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# Journal of The American Institute of ARCHITECTS

PIERRE CHARLES L'ENFANT

MARCH 1944

## Washington, a Planned City in Evolution

*By Major General Ulysses S. Grant, 3rd*

## Architects from a Lawyer's Viewpoint

*By The Honorable Emory H. Niles*

## A Truce Upon Your Housing!

*By Dorothy Rosenman*

C. D. Maginnis · Lt. Col. Whitney
Otto R. Eggers

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# Architects from a Lawyer's Viewpoint

### *By The Honorable Emory H. Niles*

JUDGE OF THE SUPREME BENCH OF BALTIMORE CITY

**An address before the Baltimore Chapter, A.I.A., January 28, 1944 by one of the Chapter's Honorary Members who is also President of the Board of Trustees of Goucher College**

MR. PRESIDENT, AND GENTLEMEN OF THE BALTIMORE CHAPTER:

I always feel some hesitation in expressing my views on the profession of architecture to the members of the Chapter, for I feel that even though I am an honorary member, I am nevertheless not an architect, and am an outsider. If, then, I offer advice to architects I hope it will be taken as coming with humility from one who occupies that favorable position which enables him to criticize and suggest, without having to bear the burdens of carrying out the suggestions.

The gist of these remarks is that in my opinion the architectural profession has suffered greatly by being tied hand and foot to the building industry. In a sense this tie is so tight that the architectural profession can be charged with not being an independent profession at all, but merely an adjunct of the building industry; that the architect is a sort of super-master-builder who has neither the responsibility of the builder nor the independence of the owner. He is a fifth wheel indeed sometimes, and I venture to say that the vast majority, both in volume and value of building projects, are executed without the services of an architect. On one side, we have projects in which the only professional advice comes from the engineers, who have in large measure displaced or even usurped the functions of the architect. On the other side we have the builder, who feels (and is) entirely competent to execute a building project which will sell, or which will with reasonable adequacy fulfill the needs for which it was constructed, without the benefit of any professional services at all.

One of my architectural friends believes that the cause of this lack of understanding of the need for architectural services is due to the fact that for the last two generations the architects have placed all their efforts, both in their schools and in their practice, on the esthetic side, and have become in the minds of the public, merely experts in esthetics.

◆

I would by no means minimize the value of the esthetic elements in any building project, nor would I pretend to pass judgment in the controversies regarding those elements. It seems to me, however, that the architectural profession has, by tying itself to one trade, lost sight of its true function, and sold its independence without even getting a mess of pottage in return. As a member of another profession, the law, I would call your attention to the fact that the lawyers have identified themselves with, and made a place for themselves, in almost every branch of social activity. If a new project is to be promoted, the lawyers are there; if an old project has failed, the lawyers are there. If a man has an accident or a dispute, he seeks a lawyer; if a man wants to avoid an accident or a dispute, he seeks a lawyer. If the Government wishes to borrow money, it gets legal advice; if the Government wishes to spend money, again it gets legal advice. There is hardly any transaction or activity, from operating a theater to condemning land for a sewer, in which a lawyer does not usefully perform some service. Although the lawyer's financial fortunes rise and fall with the general financial tides, he is not bound tightly to any single trade or business with its consequent violent fluctuations.

The same is true to a lesser extent of the other professions; namely, teaching, the church, pure science, and medicine. In every one of these the professional activity extends far beyond, and contributes valuable assistance to, many forms of social endeavor. Even the engineers, those dragons who prey upon the architects, have a far more stable base on which to work than the architects.

I saw recently an article in *The Octagon* which emphasized the fact that the architect is the only person whose training equips him for generalized thinking and for the coordination of all the elements, practical, esthetic, scientific, financial and utilitarian, involved in a building project. I suggest that the architect is the only person similarly equipped to imagine, regulate and control the same elements, not merely in a building project but in a project of living. Just as the lawyer occupies himself with every phase of the legal relations between human beings, and the doctor with every phase of the physiological and anatomical relations between the organs of the body and their environment, so the architect should occupy himself with every phase of the physical surroundings and framework in which those human beings live.

As your President has pointed out, the problem of the engineer is the control of natural forces which operate according to fixed and exact laws; he has achieved his purpose when the building does not collapse and its mechanical equipment operates. The architect, however, is dealing, not with inanimate physical material, but with human beings. His problem is to provide material, functional and esthetic facilities and surroundings for human beings to live in and use, according to laws which are more or less inexact but which are none the less ascertainable and important. The architect is not concerned with the details of justice, business, or hygiene. He is concerned, however, with the material apparatus involved in those activities and with the coordination of them to the other activities in which members of our society engage.

◆

The architect recognizes as in his field the design of the interior arrangements of a department store, as well as its external appearance. But he has sub-contracted everything to do with the design of its heating, lighting, ventilation and construction, except for sporadic and sometimes ineffective "supervision." He has failed to make the public believe that his services are valuable in deciding upon or designing the facilities by which the prospective customers can get to the store; the means by which the goods for sale can be brought to the store; the equipment by which it can be delivered; the streets and the other means of transportation which are used for these purposes. Nor does the architect as such concern himself with the nature of the community as expressed in the term "city planning," or the sub-division of that art known as "zoning." The architects have failed to impress strong organizations which are essential parts of our society with any sense of the need of the kind of thinking that architects, and perhaps architects alone, can do. What hotel, for example, consults an architect in regard to anything except matters of building and decoration? What power and light company has an architect to do over-all generalized thinking and planning? There are hundreds of engineers on its payroll, but no architect. Every railroad has its corps of engineers, but no architect. In still larger activities we see great cities with engineering departments of high quality, but such cities seldom, if ever, have architects as permanent and steadily working members of their staffs, prepared to do coordinative and expert thinking on the physical framework of the entire community. The only time that cities retain architects is when there is a building project to execute, or when the art commission or some other subsidiary body needs advice on prettifying the city. More important, because they are more in number and more powerful financially, are the industrial and mercantile establishments whose needs of integration and coordination are greatest and whose pace is fastest in keeping up with both technical and social development. There is an infinity of problems waiting for the architect in such enterprises if he can persuade the owner that his advice is worth what it would cost.

I am not urging the engineering-architectural combination typified in recent years by at least one extraordinarily successful man; he was as much tied to the building industry as anyone else. To me, again an outsider, he was simply an architect who was a good salesman and who could hire and coordinate the activities of many lesser architects and engineers in order to do rapid and effective building.

❖

Not long ago there was another article in *The Octagon* relating the story of a manufacturer who retained an architect "simply to look around," with no special duties to perform, but with the general duty of thinking about the business as a whole, the relation of its major parts to each other, and its relation to other businesses and activities. That experiment was successful, and it is one small illustration of the kind of idea that I am trying to express.

It is true that architects have to some extent specialized, and we know of hotel architects, hospital architects, bakery architects, and factory architects; and it may be that there are other kinds. It is also true that architects are found on city planning commissions, zoning commissions, and art commissions. But these specialized architects are tied not merely to the building industry but to one part of that industry, while the members of commissions are tolerated as being semi-sensible artists who at least will serve for nothing in order to advance the public good.

❖

The legal profession is old, large, well entrenched and fortified in its prejudices. You are fortunate in being younger, smaller and more flexible. You can change your habits and can do so without such conflict with the laws of the Medes and Persians. In the post-War period I should like to see a development of the architectural profession which would result in a wide acceptance of the architect, not merely as a building specialist, but as a valuable adviser in all problems relating to the planning, construction, use, coordination, changing and discarding of all of the parts of the material framework of living. In any project involving large numbers of people, whether for work or for play, for moving or for remaining together, the architect's services should be useful, and should be useful enough to be paid for.

❖

At the present time the public does not think that it will get its money's worth from an architect unless there is actual construction to be done. The problem for the future would seem to me to be the convincing of the public that you as architects have something to contribute that is worth money; that your advice is worth what it costs in many fields other than those of mere construction. Your advice should not be sought merely on extraordinary occasions or in extraordinary emergencies, but should be regarded as part of the necessary ingredients in any decision involving activities of human beings together. Only by thinking on such problems; by experience in solving them, and convincing the public that you can add something of value, will the architects be able to break the tie that now holds them to one trade, and fashion new ties which will result in their becoming essential elements in all of the activities in which society is engaged.

# A Truce Upon Your Housing!

## *By Dorothy Rosenman*

CHAIRMAN, NATIONAL COMMITTEE ON HOUSING, INC.

**Excerpts by permission from an article in *Survey Graphic* for January, 1944**

When I heard that 1943 marked the tenth anniversary of public housing in the United States, my first reaction was: "Tain't so. The Wagner act wasn't passed before '37." Then it came over me that public housing is a large term covering a program that has been evolving for some time and is still in the process of evolution.

I am disturbed when opponents of public housing confuse the 1933 pattern with that in present use. It had flaws which today's pattern does not have. It was essentially a make work program to which housing was incidental and costly. I am equally disturbed when public housers assume a cocksure loyalty to every comma in the present formula. Neither attitude helps the cause of low-income families which cannot find a decent home at a price they can afford.

In communities over the country, 109,533 slum dwellings have been demolished and 105,373 new dwellings have been built. (These figures do not include war housing construction.) However, it is estimated that approximately a third of our 27,749,200 non-farm families are still living in substandard homes. Though there are other important gains which I shall take up later, I should like to point out at once that the families still in substandard homes present a formidable challenge and opportunity to all who are interested in housing construction, housing finance, local economy, and social well being. The forces equipped to meet that challenge are disintegrated, unprepared to marshal the knowledge, experience, and good will necessary to tackle a tremendous task. Present activity is devoted largely to mud-slinging, presentation of exploded panaceas, and wind-filled statements. But here and there we find the hatchet buried and serious attempts being made by both sides to meet the situation.

◆

I started in "housing" by recognizing the need for re-housing the families in New York City tenements. As I rolled my baby carriage along Central Park West I saw many half vacant buildings in the side streets and even some facing the park. So I went to the New York City Housing Authority, which was just in its formative months, and suggested the rehabilitation of old housing that was structurally sound and situated in neighborhoods that would provide park and playground facilities, good transportation and schools. I was interviewed—and I use the word advisedly—by an impatient young woman who got me out of her office in record time.

Not only the general public but the majority of those in the building and real estate field still look to rehabilitation as a solution. In these ten years, no one has taken the trouble to explain that rehabilitation is usually expensive and rarely practical. I have found out for myself that while it often provides gadgets it seldom provides essential space, light, and air. I have found out that spotty rehabilitation does nothing for the neighborhood and that people move from a rundown neighborhood just as they move from a badly maintained house. I have found out a great deal more about the costs and instability of such conversion.

Here is a job for the local housing authorities. They should collate the facts on this subject and on many other subjects as well, and set them forth for public scrutiny, comment and refutation. The absence of such facts has not only retarded progress but has acted as a boomerang against the desired objectives.

◆

For some reason or other, the average citizen has received the impression that public housing is intended as a substitute for privately produced homes. The articulate opponents of public housing have fostered that conception, though most of them know better. They demand an end to it on the ground that it competes with private endeavor. They furnish no proof to back up this accusation. It is, indeed, untrue. Homes subsidized by public funds are tenanted by families whose incomes are not sufficient to warrant their paying an economic rent for a dwelling which meets standard specification. There are, of course, exceptions—during the war, public housing has been opened to highly paid war workers. The misconception is rife, but wartime housing is not my theme.

In my opinion the arguments against public housing fall into several categories:

The first is that it entails an expenditure of public funds and adds to the total tax burden. That argument is countered by estimating the cost of slums to the taxpayer—the extra sanitation, fire, police, and health costs—and by the necessity of making social progress, even though it entails expense.

The second argument claims unwarranted competition with private enterprise and points to the ability of the secondhand home to fit the need. I have already given my answer to this.

The third argument charges public construction with being more costly than private construction. Contrary to popular belief, the Government itself does not build. All construction is done through private building firms selected by local housing authorities through public bidding. Publicly financed construction may be more expensive, but neither group today has the data to substantiate or disprove this accusation.

The fourth argument, and it is frequently voiced, is that everyone who really wants to work can earn sufficient money to buy or rent in the normal market. I have spoken with many people who believe this. Most of them have never come to grips with the actual facts.

Many opponents of public housing have ceased to lay stress on these four arguments. They have new ones. One is aimed at the roots of the present method of administering subsidy. They acknowledge that private financing cannot reach the bottom income groups. They hope to be able to produce lower-cost homes when the war is over and thus to reach an income level beneath what they now serve. They also hope that the national income level will remain higher pitched than it was before the war and thus increase their market.

The line of opposition has taken on a new objective. For those with incomes below their two hopes, they recommend that subsidy be given in the form of rent relief administered through regular relief channels and paid to landlords who operate privately financed buildings.

◆

The new line has its own obvious weakness. Thousands of tenants, victims of the unbridged chasm between housing production costs and wage scales, would be revolted at the idea of applying for rent relief. There is a great difference between renting a house or an apartment known to have a public subsidy, and taking a rent relief check to hand over to the landlord.

The strength of the new line is that it prods two fundamental weaknesses of the public housing that has been built to date—size and architecture. Housing authorities have built tremendous "projects" and—with some very distinguished and delightful exceptions—have built them so that you can tell at a glance that they are public housing. When my young son came to visit me at a Baltimore hospital last spring, he said, "I've come through all kinds of neighborhoods. I passed two public housing projects." I laughed because though there were no signs on the buildings the child had identified them from the train window and had accepted the identification as commonplace.

Large-scale building brings certain economies, but I have heard that if size goes beyond a certain point it defeats this objective. I have never been able to find out the economic size desirable as a building unit or management unit. Surely this is fundamental to future procedure. There would be variables, of course, but a slide rule of building and management economy needs to be made.

There are social factors to be weighed as well as economy. To my mind it is socially undesirable to build large communities for only one rung of the income ladder. We know that millionaires do not live in slums and blighted areas, yet small businessmen, doctors, lawyers who earn substantial sums do. Every slum clearance project displaces families that are ineligible in the new project because their incomes are too high. Unfortunately, many of these families are in the no man's land of housing—they cannot get acceptable privately financed housing at the rental they can afford, and they cannot get into public housing because their incomes are too high.

◆

It is definitely undesirable to build large public housing projects that dominate a neighborhood and mark it at one income level. Public housing should melt into the horizon of privately financed units. That would mean that public and private enterprise would have to work together in rebuilding an area. There are several ways of effecting such a relationship. This would call for cooperation and an end to back-fence bickering.

Much of the feeling against public housing comes from the smaller cities which have rebelled against architectural treatment alien to their way of living. Apartments are disliked in some places; row houses in others. A flat roof can alienate an entire community accustomed to pitched roofs. Innovations in living customs cannot be choked down people's throats even though they bring certain advances with them. The advances must be made within the pattern of the community.

❖

Public housing has contributed much to an appreciation of the importance of site and community planning. Public housing, as part of a slum clearance program, has with few exceptions been built in the heart of cities on land cleared of substandard buildings. That land costs much more than it is worth. Excessive costs have often caused local housing authorities to put up with land planning standards that they know to be poor.

I would say that public housing has indicated one way toward rebuilding the overcrowded sections of our cities, but has erred even as it plowed a new path. It has demonstated that many streets can be eliminated and replaced by footpaths which lead to service streets, playgrounds, and recreation areas. It has demonstrated the coordination necessary between home and school, play and recreation facilities, transportation, shopping, and health services. It has demonstrated that free space about buildings can be so organized as to provide useful play and garden areas instead of alleys, backyards, streets, and patches.

It has shown by poor example, as well as by good, that it is not wise to house too many families to the acre. Using expensive slum land—as the law directs them to do—housing authorities often have built projects that house too many families to the acre. The reason is understandable, but the judgment is debatable. It might be wiser to anticipate trends, especially since the buildings are being built to last a minimum of sixty years.

The sixty-year amortization feature is itself questionable. I do not look for a miracle "dream" home to float down from heaven on a magic drafting-board after the war, but I do expect construction and architectural progress. (I certainly do not anticipate a period of stagnation.) These buildings put up to last for sixty years may well be outdated in thirty. I am certain that the size of the rooms will be frowned on long before 1975. The year 2000 is likely to find all noses turned up at the sight of a 1940 public housing project.

Noses may turn up too at the Metropolitan Life Insurance Company's Parkchester and its proposed Stuyvesant Town (both in New York City), because they are built on the same high-density, tall-building pattern as many of our public projects. On the other hand, the Metropolitan's project in Arlington, Va., Park Fairfax, will probably weather the test of time because it conforms to the most advanced thinking of the moment—fine site planning, low density, adequate community facilities, and so on.

Those who are against public housing nourish certain other grievances. The first is that public housing does not pay taxes. True, it pays a stipend in lieu of taxes. The real difficulty lies in the fact that there has been no uniform national policy on tax payments. Each community made its own dicker and the mayor who fussed longest and loudest got the largest amount. The Federal Public Housing Authority should meet with representatives of the localities in which there are housing authorities and determine upon a fair tax policy, one which would not hamper operations yet would satisfy the localities. That policy should not differ in Buffalo, Cincinnati, and Las Vegas. In the future, all public housing projects should pay a definite amount towards city expenses.

◆

A further complaint against public housing is that it is building up a new entrenched interest—that the employees in more than 600 local housing authorities and in the regional and Washington offices of the Federal Public Housing Authority are striving to perpetuate the program in order to keep their jobs. That is slightly ridiculous. Apply that indictment to the members of the forestry service or to the park service and you will find it untenable.

However, the accusation is based on a certain something that calls for consideration. In some housing authorities, the personnel has conceived the notion that the tenants are incidental to the project. Their tenant relations are poor; their methods of establishing eligibility and of checking on incomes are embarrassing. Fortunately this is not universally true, but such instances serve to dismay those of us who believe in a public housing program. Those who administer local housing authorities must guard against the "You do as we tell you" attitude; most tenants are reasonable when things are made clear to them.

The third complaint is that public housing is trying to kill off all private enterprise. Public housing authorities are accused of getting ready to gobble up the earth when the war is over. The truth is that neither the public housing cause nor the interests of private housing can be furthered without a united front. It is to the interest of private industry that public housing authorities act as experimental demonstration stations. They are not competitors.

◆

The fact is, the local level of housing administration requires streamlining. So many divisions of housing are confusing to the public, to the building, real estate and financial professions, and to the objectives they all seek. There are too many jurisdictional disputes. There is teamwork among the agencies on the national level. The four branches of the National Housing Agency — the Federal Housing Administration, the Federal Home Loan Bank Administration, the Federal Public Housing Authority, and the Homes Use Service—are working in unison. It is time for coordination on the local level.

◆

Is the local housing authority the logical nucleus around which such an organization can center? It is, if it does not isolate itself, and if it serves as a source of information, counsel, and advice to the business, financial, and social interests of the community. It is not, if it has failed to achieve the respect of the community.

It is time to put our housing house in order in every locality so that we can proceed to get ready for the great job which should start when the war is won.

"NO PURELY EUROPEAN achievement in the textile arts has, as yet, even remotely approached the triumphs of the desert weavers of Peru and Persia."—M. D. C. CRAWFORD.

# Public and Private Architects

### By Otto R. Eggers, F.A.I.A.

ARCHITECTURE is good or bad, dependent solely on its merit and not upon the status of the individual who produced the design. It is not my point here to weigh and analyze what is good architecture as distinguished from bad architecture. I have my own ideas, of course, but I am not asking anyone to accept my conception of good architecture.

I am, though, puzzled at what seems to be a growing schism between architects in private practice and architects in government agencies—federal, state and municipal. My bewilderment increases as I wonder why there should not be a very close relationship between all architects rather than a chaotic disunity.

◆

Perhaps I am not close enough to the facts, because for quite a few years I have been tied to a pencil and have not mingled enough with my fellow architects or taken part in their arguments both pro and con. During the last few years certain conditions have been brought home to me more forcibly than ever before. If I could illustrate this, rather than write about it, I would sketch the United States in the background, woefully lacking in new construction, while in the foreground I would show the architects, first debating individually in small groups, then each group debating in turn with other groups. I do not mean to be hard on our own profession and imply that as architects we might have been good lawyers. On the contrary, I want to be constructive. I sincerely hope a way can be found speedily for all architects to be members of one national organization. If this is not feasible at the moment, why not have a joint committee selected from the existing societies?

That there is a cleavage today between private architects and architects in government agencies on the subject of public construction is just a truism. It is a perennial matter in some state legislatures, in courts of law, in organizational periodicals and in architectural meetings. This problem has come home to me because of the war, and in thinking about what will be the state of affairs after the war. The problem appears to be more complicated than it may actually be, if some real, statesmanlike architects were to sit down together and agree to agree rather than, as at present, just standing off in corners presuming much without doing anything about it. I think both groups can take a little blame for this.

⁂

It is just not true that good architecture can come only from the ranks of the private architect; it is equally false that because an architect is part of a government agency his architecture must be bad. Such suppositions are grossly unfair. During the past two years it has been my privilege to meet some of the architects and some members of their staff in the Navy Department. I do not single them out purposely but simply because it came about due to business with this Department. I was most agreeably surprised to note the high architectural quality of the work done, and being done, by the men of this Department under the inspirational leadership of Mr. Howard Sullivan. This staff has a true vision and zeal for good architecture.

The architectural department of New York State, under Commissioner Haugaard, has been responsible for some fine examples of good architecture. I have seen some Veterans' Hospitals, which I believe they designed in their own Bureau, which are real contributions. There are probably many more examples, but this suffices for the moment on the question of relative merit.

There is a definite need for architects in governmental departments. There are problems at times, particularly those of security, which for many reasons can be more efficiently and expeditiously handled within a bureau. I advocate that architects in government agencies should occupy a distinguished position, be adequately paid, and that all architects should collaborate to increase the caliber of such government architects. Good architects within governmental bureaus can concentrate on problems peculiar to a governmental function, and with even limited assistance can prepare sound schematic plans. Government architects should play a major role, moreover, when public buildings are being constructed, and serve as liaison officers between the government, the private architect, and in certain instances the general contractor.

I can understand the problem of many men who are in the government service. They went, perhaps, in the beginning, just to a job. Their services were extended; their salaries may not have been comparable with those in private endeavor, yet there were pensions, promotions, and other considerations. That job became a matter of fifteen years, possibly twenty or more. Maybe retirement was not too far away. Now a specter appears in the form of no job at all, because the work will be done by private architects. Yes, it is a human problem, and there will be the problem of those who will return after this war. These are questions in which all architects should be interested.

There is a side to this question which is fundamental. I would like to mention it here, but its ramifications and application should evolve into a modus operandi through clear thinking and planning by broad-minded architects of both groups. Public buildings, particularly those of importance, belong to the people. The private architect is an important part of our system of free enterprise. Aside from the question of architectural attainments, the question of free enterprise is more fundamental than any provincial disputes. Wherein free enterprise prospers, this country will prosper; what weakens free enterprise weakens the fiber of this country.

I am not impressed with what I hear about Government economy in the practice of architecture. If economy is responsible for certain poor examples of architecture, and there are some, then I think we have effected economy unwisely and detrimentally.

◆

We as architects have a double-barreled responsibility. We have had a specialized training and our nation has a right to expect much from us. We are a young nation, relatively, and we can stand much abuse, but we will mature, and as we do so, we must grow apace culturally as well as industrially, agriculturally and scientifically. Our architecture is one of the most important exponents of our culture. We have also music, art, literature and other cultural attainments.

This problem is not such a big problem after all. There are, and will be, government architects; there are, and will be, private architects. Both, as architects, have their sphere of usefulness. Much is lost by not knowing each other better in an organized way; much could be gained if all could meet and discuss mutual problems frankly, with complete recognition of each other's position. Would that this were so, and especially a few years ago! The engineers have done a wonderful job, but so have the architects. Is it not possible that with cooperative team work both groups of architects could look out upon the future from a somewhat higher elevation?

# Honors

Milton Smith Osborne of the Alabama Chapter A.I.A., now head of the Department of Architecture and Fine Arts, University of Manitoba, has been elected First Vice-President of the Royal Architectural Institute of Canada.

Ben Moreell, Chief of the Navy's Bureau of Yards and Docks, has been nominated by the President for promotion from Rear-Admiral to the temporary rank of Vice-Admiral.

Cornelius J. White, A.I.A., of the New York Chapter has been appointed Commissioner of Architecture for New York State, succeeding William E. Haugaard, A.I.A., also of the New York Chapter, who recently resigned.

> "There should be a new commandment for museum directors: 'When you have enough to fill thirteen galleries, expose as little as you can place in three rooms.' For the business of a museum is not to store the past but to restore it, to restore to the scattered fragments of a dismembered age their meaning by restoring their original function, to make them live as they originally lived, part of an art of living, in a temple, a palace, or a cathedral."—Lee Simonson in 1914.

# Washington, A Planned City in Evolution*

### By Major General Ulysses S. Grant, 3rd

CHAIRMAN, NATIONAL CAPITAL PARK AND PLANNING COMMISSION

**Condensed from an address before the Joint Committee on The National Capital, February 18, 1944**

ALL good Americans are interested in Washington as their National Capital. However, for those who have an interest in our civic development and the proper development of our cities, it has a special and unique interest in being our only city which was planned before construction began and which has continued to have a plan, although from time to time the plan has been lost sight of for periods of years.

We owe it to the wisdom of George Washington that the city was located at the head of tidewater and navigation on the Potomac River, on a reasonably flat peninsula surrounded by a frame of hills. We also owe it to him that a complete plan for the new National Capital was made before its settlement was begun, and that a very competent engineer, Major Charles Pierre L'Enfant, who had served in our Revolutionary War, was chosen to make the plan. . . . It is interesting to note a sketch made by Jefferson at this time, in which he proposed a very much more limited and congested plan.

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* On the evening of February 18, leaders of Federal groups and other organizations concerned with civic development gathered at a banquet in the Mayflower Hotel, Washington, to discuss the future of the Nation's Capital. Speakers included Maj. Gen. Philip Fleming of the Federal Works Agency; Maj. Gen. U. S. Grant, 3rd; Major Gilmore Clarke, chairman of the Fine Arts Commission; Charles D. Maginnis, past president of the A.I.A.; Senator Radcliffe of Maryland, and Senator Burton of Ohio. The host group was the Joint Committee on the National Capital, composed of ten national organizations: Federation of Arts, The American Institute of Architects, American Institute of Planners, American Planning and Civic Association, American Society of Civil Engineers, American Society of Landscape Architects, The Garden Club of America, National Association of Real Estate Boards, National Sculpture Society, National Society of Mural Painters. With representatives from these organizations were Harlean James and Horace W. Peaslee, members at large. The addresses of General Grant and Mr. Maginnis are reprinted in part here, and on page 136.

Of course the L'Enfant plan, although it only covered the flat and gently sloping part of the District of Columbia, was on a scale far exceeding what could be usefully developed for about three-quarters of a century. Considerable criticism and ridicule of it was, therefore, to be expected in the interim, but today his foresight is paying dividends in savings for street construction, etc.

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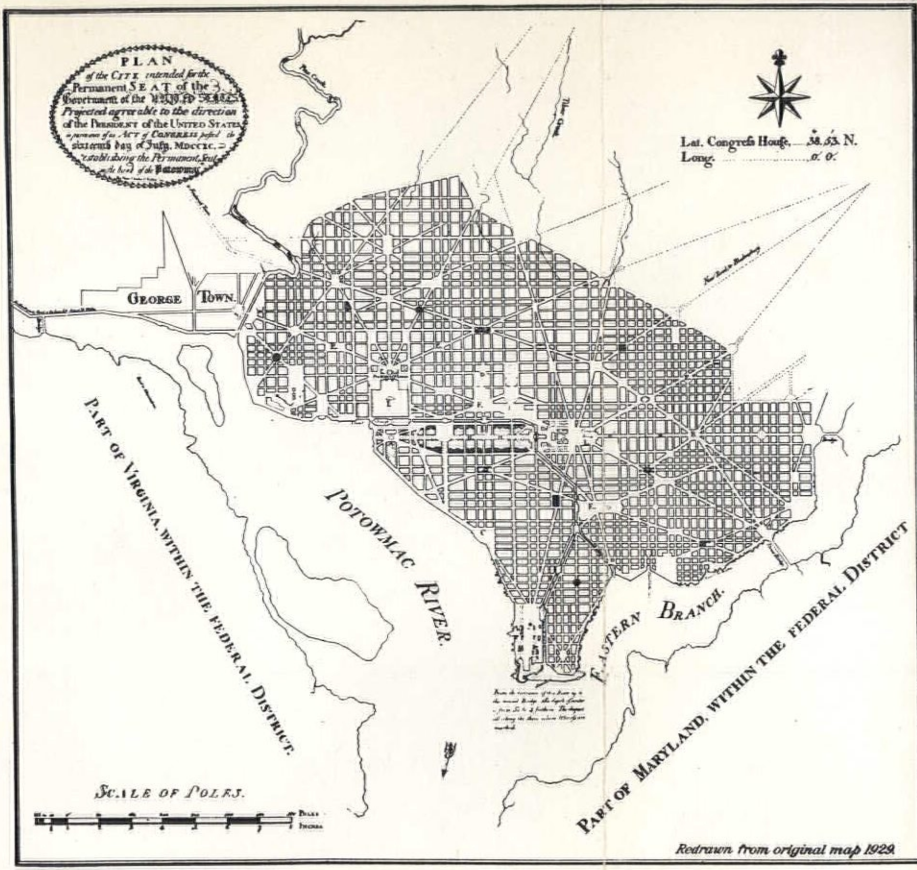
It was also natural that many things should be done which were inconsistent with the plan, although in general it was adhered to. For instance, the President's House was set back from the axis of Pennsylvania Avenue, and the Treasury Building site was advanced across the axis so that, when the latter was finally developed with the south wing added, it interposed between the White House and the Capitol, thus closing one of the important vistas provided by the L'Enfant plan. Subsequently, the Library of Congress, completed in 1897, was built across Pennsylvania avenue, screening the view of the Capitol from the southeast.

Also very little was done toward a suitable development of the park system, and when in 1853 the first steps were taken toward the development of the Mall, between the Capitol and the Washington Monument, an informal landscape park treatment was adopted, instead of the "grand avenue" proposed by Major L'Enfant. The Washington Monument itself, when started in 1848, was not located exactly at the intersection of the two major axes of the city, but was placed on nearby high ground 123 feet to the south of the Capitol axis, and 375 feet to the east of the White House axis.

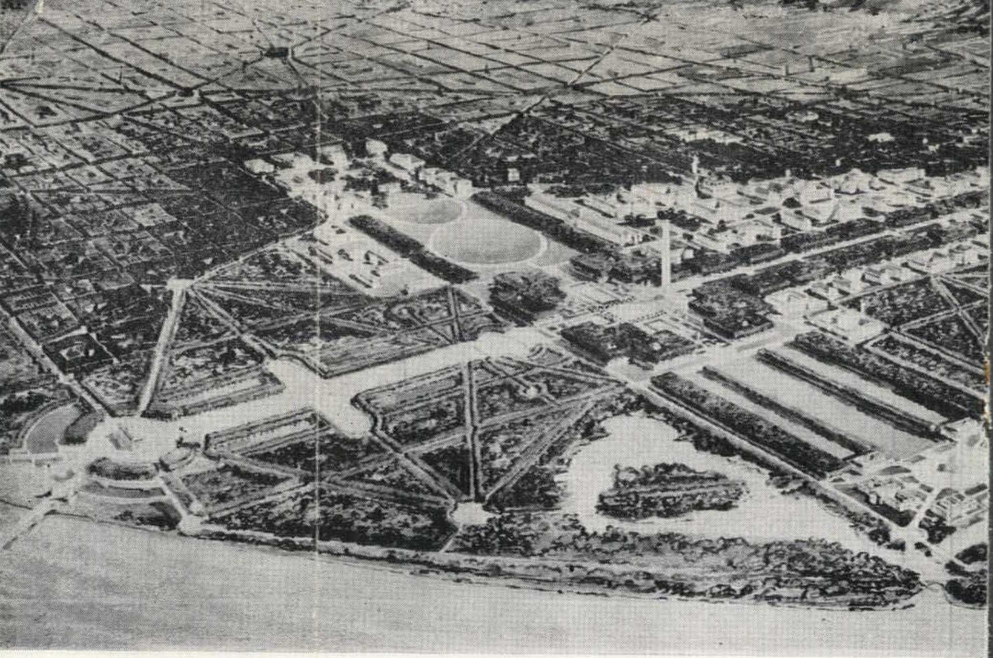
Perhaps the most serious departures from the L'Enfant plan were the failures adequately to canalize the Tiber Creek along the south side of B street, and to utilize available streams for the cascade which was to keep the canal fresh and reclaim the tidal flats of its broad estuary as a part of the central park system. This prevented the residential development of the peninsula south of the Mall, and left the estuary of the Tiber as an objectionable barrier to communication between the south end of the city and its center.

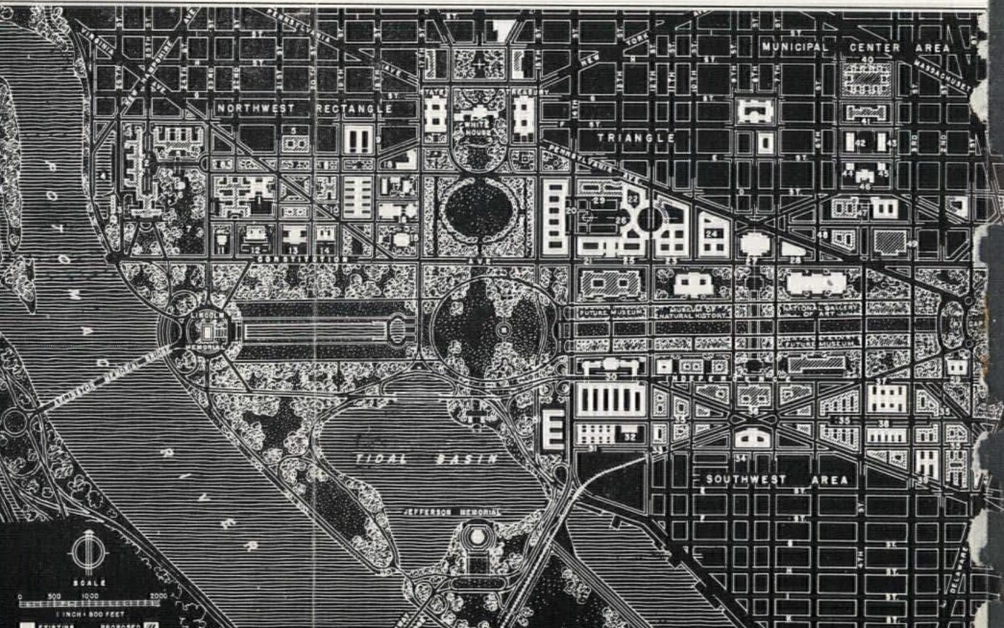

PLAN
of the City intended for the
Permanent Seat of the
Government of the United States
Projected agreeable to the direction
of the President of the United States
in pursuance of an Act of Congress passed the
sixteenth day of July, MDCCXC,
establishing the Permanent Seat
on the bank of the Potowmac
Lat. Congreſs Houſe, 38.53. N.
Long. 0. 0.
GEORGE TOWN.
PART OF VIRGINIA, WITHIN THE FEDERAL DISTRICT.
POTOWMAC RIVER.
EASTERN BRANCH.
PART OF MARYLAND, WITHIN THE FEDERAL DISTRICT
SCALE OF POLES.
Poles
Inches

Redrawn from original map 1929.

THE L'ENFANT PLAN OF WASHINGTON, 1791-92

It is a grave question whether Major L'Enfant's plan as treasured these many years is really the original. Possibly it is one of several copies made at the time, for upon it is no trace of pencil notes said by President Washington to have been added by Thomas Jefferson indicating changes to be made in its engraving




MUNICIPAL CENTER AREA
NORTHWEST RECTANGLE
TRIANGLE
WHITE HOUSE
STATE
TREASURY
PENNSYLVANIA AVE.
NEW YORK AVE.
MASSACHUSETTS
VIRGINIA AVE.
NEW HAMPSHIRE AVE.
CONSTITUTION AVE.
INDEPENDENCE
LINCOLN MEMORIAL
ARLINGTON MEMORIAL BRIDGE
FUTURE MUSEUM
MUSEUM OF NATURAL HISTORY
NATIONAL GALLERY OF ART
TIDAL BASIN
JEFFERSON MEMORIAL
SOUTHWEST AREA
POTOMAC RIVER
DELAWARE
SCALE
0 500 1000 2000
1 INCH = 800 FEET
EXISTING
PROPOSED

set up a Highway Commission for the purpose.

Some important park projects were adopted, notably for purchase of the land for Rock Creek Park (1890) and for the Zoological Park (1889), and the filling in of the tidal flats to make the nearly 1,000 acres of the Potomac Park system. But the adoption of items of major importance only could be obtained individually in this way, and the Highway Commission, being concerned with streets, did not plan for parks. It remained for Colonel T. A. Bingham, officer in charge of Public Buildings and Grounds, to get Major L'Enfant's plan out of the files in 1899 and to show not only that no provision was being made for parks in the new parts of the city, but also that some of L'Enfant's major projects had been entirely lost sight of and were about to become forever impracticable.

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On the occasion of the centennial celebration (1900) of the installation of government in the District of Columbia, The American Institute of Architects made the adequate development of the Capital a major issue. Recommendations by leading architects, with supporting contributions from the professions of landscape architecture and sculpture, were published later as a Senate Document which records The Institute's proposal for a special commission of experts to consider "the location and grouping of public buildings and monuments and the development and improvement of the entire park system." Elihu Root, then Secretary of War, and Senator McMillan, Chairman of the Senate Committee on the District of Columbia, became actively interested and the latter secured authority and funds for the proposed commission. The exact phrasing is quoted to show that the McMillan Commission did not purport to be a general planning commission and that the "Plan of 1901" was not a city plan in the accepted sense.

It is only necessary to name the members of this commission, which has since usually been known as the McMillan Commission or the Commission of 1901, to indicate the quality of its work: Daniel H. Burnham, Frederick Law Olmsted, Jr., Charles F. McKim, and Augustus Saint-Gaudens. After very careful and intensive study they reaffirmed the soundness of the L'Enfant plan and recommended its extension in a manner inspired by its spirit and on a scale more adequate to the greater capital of a greater country.

The Commission of 1901 produced a report of greatest interest and value, which has naturally been the basis for all projects adopted since; for, although the 1901 plan was never adopted as a whole, it was so convincing and sound that it commanded respect and inspired the execution of its major projects.

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Although the report of the McMillan Commission was received with enthusiasm in civic and professional circles, it also had its opponents; and it soon became evident that, lacking understanding interpretation by leaders of the professions concerned, the application of the plan would be blocked. Again the professions crusaded and enlisted the support of the President, Theodore Roosevelt, who, by Executive Order in January 1909, appointed a Council of Fine Arts. This was revoked by President Taft in the following March, as not in the province of the Executive. One year later, however, Congress gave its approval to a bill introduced by Elihu Root, then Senator from New York, and established the National Commission of Fine Arts with powers directed specifically and solely to the review of proposed statues, fountains and monuments, subsequently enlarged by Executive Orders of Presidents Taft and Wilson to include public buildings and parks. This Commission became the advocate and exponent of the Plan of 1901 and deserves the gratitude of the Nation for its help in getting the major features of the plan adopted, for the high standards of design and execution it has established, and for the bad and mediocre projects that it has prevented.

The more important of these projects adopted before 1926 were: The removal of the Pennsylvania Railroad station from the Mall and the construction of a new Union Station, through which, like a great portal to the city, the traveler enters on the edge of the enlarged Capitol Plaza and in sight of the Capitol itself; the Lincoln Memorial and its reflecting pool; the Arlington Memorial Bridge; the Grant and Meade Memorials, as main features of the great Union Plaza at the foot of the Capitol; the Rock Creek and Potomac Parkway, joining these two major park systems; the Anacostia Park development; some parts of the Fort Drive.

The officers in charge of public buildings and grounds, successors to Colonel Bingham, naturally followed the plan of 1901 as far as practicable and gave their support to those of its projects which have been adopted. Gratifying as the progress was, it was very inadequate. . . . For instance, no parks were acquired from 1791 to 1889, two parks (Zoo and Rock Creek) were authorized 1889-90, one more in 1896 (Potomac Flats), one in 1907 (Piney Branch) and except minor triangles, only Rock Creek and Potomac Parkway and Anacostia Park from 1913 to 1923. Of fifty-three sites recommended in 1901, only six were acquired up to 1925. This was sheer extravagance, since in the first 25 years of the century the assessed value of land in the District of Columbia increased nearly 240 per cent—that is, ten times as fast as the park area.

Recognition of this situation brought about the formation of the National Capital Park Commission in 1924, for the systematic and planned purchase of park land.

Congress is always ready to pass progressive legislation for the District of Columbia when the local authorities and public opinion agree as to the advisability of the measure. It is not surprising, therefore, that a law limiting the height of buildings to the width of the street plus 20 feet was adopted in 1910, or that a zoning law was passed and a Zoning Commission set up as early as 1920.

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In Washington there is a special reason for preventing high buildings. Great stress was laid by Major L'Enfant, President Washington, and all those who have followed in their footsteps, upon the location of the Capitol on a hill in the center of, and overlooking the city. If buildings in the business district were allowed to be built to a height exceeding that now set by the Zoning Commission, even to the maximum height of 130 feet permitted by law, their roofs would be from 6 to 8 feet above the roof of the Capitol building, diminishing its dominance and completely obscuring it from large areas of the city.

The newly instituted Park Commission was confronted with the inevitable close relationship between parks and streets and other elements of the city. The highway plan had been adopted in the days of animal transportation and required quite thorough revision in the areas outside of L'Enfant's plan to meet the needs of, and take advantage of, the change to automobile transportation and the latest developments in city planning. It had never been reconciled with the plan of 1901, and many features of the latter itself had become impracticable because of expensive building developments which were inconsistent with it. The rapid increase in population after World War I again started new subdivisions, this time with some outside the limits of the District of Columbia, requiring planning and control to fit them into a proper city and regional plan.

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To solve these problems and to prepare and maintain for the National Capital and its environs "a comprehensive, consistent and coordinated plan," and in response to recommendations of the American Civic Association and supporting professions, the Park Commission was expanded and changed into a National Capital Park and Planning Commission in 1926. To give effect to its efforts for a sound and logical regional plan, Virginia and Maryland jurisdictions have set up local planning commissions to cooperate with it.

One of the first major accomplishments of the Park and Planning Commission was in line with its first instructions—to coordinate the planning of the Capital and its environs. The presentation of the first stage of the regional plan was the occasion of a notable gathering at a convention of the American Society of Landscape Architects, to which President Hoover sent a message emphasizing the need of cooperation. The Governors of Maryland and Virginia spoke in similar vein, pledging their support. The regional plan, like all other elements of planning, inside the District and out, is and always will be subject to modification in order to conform to changed conditions and special local needs of the suburban settlements as rapidly as they become known.

In planning the park system, careful study was made to preserve as far as possible points and areas of special interest—points of geological, ornithological, and biological interest; points connected with the history and life of the aborigines before and immediately after the advent of the white man; points of historic interest, such as the old battlefield of Bladensburg and the old dueling ground; points of architectural interest, such as Washington's old home at Mount Vernon, the Octagon House, once the home of President Madison, and the house said to have been used by L'Enfant as an office in planning and laying out the new Federal city; and points of engineering interest.

Of special interest was the development of public buildings, started by the Federal Government in 1926 at the instigation of the Public Buildings Commission. The sites selected for these buildings were in accordance with the McMillan Commission's recommendations, and were generally in an area of the city which had become blighted. To assist the Supervising Architect of the Treasury in their design, Mr. Mellon appointed a specially selected Advisory Board of Architects. They decided very wisely that the major group as a whole should be designed as a single coordinated composition, while each building should be designed individually by a single architect in conformity with the general plan.

It seems pertinent to mention in this connection that the McMillan Commission had indicated the general type of architecture for Federal buildings, and that since 1901 such incongruities as the Post Office, State Department Building and Pension Office have been avoided.

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The impact of the present war is creating serious new problems. As in former wars there has been an enormous influx of population, 42% in 2½ years. Of these it is to be expected that at least half will remain after the victory is won. A housing shortage must be met; enormous traffic congestion and parking problems with return of the free use of the automobile must be provided for. New government office buildings must be located to the east along and near East Capitol Street to relieve the streets north of the Mall, to reduce the burden on public transportation in the northwest, and to rehabilitate the residential areas east and south of the Capitol. Additional recreation grounds, schools, and libraries must be provided.

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It is hoped that the foregoing brief sketch may sufficiently establish the fact that our National Capital is a very precious inheritance, which merits the continued interest and thought of all good Americans; that it will not and can not inspire emulation by other cities without the thoughtful advice and united assistance of our best professional experience and good taste; and finally, since the Congress of the United States is its legislative body, that it must depend upon educated, national public opinion for its continued development as the living and vivid expression of American Civilization.

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# The Nation's City

## *By Charles D. Maginnis, F.A.I.A.*

**Excerpts from an address before the Joint Committee on the National Capital, February 18, 1944**

THERE was a time when, dressed in a little brief authority, I used to be a frequent visitor to the Capital. I have been living since in a provincial seclusion on the fringe of things, so as to give me tonight the sensation of having been withdrawn out of a cloister into this sophisticated occasion. I never lost for a moment the consciousness of Washington. One cannot, any more. I dare not ask how vividly you are aware of Boston, which long ago was so unique a place in the national imagination. Yet it, too, is unforgettable. History was so generous to Boston. The early patriots made it a hallowed place. It was the abode of giants in the great age of American letters, when men spoke of it as the Modern Athens. It is a glory long departed, but the memory of it is still a wistfulness of the modern Boston, whose countenance bears the unmistakable imprint of its proud history. It is a city of individuality. No visitor is unmoved by the sentiment of the ancient souvenirs that survive in the midst of its everyday realism. Boston should guard well these proud possessions in the days of its inconsequence.

It is curious that the individuality of cities is so negligible a concern when we observe the feeling with which the average man asserts his citizenship. He regards his locality as an inevitable sort of place, whose validity he would not dream of doubting. He is not merely complacent about it, but he has built up a patriotism for it which is a particularly sensitive passion. It has nothing whatever to do with the merit of things. It is a pride quite beyond objective provocations, for it can be roused to astonishing enthusiasm by the most dreary and despairing of neighborhoods.

There is a singular perversity of this urban patriotism in that it doesn't perceive local disorders and, when it does, it finds an unaccountable relish in them. Once, as I was leaving the mellow respectability of Exeter Cathedral in England, my cabby shocked me with an invitation to visit the slums. "What," said I, "Slums in Exeter?" "Why Lord bless'ee, Sir, we has slums in Exeter that Lunnon's ain't a patch on." But I preferred to carry away only the fragrant memories.

It was Lord Bryce who said that the city was the weak, and might even prove the fatal, spot in our democratic system. But this is a political problem which will ultimately come to settlement. I have confidence that it is not beyond the American ingenuity.

In only a single instance, but that a striking one, has the architect been identified with the shaping of American cities, so crystalized is the principle that his concern is limited to the individual unit of the street. That his talents can profitably be drawn to the study of the city as an organism, however, is an idea that is slowly coming to acceptance, and American architecture has been awake to the high opportunity. The artistic and scientific skills have become effectively organized in the relatively new profession of the City Planners, whose particular business it now becomes to mold the community to its own genius, to substitute principles of design for economic anarchy. Beauty, so long admitted only as an oasis in the heart of nondescription, will eventually be brought to the American city as an organic and disciplined thing. The progress will be slow and difficult. Commerce is mighty and has many ways of ugliness. It must be compelled by forces of sentiment or law to temper its enterprise to the public sensibility. Until this hope comes to impressive reality, there will be question whether the measure of our civilization is to be found in the high estate of American art or in the debasement of our civic and rural landscapes. Our culture is not to be vindicated by the excellence of skyscrapers. If the challenge of this ugliness is not recognized as the first artistic problem of America, Radio City and the Empire State have done us too much honor. We have been carving cherrystones while the country is given over to the devastating barbarities of the billboard. So much needs saying even as we acknowledge that many of our cities are articulated by art of the highest order and a few have entered on the path of official initiative. Here we should fairly take account of the thrilling municipal enterprise of New York which is changing the face of things under bold and intelligent leadership.

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But it is the vision of the National Capital that leaps to the mind as our incomparable community. It is altogether fitting it should be so. No mere secular city, circumscribed within its own borders and preoccupied by its own life, Washington is a political abstraction, the nation's city of the spirit. In this large meaning every American from Maine to California lays claim to its citizenship. From the beginning it was meant to be a symbol of this common principle. From the beginning it was meant that it should be rendered in the terms of dignity that would do credit to the American idea. We are met tonight in the interest of that high intention. Our country is entering upon a larger life. As it moves out of its retirement into the companionship of the nations it must bear itself proudly. However genial may be the international amenities, we know that Europe is yet to be convinced of the respectability of our culture. It has never withheld its recognition nor its tributes to our great men, but it has seen them as lonely obelisks, as eccentric phenomena that have not sensibly qualified its traditional estimate of us. We are actually the most sentimental of nations, but the persuasion is not easily disturbed that the American genius is so engrossed in a civilization of materialism as to be incapable of a sustained effort in the arts towards a really national utterance. Yet the City of Washington is precisely such a demonstration. It is that by the merit of its genesis. For it is a flowering that stems from the early poverty of the republic. That the intellectual concept came from the mind of the first President is one of the symbolic felicities of history. No less so was the circumstance that the imagination was ready that could shape it to noble correspondence.

Out of this union of thought came the great L'Enfant plan, whose fortunes through the years have been so anxious an interest till it came to final vindication. From its inception it has had its critics, for in the waywardness of human nature we are incapable of reaching universal agreement about anything. There was controversy over the geography of the Capital city. There followed protesting opinion and even ridicule over the ambitiousness of the plan, as its implications were seen to be at odds with the modesty of the early need. It suffered definite violations as in the arbitrary intrusion of the Treasury, whose classic countenance offered a doubtful atonement. I recall myself the time when, as a visitor to Washington, I could step on the Mall from the Pennsylvania train whose tracks lay directly across it. The plan had been forgotten and the Washington scene became an unsightly confusion of monumental dignities and a squalor that roused the national indignation. . . .

But an element of another consequence has entered in. A changing world has driven art into the mood of revolution, and Washington must confront the challenge of a philosophy which, in the name of modernism, protests its architectural validity. It is a movement to be reckoned with, a crusade that will find so classic a citadel a particular provocation. It would be an intellectual disloyalty were we indifferent to the claims of an architecture that professes to interpret with superior logic the disposition of the time. Those of us who detect limits to the pertinence of the new design, however, are reasonably concerned about its implications on the Washington tradition. We know its precocities. They raise doubts about the effect of its disturbing presence in so orderly a household. Reasonably it is not here a problem of principle but of decorum. As such we may leave it to the wisdom that has watched thus far over the formal good-order of the Federal City. On this and all other accounts we must feel it a happy circumstance that those agencies promise to abide with it which have carried the City through so many vicissitudes to an integrity that has won the enthusiastic sanction of the American people.

# Farewell "Or Equal"

As a means of improving competitive bidding practices, The Producers' Council has proposed a new "Bidding Practice for Building Materials," to replace the controversial "or-equal" clause commonly used in the past.

The plan has been approved in principle by The American Institute of Architects and is recommended for general adoption by architects, engineers, contractors, sub-contractors, material concerns, and others involved in bidding on construction projects.

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"Use of the 'or-equal' clause," the Council announcement explained, "has permitted contractors and sub-contractors to figure their bids either on the makes of building products named in the specifications or on other products which they consider acceptable as offering equal quality and value. In many instances, this practice results in differences of opinion as to whether the alternative material or equipment actually is of equal quality, and too often results in the use of a lower quality of product than the owner had intended to purchase.

"Under the new procedure, the specifications will state that the basic bid shall be figured on the makes of building materials and equipment named in the specifications, but will permit the contractor or other bidder to propose the use of alternative products, provided he quotes an exact addition to or deduction from his basic bid for each alternative.

"The proposed bidding practice will give the contractor or sub-contractor a wide latitude in proposing the use of particular makes of building products, permitting the architect, or engineer, and the owner to select the products to be used on the basis of both suitability and relative price.

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"The architect and owner then will know exactly what brands or types of materials or equipment to expect from each bidder, and at what prices. Thus, they will be able to compare and evaluate bids more accurately, and there will be no occasion for arguments after the award of the contract as to whether alternative building products meet the specifications.

"It is believed that this plan also will encourage wider use of quality products, since the bidder's chance is not limited, as under the 'or-equal' method, to submitting the lowest possible bid, based on the least costly materials and equipment."

# The Architect in War Work

THAT the architect's competence in the war effort has not been altogether unnoticed is evident in the following letter. Col. Whitney holds the degree of B.S. in Architecture from M. I. T., where he specialized in structural engineering. He was president of the Whitney Engineering Co. of Boston when, as a reserve officer, he was ordered to duty in November, 1941. He has since been concerned with the construction of war production facilities and is at this writing Assistant Chief of the Facilities and Inspection Section, Production Division, Headquarters, Army Service Forces.

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WASHINGTON, D. C.
4 February, 1944

Dear Mr. Fisher:

It has been brought to my attention that you are interested in phases of war work being done by architects. For some reason or other, the work of a group of architecturally trained men doing an important line of work in a well-known Government agency seems to have been overlooked. Reference is made to those men comprising the majority of the personnel of the Materials Control Branch, Project Division, Facilities Bureau, War Production Board.

In June 1942, the Construction Division, now the Project Division, was organized in New York City in the Empire State Building with Mr. Harlow Lewis as chief of the Materials Control Branch. In June 1943, the organization was transferred to Washington, D. C. The Materials Control Branch was charged with the analysis of design and proposed use of materials requested in the applications for construction. This Branch was responsible that critical materials were not used in construction if substitutes were available, and, in the case of absolutely necessary use, to see that only such quantities as were necessary were used.

To perform such a task properly required a broad and intimate knowledge of design, building materials, and construction procedure. The architecturally trained man was the logical solution, and fifty to one hundred were employed at various times. These men made an important contribution to the war effort by making possible large savings in the use of critical materials, thereby conserving manpower, transportation, and electric power. The success of their efforts is reflected in the many letters of commendation received from industrial concerns and others identified with the industrial expansion for the war effort.

My knowledge of the fine, conscientious work of this group of architects, many of whom had spent the best years of their lives in the profession, and many of whom had previously conducted their own businesses, was gained from personal observation and contact; also, from indirect supervision in my capacity of Army representative.

I have been associated with the architectural engineering, and construction business for over thirty years, and I consider that the group of men in the Materials Control Branch were among the most capable I have met in the architectural profession.

Sincerely yours,

J. T. Whitney,
*Lt. Col., Corps of Engineers.*

## Educational Announcements

Syracuse University, College of Fine Arts, offers one $400 and four $200 scholarships to be granted by competition on July 15, 1944. The competition will be in two fields—drawing and preparatory school record. These scholarships may be held for five years, provided the student maintains an 80 per cent average each year. Further particulars as to the requirements may be had from Dean H. L. Butler, College of Fine Arts, Syracuse, N. Y.

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University of Illinois announces the thirteenth annual consideration of candidates for the Kate Neal Kinley Memorial Fellowship, yielding the sum of $1000 toward the expenses of a year's advanced studies of the Fine Arts. It is open to graduates of the College of Fine and Applied Arts of the University of Illinois. Full particulars may be had by addressing Dean Rexford Newcomb, Room 110, Architecture Building, University of Illinois, Urbana, Ill.

# Lessons from War Housing

## *By Catherine Bauer*

**Summary of the author's "Outline of War Housing" in *Task* 4**

THERE are several planks worth salvaging from the war housing experience for use in the future. The war has dramatized the fact, so well documented by the Tolan Committee, that adequate shelter is a *basic* problem of our productive economy, not merely a reformer's frill. The wartime migration simply threw a spotlight on the weaknesses and inflexibility of our traditional building enterprise. That housing must have adequate community facilities provided from the start, is another fact we may have absorbed.

Reorganization and coordination of the housing agencies in Washington was a functional necessity for post-War, as well as emergency, action. But any notion that this move in itself guarantees harmony in the housing business is both naive and dangerous. Decentralization of Federal responsibility, through strong regional offices and local housing authorities, has once more proved its solid virtues. The fact that thousands of local citizens have effectively participated in the housing program, in peace and in war, is probably the only assurance of a strong housing movement *after* the war. It is one of the things that proves we can have planning, progress and democracy at the same time. Technical experiments with new methods and materials promoted in the war housing programs may have considerable value for the future, if thoroughly analyzed and publicized.

Finally, there is one tiny chapter in war housing history that may have the greatest future implications of all. The "Camden Plan," initiated by New Jersey shipyard workers and promoted and amplified by unions all over the country, represented a spontaneous effort of workers to get housing for themselves, on a cooperative basis. The original Mutual Home Ownership schemes initiated under Carmody were not all sound, and the details are still to be worked out. The war period is in any case, with its shifting population and lowered standards, a most unfavorable milieu for cooperative housing. But interest and the demand were there and they can stimulate a vigorous and important new chapter in American housing.

The simple fact that almost 2,000,000 people will be living in publicly built housing (with enthusiasm or otherwise) by the end of the war, may go far to demonstrate that decent housing is a prime responsibility of democratic government.

# More Violence and Violets

"Frankly, it was a great disappointment . . . 'The mountains labored and brought forth a mouse.' " WILLIAM E. KAPP, Detroit.

"The JOURNAL seems to be meeting with almost universal approval, as far as I can tell from those members I have been able to contact."—HARLAN THOMAS, Seattle.

"The Board of Directors is to be congratulated."—CHARLES C. COLMAN, Cleveland.

"It is a fine start and I am sure we are all going to be vastly proud of it."—BRANSON V. GAMBER, Detroit.

"We hope the similarity in the name of the new publication to that issued by the Royal Institute of British Architects extends no further than the name. Let's not use the British *Journal* as a model to work toward."—Bulletin of Central Illinois Chapter.

"Congratulations on No. 1 of the new JOURNAL. It is very stimulating." — GEORGE A. BOEHM, New York.

"My first reaction, while its appearance is not too impressive, I believe it is the proper size and, with some relief in the paper shortage, we may expect it to become, shall we say, better structurally." . . . MILTON B. MCGINTY, Houston.

"As pleasing to the eye as it is stimulating to the mind."—*The Architectural Record.*

"My sincere congratulations—I am delighted with the issue and have read it from cover to cover." —C. HERRICK HAMMOND, Chicago.

"May I add a note of special appreciation of form—especially the cover symbol. The suggestion of monumental reflections in an octagon frame is peculiarly appropriate."—HORACE W. PEASLEE, Washington.

"Well here is (perhaps) the first 'kick.' It concerns the printing of the title of the new JOURNAL on the outside cover, It seems to me that the important word is not architects, but Journal, which replaces Octagon. I suggest something somewhat as indicated:

JOURNAL
of
The American Institute of Architects

—VICTOR A. MATTESON, Chicago.

"I have been instructed to notify The Board that at its regular monthly meeting on Feb. 10, 1944, the Washington (D. C.) Chapter moved that the Chapter express its approval of the format and contents of the new JOURNAL."—SLOCUM KINGSBURY, Secretary.

"Congratulations on the new and revivified *Octagon.* It is a great improvement."—MILTON S. OSBORNE, Winnepeg.

"May I suggest, as the only adverse criticism possible, that the JOURNAL would better reflect the true but not always evident character of the profession if it contained more light touches."—J. WOOLSON BROOKS, Des Moines.

## Highlights of the Technical Press

*The American Engineer,* Jan. Ninth Annual Meeting, National Society of Professional Engineers, with reports of committees; 10 pp. text and portraits. Feb. Collective Bargaining; A plea from the Metropolitan Section, largest unit of the A.S.C.E., urging the Board of Directors to reconsider its unanimous report; presented by Arthur A. Johnson; 4 pp. text.

*The American City,* Feb. Cities Planning for Post-War Municipal Improvements; 2 pp. text. Limited-Access Highways in Urban Areas, by David R. Levin, Public Roads Administration; 2½ pp. text and illusts.

*The Architectural Forum,* Jan. Washington Housing; 12 pp. text and illusts. Planning the Post-War House I; 14 pp. text, plans, photos. Feb. A Layman Looks at Building, by Gerald M. Loeb; 2 pp. text; Planning the Post-War House, II; 6 pp. text, plans, photos.

*Civil Engineering,* Feb. Air Transport Looks Forward, by Charles I. Stanton, Administrator of Civil Aeronautics, Dept. of Commerce; 3 pp. text and illusts.

*The Architectural Record,* Jan. No. 1 in a series of Building Type Studies made jointly with a leading magazine serving the owner-manager group; Hotels, published jointly with *Hotel Management*; 19 pp. text, plans, photos. Feb. Pressure Planning, by Joseph Hudnut; 4 pp. text and illusts. Long-term Credit for Urban Development, by Arthur C. Holden; 4 pp. text and illusts. Service Stations, Building Type Studies II, developed with *National Petroleum News;* 20 pp. text and illusts.

*Magazine of Art,* Jan. Geo-Architecture: An American Contribution to the Art of the Future, by Wolfgang Born; 6 pp. text and illusts. Designs on/for "The Good Life," by Percy Seitlin; 2 pp. text.

*Pencil Points,* Jan. Planning Against Noise, by Donald Dex Harrison; 8 pp. text and diags. Detroit and the Detroit Area, Parts 2, 3, 4, by J. Davidson Stephen; 8 pp. text and diags. The Future of the A.I.A. by Talbot Hamlin; 2 pp. text.

*The Technology Review,* Feb. America's New Frontier, by Walter R. MacCornack; 3½ pp. text.

*Task,* 4. Outline of War Housing, by Catherine Bauer; 4 pp. text and illusts. The Lesson of Willow Run, by Hermann H. Field; 9 pp. text and illusts. Stuyvesant Town, by Simon Breines; 3½ pp. text and illusts.

# Books & Bulletins

MODERN AIRFIELD PLANNING AND CONCEALMENT. By Merrill E. De Longe, Major, Army Air Corps. 167 pp. 6 by 9 in. New York: 1943: Pittman Publishing Corp. $4.

Colonel Homer Saint-Gaudens contributes a preface to this book, in which he bestows the cachet of his hearty approval. America is sure to be building new airfields and remodeling present ones for some years to come. It is our *hope* that these will be under the protection of an enduring peace; it is our *experience* that they develop into vulnerable targets. Temporary camouflage has its unquestioned value as protection, but Major De Longe demonstrates forcefully the far greater efficiency of planning with the aids of Nature's own materials, holding in check the over-efficient bulldozer, and avoiding the formalized ground pattern and the regimented grids of hangars and other structures.

PRECAUTIONARY CAMOUFLAGE: A Guide for Promoting Low Visibility Principles without Dependence upon Artificial Coverings; a publication of the U. S. Office of Civilian Defense, September, 1943. 60 pp. 8 by 10½ in., illust; paper cover. Available from Superintendent of Documents, U. S. Government Printing Office, Washington 25, D. C. 15c (stamps not accepted).

Written for plant owners, plant managers, architects, construction engineers, builders, municipal authorities, port authorities, community planners, etc. Practice of these principles is urged not only to meet war needs but also for its close relationship with intelligent planning and better conditions of working and living.

BUILDING REGULATION IN NEW YORK CITY. A Study in Administrative Law and Procedure. By Joseph D. McGoldrick, Seymour Graubard and Raymond J. Horowitz. 760 pp. 6 by 9¼ in. New York: 1944: The Commonwealth Fund. $4.50.

From the inspection of chimneys in Nieuw Amsterdam in the 1640's to the inspection of six-story, semi-fireproof walk-ups in the 1940's, there stretches a long road of developing regulation. This book traces the evolution of New York's agencies for the construction, use and maintenance of buildings, their daily functioning, and the treatment of their determinations by the courts. Incidentally, the City's building regulation is at present administered by over 10,000 public employees.

The American Standards Association program of fifteen committees contemplates the preparation of standards covering subjects customarily treated in a building code. It is expected that these standards will be used in developing a basic American Standard Building Code. Standards approved and in print, to date, are:

Methods of Test of Door Assemblies (A2.2-1942), 25c
Portable Steel and Wood Grandstands (Z90.1-1941), 60c
Building Requirements for Reinforced Gypsum Concrete (Z59-1.1941), 25c
Fire Tests of Building Construction and Materials (A2.1-1941), 25c
Building Exits Code (A9.1-1942), $1.00.
Building Code Requirements for Structural Steel (Riveted, Bolted, or Welded Construction) (A57.1-1943), 40c

These are available from Superintendent of Documents, Washington 25, D. C. (Stamps not accepted).

# A Broadcast from the R.I.B.A.

Each Wednesday evening at 8 P.M., E.W.T., the British Broadcasting Company carries in its service a program directed to North America under the general title of "Bridgebuilders." In it, individuals of various professions direct messages to their contemporaries on this side of the water and discuss common problems. On Wednesday evening, March 22, the Royal Institute of British Architects will broadcast to The American Institute of Architects. The short-wave frequency on which this program will be transmitted is 102.9 meters, 2.926 megacycles, call letters GRC. Tune in on it and hear what our English brother architects have to say.

# The Editor's Asides

LEST WE FORGET, The Institute has a mandate. It is one of long standing — responsibility for the plan of Washington. We sought that responsibility, and have several times defended it. A large part of this month's JOURNAL serves as a fitting reminder of what the architects have done on past occasions—taking a railroad station off the Mall, for instance. Ahead of us looms the necessity for more building to the east of the Capitol. Vigilance is our job.

◆

THE INSTITUTE'S COMMITTEE on Public Information has cooperated in the preparation of a booklet, "How to Plan Your New Home," a copy of which Chairman Talmage Hughes has sent to each member. It is a good job—the best-balanced piece of writing that we have seen for a layman, on what the architect should be able to do for the home builder. Messrs. Edwards and Company, Norwalk, Conn., have generously made the booklet available to the architect without cost. Here is a well-minted coin, that should merit wide circulation, and like all coins it has two faces. One face is the individual practitioner's responsibility; he will measure up to its promise only with a competence that needs conscientious and continuous refreshing. The booklet pictures service of a quality which the client can hardly ignore; if the architect will really stretch himself to measure up to that picture, the problem of gaining public appreciation need no longer trouble us.

◆

FORM HAS BEEN FOLLOWING FUNCTION in a growing number of things man makes. The generous dishing up of ornament, accepted for generations, cloys our present taste—with one notable exception, women's dress. It is a curious lag, come to think of it, for a woman whose taste in furnishing a room may be most austere will yet wear—particularly on her head—something that would have been absurd even in Victorian days. Some aspirant for a Ph.D. should get a great thesis out of this.

◆

The U. S. Patent Office issued last month a patent on a method of producing a malleable cast iron. It involves casting a mixture containing 1.5 to 3.5% carbon, 0.5 to 2.5% silicon, and not less than 94% pure iron in the presence of a small amount of lead (up to 1% of the mixture). The presence of the lead is sufficient to obstruct the formation of flake carbon during solidification, and thereby produce a white cast iron which is to be annealed under conditions which will cause separation of at least a portion of the carbon as temper carbon.

◆

We hear frequently, in these enlightened years, of the desirability or even necessity for architectural control in residential communities. It isn't a new concept. George Washington made a bargain with the owners of land on which was projected the Federal City. It provided for the cession to the Government of title to the streets and to every other lot, and for the owners' acceptance of the President's prescription "for regulating the materials and manner of the buildings and improvements generally in the said city, or in particular streets or parts thereof for convenience, safety and order." Washington clearly foresaw the need for architectural control and for a power, suspended in 1822 by President Monroe, but reasserted in 1930 by the Federal Government through the Shipstead-Luce Act.

◆

THE PLOT against the nation's coffee now threatens to assume really formidable proportions. Rationing started it, adulteration thickened it, and now the Patent Office contributes its bit. Two New Yorkers have been granted a patent on a process of making plastic moldings from the green coffee bean. Take if you must our good soy bean, but leave the country's coffee clean!

◆

In the annual competition for the Birch Burdette Long Memorial Prize for architectural rendering, the committee has hit upon a new idea. At the League in New York there will be held, April 10-28, an exhibition of renderings of "Buildings That Have Never Been Built," and from the entries the judges will select the Long prize-winner. In the same exhibition hall there will be examples of small sculpture — again some of the "dreams that never came true"— from which the winner of the Henry O. Avery Prize will be picked.

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