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Round Table Talk

And now since we have been seated around our "Round Table," do we know one another? Do you know your mayor, your city manager, your council, your commissioners’ court? Does the County Commissioners’ Court or the City Council know what you as an architect have to offer? Do they know that you too are a public servant and are willing to serve on committees, boards and councils? That you are trained in planning? The planning of a neighborhood or a city is in a sense no different from planning a livable home. We must distinguish a house from a home. Houses are just built and often lack many of the refinements, conveniences and generally the thought thru plan of one space related to another space. In our cities, the open spaces are more difficult to plan than the enclosed spaces. Let’s take a good look at our present environment and ask ourselves: “Is this the best we can do?”

ARTHUR FEHR
Before dismantling and moving. Note heavy later gable.
The Restoration of the Nichols-Rice House

Houston is developing an "Ante-Bellum Texas Village" in Sam Houston Park. The Preservation Officer of the Houston Chapter, AIA, gives the story of the Preservation Committee's work in planning, directing and supervising a major restoration there as a public service.

Harvin C. Moore, AIA

The physical restoration of historic buildings along the Texas Gulf Coast has been given emphasis by two restorations in Houston under the direction of the Committee for Preservation of Historic Buildings of the Houston Chapter AIA.

In 1954, a group of ladies invited this committee to assist in the organization of the Heritage Society which would raise funds primarily to restore the one-hundred-year-old Kellum-Noble House in Sam Houston Park. A fire in that structure precipitated the restoration, and, after some three years, the house was opened to the public in its original location, on its original foundation, and with a large part of its original structure.

Partly because of the success of this restoration, the city of Houston and the City Parks Department, as well as the City Planning Department, have suggested that Sam Houston Park be developed toward an Ante-Bellum Texas Village representative of this early period of Texas as a state.
Currently, the second restoration in the park was eighty per cent complete. In downtown Houston, in the year 1850, General Ebenezer B. Nichols constructed a residence across the street from the County Court House. General Nichols had come from Cooperstown, New York, and claimed a prosperous and cultural background. Having entered business with William M. Rice, founder of Rice University, General Nichols sold the house to Mr. Rice in 1856 and moved to Galveston.

Mr. Rice lived in the house only a short time when he, in turn, left Houston. The history of the delightful Greek Revival house is a bit vague until 1886 when it was purchased by John Finnegan, who moved it a block away to the corner of San Jacinto and Franklin.

Two years later, Charles Evershade leased the home until 1897 at which time it was put up for public auction. D. B. Cherry, the husband of a local artist, Mrs. E. Richardson Cherry, bid $25.00 for the Greek entrance alone. No other bids were received; therefore, the Cherrys acquired the entire home for $25.00.

The old house was then moved three miles to the country which location later became known as Fargo and Hopkins Street and its modern history began.

From time to time, Mrs. Cherry added numerous features of her own design. A porte-cochère, certainly not of the original period, was built to the west with a studio above. Bathrooms were tacked on and numerous additions to the rear built, including a sort of kitchen.

As in all restorations, these things challenged the Committee to establish what constituted the original house.

By 1959, the aged relic was in delicate condition and could not be moved without wrecking. Each piece, molding, windows, doors, and numerous other parts, were coded carefully, then painstakingly taken apart, bundled and moved to the park two miles away.

During the restoration, parts that were too rotted or damaged by the years had to be reproduced. For example, several of the capitals of the columns were found unfit for continued use. Skilled wood carvers, using the remaining capitals for models, carefully and authentically copied new ones for the restoration.

When the house was dismantled, it was found that (Continued on page 8)
along the years a high gabled roof had been put over the original terrace roof. Atop the original mansion had been a “widow’s walk.” Only a piece of the surrounding railing was found, but this was a guide for a restored walk.

Each mortised timber was carefully noted and an original chimney chase between the two back rooms was discovered. This chimney was constructed on the new site.

Exposure of the first floor wall structure indicated a rather unplanned system of bracing which seemed to have been applied after the 1900 storm.

Dismantling revealed that, behind the siding below the downstairs windows, there were panels to the floor that were exposed to the outside, and that the window openings had been framed with trim that continued to a sill at floor level. It is probable that, after severe damage during the 1900 hurricane, the siding and trim were not put back as they were originally.

Ceiling joists had been damaged severely by a fire, and rather curious moulded pieces were used to strengthen the ceilings.

It was necessary in the interest of permanence to discard the wood lath and substitute metal lath on the interior.

Some question was raised as to the authenticity of the column on the front galleries and the Committee is of the opinion that the columns were obtained from some other building or were ordered of a size that did not fit. In any event, it appeared that the downstairs columns had had some two feet cut off the bottoms and the upstairs columns had been shortened by about three feet.

Completion of the main house exterior with shutters, trim, and paint suggested the planning of additional facilities and construction is now under way on the separate kitchen and gardens.

It has been a source of great pride to this Committee of the AIA to have been able to plan, to direct, and to supervise so delightful a project as the “Houses in Sam Houston Park” and the Committee feels confident that this work has been and will be a credit to the public service conscience of the AIA as well as a landmark in the preservation of the early heritage of Texas.
honored for distinguished design

FISHER RESIDENCE

ARCHITECT
J. HERSCHEL FISHER, AIA
PAT Y. SPILLMAN, AIA

LANDSCAPE ARCHITECT
DICK MYRICK

DALLAS
Vividly demonstrating the potentials of its hillside site, the plan turns its back on the service road and opens instead, with an expanse of glass, decks and gardens, to the view across the trees. The street side gardens are screened for privacy.

The plan is organized into three zones—one for children, one for parents, and third a central core common to both and containing all utilities. Only one habitable room, used as a music room, is closed from the rest of the house; the remainder relies on sliding and rolled screens to alter the spaces as desired.
The simple structural system of post and beam is developed to provide its own rhythmic and geometric order in contrast to the irregular curves of the treetops.
The following is excerpts from an address delivered by Congressman Clem Miller in the House of Representatives. His remarks were concerned specifically with one project—a public housing development in Marin City, California, which received strong criticism from the General Accounting Office. In discussing that project and GAO’s evaluation, he exposes a point of view that can endanger all architecture, both government and private.

Mr. Miller strongly questions GAO’s methods of evaluation. He points out that the agency has over 2000 accountants and 100 lawyers, but not a single architect or engineer. He maintains that GAO ignored essential considerations—social, aesthetic, maintenance. “We are given,” he states, “the two-dimensional world of the adding machine and told to make from it the three-dimensional world of the value judgment.”

GAO’s approach, Mr. Miller asserts, can lead to only one conclusion: “That public housing should be institutionalized. It means every breath of imaginative design withdrawn.” Mr. Miller opposes this conclusion, and shows that it is contrary to the direction envisioned by Congress.

Congressman Miller’s address clearly, persuasively and thoroughly states the case against “judgment by adding machine.” Though not reprinted in full, the nature and intent of the address is retained.

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very fact of creating a pleasing public housing project must find some cen­
sure at GAO; that public housing must
be spartan rather than esthetic.”

“The Marin City public housing de­
velopment was no back-alley tenement
lost in a big city. It was solidly out in
front for all to see.

It was also the toughest of sites from an
engineering view. A small flattland
rising abruptly upward with a ring of
imposing mills.”

“It would have been easy to repeat
the Lanham Act formula. Brown,
wooden barracks pasted on the slopes,
parallel to the contours of the hills. It
was easier and it looked cheaper. Ac­
tually, that is not the case. It would
not have been cheap to build, and
certainly not to maintain.”

“So Aaron Green hit on the bold
idea of multistory buildings at right
angles to contour but yielding grace­
fully to the slope. Yet withal, Brown re­
tained a sense of strength, of design,
of beauty, a fitting accompaniment to
the costly private developments en­
visaged for the upland acres.”

“For this imaginative design, Aaron
Green has won the plaudits from ex­
perts all over the world. From the non­
professionals, the commuters in Marin
County, pleasure and relief that the
barrack days of public housing was
not here reproduced.”

“This is the project that the Gen­
eral Accounting Office has found un­
acceptable, and tells us is an abuse of
congressional intent.”

“I take vigorous exception to this
finding. So do many others who are
competent in the field of housing and
housing law.”

“Where did GAO err? It over­
reached itself in two respects. First, it
arrogated to itself duties which were
beyond its capacity to perform, and
second, when conclusive evidence was
offered, refuting its charges, not only
did it fail to remand its case as closed,
it pressed contentiously on with its re­
port, determined to find some flaw.
Certainly, it is the duty of the watch­
dog to press with vigor. The use­
fulness of the watchdog is impaired when
it barks and snaps at an innocent pas­
sy- rather than an intruder.”

“The planning consultants were. There
had been none. I asked who the en­
gineers had been. There had been
none. I asked who had there been. There
had been several accountants and a
supervisor. That was all. Absolu­
tely all.”

“Mr. Speaker, I ask how a com­
plete, well-rounded picture of a com­
plex housing project can be obtained
under these circumstances? It reached
architectural conclusions without an
architect, engineering conclusions
without an engineer, esthetic and his­
toric conclusions without a planner.
The answer is that it has failed.”

“When one gets down to their re­
port on Marin City, the analysis is
hard to believe as worthy of a year’s
by an investigating team. As I
have said, it appears they were at­
tracted to the Marin City housing pro­
ject because it was a different treat­
ment of public housing problem. It
seemed to conclude that when things
are different, or bizarre, or unfamiliar,
there must be malfeasance or ineffi­
ciency.”

“Since the costs for the project met
the overall standards and requirements
of law and regulation, then the investi­
gators hit on the novel idea of ex­
amining the component parts of the pro­
ject individually to see whether the in­
dividual components were excessive in
cost.”

“GAO agreed that total costs met
the requirements, but that components
did not. What does this approach
mean to sensible design planning? It
means sterility at best, chaos and an
inability to perform at worst. It ham­
strings design to place it at the mercy
of such unpredictable and ignorant
criticism. What is a designer for if he
cannot accommodate—to give here,
take there, all to solve a problem? Par­
ticularly as here at Marin City, ac­
knowledged to be a tough problem? It
just can’t be done. Design suffers. De­
signers are increasingly unwilling to
submit themselves to such inconsidered
judgment. Let there be no mistake,
the GAO tragedy at Marin City is
widely known in the world of design
and bitterly resented.”

“Furthermore, the GAO report re­
jects any consideration to the esthetic
qualities, the nature of the community
itself, and the living standards of the
residents.”

“Mr. August Heckscher, special
White House consultant on the arts,
recently spoke before a national con­
ferenee of the American Institute of
Architects. He warned us as follows:
“A civilization begins to manifest it­
self when men and women have begun
to take thought about what they con­
struct, and why, and to what end.”

“In order to ‘descend from a spiral of
ugliness and irrationality,’ we must
be in readiness to undertake on a
large scale the kind of public works
which are truly public— in the sense
that they serve the highest interests of
the citizenry; and truly works—in the
sense that they are made to endure
and to be judged by future genera­
tions.”

“He has also said in another place:
‘It [the State] seeks through con­
certed action to lift men above private
comforts and to give them some vision
of public happiness. The citizens of
such a state will have found them­
selves, because they will have found
the purpose and values which they
share with others in creating this
world, in shaping these works, men
are made more confident of their own
destiny.’

“The GAO would reject this view,
certainly for purposes of their func­
tion in government. I daresay it would
do so with spirit and enthusiasm.”

“The GAO would reject this view,
certainly for purposes of their func­
tion in government. I daresay it would
do so with spirit and enthusiasm.”

“To some degree we have become a
nation of accountants. The figure
sheets have become sacred talismen.
Among other things this leads to the
destruction of beauty. One only need
to look at the buildings going up in the
Capital City of our country to see
some of the most graceless architecture
conceived by man.”

“And let no man say that we can
forget beauty for utilitarianism. Utility
is beauty, and has been so for all ages.
The angry critic who accepts the bar­
racks architecture at home is crossing
to Europe by the planeload to see the
outpourings of other cultures and
other ages. It is quite clear to me that
the Parthenon could never have been
built under the watchful eye of GAO.
Notre Dame at Paris would not have
been attempted with GAO approval.
We need not fear for our country
when we are putting up great build­
ings of imaginative design. We need
fear for ourselves when we stop doing
it.”
MONARCH TILE SCHOLARSHIPS

Winners of the annual architectural scholarships awarded by Monarch Tile Manufacturing, Inc., of San Angelo, Texas, have been announced by Fred J. MacKie, Jr., F.A.I.A., of Houston, Texas, President of the Texas Architectural Foundation.

First place winner is Edward V. Kemp of College Station, Texas, architectural student at Texas A & M College. Second place winner is Elmer Joe Wallis of Lubbock, Texas, architectural student at Texas Technological College.

The winners were selected from a list of qualified candidates from the five schools of architecture in Texas, by the Awards and Scholarships Committee of the Texas Architectural Foundation Board of Trustees. Mr. MacKie was chairman of the committee and was assisted by Theo Keller, President Houston Chapter, AIA. C. Herbert Cowell, member Texas Board of Architectural Examiners, and Wal­lie Scott of the firm of Caudill, Row­lett and Scott.

In notifying Bill C. Baker, President of Monarch Tile, the names of the winners, Mr. MacKie said that the Officers and Directors of the Foundation "have again asked me to express sincere appreciation for the dedicated interest in furthering architectural education which you and the Monarch Tile family have so long demonstrated.”

Mr. Baker expressed pleasure at the selection and displayed deep interest in the statement by the selection committee that “many of the applicants whose names were submitted were eminently eligible.”

First place winner Kemp was born in Atlanta, Georgia, is a graduate of Arlington State College, Arlington, Texas, has attended the University of Texas, and is scheduled to graduate from Texas A & M College next year with a degree in architecture. He is married, has two children and has gained practical architectural experience with architectural firms in Greenville, Mississippi and in Arlington, Texas.

Second place winner Wallis was born in Phillips, Texas. He is a graduate of Abilene High School, holds a B.A. degree from Hardin-Simmons University of that city, and is scheduled to graduate next year from Texas Technological College with a degree in Architecture. He is married, has one child and for more than a year has worked for a Lubbock architectural firm.

COURTHOUSES

Publication in Brownwood of "Courthouse of Texas," has been announced. The 260 page book contains photographs of the county courthouses of all the 254 counties in the state.

The photographs were made by Clark Coursey, for the past twenty years editor of "County Progress," the official publication of the County Judges and Commissioners Association of Texas.

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Armco Steel Buildings are now available in a choice of baked-on plastic-base enamel finishes. These colorful coatings on zinc-coated STEELLOX® Panels provide extra weather protection, extra beauty for durable Armco Buildings. They won't check, chip or peel. Want more information about attractive, functional Armco Steel Buildings? Call or write Metal Products Division, Armco Steel Corporation, P. O. Box 1699, Houston, Texas. Offices also in Austin and Dallas.
Curves from straight lines. The hyperbolic paraboloid shell roof is, in effect, a three-dimensional "sheet" of concrete in which strength and rigidity are accomplished not by increasing the thickness of the sheet, but by curving it in space. Despite its double curvature, this shape can be formed entirely of straight pieces—as can be seen in the side elevation at left.

The concrete roof shown will be the largest single hyperbolic paraboloid of its type in the United States. The building it will cover is a 1,350-seat Edens Theatre in Northbrook, Illinois.

This saddle shell roof will measure 159 ft. between working points at the abutments and 221 ft. from tip to tip. The shell will be only four inches thick.

H/P's, as they are called for short, are exceptionally adaptable to churches, auditoriums and, as shown here, for theatres.

Get complete technical literature on hyperbolic paraboloids. (Free in U.S. and Canada only.) Send a request on your letterhead.

Architect: Perkins and Will, AIA, Chicago, Illinois
Engineer: The Engineers Collaborative, Chicago
General Contractor: Chell & Anderson, Inc., Chicago

**HYPERBOLIC PARABOLOID SPAN DATA**

<table>
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(1) figures given are recommended lower limits; maximum feasible limit—5/5.
(2) average depth of edge beams. (3) average shell thickness in inches. (4) average reinforcing steel of hyperbolic paraboloids in pounds per square foot of surface.
The Texas Architectural Foundation offers scholarships in architectural education and sponsors research in the profession.

Contributions may be made as memorials: a remembrance with purpose and dignity.

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IN AN UNDERGROUND RESIDENCE

Thirteen feet underground is this striking eight-room home, constructed by Swayze Bros. in Plainview, Texas. With four bedrooms, three baths, a modern kitchen and year-round air conditioning, it includes extensive installations of Monarch Tile. The builders claim it is a complete fall-out shelter, secure against fall-out, tornados, hailstorms, dust and germs. Heating and cooling require minimum equipment because of earth insulation, exterior maintenance is eliminated and insurance rates are one-eighth normal. Three feet of soil are over the home with eight-foot ceilings and 18 inches between the 3400 square feet inside shell and the 2800 square feet inside home, and a well, pressure tank and sewer lift are included. Technical and cost information are available from Monarch on request.

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ABOVE—Above ground entrance to the new underground residence and fallout shelter in Plainview, Texas.

BELOW—One of a number of Monarch Tile installations in the new underground residence in Plainview.