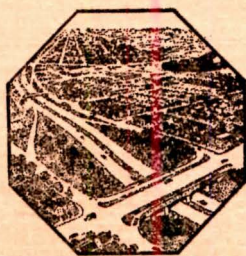


Journal of The American Institute of
ARCHITECTS



February, 1948

The Architect's Professional Vista—I

Shall the White House Have a Balcony?

Lessons from the Pan American Congress

Necrology

We Can Cut Building Costs

News of the Educational Field

A Letter from Sir Ian MacAlister

35c

PUBLISHED MONTHLY AT THE OCTAGON, WASHINGTON, D. C.

UNIVERSITY OF ILLINOIS
SMALL HOMES COUNCIL-
MUMFORD HOUSE

JOURNAL OF THE AMERICAN INSTITUTE OF ARCHITECTS

FEBRUARY, 1948

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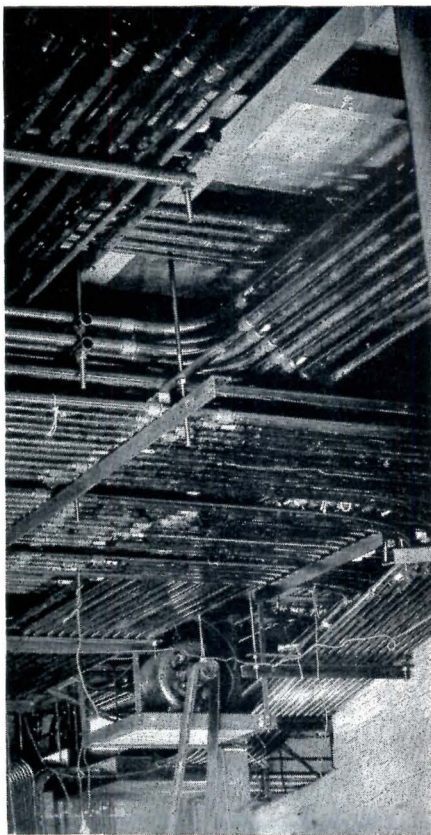
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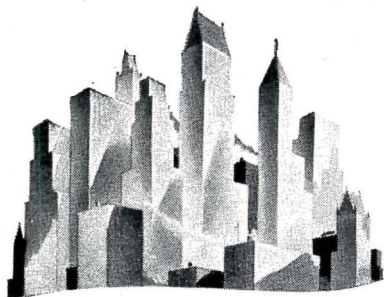
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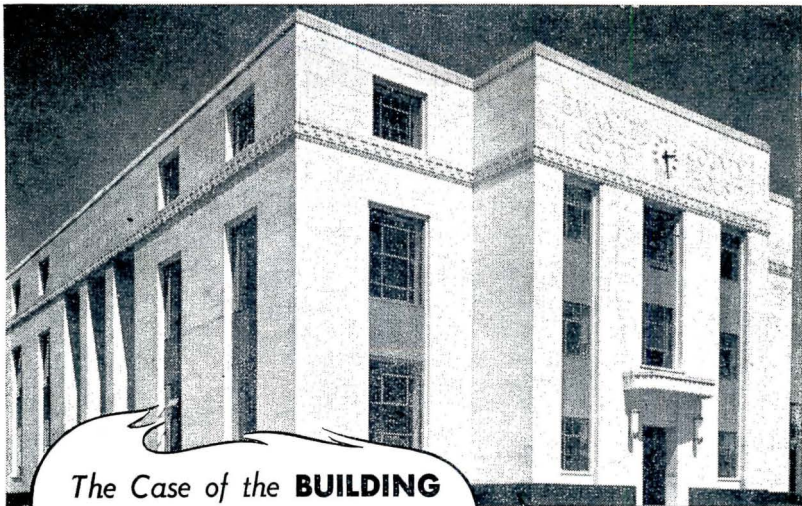
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The Architect's Professional Vista

IN TWO PARTS—PART I

By Henry S. Churchill

An address before the Cleveland Chapter, A.I.A., on November 20, 1947

IT IS GETTING TIME, I think, for the architect to again take himself seriously as a creative force in shaping his environment. The great city planning achievements of the past, which we find admirable because they are so gratifying to us emotionally, are the work of architects. These men were no less practical than we are, no less concerned with getting things done. Their opportunities were no greater than are ours. Although we have come through a century of materialism during which our cities have degenerated, a century during which architecture has been neglected as an art, yet this same century has seen the development of scientific miracles which foreshadow a new world. What this new world will be like will in large measure be determined by the human, spiritual and artistic values in which we clothe it. And in this the architect must play his

part. Such an opportunity has come to him only twice before in the history of the Western world—once when the Dark Ages gave place to the medieval rebirth of the 13th century, and again when America was discovered.

I am interested in the architect as a creative artist because of the way my generation was brought up. The artist, in my youth, was thought of rather derisively as an impractical dilettante. The work of the world was done by tough-minded business men, and tough-mindedness and art were incompatible. Art was something you bought after you had made your pile. You bought it because your women-folk wanted you to, because it was expensive and exclusive, and, since it came from Europe, distant and exotic as well. It did not touch life.

Architecture in particular suffered, since the practice of it is a

with the dull. The architect has never been free in his art, as the painter is to take canvas and paint or the writer to scribble at will. Architecture has always been limited by the most severe conditions of use and cost. Yet as an art it must transcend these limitations, or it is not an art at all, only a trade, and not a very profitable one.



In this plea for the rededication of the architect to the service of beauty and imagination I am not talking about the specious efforts at city planning that went by the name of the City Beautiful. That movement of the early century was, like the then contemporary architecture, based on the fallacies of eclecticism. It was pompous and slightly ridiculous, and it failed because it had no real relation to civic needs or human purposes. It was, in its way, as incomplete as the statistical planning of today. There was no truth in the City Beautiful, and there is no beauty in the city statistical today. Truth and beauty, as Keats and Alfred North Whitehead have pointed out, are inseparable and indistinguishable. Since both are based on the reality of the present

neither is absolute nor changeless; both are relative, dynamic and contemporary.

Our cities today are obsolete, and the physical evidence is hardening of the traffic arteries. There are many other symptoms, well known to all of you. The cause is the impact on their structure of the remarkable technological changes in communications, manufacturing and medicine. Behind these is the basic revolution in science, particularly in chemistry, electronics and nuclear physics. The problem is how to reconcile these forces with antique finance, reactionary law and uncomprehending administration. It is almost a case of the irresistible force meeting the immovable body. Fortunately, the body politic is not quite immovable.

To my way of thinking, the architect should not be too concerned with how the reconciliation is effected. He can well leave that task to others, to the politicians, the economists, the dabblers in the social sciences. The architect dealing with the physical and the human, can make clear what the form of the new city must be. He deals in space, structure, people, the relations of things as three-dimensional order.

I know, of course, that economics is the foundation of sound city planning, that potential employment, future population, and all the rest are necessary guides and limitations. I know, too, that politics is always with us, and that compromise is the way to accomplishment if not honor. My point is that while these things are indeed a part of city planning, they are not all of it: that as a matter of fact some very fine city planning was done by architects long before logarithmic paper and the method of least squares were even a gleam in a statistician's eye. So these working data need not worry the architect too much, and while he accepts them as part of the program he has other things to think about.

These other things may range from a practical solution of our immediate problem to great schemes and dreams, depending on the man and the opportunity. Sometimes the two combine, as in the problem of parking, the number one problem of every city. For instance, it has been seriously proposed, and even legislated, that every building shall provide its own parking and unloading facilities within itself or on the same lot. Apply that to down-town

Cleveland, or to any "down town." There would be curb cuts every hundred feet, at least, to enable cars to roll in and out across heavy pedestrian travel, trying to get in or out of the stream of heavy traffic in the street. Is that a remedy or a confusion? I do not even bring up the economics involved in such a proposal, for a moment's thought will show that this is not an economic question at all. It is one of sound sense in the physical relations of moving objects, and the structures that surround the space in which they move, and the purpose of their movement.

Within this frame lie a variety of solutions for the urban architect. Any solution must be on the grand scale, for it affects and is affected by all phases of city planning. The problem itself is one facet of the technological impact I spoke of before, and to solve it properly opens new patterns and new visions for the arrangement of streets, open spaces and buildings. In the architects' thinking economic considerations need be only secondary, for the simple reason that the eventual acceptance of any real solution will be forced by the pressure of economic necessity. That is to say, in our major

doubtful whether it was possible. However, no position would be taken by The A.I.A. until next year.

The items (1) and (4) should be considered in natural sequence, and in general they lie within the development of themes of discussion and the exposition of the architectural work of the separate countries. It seems that the general area should be lifted into more serious work and more time and thought especially should be devoted to fewer themes, making them a matter of greater importance. For example, had the theme of this Congress been restrained to housing and the development of neighborhoods, bringing to bear all of the intelligence of the group, it would have had a greater influence on both the profession, the separate governments and the people.

The following are recommendations:

(a) Thorough definitions should be insisted upon. Too much time was taken in trying to determine the limitations of each theme.

(b) The subject of the themes should be definitely limited and tied up to the exposition.

(c) All the themes presented by each country should be translated

into Spanish and English, and bilingual copies given to each official delegate. If there were time to print the themes of the U. S. group, all the better. In that case two hundred or more copies should be made for the official delegates. This would make a tremendous impression and the cost would be little. It would also be of great benefit to the secretariat which services the congress.

(d) The authors of the themes should also give illustrations to their subjects.

(e) Other than the limited group of theme subjects, there should be one in which a whole day would be devoted to the improvement of architectural practice techniques.

(f) All themes should develop one or more recommendations which would help keep discussion in order.

(g) All themes should be devoted to interpreting one's own country. Advice on how others should operate would seem officious.

The Exposition of Architectural Work at Lima

The exposition was too large and too tiresome and lacked coordination.

(a) The show should be tied to the themes.

(b) As far as the United States is concerned, the Lima showing, while clever, was not good propaganda. Here an opportunity was missed to show the character of American democracy. City planning could have been developed about the T. V. A. and the late work at Chicago, Detroit and Philadelphia. An historical development of the neighborhood in the United States could have been shown, with good and bad examples.*

(c) Then other good examples of housing, some of which might not be acceptable to the Museum of Modern Art idea—of exhibitions which tend to be clever only.

(d) The Latin-American jury which looked at the U. S. exhibit, with the intent of awarding honors to architectural works, thought the exhibit in the nature of a child's scrapbook, that little originality was indicated and, where it was, there was too little shown to judge the complete character of the work displayed.

(e) This scrapbook idea was pretty general throughout the

whole show except in very few cases, one of the best being Uruguay, where the plan of Montevideo was fully developed. Showing the development of schools throughout the country made a deep impression of the attempt to carry education in a widespread manner.

(f) It is obvious that while architecture is still an individual creation, in these days the interest, and especially at these congresses, should lie in the showing of broad achievements.

(g) A book of illustrations for the official delegates would make a great hit—something to carry back home; there was nothing from the U. S. delegation.

(h) The opportunity for the State Department: not a hurried collection of pictures, but a well-coordinated exhibit which could be developed long before the need. One can honestly stress the low point of illiteracy in the United States, i. e., good schools; the admirable position of some 65 per cent of our people in relation to housing; also the fact that there has been some historical background of steady improvement.

(i) Finally, there might be shown, fully covered, one outstanding building which would be

* In a fire of January 20, the entire exhibit, returned to this country and stored by the State Department, was destroyed.—Editor

hors de concours for honors. Brazil might, for example, have shown the Education Building in greater detail.

The Delegation of the United States

(a) The official delegation should be composed of personnel of which at least 50 per cent speak Spanish. The wall of language difficulties is very high indeed. Practically all of this year's delegation could read Spanish, which was of some help, but the United States should take a larger participation on the floor of plenary sessions.

(b) As the congresses occur every three years, The A.I.A. might allot a sum each year in its budget to accumulate, giving the delegation the opportunity of par-

tially financing transportation, at least of delegates who do speak Spanish, of employing interpreters and of translating and printing where necessary.

(c) The official delegates should be housed in the same hotel. The A.I.A. could make reservations for the official group.

(d) The delegation should have a distinguished stationery for the display of notices and for correspondence.

(e) The official delegation might meet once a day to discuss programs and to better develop the themes.

These congresses are important and The A.I.A. should stress the opportunities for international good will and the intelligent showing of American life and ideals.

Garden Week in the Old Dominion

FOR THE DATE of its second post-war Garden Week in the Old Dominion, the Garden Club of Virginia has selected April 26-May 1. Then the highways are made beautiful with the fragrance of honeysuckle, while snowy dogwood sprinkles the woods, and the ancient romantic gardens are at their most gracious best.

The objective this year is the

restoration of historic Virginia gardens, naming no specific one, as was the case last Spring when that of Gunston Hall was the beneficiary. Only three times has a particular garden been named in advance, yet the Club has restored eleven places since Garden Week was initiated in 1929.

At least 150 gardens, homes, Colonial churches and other pub-

lic buildings will be listed among those to be open. Although housing space continues none too plentiful, there will be room for the comfortable entertainment of visitors who make reservations in advance. From city hotels guests may take all-day drives to various places in each general vicinity, and information bureaus, well manned, will be opened to all to give advice and instructions as to roads.

There are many charming hostels and tourists' homes in the towns and villages, as well as on the outskirts of the larger cities, where excellent accommodations may be had by writing ahead. Whether you wish to sleep in a city hotel or at a rural inn, the Virginia State Chamber of Commerce, Richmond, will give information, road maps and other literature.

The State has been divided into districts to facilitate travel, and detailed information can be had from headquarters of the Garden Club of Virginia at the Jefferson Hotel, Richmond, where the places to be open and the admission fees are registered. Fees will range from 50c to \$1, tax included.

Divisions include Alexandria, Fredericksburg, Northern Tidewater, Richmond, Gloucester, Norfolk and Princess Anne, Lynchburg, Orange, Staunton, Charlottesville, Piedmont districts, Fairfax County, near Washington; Upper James River (above Richmond — both sides); James River Plantations (below Richmond — both sides); Williamsburg, Jamestown, Yorktown, on Hampton Roads, Southside Virginia and Eastern Shore.

Honors

To ALFRED E. REINSTEIN, of New York, a scroll from the New York Society of Engineers, "for his successful coordination of the engineering activities of the Department of Housing and Buildings as the first commissioner of the department under the 1938 charter," and for his independence

of action and devotion to the public service.

HARRIE T. LINDBERG and JAMES KELLUM SMITH, F.A.I.A., both of New York, are among the eleven new members elected to the National Institute of Arts and Letters.

Urban Planning Personnel

THE CHICAGO PLAN COMMISSION announces the resignation of H. Evert Kincaid as Executive Director. Mr. Kincaid will engage in private practice as a city planning consultant in Chicago. Carl L. Gardner, who has been director of the planning division, is appointed Executive Director. Mr. Gardner's long record of public service includes work with the City Engineer's Office in Seattle, the Development Division of the

National Park Service, the Town Planning Unit of the Resettlement Administration, and F. H. A.



BALTIMORE is seeking a director for its Department of Planning. Inquiries and applications may be addressed: Department of Planning, Room 400, Municipal Building, Baltimore 2, Md.—Attention of Lucius R. White, Jr., Chairman of Personnel Committee.

News of the Educational Field

The John Stewardson Memorial Scholarship

CITIZENS OF THE U. S. A. who shall have studied or practised architecture in Pennsylvania for at least one year immediately preceding the award, are eligible to compete for the John Stewardson Memorial Scholarship in Architecture. Candidates must be not less than 22 nor over 32 years of age on February 28, 1948. Other requirements will be found in a circular of information to be had from Henry D. Mirick, Room 809, 12 S. 12th Street, Philadelphia 7, Pa. The winner receives \$1,000 and will study in this or

foreign countries as determined by the Managing Committee.

The George G. Booth Traveling Fellowship

THE COLLEGE OF ARCHITECTURE AND DESIGN, University of Michigan, announces that the George G. Booth Traveling Fellowship in Architecture will be offered again this year, and the competition in design will be conducted during the two weeks beginning April 3, 1948. This competition is open to all graduates of the school who have not reached their thirtieth birthday on that date. Prospective candidates should

write to the office of the College of Architecture and Design, University of Michigan, at once.

PRINCETON UNIVERSITY'S Bureau of Urban Research announces a series of five public lectures under the general title, "Cities in Transition." The first of the lectures, on March 2 at 7:45 P.M., is by Philip M. Hauser, Assistant Director of the Bureau of the Census and Professor of Sociology at the University of Chicago. His subject: "The Changing Population Pattern of the Modern City." The other lectures are:

"Time, Space and the City's Physical Readjustment," by Henry S. Churchill, architect and city planner; Mar. 4, 4 P.M.

"The Economic Theory of Urban Expansion," by Homer Hoyt, economist; Mar. 8, 4 P.M.

"Governmental Problems of Urban Decentralization," by Joseph D. McGoldrick, former comptroller of New York City; Mar. 10, 7:45 P.M.

"The Defense of Cities in Aerial Warfare," by Ansley J. Coale, Assistant Professor of Economics, Princeton; Mar. 11, 7:45 P.M.

The lectures are to be held in the auditorium, Frick Chemical Laboratory, Washington Road and William Street, Princeton.

WESTERN RESERVE UNIVERSITY announces the appointment of Hermann H. Field, whose article on Poland appeared in the January JOURNAL, as Director of Building Plans for Cleveland College. In this capacity Mr. Field, formerly with Antonin Raymond & L. L. Rado, New York architects, will develop the requirements and overall plan for a new down-town college center in Cleveland. It is intended that this study will also have a wider application in setting new standards in the field of urban university planning. He will also participate in the work of the architectural faculty of Western Reserve School of Architecture.



"A conference is a group of men who individually can do nothing, but as a group can meet and decide that nothing can be done."—Pittsburgh's *Charette*.



The South Portico of the White House

PRESIDENT TRUMAN is said to want a balcony or porch conveniently reached from his bedroom and study on the second floor of the White House. Inspired by his experience with the typical balconies of Charleston and other southern cities, he purposes adapting the South Portico to this desire.

The Commission of Fine Arts, when consulted, advised against the proposed alteration. In a memorandum for the press the Commission said:

"In response to inquiries as to any action taken by the Commission of Fine Arts with reference to the construction of a porch at the second-floor level in the South Portico of the White House, the Chairman stated that the proposal was given careful consideration at two meetings of the Commission. They recommended against the addition of a porch because, in their opinion, the addition of such a feature would permanently change the appearance of the south facade of the White House. The Commission are opposed to any change in the design of the central element of a building of such historic significance.

"As regards the White House, the Commission act only in an advisory capacity when their advice is requested by the President.

"When the President decided to go ahead with the proposed addition to the South Portico, the Commission were gratified to learn that the work would be carried through under the direction of such a distinguished architect as Mr. William A. Delano."



FROM WILLIAM ADAMS DELANO, F.A.I.A., New York:

"In April, 1947, the President asked the Commission of Fine Arts for approval of a second-story balcony on the South Portico of the White House. There was no intentional secrecy. The Commission advised against it, stating, however, that it had no veto power but expressing the hope that if the President were determined to proceed he ask some architect of reputation to advise him, and named me. Gilmore Clarke, Chairman of the Commission of Fine Arts, urged me to act, so when the President followed the advice of the Commission about appointing an architect, he wrote me asking that I undertake

the design of the now much-discussed balcony. I said I would.

"This is not the first time that changes have been made in the White House, to make it more convenient for the President then in residence. Under Theodore Roosevelt, Mr. McKim made many major changes—interior and exterior—and I myself, in 1927, in Mr. Coolidge's administration, put a new and higher roof on the main building to gain needed bedrooms."



Text of the resolution adopted by the Executive Committee of the Washington - Metropolitan Chapter, A.I.A., follows:

"The Executive Committee of the Washington-Metropolitan Chapter of The American Institute of Architects, appreciating the contributions made by the National Commission of Fine Arts toward development of the City of Washington, disapproves as a matter of principle any action by the President or any Government agency tending to ignore recommendations of the Commission in all cases where the Commission has authority to pass on the design of public buildings."



From HORACE W. PEASLEE, F.A.I.A., member of the A.I.A. Committee on the National Capital (a letter written to and pub-

lished in the *Washington Star*, January 12):

"May I be permitted the use of your columns to relate the White House balcony controversy to the general question of the part played by the National Commission of Fine Arts in the building of the National Capital?"

"The commission had its beginnings in an Executive order by President Theodore Roosevelt issued in 1909, an order revoked by his successor, President Taft, who felt that such an undertaking should have its foundations in legislative authority. This authority was established by Act of Congress approved May 17, 1910. It was broadened by successive Executive orders and directives issued by Presidents Taft, Wilson and Harding and by supplementary legislation, the Shipstead Act, extending the jurisdiction of the commission to private holdings fronting various public buildings and parks. Its duties were summarized by the late Charles Moore, chairman-militant of the commission, as advising upon 'all questions involving matters of art with which the Federal Government is concerned' in the District of Columbia . . . from medals, insignia, and coins, statues, fountains and monuments; to public buildings and public grounds under Executive administration; and finally to related private undertakings.

"The recommendations of the Commission of Fine Arts are not

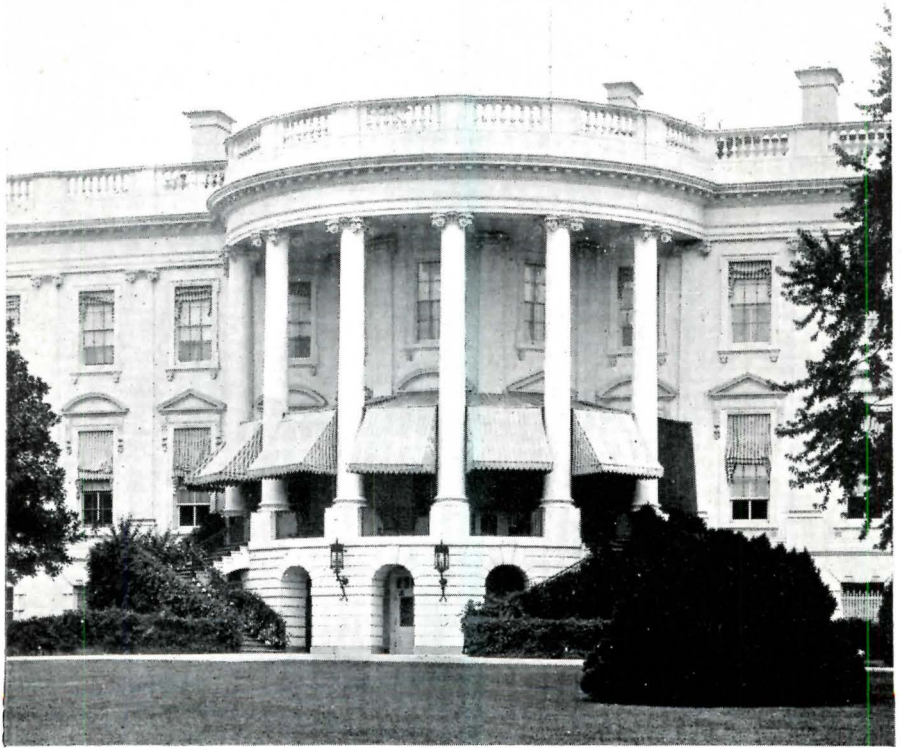
mandatory, but they carry a great weight of qualified opinion in the field of the arts. Service on the commission carries no remuneration other than the great honor and distinction of being selected to serve as a guardian of the public interest in the development of the Federal City. The great architects, sculptors and painters of the past four decades have been glad to give their services to the cause. This service has not been in the form of arbitrary approvals or disapprovals, but constructive and helpful criticisms and suggestions to make the most of each opportunity. There have been controversies and disagreements, it is true; but one cannot overlook such major achievements as getting the railroads out of the heart of the city, redeeming the Mall, saving the foreground of Arlington from the scheduled Pentagon development and establishing high standards in every field of the arts. Nor can one overlook the vision and wisdom of those Executives who have shown their appreciation of the commission's service by broadening its scope and establishing a tradition of conformance with its recommendations.

"With this background, one may consider the question of the balcony. It may be granted that the distinguished architect who was called in for consultation after the project was under way has never done anything in his life which was not good architecture; it may be

acknowledged that the present awnings of the portico are inexcusably ugly; it may well be that a balcony is a pleasant place on which to sit; there may be ample precedent for such a treatment in the buildings of Charlottesville or Charleston; the whole thing may be much ado about nothing.

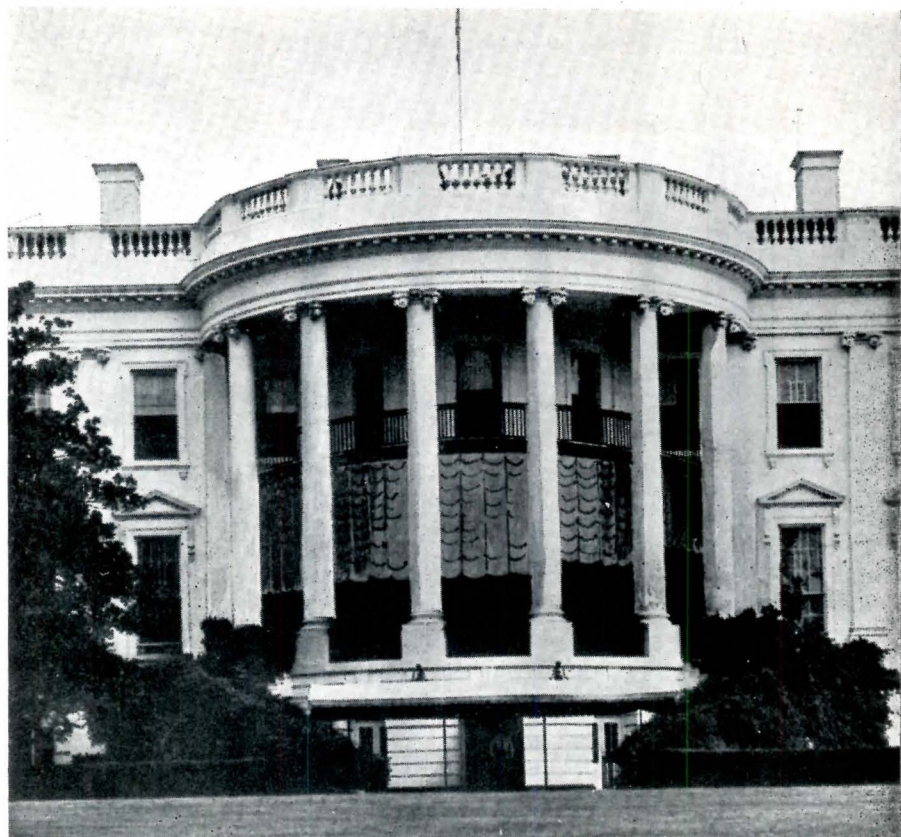
"On the other hand, we must take cognizance of the fact that the outstanding representatives of the allied arts, who have been picked to advise us in such matters, are unanimous in their disapproval; that the obnoxious existing awnings can be redesigned at a fraction of the balcony cost; that the precedent for this historic structure is nearer Dublin than Charleston; that the White House is a much sought-after place as it stands, even lacking a balcony; that the affair is of great consequence because a matter of principle is at stake—the propriety of an executive agency proceeding with such a project, particularly a nonsensical project involving one of our most highly regarded historic monuments, and the current Chief Executive, in complete disregard for the unanimous adverse opinion of the agency established by preceding Executives to protect such monuments, regardless of pro forma compliance with the letter of the law regarding 'submission' of plans.

"It may be said that this is something for the Executive to decide, that it is not the business of private individuals or associations. That



SOUTH PORTICO OF THE WHITE HOUSE
(See next page for proposed addition)

Photograph Copyright by Harris & Ewing



SOUTH PORTICO OF THE WHITE HOUSE

The photograph has been retouched to show the effect of the balcony
and the new type of awnings which drop from a pocket
in the balcony soffit

WILLIAM ADAMS DELANO, ARCHITECT

theory has been thoroughly tested in the past and found wanting. It was not until the turn of the last century that an aroused public opinion checked mediocrity in Capital building and saved the White House from threatened defacement. Once before, in the present administration, it has had to do the same job over again. It is unusual, to say the least, to start such needless controversies in election years. The professions have a right to raise voices of protest by virtue of the service they have given in the past and the need of obtaining recognition for the recommendations of their Supreme Court if that body is to have future value to the Nation."

From TURPIN C. BANNISTER,
Chairman of the A.I.A. Committee
on the Preservation of Historic
Buildings:

"Our committee strongly opposes addition of balcony to South Portico of White House. Balcony would mar portico's fine scale, destroy view of wall and create ugly heavy shadows."



From ERIC GUGLER, F.A.I.A.,
New York:

"If I had it in my power as I leave office, I would like to leave as a legacy to . . . the American

Institute of Architects the duty of preserving a perpetual "eye of guardianship" over the White House to see that it is kept unchanged and unmarred from this time on.'—Theodore Roosevelt, December 12, 1908.

"It seems to me that to avoid recurrent embarrassments which spring from this honored obligation, the building at some time in the near future should come under a protection that it would get by being declared a National Monument.

"This designation of National Monument should provide for the exception of part of the upper floors, and it is to be hoped that such a step would be instituted with the help and suggestion of the then President. The idea would be that the upper floors would be freely used and rooms changed at will by each incumbent. These rooms would be returned to their original state upon the retirement of each President, funds being provided to pay for this restoration.

"The President's living quarters should be of the best. There are many ways in which generous conveniences could be achieved—for instance, a commodious roof garden arrangement which would not be seen excepting from the sky and would not in any sense hurt those elements of the building which are cherished by all Americans.

"The White House should eventually be restored to the state in which it was when Theodore

Roosevelt left it 'in his will' to The A.I.A. to cherish.

"The State, War and Navy Building should be used from here on out as the Executive Offices for the President, with the convenience of a connecting tunnel."



From ALBERT SIMONS, F.A.I.A., of Charleston, S. C., member of The Institute's Committee on the Preservation of Historic Buildings:

"Believe that opinion handed down by National Fine Arts Commission should be sustained and no balcony added to White House. Since the rise and fall of Mussolini, balconies have not acquired a felicitous association with official residences."



From THOMAS HARLAN ELLETT, F.A.I.A., New York:

"While visiting Washington I have become much concerned over the proposed construction of a so-called balcony under the South Portico of the White House and have been walking around the south front and studying it with care.

"In the noontime sun I was first struck by the play of light and shade on the central feature—the sheer beauty of the thing; the shadows of the handsome columns

on the curved bay of the Blue Room, the bay itself with its fine fenestration, trim and sparkling consoles; the reflected light in the upper part of the portico. All this would be lost in the cavernous shadows of a platform at the second-floor level.

"The Commission of Fine Arts has called the proposed balcony a 'porch,' and rightly so. We are informed that it will be ten feet wide, not the light and airy thing generally associated with a balcony, but an affair of steel and concrete extending from wall to columns.

"Such a construction, on an existing building, would necessarily be attached to the columns and be supported on its outside perimeter by them—a practice that architects try to avoid. On the wall side the attachment of the platform would require the destruction of *five fine pediments* over the lower windows! *

"As for doing away with the ugly summer awnings they in all probability would still be required—not only on the first floor but on the second as well, thereby doubling the objection to the porch on that score.

"Finally, we would then have two low and stuffy porches instead of one fine one.

"The 'majestic portico' would be no more."

* Further inquiry reveals that these pediments are not to be cut; the soffit of the balcony clears them by 8".—Editor

From C. C. ZANTZINGER,
F.A.I.A., Philadelphia:

"The only information I have concerning the second-story porch for the White House is that which has become available to me through the public press. My information, therefore, is probably incomplete. This does not, however, change the fundamental facts affecting the White House, which are:

"1. That the White House, as it has come to us, is probably as fine a building and as representative in its design of American taste and tradition as any existing building.

"2. Additions and changes therein, that may be proposed by whomsoever, must be presented to the Commission of Fine Arts, in whom is vested, in the public interest, all authority for control and decision



A cartoon by JIM BERRYMAN in the *Washington Evening Star*, January 12, 1948

in all matters of possible changes within or without the White House as to its design, its furnishings, its equipment, or whatever.

"3. It is, therefore, not within the power of any citizen, whatever be his position in the government or in private life, to undertake alterations of any kind to the White House, in whole or in part, without the approval of the Fine Arts Commission.

"My answer, then, to your telegram is that I endorse the ruling of the Fine Arts Commission in the matter of the second-story porch.

"Permit me to conclude by saying that manifestly there can be

no other way to deal with government property than that which is rehearsed above. People of influence, in private life or elsewhere, either due to their donations or for whatever reason, have been listened to by the authorities of institutions or whatever, in matters of building design or location, to the great detriment of the general character, etc. of individual buildings or groups of buildings.

"It is my conviction that there can be no two ways to look at this present undertaking. It is the Commission of Fine Arts who should rule finally in this matter."

We Can Cut Building Costs

By R. D. Sannitt

NEITHER our architecture nor our building is in a healthy state." So Mr. James R. Edmunds, Jr., (past President of The A.I.A.) begins his excellent article in the July, 1947, issue of the *Constructor*.

Mr. Edmunds continues: "True, we are swamped with work, but how much of all this is under construction or even likely to be in the near future?" He then says: "This condition of affairs cannot go on indefinitely."

We know the sickness is high costs. To effect a cure, we must

go deeper into the causes. By doing so, we find these basic truths:

1. That no *one* group or trade within the industry causes the high costs. An increase in one trade, in itself, is almost negligible. But, when we add them all together, the inflationary costs appear.
2. The estimating methods we now use to prepare our quantity surveys are both inefficient and inaccurate. By being inefficient, they cost us entirely too much. They are a contributing factor in the

high cost of construction. And, because of their inaccuracy, they often contribute more than their share.

3. We cannot hope to reduce costs by cutting wages. If we are to achieve any reduction at all, it will have to be through greater efficiency. *Estimating* can stand a lot of that.

Here is a plan to reduce estimating expenses to a mere fraction of their present amount, and to produce much more accurate quantity surveys at the same time.

Let the architect supervise the quantity survey work on all projects he issues for bids. The survey would be a complete summary of materials required in the building. It would be given to the general contractors along with the drawings and specifications.

The materials for each trade will be listed for direct pricing—each in the precise manner required by that trade. This will include all subcontract items such as glass, painting, roofing, etc. (Excavation, however, will be omitted.) The general contractor will bid the job in a lump sum as he now does. His bid, however, will be based on the plans, the specifications, and the architect's quantity survey. In

short, the quantity survey will be guaranteed for the trades it covers.

The plan is to have specially trained men prepare the quantity survey, and assist the architect in writing the specifications. We know, of course, that most of the architectural offices are not large enough to maintain a staff of quantity surveyors. Such offices would use a registered consultant service, made up of thoroughly trained and licensed men. The consultant quantity survey offices would serve the architects in much the same way that registered consultant engineering firms do. The architect would issue these quantity surveys under his own name.

The architectural firms that handle a large, continuous volume of work could maintain, economically, their own quantity survey and specification writing staff. The men would come from the same source. They would be college trained, and would have completed supervised apprenticeships with architects, and with general contractors and subcontractors—both in their offices and in the field.

This plan is practical. And it is not so revolutionary when examined in the light of present conditions.

The architect designs a build-

ing for his client. By drawings and specifications, he tells how it is to be built—of what materials, and with what workmanship. He should, therefore, know best how much materials of each type will be incorporated in the finished structure.



Of this we are sure: there can be nothing indefinite about the quantity of materials needed, in place, in any proposed building.

Yet, when the architect now completes his drawings and specifications, he immediately turns them over to the contractors. Each contractor in turn figures out for himself what the architect intended for his building. That is, what materials and how much of them will be needed to produce the structure he designed.

The result is inefficient and faulty quantity surveys. The architect might think he is getting an economical bid because it happens to be the lowest of those submitted. But the vagaries of our present-day hit-or-miss estimating methods too often result in the owner's paying for a lot more than he gets.

We can be sure that any plan whereby the architect issues guar-

anteed material lists cannot be put into full practice overnight. Quantity surveyors must be trained in new methods. Adequate consultant offices must be planned and established.

How all this can be done, gradually, without disrupting the flow of construction will be the subject of a later article. It is best to concentrate here on the benefits of the change.

Here are a few of the tangible savings that an owner will make if his architect issues a guaranteed quantity survey when asking for bids on his project.

a) The estimating cost will be considerably less, and for a more accurate job. Contractors' bids will reflect the savings.

b) Time is "of the essence" on most construction contracts. At present, architects must allow the contractors two to six weeks to prepare their bids. Most of it is consumed in quantity survey work by the general and subcontractors.

We could cut this time considerably by preparing the quantity survey concurrently with the plans and specifications.

We have all watched quantity survey work float around in a sea of uncertainty for years.

By finally taking it under his

wing, the architect would benefit in many ways. First and foremost, he would be able to turn out more workable drawings and specifications. Since the quantity surveyor makes the first practical check of the drawings, most of the "bugs" could be straightened out before anything is issued.

This would help to reverse the trend (becoming more and more prevalent among owners and builders) to bypass the services of the architect.

These things are costly to an architect: 1) to have to issue addendum after addendum as the contractors' staffs find the inevitable discrepancies in the drawings and specifications—and to postpone the due date for bids while the changes are made; 2) to issue a preliminary set of drawings for a quantity survey and budget estimate; 3) to call for bids on a project and find that the lowest bid received is far above the total money available—then to redesign the job for a lower cost.

These three plagues are continually with the architect. They would be eliminated once and for all if he relied on experts to make the guaranteed quantity survey as the plans are being prepared, and before they are issued.

Once the architect has had the quantity survey prepared, he could ask a contractor for a budget estimate on it to ascertain its approximate cost. This is quite different from giving a busy contractor a set of preliminary plans on a job he may eventually bid on competitively. The contractor has neither the time nor the inclination to give such work the thorough study required to produce a reasonable estimate. If you give him a quantity survey that is ready for pricing, he can do the job quickly, and come up with a more realistic preliminary figure.

Specifications have become little more than re-servings of legal hash. Their reform and clarification is becoming a must in the industry. Under this plan, the architect would tell the quantity survey department what he requires in the way of materials and workmanship. They would then formulate the specifications. In this way, the architect would assure himself of turning out a readable, up-to-the-minute book—written expressly for the project on the boards.

On a large building, no architect can put out a set of plans entirely without discrepancies. Nor can he anticipate all the details re-

quired. Such a feat is not humanly possible by the architect alone. But it can be accomplished once the men who make the quantity survey give the plans a thorough study from their own perspective. If this is done under the architect's supervision (before the drawings leave his office), the corrections and clarifications should entail only the slightest cost.

The benefits that guaranteed quantity surveys will give the general contractor are vast. We might touch upon a few here.

He would be relieved of the most burdensome part of preparing an estimate. He would not have to keep a staff of quantity surveyors on the payroll even when he is not figuring work.

He could bid as much work as his bonding capacity allows rather than as much as his overworked quantity surveyors can turn out.

He would not be at the mercy of inexperienced or negligent men. Today, the demand for quantity surveyors is so great that they can get themselves hired if only their talk is along familiar construction lines. But their shortcomings are seldom found out without considerable loss to the contractor.

All these benefits would apply as well to subcontractors. They

would get the guaranteed quantity surveys for their own work through the general contractor—just as they get drawings from them at present.

The subcontractors, whose estimators rarely are well trained, would assume less of a risk. They would be less likely to renege on a contract. That situation usually costs the general contractor a lot in money, and the owner a lot in quality of work.

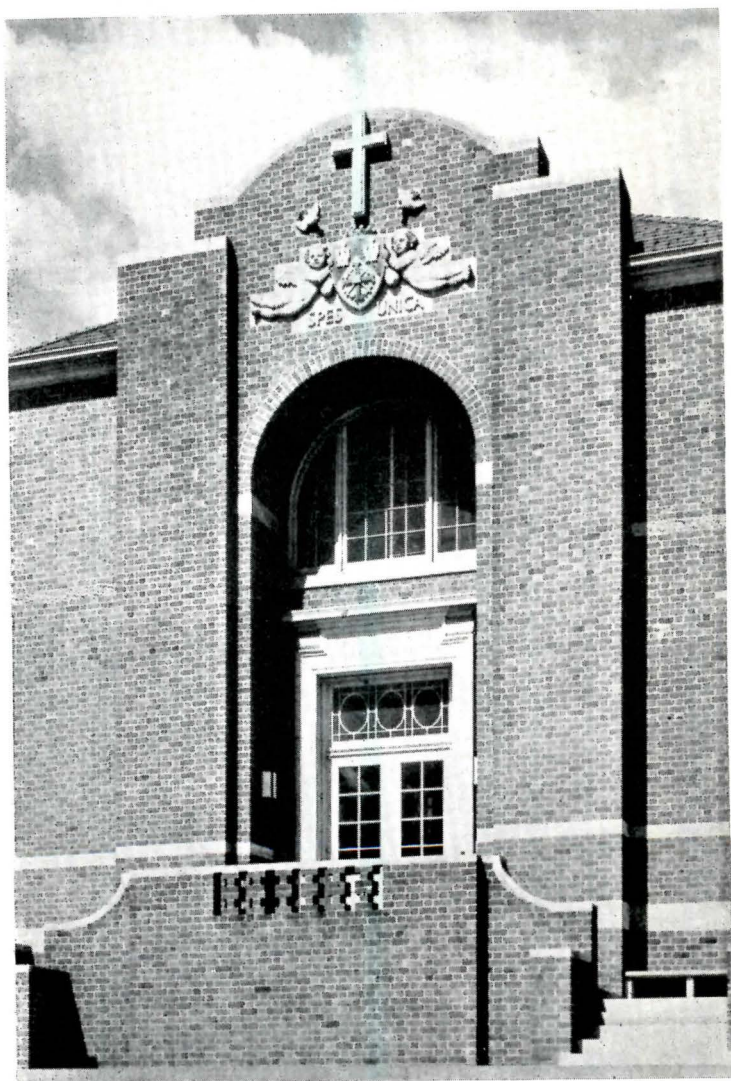
The contractor would not be burdened with the expense of figuring projects that are destined to run over the appropriation—only to be revised and refigured, or cancelled entirely.

The contractor would get specifications that anyone can read and understand. He would not be bombarded with addendum after addendum that change the drawings, the specifications, and even previous addenda, until it is a project in itself to keep them all straight.



The owner will certainly have little objection to getting a better building in less time and at a lower cost.

Some architects, however, may possibly consider the plan as an ex-



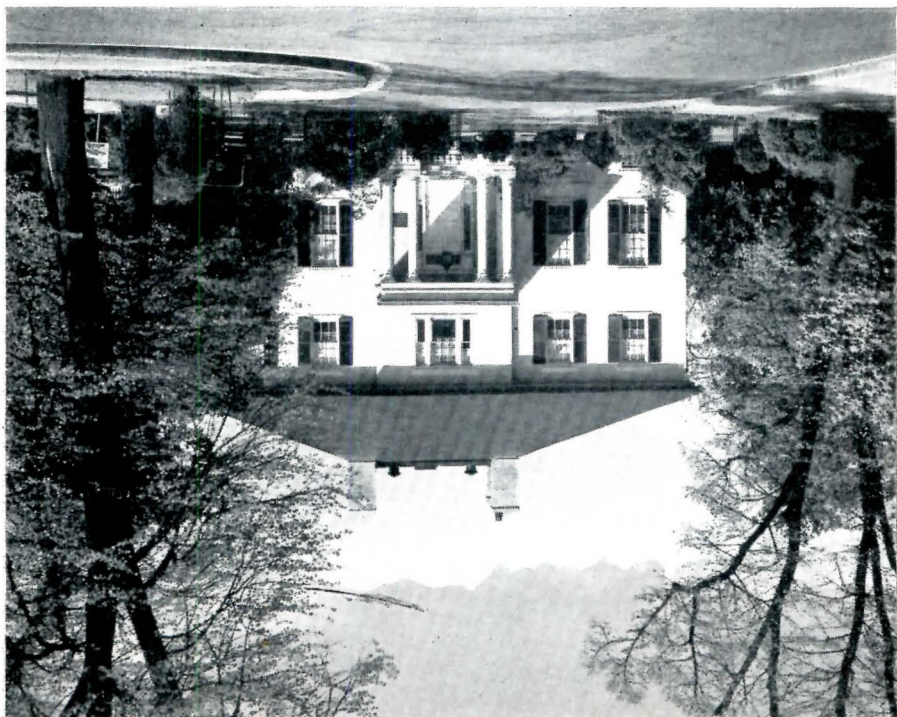
ENTRANCE, ST. MARY'S ACADEMY
ALEXANDRIA, VA.

BUCKLER, FENHAGEN, MEYER & AYERS, ARCHITECTS

THE OFFICIAL RESIDENCE (1811) OF
VIRGINIA'S GOVERNORS, RICHMOND, VA.

To be opened for Garden Week, April 26-May 1, 1948

Do you know this building?



cursion into the realm of the tradesman—a corruption of his art, and a lowering of his professional standards. But the architect does not achieve art in his profession from beauty of the drawings he turns out. It is the completed structures that bear witness to his talents. The plan is designed to facilitate the construction of the architect's project at a more reasonable and just cost.

Some architects may have qualms about guaranteeing the quantity survey as the basis for bidding. However, by making such a guarantee, the architect merely assumes a responsibility that is rightfully his. He designs the building, and writes the specifications. Therefore, he best can tell what materials—how many yards of concrete, how many brick, how much steel, etc.—will be incorporated in the building.

When the exact quantity of material needed in a proposed structure is open to question on a set of drawings, the drawings are faulty. If they were clear, there would be no question. Quantity surveying can be the most exact science in all of the construction processes.

But, until now it has always bordered on guessing.

The guarantee of the quantity

survey is the most vital feature of the plan. Without such a guarantee, the idea would merely add to the cost of estimating. The general contractors and all the subcontractors would still have to make quantity surveys to verify just how much they must actually furnish.

Some subcontractors may say that the issuing of guaranteed quantities by the architect will enable *anyone* to figure the job, thus putting them up against unfair competition. Such reasoning, however, assumes that all you need to be a success in the construction business is a good quantity surveyor. A few more prerequisites are involved. That, we all know.

As for the competition angle, the architect will still have the same power of selection over general contractors. On public work, there are statements of prequalification—listing assets, experience, personnel, and equipment. On private work, there is the invitation to bid.

The cost of the guaranteed quantity survey will be borne by the owner—just as he pays for every service, whether through a direct charge or as part of the contract price of the building. He would be assured that he is not paying

From the Civic Services Committee of the Carolina Art Association came the architectural inventory that I mentioned earlier. With funds provided by the Carnegie Corporation, that inventory found that Charleston possessed 26 buildings important to the nation, 113 listed as valuable to the city, 169 valuable structures, 317 as notable and 543 worthy of mention. This survey, illustrated with photographs of each building, was published by the Carolina Art Association, with the help of 200 local business men who paid the costs of publication, as a book entitled "This Is Charleston."

The 7500 copies of "This Is Charleston" that were distributed both locally and throughout the country performed a valuable educational service, saying, "Look, this is the architectural heritage that must be preserved." But there is still the job of preservation to do, the day-to-day battle of persuasion and demonstration that good architecture is an economic asset.

It is a job calling for concentration, diplomatic skill and cooperation. When Kenneth Chorley, of Colonial Williamsburg, Inc., visited Charleston several years ago, he urged that a separate organiza-

tion be created to preserve and properly use the important architecture of this community. He said:

"You who live in Charleston have an obligation to encourage present-day Americans to visit your city. The history of our country is *their* legacy, also. You who have the good fortune to make your home here are in a very real sense custodians of important national treasures, and it becomes your duty to share them with other Americans who may know little or nothing about them. Here is a city which is unlike any other city in our nation—with a charm and a character that is unique. And here are priceless, irreplaceable national treasures."

Following Mr. Chorley's suggestion, and feeling that in this way the best interests of Charleston architecture would be served, the Carolina Art Association asked twelve individuals who had been leaders in this cause to incorporate the Historic Charleston Foundation.

This incorporation was completed in the spring of this year. The Historic Charleston Foundation is now chartered by the State of South Carolina as a non-profit,

educational institution. Its object is to preserve and use the architectural and historic treasures of the Charleston area. It will not maintain buildings as museums save in exceptional cases, trying instead to utilize them as living units of the community.

With broad powers to handle both funds and real property, the Foundation can buy, sell or rent, borrow, make loans or hold mortgages on property which it purchases or may have bequeathed to it. To fully realize these aims, the Foundation must have capital.

Seeking to find a source of revenue, the Foundation believes that preservation can pay for more preservation. Already many people come to Charleston, attracted by the unique architectural flavor of the city as well as by its gardens. So far there have been no tours of houses for the aid of the houses themselves.

This spring, from March 15 through April 16, Historic Charleston Foundation will conduct a series of tours of historic houses with eight tours planned to include twenty-four of the most important homes of the city. Profits from the tours will be shared by the home owners, the Foundation thus giving the home owners funds

to help keep their property in repair and providing the money which the Foundation must have in order to carry on its preservation work.

Frankly, the Foundation is primarily interested in securing money for its program. But there is a secondary and equally important task that these tours will perform: they will be visual demonstrations in American architecture and American history. Here the visitor will find Georgian, Baroque and Adam; Classic Colonial and Greek Revival, in combination with the two architectural innovations created in Charleston—the long piazza designed to meet the special needs of the climate, and the “single house,” gable end to the street and one room wide, also created out of climatic conditions.

The many architects of the past who worked here, some few of them men of true creative imagination but all of them craftsmen worthy of that name, were often derivative when it suited them to be so, but they also dared to be individualistic in planning for special needs. Here the visitor will also find that functionalism existed long before the day of Frank Lloyd Wright, for Robert Mills, architect, writing and working in

Charleston a hundred years ago, said:

"Utility and economy will be found to have entered into most of the studies of the author, and little sacrifice to display; at the same time his endeavors were to produce as much harmony and beauty of arrangement as practicable. The principle assumed and acted upon

was that beauty is founded upon order and that convenience and utility were constituent parts . . . His considerations were—first, the object of the building; second, the means appropriated for its construction; third, the situation it was to occupy. These served as guides in forming the outline of his plan."

Books & Bulletins

HEAT PUMPS. By Philip Sporn, E. R. Ambrose, Theodore Baummeister. 196 pp. 5½" x 8½". New York: 1947: John Wiley & Sons, Inc. \$3.75.

Thermodynamic principles, equipment design, installation and maintenance of year-round air-conditioning with the heat pump, and industrial applications.

THE DISINFECTION OF AIR. Official Bulletin No. 229 of The American Hospital Association. 24 pp. 5½" x 8½". Chicago: 1947: American Hospital Association. 25c.

COMMUNITAS. By Percival and Paul Goodman. 142 pp. 11" x 8½". Chicago: 1947: University of Chicago Press. \$6.

An effort to raise the level of thinking about physical planning, to see more clearly why it is that with an immense surplus productivity we have not been able to achieve equable distribution.

HOMESEEKERS' HANDBOOK. By Gerald L. Kaufman. 160 pp. 6" x 8". New York: 1947: George W. Stewart, Publisher, Inc. \$2.50.

A New York architect helps steer the layman through the maze of acquiring a house, whether he buys, builds or remodels.

AN INTRODUCTION TO MODERN ARCHITECTURE. By Elizabeth Mock and J. M. Richards. 138 pp. text and 32 pp. illustrations. 4¼" x 7". New York: 1947: Penguin Books, Inc. 35c.

Mrs. Mock has revised, edited and added new material to a book originally published in London, 1940, and written by an editor of *The Architectural Review*. Here is an admirable interpretation and historical record of the architecture that is evolving pretty much all over the world. The authors develop their theme logically and convincingly in a book from which

architect and layman can profit. It is only in the final chapter of comment on individual buildings that one senses an over-enthusiastic ac-

ceptance of some forms that can hardly be reconciled with the fundamental principles the authors had so clearly set forth.



Architects Read and Write

Letters from readers—discussion, argumentative, corrective, even vituperative.



A LETTER FROM SIR IAN MACALISTER

THE following letter expresses, with his peculiar graciousness, Sir Ian MacAlister's understanding of our country and its writers, our architects, their work and their personalities.

It remains for us to recall his long years of distinguished service as Secretary during which all architectural groups were gathered into the Royal Institute of British Architects, also his endless helpfulness to visiting architects and students. Few of us knew of his retirement during the last war, nor of the loss of two of his sons and the serious injury to a third.

The all but fatal accident toward the end of the war, from which he himself suffered, prompted the expression of sympathy and friendship from this side to which his letter refers.

Our hearts are the warmer, our lives the richer for such an example of service and sacrifice from so modest and gallant a friend.

I still do not know what to say but I must try to say it. I am

still quite overwhelmed by this extraordinary and quite unexpected manifestation of kindness and generosity. And it is the *kindness* above all that makes me feel very humble and incompletely deserving.

I can only wonder how it came about that such an idea came to grow in the minds of my friends in the United States and of so many others whom I like to think of as friends though I have not the privilege of knowing them personally.

I can only tell myself that in some mysterious way many realized the fact that to me—all my life—the United States has been my second country. It began a very long time ago when I was a child. Brought up with a worship of "Tom Sawyer," "Huckleberry Finn," and the "Life on the Mississippi," "Uncle Remus," "Helen's Babies," Washington Irving, Fenimore Cooper, Francis Parkman, Emerson, Lowell, John Hay, Prescott and Motley; in fact there is no end to the catalogue of figures,

great and small, that formed the background of my thoughts all through the time of growing to manhood. Then came—and it has lasted till today—a continuous serious study of American literature and, above all, American history. I sometimes tell myself in strict privacy that I know more about American history and the United States than anyone in this country, and certainly more than most Americans.

In the company of my little band of special heroes there are certain Americans. So it came about that when—more than forty years ago—I became Secretary of the R.I.B.A., I found myself suddenly with the opportunity of special contact with some of the finest and most interesting figures in the world of American architecture, and my personal memories of them are among the brightest in that very mixed storehouse. The majestic Dan Burnham, the courtly Cass Gilbert, the kindly Dan Waid, the leonine Donn Barber, the shy genius of Bertram Goodhue, the stern principles of Ralph Adams Cram, the fascination of William A. Delano; in fact the

list is so long that my supply of adjectives would fail before I came to the end of it. And of the many whom I did not know personally I knew a good deal of the professional achievements, and I could almost pass an examination in the subject of American architecture in the last fifty years.

In the cases in which I had the pleasure of personal contact it was I who was the privileged person and the little that I was able to do in the way of friendship and hospitality was repaid many fold in the pleasure that I received. So with all that in the past, you can, I think, realize what it meant to me when I read your letter. I just don't know how to begin to thank you personally and all these kind men who have done me so much honour and contributed so generously to the material side of a pensioned official.

I could go on for a long time, but I must not weary you. This letter is just another attempt to say "Thank you" with all my heart.

Believe me

Yours very sincerely,

IAN MACALISTER

CALL FOR A PLASTIC DRAWING SURFACE

BY ROBERT E. LEDERER, Chicago

IT CAN BE STATED, with malice towards none, that we architects are in the business of manufacturing architectural drawings.

Depending on the size of the office, we are either investing considerable time or considerable money into the very process of drafting.

FEBRUARY, 1948

It seems surprising that for a very long time no drastic progress has been made in the process of drafting. I, for one do not remember reading in any of the professional magazines about any effort to improve it.

The main shortcomings of our drafting process are: the pencil point is constantly changing, getting blunter and blunter and requiring continuous re-pointing; pointing the pencil inevitably gets some graphite on the draftsman's fingers, which makes it doubly hard to keep the drawing clean; the average draftsman spends considerable more time sharpening his pencil than he spends drafting. Another shortcoming is the smudging of pencil lines. It requires strategy to keep a drawing in fair condition from beginning to end.

I propose that the JOURNAL submit our drafting problem to the plastics industry with the recommendation to develop for the use as a drafting medium a coated, transparent sheet. The coating should be of such consistency and should have such properties that lines can be scratched into the coating with various scratch tools. The coating should be transparent but slightly colored, so that the scratched line should stand out clearly. The coating should be available in liquid form, which would make it easy to make corrections by re-applying the coating where it has been erroneously scratched. The coating should

protect the sheet where it has not been removed, and the sheet should have a surface to which ink could be applied with a brush where the coating has been removed by scratching.

The sheets themselves form no problem. Acetate sheets with one frosted side are available, which would lend themselves beautifully for the purpose. To find the right kind of coating is quite a problem. There are all kinds of liquid friskets on the market which come fairly close to being suitable. The difficulty is that most of them form a surface tension which makes it impossible to scratch lines freehand. They can be very nicely scratched as long as a straightedge or a French curve guides the scratch tool, but they cannot be scratched freehand for lettering or other purposes, because the coating will chip and peel—this as a consequence of the prevailing surface tension.

What we need is a coating of a consistency similar to the coating of Ross scratchboard, but transparent and available as a fast-drying liquid for corrections.

A similar coating is also used for silk-screening but this coating, as manufactured by the Nu-Film Products Co., has the same shortcoming as the friskets, it has to be scratched by a tool which is guided by a straightedge or by a French curve.

The available materials come close enough to the product which I have described to make my opti-

mism justifiable that such a drafting medium could be developed by the plastics industry if our needs were explained to them.

To finish the description of the drafting process, which I have in mind, the coating should be removed after the ink has been applied, either by peeling or by use of a solvent which does not affect the ink. If further changes have to be made after the coating has

been removed, an ink eraser would have to be used and re-inking could be applied with or without re-coating.

I think that you would be doing a service to the entire drafting profession, except those who prefer the use of a quill pen and a horse and buggy, by submitting my suggestion to such plastics manufacturers as Eastman Kodak, duPont, Dow, Haas & Roehm, etc.

IS IT ARCHITECTURE?

By VICTOR A. MATTESON, F.A.I.A., Chicago

MUCH of the so-called "functional" architecture is not architecture at all but simply construction engineering. While it is true, architecture should serve and reflect the purpose or function of a building, that should not be its sole aim. A structure cannot be considered as architectural if its design ignores principles contributing to beauty as expressed by pleasing proportions, mass, scale, line, modeling, decoration, color, etc. Harmony of its design with respect to its own or to neighboring structures, especially in regard to scale, cannot be successfully ignored if the result is to be pleasing to the eye.

There are innumerable glaringly ugly examples of such in recent structures, and perhaps among the worst examples are to be found in remodeled store fronts. One is led to suspect that the cause may possibly be found in an effort to

be different, for the sake of publicity either on the part of the architect, the client, or both — or could it be the effect of pure inability, laziness, or lack of skilled draftsmanship, or lack of good taste? It is evident that, in most cases, simple economy so far as building costs are concerned is not the sole motive. It is also evident that some of the functional designing costs the architect less in time and draftsmanship than more thoughtfully considered designing would do.

If architects continue to ignore those basic principles of design which in the past have been generally accepted as fundamental to the fine arts, they will ultimately force architecture to become one of the lost arts. Architects will then become merely utilitarian planners and constructionists — in other words, engineers. Engineering is a noble and necessary calling;

however, beauty is necessary to the joy of life and should not be ignored for the sake of the purely

utilitarian. Architects have a responsibility if architecture is to survive as a fine art.

SUNLIGHT AND THE PATIENT

BY E. W. DYKES, Canton, Ohio

HAVE JUST READ, in the December '47 JOURNAL, the conflicting articles on sunlight and the patient. Having no hospitals to design I am spared, for the present at least, the unhappy moments of indecision. Neither convinced me.

One conclusion that can be drawn is that each was biased by his training with respect to style, or lack of it. From this viewpoint Erikson could certainly be suspected of reaction while Cutler may be accused of going overboard for something relatively untested. It is my contention that the readers' present opinions will be exactly those that they held before

reading the two aforesaid articles.

This letter, therefore, is to suggest the possibility of a similar story based on fact, not opinion. Surely enough hospitals of the "new" type have been built to allow the gathering of data sufficient to indicate a definite leaning one way or another, if not definite conclusions. Again the bias of such a researcher will color the findings. Nevertheless, shouldn't an opinion based on fact be more conclusive than one based on training? Certainly, too, such data should be of infinite aid to those hospital designers who are willing to admit that improvements are possible.



Calendar

February 2-6: Eighth International Heating and Ventilating Exposition, Grand Central Palace, New York.

February 22-26: Annual Convention and Exposition of the National Association of Home Builders, Stevens and Congress Hotels, Chicago.

March 2-11: Lectures "Cities in Transition," Bureau of Urban Research, Princeton University, Princeton, N. J.

March 15-19: Sixteenth Annual Meeting and Sixth Annual Industrial Exposition of the American Society of Tool Engineers, Cleveland, Ohio.

JOURNAL OF THE A.I.A.

March 22-24: Chicago Technical Conference, sponsored by fifty-one societies affiliated with the Chicago Technical Societies Council, Stevens Hotel, Chicago.

March: Cold Cathode Fluorescent Lighting Exhibit postponed from October 1947, Hotel Commodore, New York City. Specific dates, early in March, to be announced later.

May 27-30: Annual Conference of the R.I.B.A., to which A.I.A. members expecting to be in Europe are invited, Liverpool.

June 22-25: Eightieth Conven-

tion of The American Institute of Architects, Salt Lake City, Utah.

June 26-July 1: Formal constitutive assembly and first Congress of the International Union of Architects, Lausanne, Switzerland.

September 20-24: Annual Technical Conference of the Illuminating Engineering Society, Hotel Statler, Boston.

September 20-24: Fiftieth Anniversary Convention, American Hospital Association, Atlantic City, N. J.

The Editor's Asides

TECHNICIANS of the Forest Products Laboratory and HHFA are convinced that, although the majority of our houses are built of wood, we do not know enough about nailing. So they've written a book—"Technique of House Nailing," mostly illustrations and captions. These show not only where to nail for best results, but also with what size nails. It's a good check for the specification writer. Costs 20c; Superintendent of Documents, U. S. Government Printing Office.

Now, if we only had the nails—



DEAN GILMORE C. CLARKE of Cornell's College of Architec-

ture tells of a grant of \$1,500 to provide a year's study in the College for "a worthy foreign student."* The grant is made from a fund established anonymously for the encouragement of study in the fine arts. Already enrolled are students from China, Colombia, India, Mexico, Norway, Panama, Peru and Turkey.



ELSEWHERE in this issue will be found mention of "An Introduction to Modern Architecture," by Elizabeth Mock and J. M. Richards. It is a book which should be required reading for the architectural student and the practitioner. Many will not agree with

all its conclusions, particularly the enthusiastic praise given individual buildings in the final chapter, "Some Modern Buildings". Nevertheless, the authors' presentation of the inception, essential aims and recent evolution of what is called "modern architecture," is clearly set forth, and with a restraint that is in welcome contrast to the over-zealous words of many protagonists.

One minor point in the authors' argument is open to question: "Unfortunately we cannot rely on our own good taste. The state of architecture and the design of nearly everything around us has sunk so low that we are no longer capable of judging what is good." Perhaps not, but what special insight or elevation above the norm is given the authors to judge the taste of a whole people—their own people in their own era? It is the fashion, at the moment, to despise the taste of the Victorian era. What those people admired in their day we do not admire. Therefore, we point to their bad taste and our own good taste. By what right? What would they say of our taste if they had lived after us rather than before us?

No, the taste of a people is something that I would not care

to label good or bad. When I was a callow youth I thought the Baroque was a decadent art, hardly discussed in polite society. Today I blush at the remembrance of that immature judgement.

Taste is the reaction of people to their environment. Whether it is good or bad taste is not for us to say.



FOR SOME YEARS we have leaned comfortably upon that well-established rule of thumb: A family can properly spend a fifth of its income for shelter; it can spend double its annual income in buying a house. Now FHA says it is not so sure of that or any other formula. "Judgment based upon the financial situation of each individual family is the only safe guide." FHA underwriters make an analysis of the borrower's principal sources of income and conditions affecting the probable continuation of this income, taking into account the nature of the borrower's employment, local employment conditions, his age, health, education and experience. After obligating himself with a mortgage, will he be able to maintain the approximate standard of living he has established for his family?



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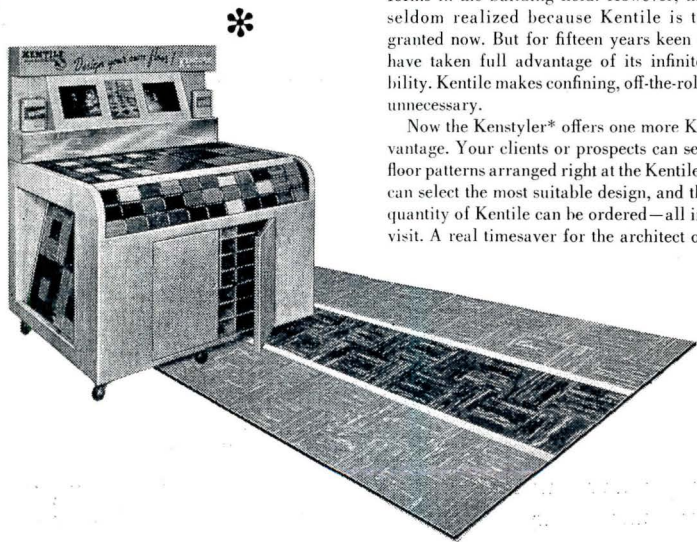
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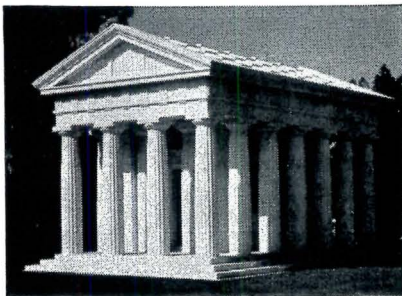
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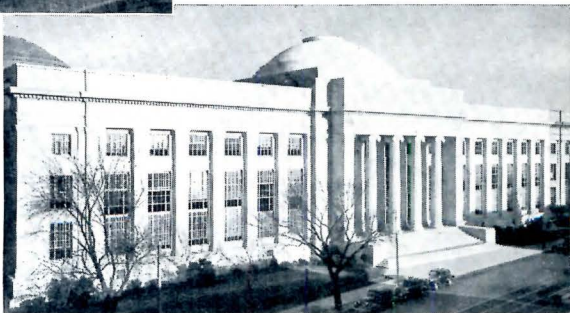
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