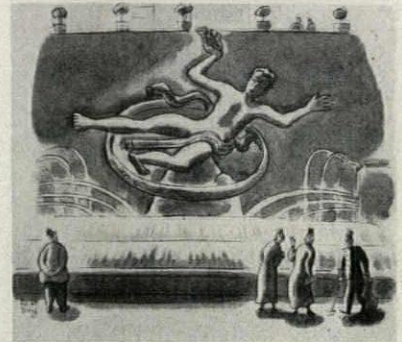
"From the Ridiculous to the Sublime" is the title of an article in the June *Architectural Review* (London) with the sub-title "Two Rockefeller Creations," by Anson Bailly Cutts. With laudable moderation he compares Rockefeller Centre or Radio City with restoration work in Williamsburg, Virginia. It is pretty clear to

the reader which is meant by the Ridiculous, said to be a horribly costly joke. If the inner history of it could only be published—I have been privileged to read it—lovers of architecture would be aghast. With all the money that could be wished for, with a client who had a big dream, the possibilities of this group were infinite and inspiring. As built it looks as though it had been evolved out of an undigested body of theory, not from a vision of form, of mass, of color, of light and shade, of superb composition. It looks like the meagre offspring of the real-estate operator, the promoter, the space merchant, not like the vigorous, human offspring of the artist, born parthenogenetically. I observe that I have given two more parents than is usual for such a birth—but even three is only a selection in this case.

* * * *

Mr. E. H. W. Atkinson writes of the approaches and buildings connected with the Mersey Tunnel in Liverpool, a traffic tunnel like the one between New York and New Jersey, but conceived and executed on a splendidly monumental scale. The great ventilating station has the fine qualities of the Battersea Power Station noticed in August—fresh vision without freakishness and a superb sense of wall surface and how to treat it and avoid the bleak and dreary.

From *The New Yorker*



"Pardon me, but is this to be permanent?"

* * * *

This is followed by two Hungarian Houses by Ludwig Kozma of Budapest, one of which we reproduce here. Here is another kind of use of wall surface, and a fenestration that is incomprehensible to one American mind. It is from such sources of inspiration that the busy little American plagiarist is, for the moment, improving each shining hour. It is accompanied by the usual blurb one has learned to associate with these foreign portents.

* * * *

One of the loveliest things I've seen so far is "A House in England" by Connell and Ward, reproduced here from the *July Review*. Form Follows Function Fatally. The family is evidently supposed to live openly with, undoubtedly, "open plumbing, openly arrived at," to quote George Chappell's immortal *mot*. Not one expedition from floor to floor need be missed by any neighbor who has the enterprise to lift an eye, so generously is the staircase exposed to all beholders. The pipe-rails are managed with especial skill to keep the sparrows from falling off the roofs. We may all look forward with confidence to seeing

this reproduced in our own dear land.

* * * *

The June *Architecture* begins with a profusely illustrated article on the trend in the design of "Our New Public Buildings" by Edwin Bateman Morris of the staff of the Supervising Architect's office. It is sane and thoughtful. Among other things he says, speaking of the swing away from old and hackneyed forms and combinations of forms: "But the thoughtful, sensitive person, who appreciates inspiration in architecture and deplores affectation, will be unwilling to accept and swallow it all. He will approve of the crusade to eliminate the old affectations in favor of honest inspirational design, but he will not approve of the mere substitution of a new type of affectation for it." Precisely. For my part however I have not been conscious of any current crusade against old "affectations." The affectations were largely ignorances I think, and the "crusade" was, taken by and large, the old game of follow-my-leader of the architectural Bandar Log—"Brother, your tail hangs down behind; permit me to grasp it firmly so that whatever credit may be yours, may be mine also."

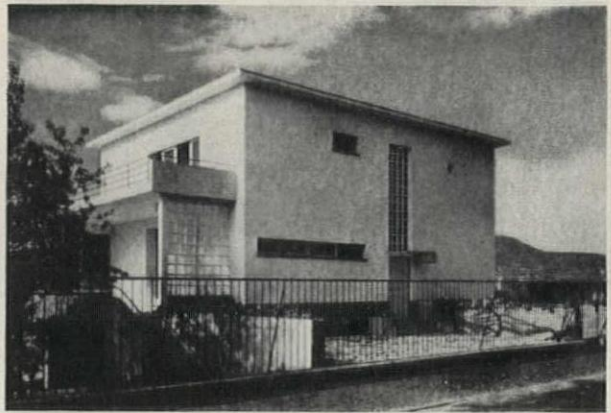
I finished Mr. Morris's article with real enthusiasm. Here is a man who sees things clearly and sees them whole. His words ought to be read by every man in this country who cares for architecture. I wish I might quote it all here, every word; since that can't be done the next best thing is to advise every practitioner, every draftsman, and every student, to buy the number and keep it and read it again and again. It is the best statement of the case for real progress in design that has fallen under my notice. I move a vote of thanks to Mr. Morris.

* * * *

All of the work of Alfred Hopkins is of high quality; but in the farm group he and his associates, with Martha Brookes Hutcheson as landscapist, have designed for Mr. Herbert N. Straus at Red Bank, N. J., he quite excels himself. There was an existing pond on the place with a dam across one end; the main part of the group is at the left-hand junction of the pond and its outlet, and across this outlet is what is evidently a Superintendent's house joined to the main group by an arcade built upon the dam. Mr. Straus does his men well. Their "lounge," simple enough to be sure, yet has the air of interiors I have seen at Princeton and Yale; the men, as well as the cows, the bull and their children must be a contented lot. There is a strong feeling of the old world and specifically of France, residing partly in the forms and partly in the air of permanence and solidity it all has, an air to which we of the New York metropolitan area are not accustomed. Down in Berks County, Pennsylvania, one of the loveliest counties in the East, the so-called Pennsylvania Dutch brought over from Germany a love of masonry and all it connotes of continuity, of tradition, of honest, solid worth and pride in these; and a journey through that countryside is like a little tour in Europe with the added pleasure of feeling that one is nevertheless at home.

Mr. Hopkins has secured just that quality of solidity

From *Architectural Review*, London, June, 1934



HUNGARIAN HOUSE, BUDAPEST

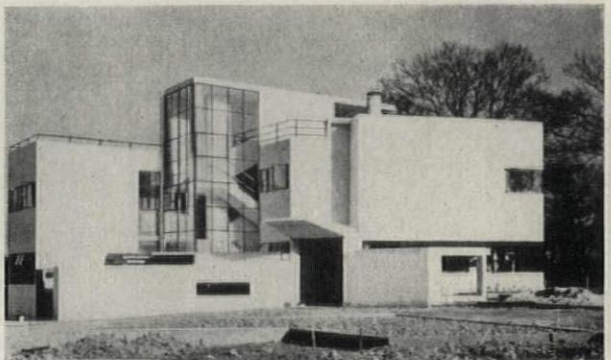
Ludwig Kosma, Architect

and permanence. He has, I am told, developed a concrete block, made on the premises under his own eye, which is practically a cast stone of agreeable color and texture with variety, and variety of shape also, and trims the buildings with a veritable cast stone—in this instance also made under his supervision. The country around Red Bank has a wooden architecture—but Mr. and Mrs. Straus, who know provincial France well and love it, wanted this group to be in the character of rural France.

Here is another instance of the masterly use of natural features of a site in an architectural composition. The arcade across the dam is an inspiration; putting the buildings close enough to the water to secure the added beauty of their reflection is another; the subtlety of the treatment of the two masses on each end of the linking arcade, one masked by tree forms, the other more open to the view, is yet another.

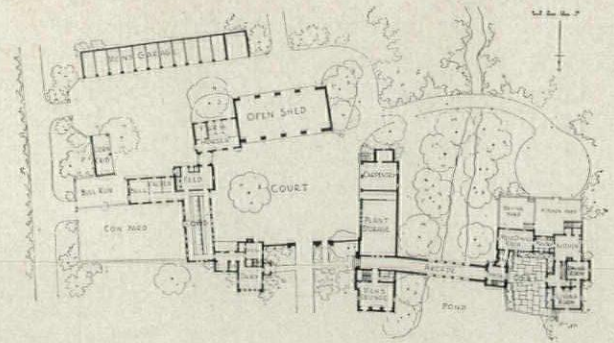
This beautiful piece of work is well illustrated in the August *Architecture*. One reason why I admire it is because it is done in the spirit not in the letter that killeth. One part of it is chosen as the "Favorite Feature" for the month. Mr. Hopkins seems to be able to make even the livestock yield to his will; the geese in the foreground of this picture very obligingly posed for him when he took it. Luckily there are no

From *Architectural Review*, London, July, 1934



A HOUSE IN ENGLAND

Connell and Ward, Architects



scale details of them, and the plagiarists will be at least so far baffled.

* * * *

The Architect and Engineer (San Francisco) has begun a very interesting series of historical buildings in California; the pictures have a very pleasant non-professional look about them.

* * * *

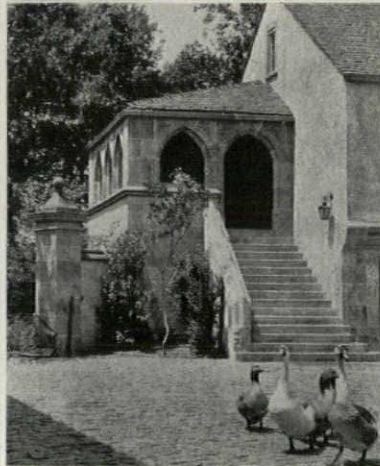
Mr. Ellis F. Lawrence of Portland, Oregon, president of the Association of Collegiate Schools of Architecture, made a report to that body in May, published as two articles in the July and August numbers of *The Architect and Engineer* (San Francisco) which should be read by all interested in the future of the profession; for these schools are training many of those who will do the architecture of this country when the present lot have gone West. Knowing nothing about architectural education from the pedagogical point of view except as I judge its results by the young men they turn loose upon us, it is of course a hobby—and if Dobbin will be so good as to permit me to mount . . . ;

I shall not attempt to differentiate between Mr. Lawrence's own comments and opinions and those he quotes from the reports to him of the several schools.

* * * *

"Shall Age Abdicate to Youth?" "I am not sure but that it would be the sporting as well as the wisest thing for all of us of the old guard over forty to abdicate in favor of the younger crop of architects—the product of the schools." This program promises peace to many a weary and harassed soul among us—but it has been my observation (I am nearing forty) that architects do their best and ripest work after they have passed fifty or fifty-five—not always their most brilliant work, but their soundest. I could cite any number of instances. It seems to take at least that long for a man to slough off a lot of things, leave a lot of inhibitions and prohibitions behind, begin to learn to see, begin to be his own man, the captain of his own soul—and I ask myself whether it would be wise to lose the value of his preparation and experience by abdicating at forty before these have matured—and

From *Architecture*, August, 1934



FARM GROUP

Alfred Hopkins, Architect

the problem of what the abdicant of forty is to do with his spare time might be given a thought also.

* * * *

Mr. Lawrence speaks of the Registration Boards of the several States as doing their best to raise the standard of architectural qualification. I have observed only what is happening in the State of New York, where right to practice was very properly based upon an adequate education; requirements have been steadily made more stringent, until now it is intended in a short time to demand a college degree for a certificate. I protest in the name of common sense, in the name of the democracy of the arts of design that this is bureaucratic nonsense gone bughouse. It has been

my pride and pleasure, in the forty years of uneducated senility Mr. Lawrence would allow me, to know well and profoundly to respect scores and scores of men who never had any "college education" but who have been nevertheless the men who have made American architecture lead the world. And now it is proposed to shut the door of opportunity in the face of the boy who cannot afford to take a college degree; an ambitious youth in an office is not to be allowed to offer the educational equivalent as now he can—he will have to show that damned piece of parchment, a document, permit me to say, that is no guaranty that he will ever be an architect worth the cubage he occupies.

* * * *

The schools report a regrettable decrease in enrollment. Why should it not be expected, and why is it to be regretted? To me, one of the most absurd spectacles of the past five years of depression has been the struggle of the architectural schools to turn out as many students as possible into a profession that has no room for them and no work for them. Do the schools fondly imagine that if and when business picks up we shall give employment to these raw students rather than to our old men, seasoned and tried? It must be, and continue to be, a rude awakening for these boys.

* * * *

Some of the schools carry "at least one design project through complete working drawings and specifications." Dobbin, a most intelligent beast, tells me that in his opinion—he only pretends to horse sense—school is no place to try to learn how to make working drawings, and as to specifications, beyond the general theory of them, it is a waste of the students' time. To which I should like to add on my own account, that it sacrifices the large view of architecture to mere opportunism.

What is the theory of our architectural educators anyway? For what position in the world beyond school are the schools trying to fit these boys? Do they lead them to believe that they are going to be practicing architects right away, dealing with immense building projects, and try to equip them for that rôle, or to take the grade in an office for which their inexperience in real work fits them? What a boy can learn in school about working drawings and specifications will be of very little use to him in an office if for no other reason than that "there are four-and-forty ways of writing tribal lays and every single one of them is right"—in some *other* office.

If the schools would just teach those boys how to think, they will quickly pick up the technology of office work. Give me a lad with a broad general education in architecture and cultural things in general, a fellow who knows how to think and see, whose head has not been swelled by poor counsel in school, and he will be put very quickly on the road to being a real architect if he has any talent at all.

* * * *

Why do the schools institute "city planning" and "housing" courses for kids who can't design a single unit of any sort decently. The place for such stuff is in a post-graduate course, or for out-of-hours work when he has joined the ranks of draftsmen who are fitting themselves for practice on their own.

I am appalled by the prospectuses I receive from the schools with their bewildering mess of courses. Some of them, as soon as they hear that something or other is to the fore immediately establish a "course" in it. They spread the boy's time out too thin. And the great essential, design, is not given nearly enough time.

* * * *

"One school reports little or no cast drawing is now given and greater use of charcoal, it being cheaper." We have seen a good deal of the use of charcoal in the last few years; it has its virtues in forcing breadth of attack in the study of a problem in its very earliest stages, although I believe 4B to 6B pencils to be better; I can't enlarge just now on my reasons. But the use of charcoal is abused. It is also used for *rendus*, which are in consequence all too often weak and woolly and mushy, with no sense of the firmness of structural form. The use of charcoal for ornament is also taught, and draftsmen so taught enter an office unable to make a drawing of ornament of the kind fit to give to a contractor. Have the schools not yet awakened to the fact that in modern practice the contractor gets blue-prints to work from, sometimes as many as a

dozen or more of each? And Dobbin says he would be much obliged if someone will tell him how to have a useful blue-print made from a smudgy charcoal drawing.

The architect's real tool is the pencil, *messieurs les professeurs*.

* * * *

One prime cause for the dissatisfaction of the practicing architect with the schools is that design and draftsmanship are not given nearly enough time and are encroached upon by courses which give smatterings of this and that. I suppose every member of a faculty has, for his very living, to exalt the horn of his subject above the others—but where does the student come in for whom these schools may be supposed to exist, in this faculty competition. Is he being solidly grounded in those things any practicing architect, utterly indifferent to pedagogical theories, expects in any student he takes into his office?

* * * *

Despite my love for my very dear friend Professor Willcox of the University of Oregon, my admiration for his qualities as a human being, and my profound respect for him in every respect, I have failed to be able to fall in with his non-competitive theory for students. We have had many a talk about it. Of course every man's opinion is colored by his experience, his training, and his personal likes and dislikes. It has been my experience that some men thrive on competition and others thrive on something else—which seems to point to the danger of systems and theories applied to all alike. Is it impossible to let the student elect for one or the other? When I was a youngster a much older man said to me "Remember, sonny, it's resistance that makes the kite go up." And there is a resistance about competition—or emulation, if you like—that gives a certain force to the efforts of some men and boys, a salty tang to life.

The non-competitive idea seems to me to run the danger that the student will instinctively elect to do always the thing he likes to do or can do most easily—and then when in real life he is set to do something unsympathetic to him, he is bored and dissatisfied, and an office is no place for the coddling of spoiled and pampered young gentlemen. But if he works on the same problem as his group, that problem may be assumed to have been very carefully considered by the head of the school as part of a general program that will round out the most useful experience for all the students. There is great danger it seems to me that aptitudes may be coddled, and deficiencies glozed over.

And by the non-competitive method, everyone is working on a separate problem, and the student does not see a lot of different solutions of the same problem being worked out beside him, and he loses one of the most valuable lessons he can have.

* * * *

A school reports: "We are now giving three years of *what we call* professional practice." The italics are mine. It can't possibly be that so why call it that! School is no place for professional practice courses

beyond some lectures on its fundamental principles, which are really its ethics—ethics in a very wide sense. Practice varies in every locality and in every office in every locality and from time to time the office changes its practice as it is checked by experience. The smattering a boy can get in school is useless to him in an office. Ninety-nine chances to one, the first office he enters has a totally different point of view of practice. A theory of professional practice is evolved through experience, and cannot be taught; it is suited to the man or the office who evolves it, and wouldn't do at all for the architect in the office across the hall.

* * * *

Teach principles—fundamental principles, and forget “the changes that are occurring all about us.” Armed with fundamental principles of design, of ideals, of conduct, the boy is equipped to meet any changing conditions. For things change so fast out in the world that what occurs during his school days is old stuff when he comes out. But principles do not change. A real principle is eternal, and he should be taught how to know one when he sees it.

* * * *

An occasional lecture on wholesome and salutary modesty and humility in the presence of one of the most difficult and intricate jobs in the world would do no harm. These boys should learn before they have to have it knocked into them that though they may rate as “architects” in school literature, when they leave school and enter an office they are just junior draftsmen and have a long road to travel before they may worthily assume the title *Architect*.

* * * *

Architectural draftsmanship is very badly taught in most schools, or not taught at all. Most students when

they come out don't even know how to sharpen a pencil, let alone draw a line with it that has any quality.

* * * *

All the programs Mr. Lawrence suggests in his second article seem to be for the school heads and faculties to consider carefully, frame a rational scheme of architectural education upon them and *not confuse the undergraduate mind with matters their elders have the utmost difficulty in grasping*. For why should his students be “floundering in the subject of democracy”? Why drag democracy into a curriculum intended to make architects? The kids have enough to learn without being bothered and confused with that sort of doctrine. They may be supposed to have gotten some inkling of that subject—upon which an entire world, twenty-five thousand miles in circumference, bitterly disagrees—through their regular academic courses. Pedagogues just now are so afraid of not being thought he-men-up-to-date that they confuse their own issues. The Victorian Era also reeked of that kind of nonsense. Art is art and it isn't democracy or socialism or sociology or theories of life—it is art, to be worked in as art, to make and to be subject to its own laws, to make its own ethic, with its principles like a great rock in a world of “changing conditions.”

Let boys come out of an architectural school saturated with the pure love of architecture, not as little amateur parlor socialistic demagogues blatting around the drafting rooms keeping better men from their work. Let them acquire their own social philosophy in the School of Life.

* * * *

Time now for Dobbin to retire to his stall until someone else comes along with the turpentine.

(TO BE CONTINUED)

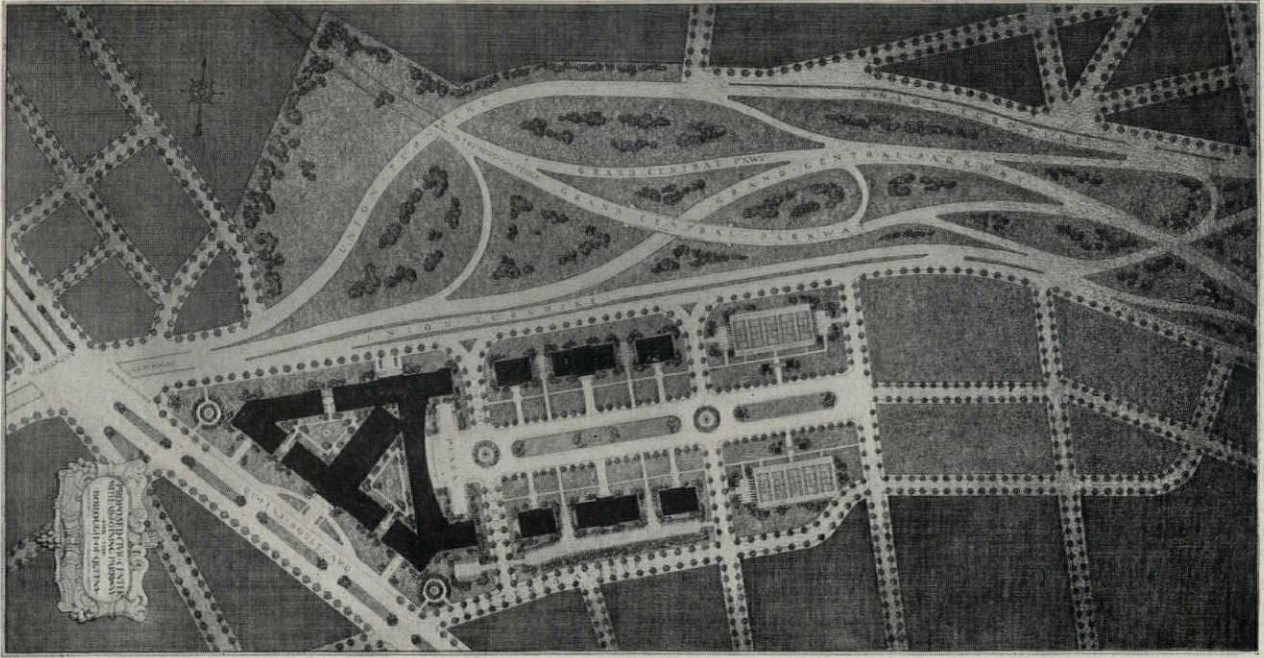


QUEENS BOULEVARD ELEVATION OF PROPOSED CIVIC CENTER FOR THE BOROUGH OF QUEENS

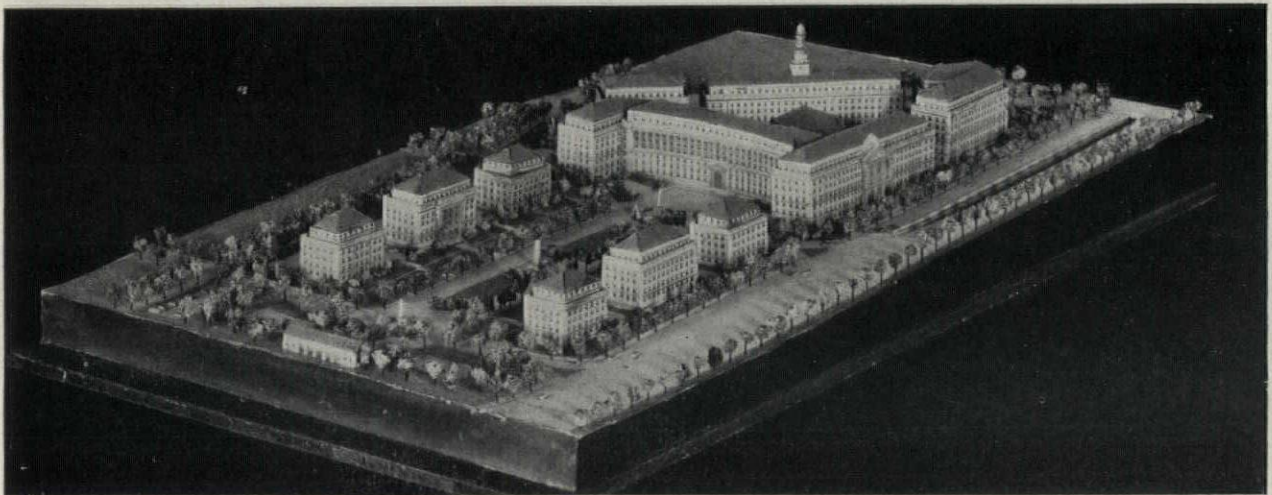
PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT, KEW GARDENS SITE, FOR QUEENS CIVIC CENTER—WILLIAM W. KNOWLES, ARCHITECT

Last month we printed two schemes for the Proposed Civic Center for the Boro of Queens. Another proposal is the Kew Gardens site directly opposite the Kew Gardens Inn. This site has many proponents because it is a beautiful site on high ground at the intersection of the two main boulevards in Queens. At this same intersection is an express station of the new subway and on the under-pass a bus terminal. With all of these transportation facilities and with the advantage of central location in the borough both geographically and in point of population, this site and this group of buildings have won the plaudits of many seeking a greatly needed Civic Center for the Boro of Queens. As the model shows, the character of architecture selected for the building group is in the spirit of our best early American architecture, similar to that adopted by the Treasury Department for the rebuilding of the “Triangle” in Washington, D. C., and now well advanced.

PROPOSED QUEENS CIVIC CENTER

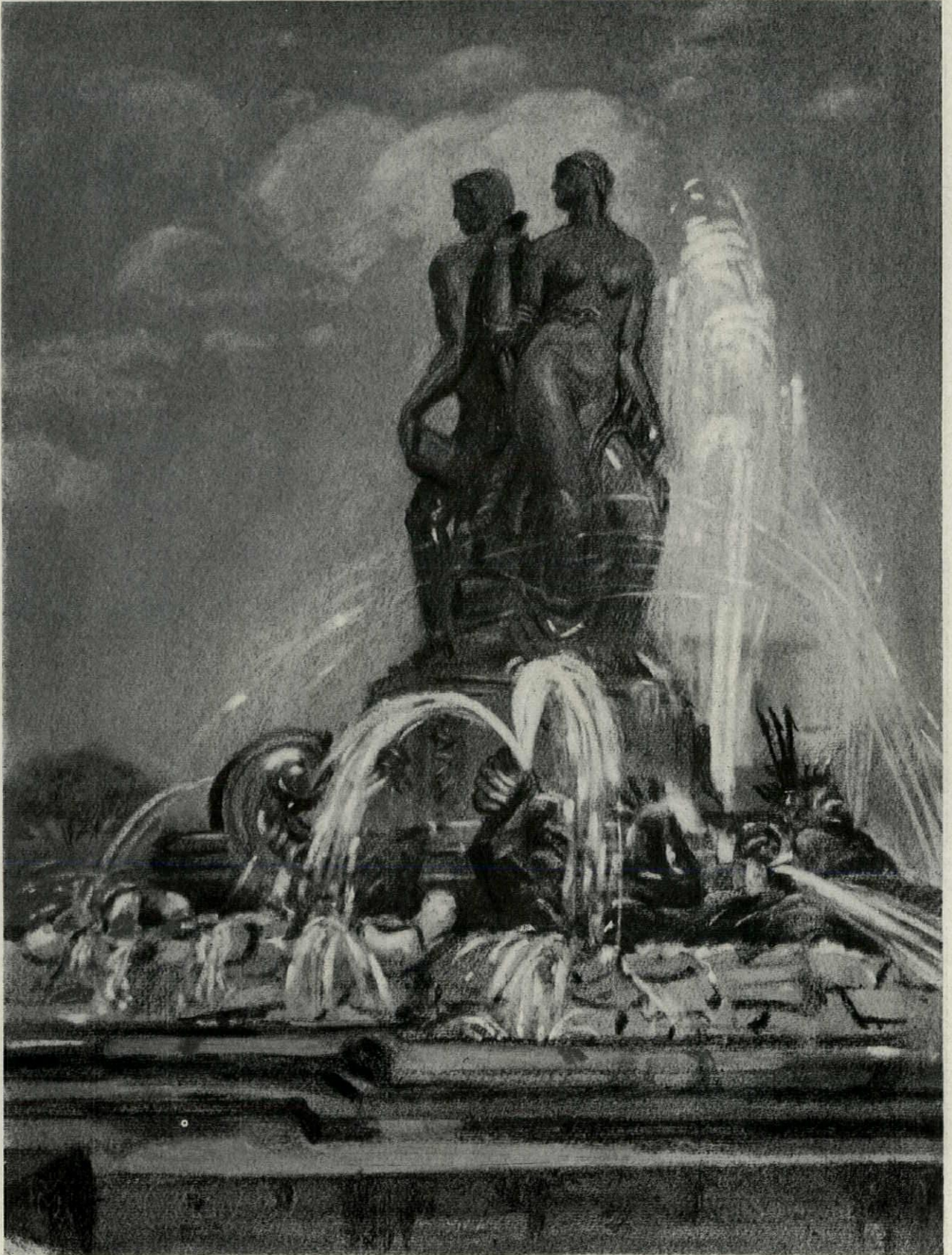


PLAN OF PROPOSED QUEENS CIVIC CENTER AS IT WOULD BE AT THE KEW GARDENS SITE



TWO VIEWS OF SMALL SCALE MODEL (80 FEET TO THE INCH), PROPOSED QUEENS CIVIC CENTER

William W. Knowles, Architect



FOUNTAIN BY EUGENE SAVAGE, GRAND ARMY PLAZA, BROOKLYN, NEW YORK

FROM A CHARCOAL DRAWING BY E. P. CHRYSTIE, DONE ON GRAY PAPER WITH TOUCHES OF WHITE CHALK

The Creative Process and Modern Architecture

By Elmer Grey, F. A. I. A.

All the creative part of architectural work passes through our minds, yet how seldom we find anything helpful written about the mental processes through which such work is done. It is a much involved process to be sure, yet one of such great moment as to deserve far more attention than ordinarily it receives. Sir Joshua Reynolds, in his *Discourses on Art*, made a very thorough analysis of the operation as applied to the art of painting; and many of his deductions are equally applicable to architecture—but few architects read those admirable essays.

It will be conceded that such ideas as come to us in our work are derived from widely different sources. We receive some from the work of others manifestly, while many we look upon as being original with ourselves. These latter no doubt are original with us, so far as originality goes—but how and where did we get them! Upon analysis I think it will be seen that even these, in their first inception, came because of the work of others, because of something which not necessarily suggested them but which nevertheless supplied the thought nucleus from which they were evolved.

As we grow up from babes to maturity our thought processes are formed and influenced by the mass thought around us and the things we see. As we study architecture the same process inheres; this mass or race thought in which we are immersed, and the things we see around us, are the only possible source from which any of our ideas could have received their primal or initial impulse. Upon this race thought each period of the world's architecture has left an impress, and as we study these periods we more or less absorb their atmosphere.

In the course of time this absorption of ideas becomes a great mass of heterogeneous thought material within us, of which we are scarcely if at all conscious—it becomes imbedded deeply in our subconscious minds. There, apparently, it frequently undergoes a very mysterious process. Some ideas seem to take on something of the aspect of their cohabitants; so that when we draw on the common store to express ourselves, they come out in forms far different from those in which they went in! Our subconscious minds are much more than mere storehouses of impressions. Ideas placed in them seem to become intermixed one with another, so that, if the collection be valuable, the jewels of one compartment, so to speak, become inter-fused with the rare fabrics of another—and when we draw on the supply a new thing is born! Sometimes of course the collection is not so valuable, and then poor material gets mixed up! But in any case the result is often startlingly different from the deposit

originally made. A gestatory process has been going on, and when we draw from it we create!

How do I know all this to be so? Partly from my own experience and partly because the experiences of others corroborate mine. Mary Roberts Rinehart has admirably described the process as it relates to literature. She says:—"Many times I cannot trace the origin of the idea. It comes, and that is all I know. Except this: that no idea comes as a new one. I remember it as something which I had thought of long before. When it emerges as a complete thing it still has that ghostliness about it of something long forgotten, and now surprisingly alive. Undoubtedly this is the case. The burial is in the subconscious, where it not only lies but grows . . . It is rather like a foetus . . . The whole process of creating a piece of work resembles gestation."

The subconscious part of our minds then is a sort of germinating house, in which are sown continually all kinds of seeds. Much like those in the vegetable kingdom they do not always come out true to type. Contiguous influences affect them. But just as in plant life beautiful new varieties have been produced by skilful culture of other species, so in architecture, analogous methods often bring forth brilliant new designs.

Robert D. Andrews, the eminent Boston architect, once shed further light upon this subject in an address delivered before the Boston Architectural Club. He pointed out a most important practical application of it. He declared that because of it we often put our conscious endeavor in the wrong place in our work. All too frequently we put it at the end when a problem is to be solved, whereas it should have been put at the beginning by a prolonged wooing of all cultural influences which might broaden and enrich us.

He elaborated upon this theme in ways highly enlightening and I have often thought how true were his remarks and how valuable they would be to many draftsmen who keep their attention fixed too closely upon their tasks at hand and fail to take in their relation to life as a whole. Some of our greatest architects were not especially brilliant draftsmen, but nevertheless had unusual qualities of discrimination and judgment which placed them well above their fellows and which came from just such cultural influences.

Of course there is a wide difference in the receptivity and creative power of different individuals in this respect. We all have our natural aptitudes and some seem to be especially endowed. But even with these, the gathering of impressions, the making out of the mind a rich storehouse of thought material upon which to draw later on, is a prerequisite of success.

We go to Europe in our youth and make a lot of sketches—but the sketches are not used. What are used are the stimuli, the sense of order and proportion which these buildings inspire. They “get under our skin,” cause a ferment in our subconscious, and we are never thereafter the same! Even as the lad in Washington Irving’s story of “The Great Stone Face” came in time to look like the face he loved, so will our work reflect the influences we have absorbed.

I am aware that there are those who think differently about this matter; those who would have us reject all the accumulated thought of the past in order, as they suppose, to be more original. I refer to some, but not all, of the followers of the modernistic school. There is so much discussion about that subject nowadays, and it is one so intimately connected with this discussion, that I venture an attempt to clarify it.

Some very noble buildings have been done in what is called the modern style. The Tribune Tower, Daily News building, and Civic Opera House in Chicago are examples, also the Folger Shakespeare Library in Washington, D. C. The fact that the Tribune Tower and the Civic Opera House have Gothic and Renaissance ornament on them does not exclude them, I take it, from the modern category. A building does not have to be devoid of ornament, I hope, to be classed as modern. The historical derivation of the ornament on the other two of this group is less apparent, and ornament has been used sparingly; but the general character of their designs, their fine relation of voids to solids, and splendid orientation, show plainly that their authors had been well drilled in the principles found in the best buildings of the past.

Many other modernistic buildings, however, show that they were done by men of a different stamp, men who never were properly trained. They are crude, restless, and bizarre. Particularly is this evident where attempts have been made to use the style for residences or churches. When used for residences people usually object, for one thing, to its appearance of “bareness.” They object to this, I dare say, because it seems to reflect a poverty of resource on the part of the designer. The resources of one imagination however brilliant, if divorced from the past, are not to be compared with the accumulated imagery of ages. Most people well know this; they know that the background of their race is rich with beauty, and they are pleased to have something of this wealth of design suggested in their environment. This does not mean “period styles”; it merely means that most people like to have suggestions of the past recalled in designs of the present.

With churches a similar situation prevails. One of the strongest magnets in connection with the Catholic and Episcopal faiths, I believe, is their persistent use of Gothic architecture, which centuries of race thought have associated with worship. Mass in a modernistic interior would lose much of its impressiveness.

One is led to feel that many queer modernistic designs were prepared for the sole purpose of securing novelty. No other explanation can account for many of the strange things that have been done. They appear as though prepared by men who could not de-

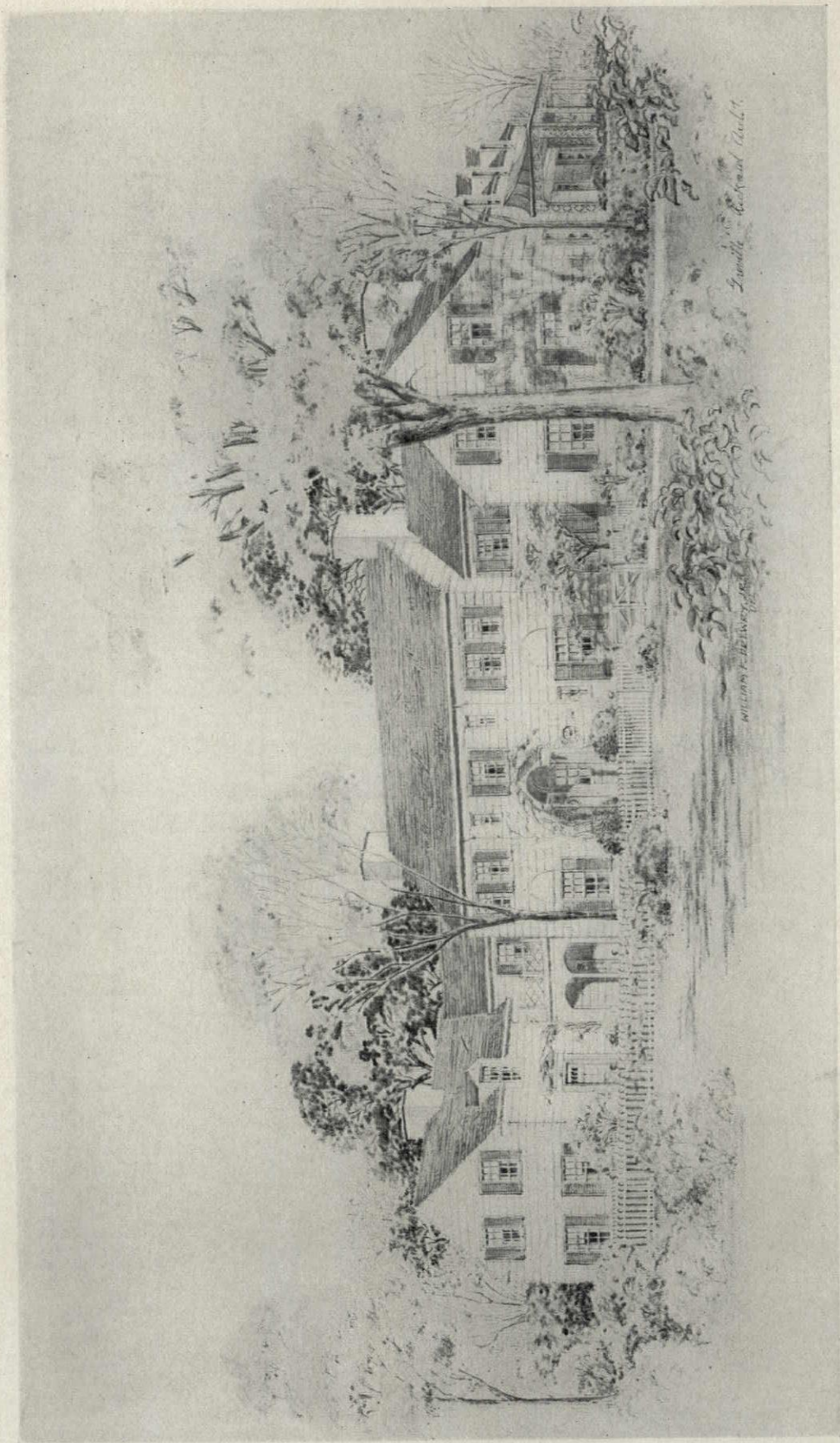
sign well and seized upon this movement as a possible way out, as a short-cut to success. If they can’t do new things that are really good they will try this easy way (as it appears to them) and trust to “getting it across” with the public. Much more than novelty is required, however, to have a new architectural style widely and permanently accepted by people of good taste. The new thing in dress, for instance, is usually based on a modification of the old, and must have merit to recommend it in addition to novelty; likewise the new thing in painting, sculpture, or any art. This points the way to judge modern architecture.

Throughout the ages there have been built various important groups of buildings with which discriminating people are familiar and which they use as a sort of measuring stick with which to appraise the merit of new buildings. The great Gothic cathedrals, the baronial halls of England, the lovely domestic architecture of England, the beautiful châteaux of the Loire valley, the imposing halls of the burgomasters and guilds in Holland and Belgium, the civic buildings and palaces of the Renaissance in Italy, the temples of ancient Greece, and even those of Egypt. It is by a standard of excellence established by the principles of design used in these fine old buildings that we may appraise the value of new work. I think we will find that by such a standard some so-called modernistic work is good, while much is poor, and also that much new work that is not modernistic is good, while some is poor. Architects are interested in good work of any style, for they are asked to design in all styles.

They are thus called upon because it is those who build who determine the trend of style. Architects are seldom allowed to dictate in the matter. I know of one architect who lost a good residence job because he insisted that it be modernistic; and I know of a projected modernistic house that was abandoned because the owners of the high-class residential tract in which it was to go would not permit that kind of a design to be built there. They felt that it would clash too violently with the buildings around about it. Theoretical “functional architecture” did not appeal to them; they wanted harmony.

And you can’t blame them. People who live in a well-ordered community have a right to exclude from their midst a bull-in-a-china-shop design. Such people seldom want any old structure literally copied; the spice of novelty would be missing; but when novelty is introduced they want it to respect its surroundings.

This idea has been incorporated in some of the best modern work in very delightful ways. The Folger Shakespeare Library is an example. This building had a classic environment to chime in with; while its interior was to be given over to activities of an entirely different period. The problem was solved by frankly making the outside harmonize with its surroundings—into which was skilfully fused some of the simplicity and directness of the modern spirit—while the interior was carried out in Elizabethan. The combination was an act of consideration toward the environment and a charming gesture of deference to the past. That, to my mind, is the creative process at its best.



HOUSE FOR DR. CHARLES L. LARKIN, MIDDLEBURY, CONNECTICUT
 GREVILLE RICKARD, ARCHITECT
Pencil rendering by William F. Dreyer, Jr. (Plans on reverse)

PENCIL POINTS
 (October, 1934)

Latest Washington Report on FHA

By Chester M. Wright

Attention was focussed on new home construction by Federal Housing Administrator Moffett when he appointed J. Howard Ardrey Deputy Administrator to supervise the operation of the important titles two and three of the Act.

Title II provides for mutual mortgage insurance of mortgages on new construction, but is confined exclusively to residential or semi-residential properties.

Title III provides for the creation of National Mortgage Companies under the direction of the Federal Housing Administration for the purpose of affording a nation-wide market for insured mortgages.

Essentially the Federal Housing Administration is a large insurance institution. It insures mortgages on new construction, and it insures loans on building repairs. Since its functioning is entirely a matter of financing, it is inevitable that financiers will have much to do with its administration. Mr. Ardrey is an eminent financier. At the time of his retirement he was executive vice-president and director of the Guaranty Trust Company, and was a director of many other banking corporations.

But the National Housing Act will effect revolutionary changes in home mortgage procedures and philosophy. It reduces interest rates on both modernization and new construction loans. It involves a re-education of the banking fraternity, and the members of the Administration who are interpreting the new rules include many architects, economists, and industrialists.

Banking and insurance legislation has been largely responsible for developing second mortgage racketeering. That is a harsh statement, but it has long been recognized. Provisions limiting loans to 50 per cent of the appraisal value of a home were enacted for the protection of savings banks and insurance companies on the theory that the depositors and insurance beneficiaries had to be protected against possible loss through unwise operations of directors of banks and insurance companies, but like so many other prohibition laws, the cure was worse for the patient than the bite. The protection was too great. It left a margin between the original investment which the average home owner could make and the loan (of about 25%) which he could get from the bank. This margin became a fruitful field for the racketeer.

Now that a home can be insured up to 80% of its value, the racketeer is eliminated, but the banker has to reorganize his concept of home values. He must make sure that there is at least 80% value in the property. He must add 30% to his appraisal standards. Henceforth he must apply banking principles to real estate instead of the speculative principles that have applied in many cities.

Appraisal standards are therefore undergoing a

thorough revision, with the construction division of the Federal Housing Administration as the focus. Mr. Frederick M. Babcock, who is Chief Appraiser, will be responsible for many important decisions in the near future. Washington has so many real estate appraisers in the government service that it resembles a convention of appraisers. In fact, the convention this year will hold its session in Washington.

It seems inevitable that the emphasis upon higher appraisal standards will operate in favor of quality products in future building construction. When the banker has to watch 80% of the value in a home he is not likely to countenance the "jerry building" which took place during the building boom years. Furthermore, since the loan may run for a period of twenty years, there will be less opportunity to pass the buck of "jerry building" on to somebody else. The depreciation factor must be watched with more care.

It will not be the bankers alone who will apply a more rigid rule of value; the government itself will take a lead in suggesting appraisal values which should be followed.

Architects may, in the future, be doing much calculating on the basis of the actual cost to the home owner of ordinary materials and repairs. The better material will naturally cost less in the long run. This argument will undoubtedly be utilized by corporations selling quality products.

The architect, especially the small house architect, should be one of the chief beneficiaries of the operation of the Housing Act. More than anybody else, the architect can insure that permanent values are incorporated in a home. It is expected that more architects will focus their attention upon small house construction. It is believed that those who specialize in small house building will have a more assured income over a long period of years than those who live only for the monumental projects, which will come with less and less frequency as the population growth of the United States declines.

Indications are that loans for new construction will be available before the expiration of the original six months' period predicted by Mr. Moffett. Considerable pressure has been brought to speed up preparations, and they have been speeded up.

It is expected that the long range part of the program will be under way by the first part of November. Administrator Moffett believes that rules and regulations for Titles II and III will be ready for distribution by the end of the first week in October.

Meanwhile, the modernization program is under way. Many local campaigns have been started, and several thousand others are in prospect. A steady pressure is being exerted. There will be no big boom

of modernization activity to blow up, but a gradual accumulation of work.

Fourteen of the forty-eight states have gone over the top in their drive to have their "ten largest cities" completely organized. The states are: New Hampshire, Vermont, North Carolina, Virginia, West Virginia, Illinois, Kansas, New Mexico, California, Nevada, Rhode Island, Florida, Nebraska, and Alabama. Eight other states are just ready to go over the top with organizations completed in nine of their "ten largest cities."

Rhode Island is the first to report a loan made in every county of the state, although there are many other states on the brink of this accomplishment.

Pennsylvania leads all the states for the number of loans actually made in fifty per cent of the counties in that state; California runs a close second, with New York third and Virginia fourth.

New York leads all states, by a wide margin, in bank acceptances, with Pennsylvania, Illinois, and Ohio following in the order named.

Nebraska is still leading all states in the number of cities organized, with a total of 258; Indiana comes second, and Texas third.

The terms are not so liberal as to cause people to make repairs who are not justified economically in doing so. Some critics have said that they are not liberal enough, but those who are guiding the future destinies of the Housing Administration do not want repercussions in a few years from modernization loans which might jeopardize very constructive work in home building and financing in the next ten years.

Washington correspondents who would like to report success for the modernization program comparable to the old Liberty Loan campaigns are not finding comfort in the number of modernization loans reported as of September 25, when the report showed 6049 loans totaling \$2,737,000. The truth is that because of the regulation giving banks thirty days in which to report loans, the record is not complete.

A few weeks previously, the field directors reported more than 5,000 loans actually made. The number of loans is increasing daily to such an extent that Administrator Moffett estimates the loans are now running to \$1,000,000 a day.

The analysis of the modernization and repair loans which has been reported to date gives an interesting picture of where the business created by this program can be located. Divided by occupations, 65 per cent are mechanics, clerks, and other employee groups; 35 per cent are business and professional men. This confirms what everybody has known for a long time—that the real source of business in the United States is the group with incomes of less than \$2000 a year.

It is this group which the National Housing Act was designed to benefit particularly. First, to bring about re-employment in their ranks, and second, to protect their investments in their homes.

This group is the foundation for the business of all those interested in the building industry—architects, contractors, lumber and building supply dealers, and manufacturers of home building equipment.

It will be of particular interest to business men supplying modernization needs to know for what money obtained through these loans is being spent. The percentages are:—*Heating*—14.53; *Inside Painting and Redecorating*—14.47; *Plumbing*—13.82; *Exterior Repairs*—9.70; *Roofing*—9.27; *Outside Painting*—9.21; *Remodeling: General*—8.50; *Interior Repairs*—5.59; *Cementing*—3.95; *Lighting*—3.51; *Remodeling: Bathroom*—4.07; *Additional Rooms*—2.41; *Remodeling: Kitchen*—1.97.

That the home is still the greatest source of business is indicated by the fact that 95 per cent of the loans were made for home improvements, and 5% for improvements of business property.

The average loan runs to \$459; the average income of the borrowers is \$2,955; the average loan period is 25 months—but the average amount loaned and the average income of the borrowers are higher than had been expected. Evidently, the higher income class is the first to respond. As the program proceeds the average loan will undoubtedly decrease, and the lower income group will participate to a greater degree.

Under Title IV of the Housing Act provision is made for setting up a corporation under the auspices of the Home Loan Bank Board for the insurance of accounts in home financing institutions of the building and loan type. Rules and regulations covering the extension of this insurance are now ready for distribution.

Leaders in the building and loan industry have proposed that the rules are forcing too abrupt a change over former procedures, and that a reform in procedure should be more gradual in its application.

In many of the actions of the various government departments concerned about housing the philosophy is getting a good foothold that utility should be the guiding principle of design. The Housing Division of the PWA is applying this idea to its work to a marked degree. Certain minimum standards are being stressed in connection with plans for low cost housing projects. For instance, bathrooms must be equally accessible to the various rooms of a unit so that other rooms will not have to be crossed in going to them. Much attention is being paid to the design of stair wells in an effort to utilize space.

Although the PWA and all of its agencies are scheduled by law to expire next July, Administrator Ickes has intimated that legislation will be induced to extend the life of the Housing Division, for by next July the low cost housing work will just be getting under full swing.

A number of Mayors of Cities throughout the Country have reassured their taxpayers that assessment appraisals will not be increased on homes which are modernized with loans obtained under the National Housing Act. It seems that the average citizen feels that increased taxation may be a real deterrent to cooperation in modernization campaigns and the Administration is welcoming any assurance which can be obtained regarding increased taxation.

A. L. Gaptill's Corner

A LITTLE DEPARTMENT OF ARCHITECTURAL ESTHETICS, WITH EMPHASIS ON SKETCHING AND RENDERING

In Harness Again

Like many of the rest of you, my vacation period is over, and I'm back on the job, with the result that this page, handled at a distance for several months, can again be done at close range.

Not that I've been able to loaf for several months! Far from it. Aside from my six weeks of teaching in art classes at Boothbay Harbor, Maine (and it was a grand six weeks, incidentally, with wonderful weather, wonderful subjects to draw and paint, wonderful cats, and, best of all, a wonderful group of students and instructors), I've dragged other jobs along with me—enough, at least, to keep me out of mischief. I hope that each one of you has had as good a complement of work and fun!

The Rendering Projects

Are you getting "fed up" with these? Rather see something else substituted? Let me know. Otherwise it is my plan to run them for a number of months longer.

Rendering Project No. 5

This will doubtless prove of interest mainly to those who are students or beginners and so do not yet realize what a handy rendering tool, even for work in perspective, the ruling pen can be.

Not that entire renderings are made with it, for this is seldom, if ever, the case. It is commonly employed in work in wash and water color merely as an adjunct to the brush.

Even in this limited field, its uses are too numerous to mention. It is convenient for applying pigment to narrow areas, or where great accuracy is needed. It is speedy for putting in window muntins, stone and brick courses or joints, shingle and slate butts, etc. It is handy for fluting columns and rendering lattice strips, railings, shutter slats, and the like. It is extremely efficacious for drawing narrow shadows, as on mouldings and under clapboards. Sometimes it is employed in a freehand manner, without the aid of T-square and triangle.

Perhaps its greatest value lies in its use for the application of highlights of

opaque paint or white ink. Sheet 5 shows a number of examples. Whether one works on tinted paper, as here, or on a white surface, methods are much the same and results equally effective.

The highlights on Sheet 5 were done with water color paint, Winsor & Newton's Chinese White having been chosen. Cheaper whites are sometimes selected, but are quite apt to darken or discolor gradually; some eventually flake off. As pure white is seldom desirable, one tints his pigment with other colors according to purpose.

It is a bit of a trick to get the pen to work just right when loaded with this heavy paint, which must be thick enough to cover well when dry, yet not so thick as to form ragged lines or clog the pen. A consistency like that of heavy cream is about right. There should be enough pigment mixed to prevent rapid evaporation: the smaller the quantity, the greater the difficulty of keeping it uniform. It should be kept covered, if possible, and stirred whenever the pen is filled, a single brush serving for both stirring and filling. The pen must be wiped frequently: even the outside must be kept absolutely clean and dry.

Opaque highlights should be the last things added to a drawing. Otherwise not only do they become soiled all too easily by T-square and triangles, but it is hard to work over or next to them. It will be noticed that in much of the work on Sheet 5, light and dark lines were combined. In such a case (see the iron rail at the top of Sketch 2) the darks are applied first and the lights last. If the reverse process is attempted, it will probably demonstrate that the white, being thick and absorbent, will prevent neat application of the dark. If it does prove necessary to rule a few darks after such highlights are in place and dry, it is advisable to substitute a sharp pencil for the pen.

Sketch 3 shows, in the second-story window and latticed porch, two typical applications of ruled highlights. In the first, the sashes were ruled directly over the dark wash suggestive of the shadowy interior. Incidentally, in the shutters of this window the darks were done with the pen. When there are many windows, as in a hotel or office building,

such uses of the pen result in a great saving of time and add to the clean-cut effect. In our second example—the lattice or grille work below—the background was again rendered first; then the ruling of white was added.

Sketch 3, like some of the others in this series, was done, for convenience, from photograph, which accounts for a rather marked perspective distortion. For a normal appearance, the right-hand vanishing point should be farther to the right.

Our Monthly Crit

Sam Chamberlain has given us an especially good cover drawing this month. He has blended the black and sanguine crayons in just about the happiest proportions to get an effect of rich color, much more colorful than many sketches I have seen where the whole range of available pigments were used. Another argument for keeping color schemes simple and depending upon the skilful handling of values! Incidentally, all these Chamberlain covers are square compositions. It is supposed to be difficult to compose a picture in a square space rather than in a rectangle, which may be one reason why most paintings and sketches are longer in one direction than in the other. Anyway, experiment for yourselves some time and see if you can exhaust the possibilities of the square composition as to pattern and movement. I marvel at Chamberlain's ability to achieve continual variety in a series of this sort without any apparent let-down in quality.

E. P. Chrystie is represented this month by a water color and two charcoal sketches. It is in the latter medium that he excels. I often wonder why architectural men do not work more often with charcoal. Hopkinson Smith comes first to mind as an artist who explored the possibilities of this flexible medium and Joseph Pennell used it freely also. Hugh Ferriss has, of course, done wonders with it in his magnificent renderings. Chrystie, however, is one of the few men who have used charcoal consistently as a sketching tool. Let's have more of it. There are various tints of charcoal paper available other than white and using chalk for the highlights adds to the range of effect that can be obtained.

Two more sketches by Carl Heilborn appear this month on pages 529 and 530. The one in litho pencil was drawn on cameo paper. The figures are alive and look natural. Ability to make them so seems rare among architectural sketchers, but it can be cultivated with practice.

PRACTICAL PERSPECTIVE RENDERING PROJECTS &
SHEET 5 • ILLUSTRATING SOME USES OF THE RULING PEN •

1. The pen is useful for
brick representations



also for stone



white joints



dark joints,
high lighted edges

Ideal for fences



and mouldings

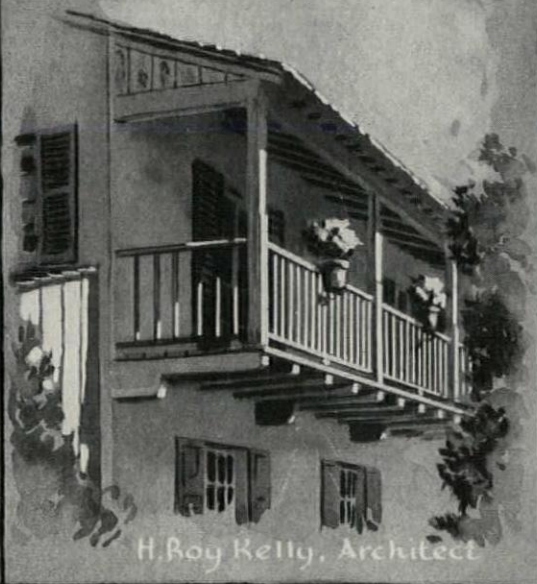


BOTH WHITE AND TINTED PAPERS PERMIT THE USE OF THE RULING PEN

2. Apply dark first

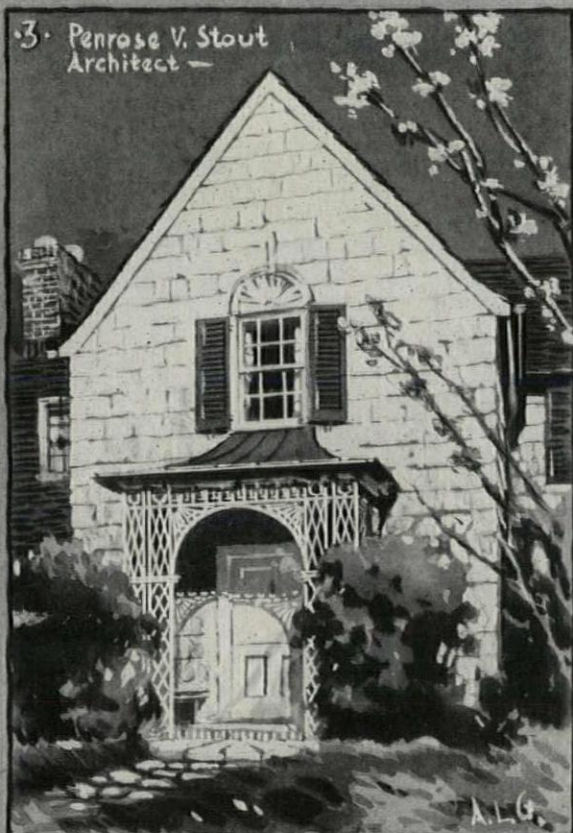


Add white last



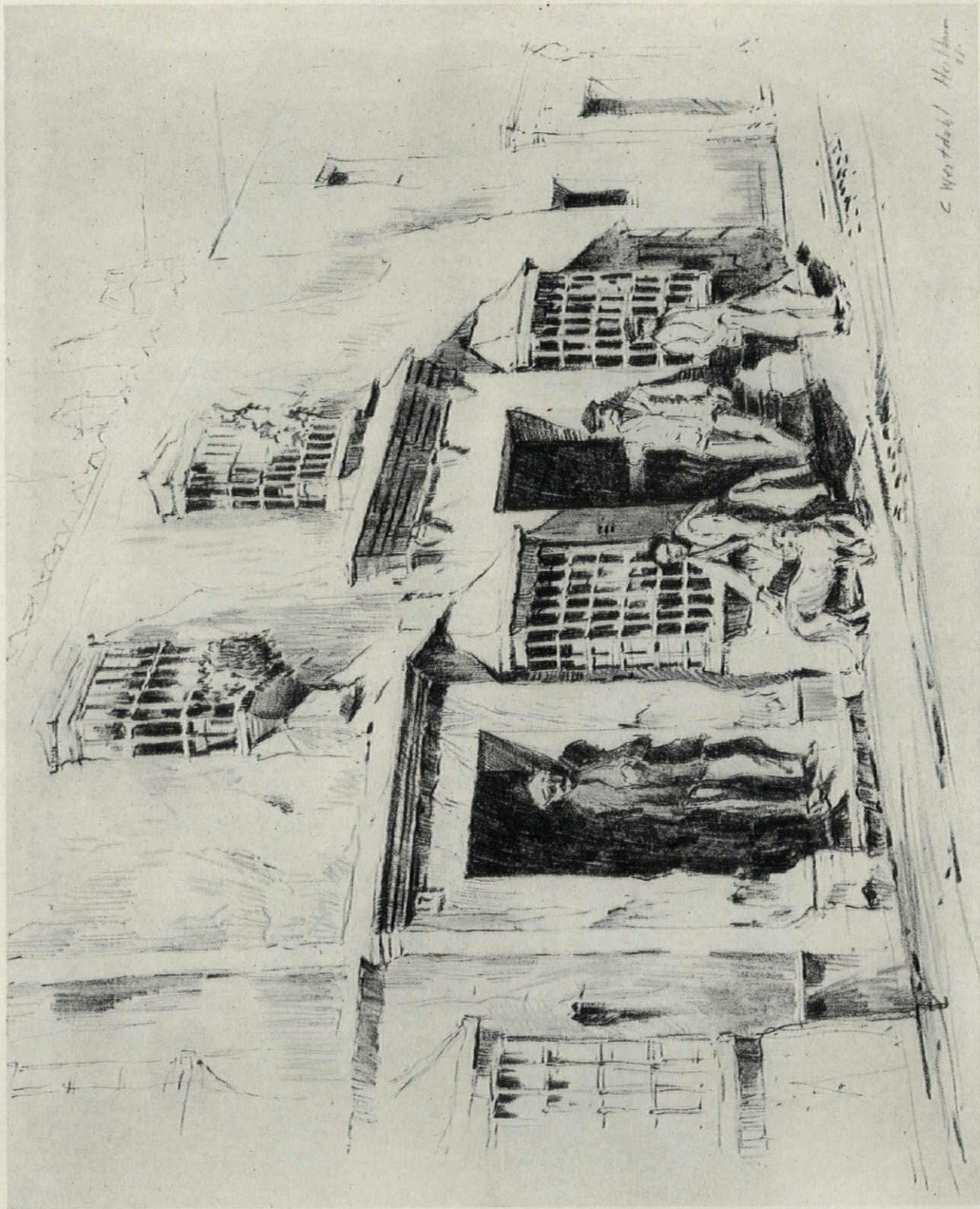
H. Roy Kelly, Architect

3. Penrose V. Stout
Architect



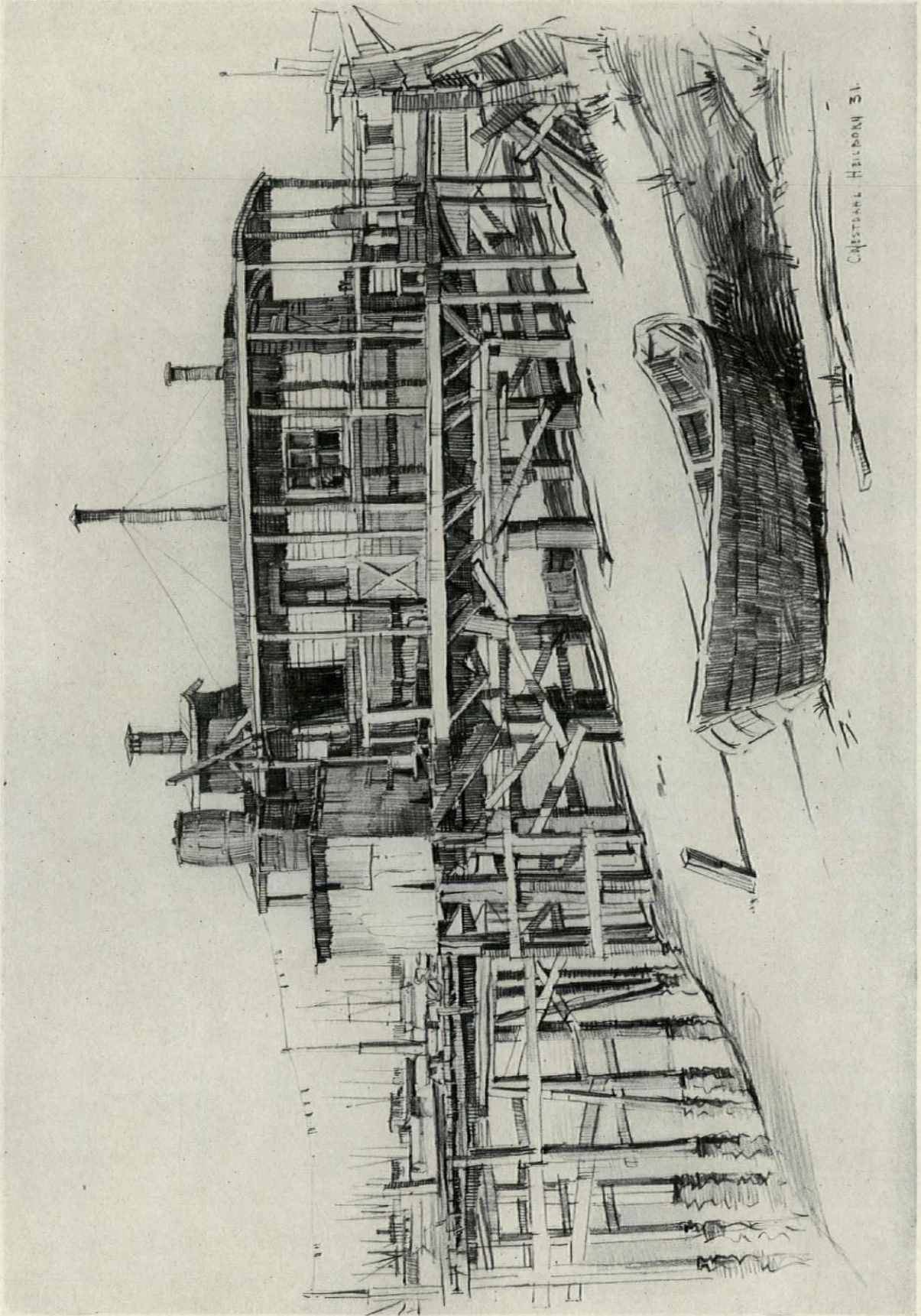
THERE ARE ENDLESS APPLICATIONS

BRUSH AND PEN ARE OFTEN COMBINED



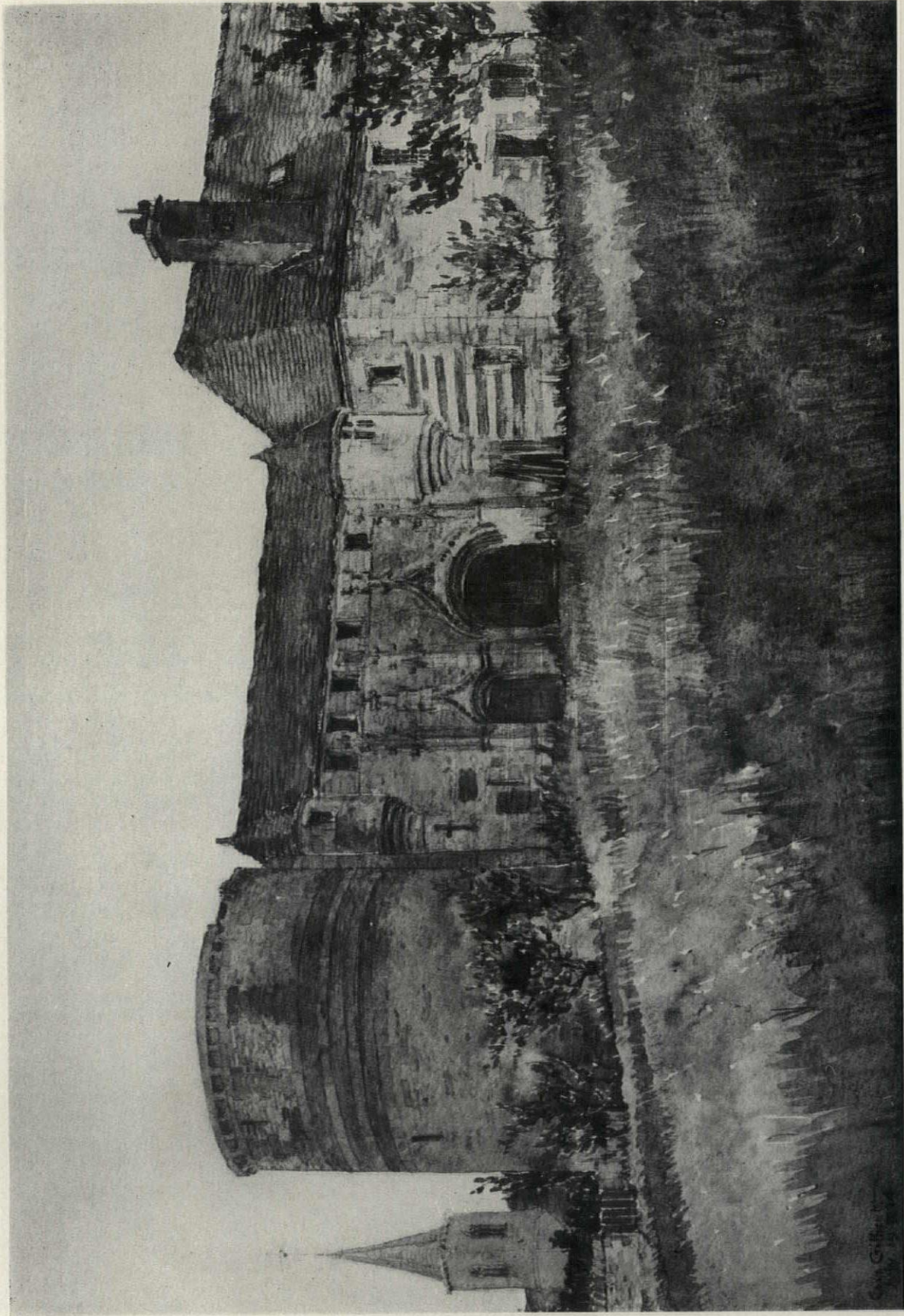
FROM A LITHO PENCIL SKETCH BY CARL WESTDAHL HEILBORN
IRON GRILLES, RONDA, SPAIN

PENCIL POINTS
(October, 1934)



FROM A PENCIL SKETCH BY CARL WESTDAHL HEILBORN
HOME AT HARBOR, SAN PEDRO, CALIFORNIA

PENCIL POINTS
(October, 1934)



FROM A WATER COLOR SKETCH BY THE LATE CASS GILBERT
WHOSE WORK AS MASTER ARCHITECT AND DRAFTSMAN WILL BE FEATURED NEXT MONTH

PENCIL POINTS
(October, 1934)

Architectural Guild of America

The first National Convention of the Architectural Guild of America, just concluded, brings to the profession a vigorous, permanent association whose policies and objectives have been developed during a year of careful preparatory organization and active work in improving the economic status of architectural men and standards of the profession.

For *President* the convention chose Herman R. Kaplan, an architect of wide experience and great executive ability, a man who instinctively thinks and acts in the cause of labor. He has been active in organizing and directing the Guild and is chiefly responsible for its national Constitution and By-laws. As chairman of the Economic Relations Committee, Mr. Kaplan won commendation from the NRA Administrators for his keen analysis of the effects of the proposed code and for the alternative code he offered. Under his leadership the Guild will go forward rapidly, and we trust that he will receive the immediate and enthusiastic support of all architectural men and associations.

The other officers elected were: Clifford F. Hart, Francis Kapp, and Anthony J. Oliva, *Vice-Presidents*; Anthony Nocella, *Treasurer*; and John F. St. George, *Executive Secretary*. The new Executive Board will consist of E. P. Bankes, Gabriel A. DiMartino, Joseph L. Hautman, George H. Holland, Joseph F. Kriner, Sydney J. McBride, Henry V. Rinderman, Henry Sasch, Theodore Voyvodick, and Jacob Wallach. All of these men have held important places in the Guild and we are therefore assured that the progress and work in the organization will be uninterrupted.

The economic situation is still the most salient problem of our men and the Guild is concentrating a large part of its attention on employment. The committees and officers have carried on a long campaign for civil work both as part of the PWA program and in useful "made" work. The opposition to any governmental enterprise is very great and each project which is finally started has behind it a vast amount of struggle against selfish interests and political obstructionists. Local and Federal authorities are cognizant of the ne-

cessity for public building construction to absorb architectural men and the vast army of building trades workers and although it is necessary to insist on appropriations from local governments, the success of any attempt to alleviate unemployment depends almost entirely on the national Government. We are concentrating our efforts on the Administration and utilizing every source for aid in having appropriations made now and new projects started.

In New York a great many members are engaged on temporary civil work consisting largely of architectural projects. The great importance of this work has caused the Employment Committee to wage an active campaign for legislation to provide funds to carry on these projects. Although not wholly successful in the measures advocated, the attack on work projects which accompanied the opposition to the taxing measure has been halted, and funds will be available for reinstatement of men laid off and for the unemployed. At best, however, relief projects are merely palliatives and in New York City the Employment Committee looks to Washington for real assistance.

The Economic Relations Committee finds a great amount of opposition in the Treasury Department and the Public Works Administration to the inclusion of wage scales in architectural contracts. Apparently the spirit of the New Deal does not permeate the entire administration and we are to receive governmental support for better standards only by continued fighting. The slight concession made in a ruling of the Public Works Administration cited in last month's issue has taken much effort, but the way is now shown to obtain at least a decent wage scale when the Federal government finances any work. We have taken the report of the Deputy Administrator in charge of the Construction Industry Code, in which it is recommended that architects' pay be higher than the rates paid skilled labor in the same locality, and we are endeavoring to have this included in all PWA and Treasury Department contracts with private architects.

In developing a program for legislative activities, the Guild has made every effort to increase the economic

security of architectural men. At the last session of Congress and of the State Legislatures our Committee on Legislation made many attempts to incorporate, in the proposed Unemployment Insurance Bills, various provisions which would include benefits to our men. Although none of these measures were adopted, it is significant that, with the exception of one radical bill which lacked substantial support, there were none which were designed to benefit the professional or white collar worker. We believe that our men should never again be forced to endure the suffering and degradation of the past four years and we realize the necessity of setting up unemployment reserves so that in the future they may take the place of relief agencies as a systematic, honorable method of tiding over a slump period. We are, therefore, submitting recommendations for Unemployment Compensation Legislation to public officials and shall actively support such measures at the next sessions of the State Legislatures and Congress.

While the New Deal may have eliminated individualism, it has served to draw architectural men into a distinct group and, in emphasizing their real interests, has created a receptiveness for a Guild of architects which has never before manifested itself. We must use this opportunity to build strong chapter organizations throughout the country with a national representative body which will have the power to bring essential and permanent benefits to architectural men. We invite architectural associations to further inquire about our objectives and organization, and urge architectural men to join the Guild and form chapters in their cities.

ARCHITECTURAL GUILD OF AMERICA

John F. St. George,

Executive Secretary

The Architectural Guild of America, Room 226, 101 Park Avenue, New York City. Any architectural man who is not an employer is eligible to membership. In applying kindly state your regular occupation, your name and your address. The initiation fee is 25 cents and the dues are 25 cents a month. For local chapters and groups there is only a monthly per capita tax.

Georges Dengler

Appointed at Pennsylvania

The University of Pennsylvania announces the appointment to the Faculty of the Department of Architecture of the School of Fine Arts, of Georges Dengler, Premier Grand Prix de Rome, 1931, as Professor of Design.