

IOWA ARCHITECT



Iowa Chapter, American Institute of Architects



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in this issue of Iowa Architect.*

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* In Memoriam *

Karl Keffer has stopped practising Architecture and is now performing in the Elysian Fields where deadlines are unknown, and where there are no defaults, substitutions, or rejections. Karl had long pretended that he would retire in favor of a leisurely existence in Des Moines, California, and Minnesota; but he had led too active a life for that lessened pace to have fully gratified him.

His start in Architecture, in the early days of the twentieth century, took place at a time when youth was a serious handicap to acceptance by the public. His entire life was a struggle; first to overcome this drawback, later to execute the many commissions which came to him; for he always dominated the firm which he headed, and may be said to have been personally responsible for more school buildings than any other man in the state of Iowa.

He became a solid symbol of the successful architect. He responded to the need for maintaining the Profession by training in his office a number of men who are today practising on their own; and by contributing generous funds to the Department of Architecture at Iowa State College for scholarship.

He cooperated with fellow architects in causes where he could be most effective, such as the Legislative Committee and the Building Code Committee. He was always considerate of his fellow practitioners. His decisions on controversial matters were always considered fair by both clients and contractors.

Karl Keffer was never spectacular. He believed in sound Architecture and forthrightness in business and professional dealings. The Profession of Architecture, which necessarily must contain visionaries, will miss this sturdy middle-of-the-roader.

- By John Brooks

HERE'S HOW THE CANDIDATES FOR GOVERNOR
STAND ON ISSUES THAT WILL INTEREST YOU

* * *

Two committees representing the Iowa Chapter, A.I.A., interviewed Attorney General Leo Hoegh, Republican candidate for governor, and Polk County Attorney Clyde Herring, Democratic candidate for the same office, on Monday, Sept. 13.

The purpose of the interviews was to learn the candidates' views on certain issues that are important to the general public welfare and of interest to Architects.

Hoegh met the Architect's committee in the State House and Herring met the committee in the Polk County Court House. Both candidates received your representatives graciously and gave the impression that the visits were welcome and appreciated.

Each candidate answered identical questions put to him by the committees. Following are the questions and summaries of each candidate's answers:

What is your opinion of a State Building Code?

Hoegh said he feels Iowa should "catch up" with other states in the matter of a Building Code which, he pointed out, would be in line with current trends and would be no expense to the public. He feels it is one of the responsibilities of the State Legislature to "guide" the people in building. He favors a State Building Code, if not the one presented previously, then, at least, a revised version.

Herring said he favors a State Building Code. He agreed that the absence of a Code lets down the bars for poor design and structure. He feels a State Code would eliminate "confusion" and afford protection for the public.

What is your opinion of strengthening the present architect's licensing law to exclude unqualified persons from the practice of architecture, and to protect the safety and welfare of the public?

Herring said he recognized the right of architects, as well as of any other group, to protect their profession by means of strengthening their license law. He said he felt such a move would "rebound to the protection of the general public". He agreed that only registered architects should be allowed to practice above a certain level of building.

Hoegh said he believed the law should be strengthened, but that any change should not upset those now practicing. He pointed out that a poor professional man can hurt the public and that a practice law is essential. He said he felt a strengthened law would prevent a lot of harm to innocent persons.

(In answer to an added question, Hoegh said he felt the several thousand dollars in architect's annual registration fees now held by the state could be used to purchase an architectural reference library and supplies if the law is changed to allow such a move. He felt there would be no objection from the legislature to this use of the funds.)

Do you favor legislation that would provide state aid to communities unable to build needed schools, or, do you favor legislation that would increase limits of bonded indebtedness?

Hoegh said he is a strong believer in state aid to schools and feels additional money should be made available for education from state income and sales tax funds, because many now make no contribution to school support through property taxes. He doubts that state aid could be expanded to cover construction. He feels the State Legislature could not be led to appropriate money for construction. He feels school district re-organization should be encouraged and thinks raising the limits of bonded indebtedness "is absolutely necessary".

Herring charged that Iowa now ranks forty-fifth in the nation in the amount of state aid to schools. He accused the Republican administration of using sales tax funds for highways that should be used for schools and old age assistance.

He said the solution to state aid to schools may be in an over-all state millage which would be returned to the schools on the basis of average daily attendance.

He said he did not favor Federal aid to schools. "I know there is a tendency to look to Washington, but I think we have the potential here in Iowa to solve many of our own problems", Herring said.

Do you feel the State Interim Committee is usurping the powers of the State Board of Education?

Herring said he feels "there is no question that the Interim Committee is taking on the powers of the board of Education". He said the committee's system of audits and pre-audits "creates too many wheels within wheels in state government".

He said the state institutions should be allowed to "begin right now" to expand their physical plants in order to take care of the increased enrollments 10 or 12 years from now.

Herring called members of the State Board of Education "high-type individuals who should have the power to run the state schools".

(Herring then surprised his committee by asking: "What do you think of the appointment of a state architect?" The question had not been asked due to a feeling that the subject should not be brought to public attention until it seems necessary to do so.

(The architects told Herring they were, of course, against such an appointment. "It would begin a trend toward sterility", Ed. Wetherell told Herring. He pointed out that a private architectural firm must be efficient to survive while that would not be the case with a state architects office.

(Herring agreed. "I would not want to see all of our state buildings coming out of the same mold", he said. "We need so much new design and construction in our state buildings", he commented.)

Hoegh, in answering the question on the State Interim Committee, said he feels the committee "should not usurp the powers of the State Board of Education".

He believes the Interim Committee should locate emergencies and needs in state schools, provide guidance, and see that the institutions "get their money's worth". The committee should not control the board, however, he said.

Hoegh also complimented members of the board and said he felt the difficulty could be worked

out through an agreement between the Interim Committee and the State Board of Education.

Members of the architect's committee calling on Hoegh were Charles Silletto, Eugene O'Neil, Ames Emery, Wayne Lyon and Robert Savage.

Interviewing Herring were Ed. Wetherell, Charles Spooner and Bob Hullihan.

Beyond learning the candidates' views on several problems, this particular project had an important result in that it made both candidates for Iowa governor aware of architects as an organized group. Several members of the committees felt that the candidates had not been particularly conscious of architects prior to the meetings.

In addition, the comments of the candidates on the Interim Committee question were included in a news story which was printed by the Des Moines Register and carried by the state news wire services. The candidates' opinions on the state aid problem were incorporated in a second news story which has been mailed to papers out in the state.

* * *

ALVAH GAGE Alvah J. Gage, retired architect died in Des Moines early in September at the age of 81. Mr. Gage worked as an architect for 23 years in New York, N.Y., and in Des Moines. In Des Moines he was employed by Smith and Gutterson, and later, by Proudfoot, Bird and Rawson. Mr. Gage retired 23 years ago.

* * *

Stan Ver Ploeg, Secretary of the Iowa Chapter, was one of three judges who chose outstanding features in new Des Moines homes during the recent observance of National Home Week.

THIS I BELIEVE: The third in a series of articles in which members of the Iowa Chapter, A.I.A. express their convictions about the Profession.

* * *

"Do As I Say, Not As I Do"

By Leonard Wolf

If you will assume for a few minutes that all is well with Architectural education, we may proceed.

An Architect is a professional man. He is not an artist. He is not a business man. He must have some of the qualities of both. The Architect has responsibilities to his client, to the public and to the profession. Since he has certain responsibilities, he must have the authority required to carry them out.

The public is as understanding of the Architect and what he does as the Architect is of the public. What do we as Architects know about the man on the street? Very little I would say. How can we carry out our responsibility to the public if we don't know him? We should get better acquainted with our public.

The purpose of an Architect's Registration Law is to protect the public, not the Architects. Our registration boards have developed a somewhat reasonable procedure for determining technical competence. Further attention must be given by everyone in the Profession in developing ways and means for determining whether a candidate will conduct himself as a professional Architect and not as a business man or artist.

We need more Architects in Iowa. We have Architects in 20 to 25 of Iowa's counties. If we had Architects in 50 of Iowa's 99 counties, the public would be better served. It will take vigorous young men with a mission in life to establish some of these offices. Are you "old Timers" letting them get fat and lazy?

Our present supply of Architects skim off the cream of construction work in the state. It takes whole milk, however, to build sturdy bodies, good teeth and general good health. We as a profession, should have a hand in a larger and larger percent of the building construction in the state for our own professional health.

The client expects an Architect to see to it that his new building is designed and built so that the roof doesn't leak, walls won't have cracks, basement is never damp, and that all mechanical equipment works perfectly - regardless!

If an Architect successfully accomplishes the above and also has done an excellent job of planning and design - then the owner generally will want to take credit for the whole job. He generally will distribute a little credit to the Architect and others connected with the job from time to time. Even if the newspaper doesn't print your name - don't worry - your public relations are A +.

What we as Architects must do is get together more often, let our hair down, and pool our knowledge on how to prevent leaky roofs, cracked walls, damp basements and so forth. If we are professional men we must be willing to teach as well as learn. This is one of our responsibilities to the Profession. If we can get the problems like those above out of our hair, then more attention can be given to planning and design.

In our great desire for more recognition, we must never forget that our professional reputation and our public relations can never be any better than our work as planners and designers. The Architecture that we do can be our best public relations counsel.

* * *

The practice of Karl Keffer Associates will be continued by Waldo Dean and Thomas Atherton who, for many years, have been associated with the Keffer firm as architects.

A COMMENT FROM THE PRESS

ON CREDIT TO ARCHITECTS

Complaints from Chapter members that architectural firms often are not mentioned in news stories and pictures concerning new buildings led your public relations committee to question a representative of the daily press on the subject.

The City Editor of the Des Moines Register was asked: "Is it a policy or practice of the Register to delete names of architects from news stories?"

His answer: "Absolutely not." The editor explained that the Register considers the architect's name to be a part of any news report or picture on new construction.

The architect's name is left in the story if it is there in the first place, he said. But, if the architect's name is not in the story or report received by the paper, the paper will not go out of its way to dig up the name of the architect.

He was talking about stories that come to the Register from its part-time correspondents around the state. They may neglect to ask for the architect's name or the owner releasing the story may neglect to give it.

This information seems to indicate that architects will profit by gently schooling owners that the name of his architect is a part of any information he may release on the new construction.

Another approach would be for the architect to send material to the newspaper concerned (information on the building, pictures, etc.) with the request that the material be held pending an official release of information by the owner. The material then could be used as additional, helpful background.

BROOKS REPORTS ON

GSA ASSIGNMENTS

John Brooks, FAIA, returning from a recent trip to Washington, D.C., had the following information regarding future architectural work to be assigned through the General Services Administration.

About all architectural work under control of GSA will be farmed out to private architectural firms. The work will be assigned to a firm in the area in which the work is to be done, and when it is necessary to assign architects to a job, all firms in the area will be circularized regarding the size and qualifications of their organization.

Concerning recent news items about the combined Council Bluffs Court House and Post Office, Brooks said nothing has been done about selection of an architect as the Act concerning the work was not passed until late July which left no time for Congress to approve specific projects. Nothing will be done now until late January, 1955, when Congress reconvenes and the specific project is approved and the Director of Budget assigns the money.

As soon as the Council Bluffs job becomes a project it will be determined what is a logical area for selection of an architect. The area will not include Omaha or Nebraska. The architectural firms will be circularized when the time comes.

All communications with GSA prior to that time will become dead paper to clutter files. Big jobs will be assigned to large firms and smaller jobs to smaller firms, Brooks said.

* * *

Congratulations to William Lockard (and Mrs. Lockard!), Decorah, on the birth of their son, Abram William, late in August. Proud pop broke the happy news by posting a sign in front of his office and the Decorah newspaper dropped around to take a picture...