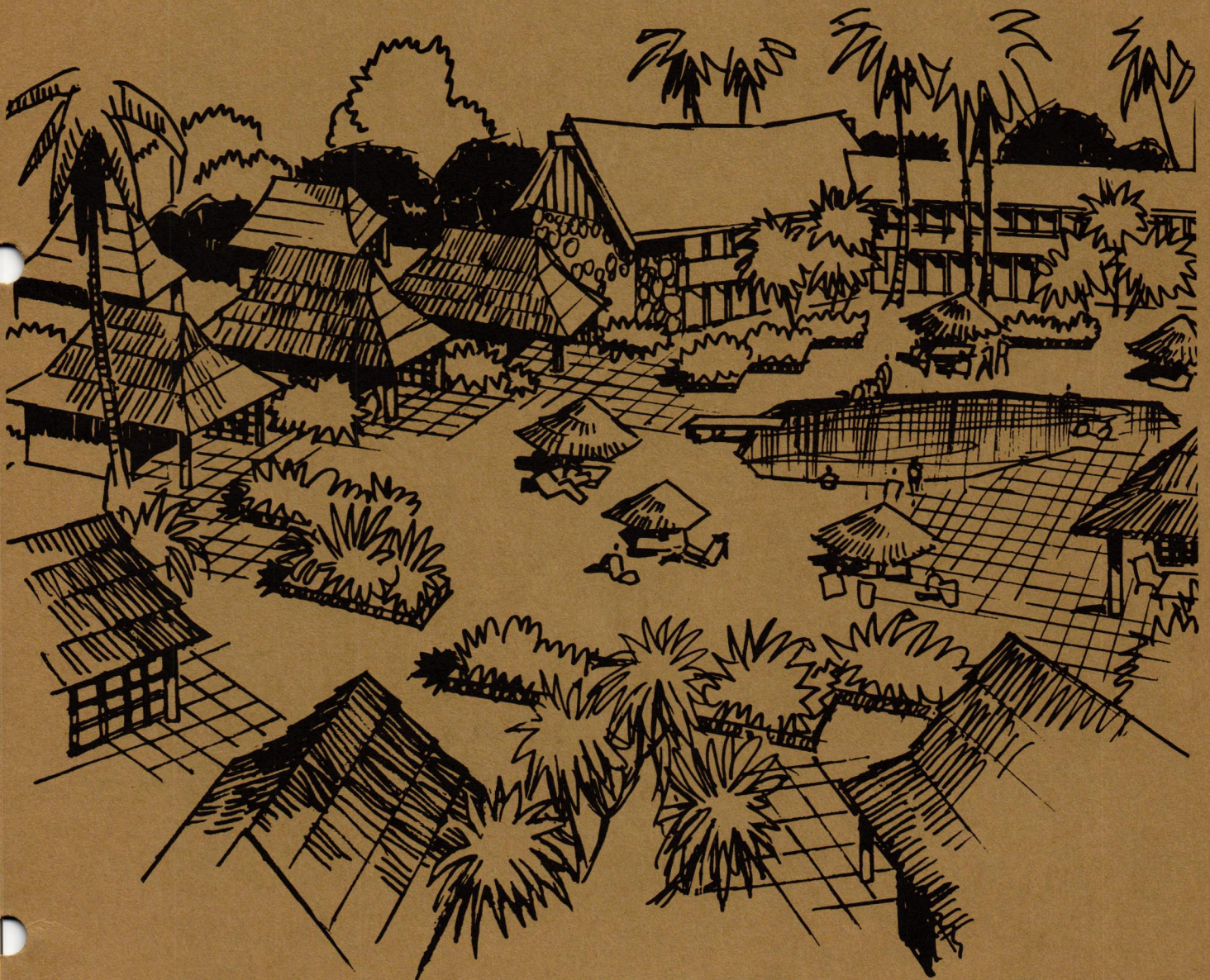
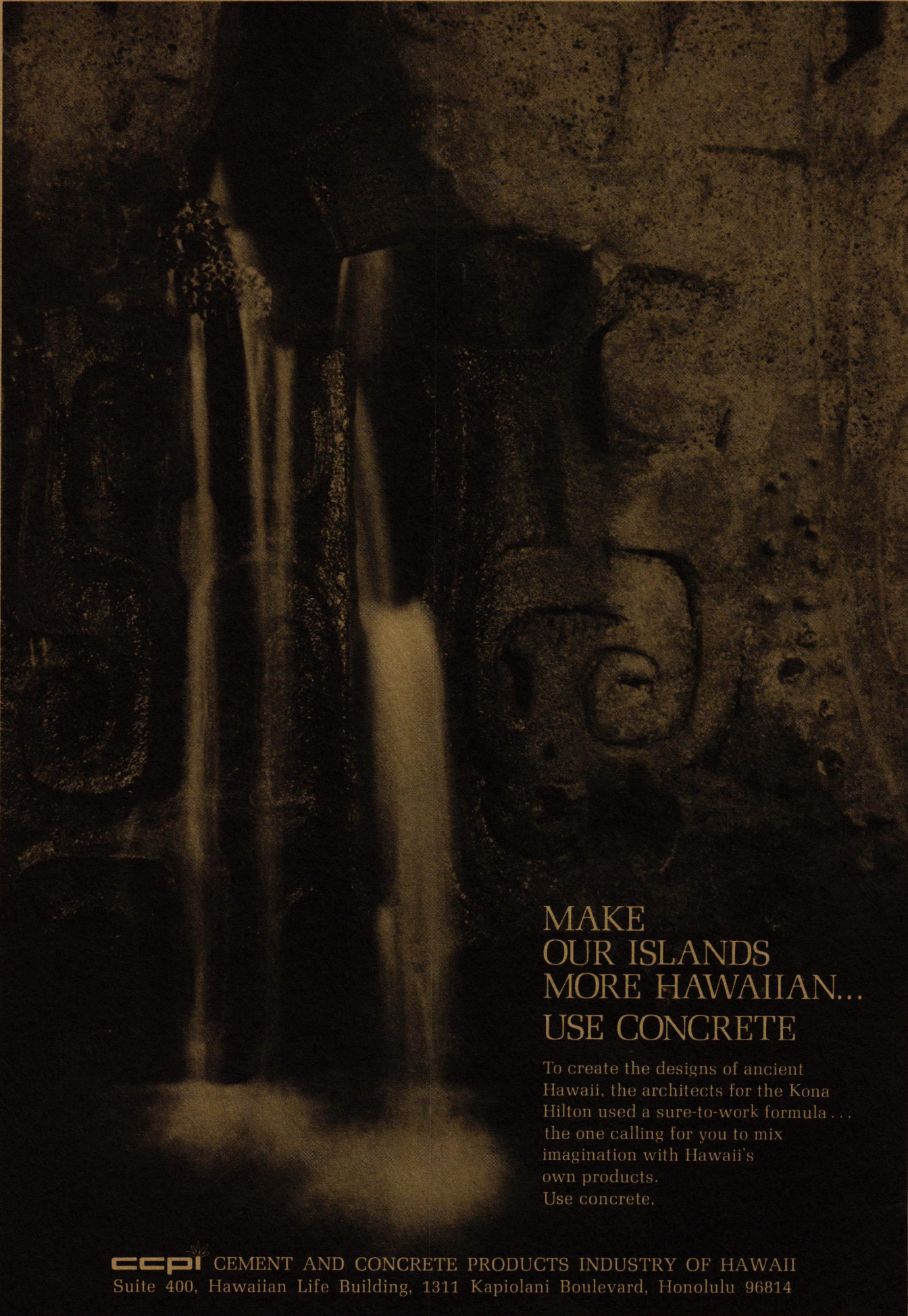


Ke Kaha Ki'i

OCTOBER, 1971

OFFICIAL PUBLICATION OF THE HAWAII CHAPTER, AMERICAN INSTITUTE OF ARCHITECTS





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HAWAII FIRMS

I. C.W. Dickey and Successors

by
J. M. NEIL

Though no one knows for sure, many people think that the oldest continuing architectural firm in Hawaii is that founded by Charles William Dickey in 1924. Certainly the firm has produced, over the years, some of the most notable designs in the islands. In addition, many local architects have worked in the firm for longer or shorter periods of time. Besides principals the list includes Douglas Freeth, Cyril Lemmon, Roy Kelley, Claude Stiehl, Thomas Perkins, Vladimir Ossipoff, Roger Benezet, Thomas Litaker, Ernest Hara, Ray Morris and Don Dumlao. Therefore, this series begins with "Pop" Dickey.

C. W. Dickey lived and worked in Hawaii long before he started the firm whose current name has recently become Onodera, Kinder & Zane. A lineal descendent of an early missionary, the Reverend William P. Alexander, Dickey first came to the islands in 1873 at the tender age of two. Returning to California for high school and then to M.I.T. for his BS in architecture (1894), he came back to Honolulu in 1895 and practiced until 1904. Then came a twenty year stint in Oakland, where Dickey gained a wide reputation for his school designs. But he did not forget Hawaii. He designed the Baldwin Memorial Church (1916) in Makawao, Maui while based in Oakland and possibly did other work in the islands. The first time he teamed up with Hart Wood came in 1919. Dickey & Wood is listed in both the 1919 and 1920 City Directories, with Dickey's residence as a boarder at the old Halekulani Hotel the first year. In 1924 he made his final move back to Honolulu. One more attempt at a partnership with Wood came in 1926, but that lasted for only a couple of years, possibly foundering in a quarrel over the plans for the Alexander and Baldwin Building (completed in 1929).

Prior to his death in 1942, Dickey gained many of the most desirable commissions available. Besides the many large residences so distinctive that the "Dickey roof" became a recognizable profile in Honolulu he did many larger structures: the Alexander and Baldwin Building, the Castle and Cooke Building, Queens Hospital, Halekulani Hotel, and the Kamehameha Girls' School, to mention only a few.

For most of those last eighteen years it was a one-man firm. James C. Simms came in as a draftsman in 1929, William D. Merrill (Dickey's nephew) in 1936, and Kenneth Roehrig in 1937, but the directories did not list them as "associate architects" until 1941. The fact that there were only a handful of architects in Honolulu during the 1930's and that Dickey was widely known and very popular among local social and business leaders meant that the firm definitely remained Dickey's show until he died.

Merrill, Simms and Roehrig continued the firm as C. W. Dickey Associates until 1948, when it took the name of the three principals. Incidentally, until 1959 the name of "C. W. Dickey Associates (Merrill, Simms and Roehrig)" was kept alive in the City Directories.

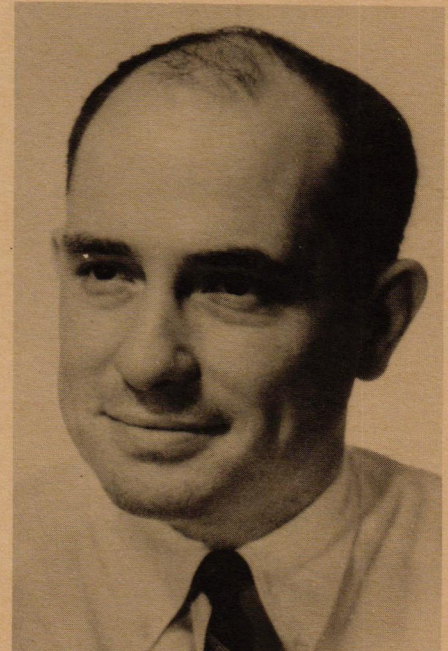
Dickey's first successors have many things in common with him. Born in Illinois in 1892 and trained at the University of California, Simms, like Dickey, worked for over twenty years as a school architect in California before moving to Hawaii. He served as president of the Hawaii Chapter of AIA in 1947. Merrill was born in Honolulu in 1909 and followed Dickey's steps of obtaining his education in California and Massachusetts (Masters degree in Architecture, Harvard) before returning to practice in Hawaii. Roehrig's background also showed some similarities to Dickey's: born in Oakland in 1907, educated in the Bay area (though completed at the University of Pennsyl-

vania), he gained substantial experience on the Mainland before coming to Hawaii.

C. W. Dickey Associates, like everyone else, had to make it through World War II as best they could. The firm did a lot of work for the military (until 1945 that meant virtually the only work available). During those years something of a pattern emerged in the way the principals worked together. Roehrig was particularly adept at making contacts and dealing with the public, Simms was thought to be one of the best specifications writers around, while Merrill preferred to concentrate on design.

After 1945 and until 1959 when Simms' death caused major changes in the firm, it set a pace that has basically continued up to the present. Strongly de-emphasizing individual houses the firm specialized in large structures of varied kinds and stylistic appearances. The excellence of the work is indicated by three AIA-Hawaii Honor Awards: Hawaii County Library (1956), C. S. Wo Building (1958), and the Bishop Museum Planetarium and Observatory (1961). Roehrig's own residence was recognized by the *Architectural Record* in its Record Houses of 1961. Other major examples of the firm's designs would have to include the HIC Concert

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Joe Farrell, President is on vacation this month. Look for his column next month.