

Chicago's New Building Code—What It Aims to Accomplish

In the lay minds of interested Chicagoans, the impression seems to prevail that the existing code is responsible for the high cost of building, and that consequently the Commission for Revising the Building Code of the City of Chicago has essentially one responsibility: to frame a code which will remove this obstruction to a revival of the building industry.

The facts are that a number of factors enter into the cost of building construction, one of which is the steady rise since the beginning of the century in the cost of both labor and materials. Another factor is the increase of new conveniences, new requirements, higher standards and added comforts, the luxuries of yesterday having become the necessities of today. From now on certain types of buildings to be up-to-date must be equipped with air conditioning, increasing the cost of construction and maintenance. A building code may be a factor of the increased cost of building, if it is out of step with the times or indefinite in its requirements. Considerations of the cost of building are not properly the concern of a building code, the purpose of which should be to set forth the minimum requirements for safety to life and health.

We examined the most recent codes of other leading cities to acquaint ourselves with contemporary works but did not find one which we could use as a model or build upon. We have, however, been greatly assisted by the United States Bureau of Standards, the National Fire Protection Association and the American Society for Testing Materials, through their publications of data procurable only by organizations equipped as they are.

The Commission came to an early agreement that we would have to start at the ground and work out our own salvation and solution to the problem. A building code is essentially a work of reference in daily use, which should be drawn with the subject matter in systematic and logical arrangement. Its arrangement and index should be such that any requirements, no matter how small, can be readily located. A chapter of definitions to define the peculiar usage of certain words in the code is also thought to be necessary.

The exercise of discretionary powers by various departments of the City, has been a source of some trouble and misunderstanding due to omissions from the code. You may have gone to the City Hall for a permit and have had an official or employee tell you that his department would tell you what to do or what not to do, based on published or unpublished rules and regulations of the department in question. Our counsel informs us that decisions of the Illinois Supreme Court have declared invalid the use of discretionary powers without certain definite, fixed, rules and regulations to direct the department heads. The heads of departments in the City Hall are not to blame for this need for the exercise of discretionary power, which is disliked by them as much as it is by the building industry.

The new code will provide for the organization of a Bureau of Standards and Tests, with authority to test any new materials and methods of construction which may be submitted by an applicant. This bureau may also on its own initiative make tests of new materials, methods and arrangements of construction, whenever in the judgment of the bureau such test or examinations are warranted.

The purpose of the code is to safeguard the life, health and welfare of the public, as expressed under the caption of Title and Scope, the first chapter of the new code as follows:

"The following provisions shall be known as the Chicago Building Code. The purpose of this code is to provide minimum standards, provisions and requirements to insure safe and stable design, methods of construction and use of materials in buildings

or structures hereafter erected, constructed, enlarged, altered, repaired, moved, converted to other uses or demolished, and to regulate the equipment, maintenance, use and occupancy of all buildings or structures. In interpreting and applying the provisions of this code such provisions shall in every instance be adopted for the promotion of the public health, safety, comfort or welfare."

A building code should not presume to design a structure, and our new code is not intended as a textbook, nor does it attempt to limit the architect or engineer in the fullest expression of his art. For instance, the location of stairs and exits may frequently determine the characteristics of a plan. Our chapter on means of exit in the General Provisions attempts to give the architect latitude in planning the location of exits, but with greater safety to the occupants provided by fire-resistive stairs and inclosures.

We are especially indebted to a number of nationally known experts in their own lines, who have been willing to give their time and assistance. We have had six technical experts from New York City and other eastern points, who gave their time and paid their own expenses to Chicago and return.

Some other building codes have attempted to follow occupancy classification and others have classified buildings by types of construction. The viewpoint of this Commission from the beginning has been that the logical classification should be by occupancy conditions; consequently, our code is constructed about such classifications in occupancy chapters as follows:

SINGLE DWELLINGS; MULTIPLE DWELLINGS (including hotels, apartments and homes for children or aged); HOSPITALS; BUSINESS UNITS; CHURCHES; GARAGES; THEATERS; SCHOOLS; PUBLIC ASSEMBLY UNITS; OPEN AIR ASSEMBLY UNITS; HAZARDOUS USE UNITS; OTHER BUILDINGS AND STRUCTURES.

A separate chapter is devoted to each occupancy classification with a full statement of the provisions applying to each. The chapter entitled "Hazardous Use Units" is to include such building requirements as have been previously in the Fire Prevention Code, applying to construction of buildings, tanks and other structures.

Following the occupancy chapters of the code, the General Provisions treat of such elements as may be common to more than one class of occupancy, including chapters on frontage consents, general construction, room sizes and capacities, fire areas, means of exit, lighting and exit signs, windows and skylights.

Following the General Provisions, a part treating of the types of construction will set up seven distinct types, viz: fireproof, semi-fireproof, heavy timber, ordinary, non-combustible frame, unprotected metal, and wood frame construction. Two chapters will embrace new provisions for fire-resistive ratings of walls, partitions, floors and fire protective coverings, and fire-resistive ratings for all types of fire doors, referred to throughout the code in terms of fire-resistive values.

The Structural Provisions with standard engineering requirements, including new provisions for steel welding, bar joist and other types of floor and roof construction and chimneys.

The Mechanical Engineering provisions cover the construction and operation of elevators, escalators, mechanical amusement devices, refrigerating and air-conditioning systems, and ventilation of all types of buildings.

The proposed ordinance, though double the size of the existing code, is as short as consistent with completeness.

—F. J. Thielbar, Chairman, Commission for Revising the Building Code of the City of Chicago.

February and March Illinois Society Meetings

On February 26, a day of snow storms, stalled automobiles and deep, wet sidewalks, occurred the monthly meeting of the Illinois Society of Architects at the Architects Club of Chicago. Its comparatively small attendance was manifested by second and more portions offered at the excellent dinner where creamed onions had to make round after round.

The subject of the evening was "Home Heating—Shall it be by Coal, Gas, Oil or Electricity?" President Elmer C. Jensen was in the chair.

Mr. Fuller, substituting for T. A. Marsh, engineer with Iron Fireman Manufacturing Company, held out for coal. H. B. Johns of Peoples Gas Light and Coke Company championed gas, W. A. Matheson of Williams Oil-O-Matic Heating Corporation held the torch for oil, while J. W. Stribling, engineer from the Schenectady office of General Electric Company demonstrated that electricity was the fuel of the future.

Mr. Fuller spoke for coal used with automatic stokers. He was convinced that coal firing by hand was inefficient; that better combustion was had through the use of mechanical stokers. Coal leaving the mines is of clearer and better quality than formerly. Such coal is washed and the washing has been brought about through enforcing smoke ordinances in cities. Only five minutes per day is required to remove the clinker. The discussion covered varieties of coal and a description of different automatic stokers.

H. B. Johns described the latest types of gas heaters, their cost and convenience. First came the conversion type of burner for installation in any boiler or furnace. Its demerits were frankly pointed out. Then followed other and higher types of gas furnaces. Gas was claimed as economical when used in conjunction with units functioning alternately as heating as well as air conditioning units. Gas fuel deteriorates brick flues as it does glazed terra cotta linings. In the gas company's experiments with metals, stainless steel has been found to resist deterioration as flue lining. The average cost for such a lining in a dwelling house chimney is \$50.00. The cost of this fuel was claimed to compare favorably with other competitive fuels. The season's fuel cost is in direct proportion to the temperature per day of the heating season. January is the heaviest month in this latitude. Fuel consumed in January is 20% of the season's fuel consumption. The speaker claimed that gas fuel cost is on a downward trend.

W. A. Matheson was the Bourke Cochran of the evening. Some men are born orators. He said oil burners were in a bad spot today owing to the black eye received through improper installation. That oil is not applicable in every case was freely admitted. In an oil consuming apparatus, the flue capacity is of the same importance as is the case with coal. Better insulation of houses for more perfect heating plants is essential. Oil burner design fifteen years ago was far from perfect. To prove the far-reaching application of oil heat, the speaker claimed eighteen billion gallons of fuel oil were consumed in the U. S. last year, while but sixteen billion gallons of gasoline were consumed by automobiles.

J. W. Stribling was impressive through his complete familiarity with electricity and how it may be expected to serve mankind in the future. Heating by electricity is still in its infancy. Interesting experiments are under way. With a decrease in cost of electric current, more uses for it are found. Why use electric heat? It is clean, safe, space saving, does not rob the house of oxygen, control is flexible by means of thermostats, requires no attention, and in quantity production it is not expensive. To compare—an oil installation costs \$1200 where an electric installation to do the same work costs \$750. Rates for electricity as low as 1c or even $\frac{1}{2}$ c per kilowatt hour are to be expected. In the Tennessee Valley, there is a rate of .64 cents per kilowatt hour. Types of electric heating are: reflector, central unit in basement and panel heating, developed in England. The latter seems to have great possibilities. It consists of a metal sheet secured to the ceiling and decorated if required. The sheets reflect heat electrically. The system is reversible for refrigeration or heat. It takes heat out of the outdoor air, which has latent heat. Such an experimental installation by the General Electric Company exists at Atlantic City. The present rates in Chicago

for electricity place electric heating beyond competition with other methods.

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The first escalator ever built and run for public use was in the Paris Exposition of 1900 and this escalator is still running but now in a Wanamaker Store in the U. S. A. So stated H. H. Dahlman, statistical and traffic engineer of Otis Elevator Company. He was speaking at the monthly meeting of the Illinois Society of Architects on March 26.

This first escalator was of the Seeberger type. In rapid development came the Reno or incline step type and the third and present day type is the cleat step type. This latter machine is built reversible. Mr. Dahlman read a paper replete with statistics gleaned through laboratory experimentation, actual experience with finished escalators, and research. All travel statistics, as he called this precipitation of knowledge, collected by Otis Elevator Company through thirty or forty years, are available to architects without cost.

Some high points of his address were: that an escalator requires the space of three elevators and does the work of twenty; that the escalator brings the traveler to his destination in shorter time than rapid running elevators, for with elevators waiting time at landings consumes more time than actual travel, while with the escalator there is no waiting since it is in operation all the time. The elevator costs just twice as much as the escalator, capacity considered. Location with reference to entrance doors and sales departments in a multi-storied store is an all-important consideration in the installation of escalators. The escalator makes second stories particularly attractive for banking quarters, leaving the ground floor available for stores producing higher rentals.

The London Tube is served at stations with escalators moving more rapidly than American codes permit. The New York subway is likewise equipped with escalators.

Balustrade design in wood and modern rustless metals is now made to conform to the interior of the building invaded. This is just another way of saying that the architect has all the freedom he may wish to make the escalator conform in beauty and harmony with his interior.

Charts, diagrams, photographs of escalators in many countries of the world, installed by Otis Elevator Company, placed along the walls were used to illustrate Mr. Dahlman's presentation.

February and March Chapter Meetings

One hundred thirty men assembled at the Architects Club of Chicago on February 12 to attend the February meeting of the Chicago Chapter, A. I. A., to listen to Angelo R. Clas, Assistant Director of Housing, and Alfred Fellheimer, Consultant to the Director of the Housing Division of PWA, Secretary of the Interior Harold Ickes, Administrator. The subject announced was "The PWA Sample Plans."

Before introducing the subject of the evening, President E. S. Hall had Secretary Heimbrodt read a letter from Earl H. Reed, announcing that the Government had re-established in the Northern Illinois Division for a period of four months the Historic American Building Survey.

A guest of the evening was Miss Katherine Bauer, author of a new book, "Modern Housing." Miss Bauer was introduced to the company.

The president called on F. J. C. Dresser, Associate Director of Housing, who said Chicago still lacked a proper real inventory survey in the field of housing. A movement was under foot to supply this. At an earlier meeting Mr. Dresser had pointed to Cleveland as a model for other American cities to follow in this respect.

Angelo R. Clas, Assistant to Col. H. B. Hackett, Director of Housing, introduced a paper in his address in which Administrator Ickes was quoted on the fundamental ideas underlying the housing proposed by the Federal Government. Mr. Clas' address was long, explaining organization of the Housing Division, the number of employees in Washington at its start and at present, and many statistics. From his talk it is gleaned that eight limited dividend projects have been approved and most of these are under way;

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Editor Monthly Bulletin

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Committee on Public Information

E. S. HALL, CHAIRMAN, TIRRELL J. FERRENZ, ARTHUR WOLTERS DORF

Who are the best men to lead the architectural profession out of despondency to the position of authority and effectiveness it rightfully claims? This is the subject discussed today wherever architects foregather. A national figure is sought, an architect equipped by education, training, experience, having contacts with men of affairs in private and public life, a man of culture and distinction, possessed of leadership, yes—generalship.

This man is wanted in the presidency of the American Institute of Architects. To fulfill the hopes of the architectural world, he must have an executive committee of forceful, clearheaded men with professional ideals.

The profession in and out of the Institute looks to these men for the revival of the practice of architecture to its best estate.

The election of these officers at the 67th convention of the American Institute of Architects at Milwaukee, Wisconsin, on May 28, 29, 30 and 31, 1935 may mark the beginning of a new epoch in the evolution of architectural practice in America.

The March "American Architect" presents Editor Betts' views on the future of architecture and the architect. In the fewest words he tells the whole story. Architecture's objective—shelter for man—remains the same through the ages. The basis of practice, says Mr. Betts rightly, is today what it was in the days of Ictinus, Wren, Bulfinch.

Straight thinking is imperative. Pessimism must not replace optimism. More and varied materials, infinitely more complications through modern requirements, call for skill and ingenuity on the part of the architect never thought of in the past. Let him show his talent—his genius. The time is at hand.

Casson Wrong on British Housing

The Editor: I am always interested to receive the Illinois Society Bulletin and grateful for being kept for some reason or other on its mailing list. I, therefore, came across in your February-March issue Mr. Matteson's letter to the editor on "Housing in Great Britain." I was interested in this letter because it was carrying into the columns of the Bulletin the same false impression of the facts that the original article by Mr. Casson carried into the columns of "Nation's Business."

When I read the article in the Nation's Business, I brought it to the attention of Sir Raymond Unwin who happened to be in Boston at the time. His characterization of it was quite definite and unmistakable, and his remarks, made not only to me but to the audience at the public library, which he was addressing for the City Planning Board, made it quite clear that the statements in Mr. Casson's article were not only in some cases incorrect but in other ways tended to give the reader a completely false impression of the picture. From his very direct statements it was clear that if there was one thing in England that all political parties and practically all persons were agreed upon, it was upon an aggressive housing policy by the Government; that every party in the House of Commons is now clamoring for greater activity on the part of the Government in solving the housing problem. He made it clear to the audience, to which I had just introduced him, that Mr. Casson had failed to make clear certain definite differences in the costs of the dwellings built by the British municipalities and those built by private enterprise. The average cost of dwellings being built by their municipalities is now \$1500 and with the cost of land and development expenses added, the total cost per family is about \$1750, which is little more than half the lowest cost mentioned by Mr. Casson for the houses built by private enterprise.

I understand, on good authority, that the houses which are built by British municipalities are let at rents of around \$8.75 per week, including local taxation. Even these rents are more than the people needing houses can afford, but private enterprise has proved quite unable, for obvious reasons, to approach these figures, and it is notorious, I am informed, that the municipal houses provide ampler accommodation and are better built than a large proportion of the cheaper middle class dwellings erected by speculative builders.

The fact that there is a building boom in England is known by every one and is due to the actual shortage of housing accommodations. It appears that about 25% of the houses built in recent years have been built by municipalities and that this activity meets the needs of people not served by private enterprise and does not in any way interfere or compete with the activities of private builders. It appears to be the case, in England as it is here, that private enterprise never has served and cannot conceivably serve the families in the lower-income groups who cannot pay an economic rent for houses built for a profit. It appears that during 1934 the municipalities built about 44,000 houses and have in hand the erection of some 300,000 more to replace slum dwellings which they have undertaken to clear under schemes approved by the Minister of Health.

All this is prior to the present legislation which Mr. Matteson refers to which is aiming at putting a further necessity upon the municipalities to extend their housing activities by making it illegal to overcrowd existing buildings with people. This appears to be a serious condition, and its cure will necessitate the provision of a very large number of additional houses.

The false impressions conveyed by Mr. Casson's article were called promptly to the attention of the President of the Chamber of Commerce of the United States last October by a number of different people who pointed out to him what in substance I have stated in this letter.

The problem of housing is difficult enough with nothing but clear statements of facts before us. When incorrect statements or statements conveying a completely false impression of the facts are distributed through various magazines, it only adds confusion to the inevitable difficulties of the problem. In order, in some degree perhaps, to offset the impression that may have been conveyed to some of your readers by Mr. Matteson's communication, I trust you will be willing to print this letter in your next issue.

—William Stanley Parker, Boston.

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MR. MATTESON'S REJOINDER: Mr. Casson, editor of the London "Efficiency Magazine," is a strong advocate of keeping the government out of business. Some of his statistics may be in error, but to me his economics in this regard seem sound. As applied to the problem in America, this means that the Federal Government should confine itself to its fundamental purpose and strict constitutional limitations. Of recent years there seems a tendency to stretch too far the constitutional provision "for the common welfare."—Victor A. Matteson.

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that the Government goes through 457 operations in checking and putting through each housing project under PWA.

Alfred Fellheimer, remembered in his profession as the architect of successful railway stations and terminals, whose pièce de résistance is, perhaps, the Cincinnati union railway station, now functions as consultant to Col. Hackett on housing. Mr. Fellheimer spoke with pictures thrown on the screen.

The stereopticon views began with blighted area pictures. Then came sample or unit plans submitted to the Division by architects from many parts of the country. Immediately following each submitted plan came the same plan altered and improved by Division architects. Mr. Fellheimer made clear that the Division's re-studies were not necessarily final; that architects appointed locally for individual projects were invited to study and improve upon the Division's plans. The number of square feet per unit was stated with each picture. It appears that the Division authorities consider 200 square feet per room, gross, about the right area for an apartment. This area is called economical.

The Porto Rican Government had requested the Housing Division to make a plan for rebuilding the shore line at San Juan now occupied by slums. Mr. Fellheimer threw on the screen the plan with drives and utility buildings submitted by the Division. This was followed by reels of slums and wrecking in different American cities, all more or less alike. A film of European housing was to be shown, but the lantern operator had neglected to bring it.

The Federal Housing bureaus, whether PWA, FHA, subsistence homesteads, or whatever, should begin to realize that endless pictures of slum and blighted areas in American cities presented to architects in their meetings are beginning to pall; that architects are presumed to know—and it is fair to assume that they do know after a five year Period of Suspension—what slums and blighted areas look like in practically all American cities.

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"For Chapter Members Only" said the notices of the March 12 meeting of the Chicago Chapter. And so it was a family meeting of the Chapter to discuss intimately subjects uppermost in the architectural mind at this moment. President Hall called for reports from chairmen of no less than eight committees. These were received with interest and discussed.

H. Van Buren Magonigle's much discussed criticism of the men and measures dominant in the A. I. A. for the last few years was referred to when candidates for the national presidency were presented. These candidates were measured with the Magonigle yardstick.

Ten delegates and twelve alternates were elected for the forthcoming A. I. A. convention in Milwaukee, May 28, 29, 30 and 31. President Hall pleaded for the largest possible attendance at this convention from the membership of the Chicago Chapter and advanced the thought that this year's convention would be epoch-making in the life of the Institute.

Secretary Heimbrodt read a report of the action of the Chapter in the matter of the last service rendered an old colleague in the passing of Frederick H. Dinkelberg. Resolutions on the death of Samuel N. Crowen were adopted.

Portable Houses in Ancient Egypt

Wooden houses were used by wealthy chiefs. The planks, about 12 to 14 inches wide, and 6 or 7 feet high, were set upright, overlapping so as to form a panel-pattern; being lashed together at the edges, the over-lap was kept close, and slid to and fro, as the night dews or scirocco expanded or contracted the wood. The doorways were all along the sides, so as to give plenty of air when still and warm. They projected into the hall, and so left sleeping spaces between each, where the chief's followers could sleep as a guard around the hall. When the inundation came, the whole house could be moved up on to the desert in a day, and set up again; when the spring pastures were green, the house could be moved down among the reed huts of the shepherds. This pattern of house gave rise to the copying of the external panelling in brick-work for the "eternal house" of the dead chief, a pattern which lasted down to the XVIIIth dynasty.

—From *Social Life in Ancient Egypt* by W. M. Flinders Petrie.

Real Property Inventory 1934

The final Real Property Inventory (1934) for each of 64 selected cities, and a General Summary, including data for the 64 cities combined are ready for distribution by the Bureau of Federal Domestic Commerce, Washington, D. C. The survey was restricted to family dwelling units and excluded hotels, clubs, rooming houses and the type of house known as a "summer cottage." Individual city reports: 10c per city. General Summary: 10c per copy. of 64 cities and General Summary: \$5.00.

The Land Use Survey of Chicago is a modification of the Real Property Inventories, made in 64 cities last spring. It will include: (1) a land use survey; (2) an inventory of buildings; (3) a financial survey. The Federal Housing Administration, in cooperation with the FERA, however, is planning to expand its house-to-house canvass in some fifty cities so as to duplicate the RPI taken last spring. *Metropolitan Housing Council News Letter.*

William D. Gates was laid to rest at Crystal Lake, Illinois, the presence of a large cortège of men of the building industry and art craftsmen. He had reached the more than allotted span of a demise, for he died at the age of 82 on January 28. He was known to the architectural world as a dreamer who put his dream materials of clay. He was the father of Teco, a green glazed pottery much admired and bought. As founder and president of American Terra Cotta and Ceramic Company, he built up a large circle of acquaintances in the profession.

Born in Ashland, Ohio, Mr. Gates came with his parents to Crystal Lake as an infant and made that his home for a lifetime. His education was obtained in local schools and Wheaton Academy. He graduated in law and practiced for two years. Then he turned to the fabrication of clay into pottery. In 1887 he founded the American Terra Cotta and Ceramic Company whose plant is located at Terra Cotta, Illinois, a suburb of Crystal Lake. Always interested in fine craftsmanship, his achievements in this direction brought him a medal at the St. Louis Exposition of 1904 and the Craftsman Ship Medal of the American Institute of Architects in 1928. He was a founder member of the National Brick Manufacturers' Association and the American Ceramic Society, in both of which organizations he served as president. He was a frequent contributor to the literature of the art of the clay-worker. His unflagging idealism and human interest brought him an ever increasing host of friends and admirers.

Frederick P. Dinkelberg, retired member of the A. I. A. in the Chicago Chapter, died in Chicago on February 10, aged 76. A widow, 72, survives. The deceased leaving no funds, the Chapter assumed all responsibility and made all arrangements for the funeral. To Carl E. Heimbrodt, Secretary of the Chicago Chapter, the profession locally is indebted for handling this matter with human sympathy and efficiency.

Mr. Dinkelberg was born in Lancaster, Pa., graduated at Pennsylvania Academy of Fine Arts and moved to New York City where he became identified professionally with such men as J. Pickens Putnam, Clarence Luce and Hughson Hawley. He was employed by Charles Clinton, an early New York skyscraper architect. New York he shared offices with and was a close friend of Charles B. Atwood.

Mr. Dinkelberg's career may be said to be contemporaneous with the skyscraper office building from its early development to its culmination in the late '20's. He came to Chicago about 1900, entering the employ of D. H. Burnham & Company. Credit is given him for the designs of the Flatiron Building, New York, Railway Exchange Continental-Commercial Bank (now Edison Building), the Conway Building, Marshall Field & Company retail store annex—all in Chicago; Wanamaker's in Philadelphia and a large office building in Pittsburgh. D. H. Burnham & Company and Graham, Anderson, Probst & White were the architects for these structures.

In independent practice under the firm name of Gaiver Dinkelberg he carried out the Jewelers Building in Chicago (now known as the Pure Oil Building), Norwegian Hospital and Murphy Memorial Hospital, both in Chicago.

Bert C. Hubbard, a member of the Illinois Society of Architects since February 1920, died on March 19, 1935. He was a member of the firm of Jobson & Hubbard until the death of C. Frank Jobson in 1925. Thereafter he practiced under his own name. For the past three years he was manager of the Chicago office of the State Architect. A widow and five children survive.