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Washington Merry-Go-Round

The Seventy-First Convention of the American Institute of Architects

In high hopes for a truly international gathering, the seventy-first Convention of the American Institute of Architects was scheduled to coincide with the Fifteenth International Congress of Architects in Washington. The opening day had almost arrived when, due to current events, the Congress had to be cancelled and the schedule of the Convention rearranged. The blow fell hardest upon the twenty or thirty foreign architects who were en route when the word was sent out. For them was left only a skeleton of the social program and the doubtful pleasure of attending the business sessions of the Institute. Many A. I. A. members were disappointed that none of the themes scheduled for discussion by the Congress were presented to the Convention.

Our hosts, the members of the Convention committees and of the Washington, D. C. Chapter, had arranged splendid entertainment. The social whirl began on Sunday, September 24, with a tea at Dumbarton Oaks in Georgetown and a reception opening the exhibition of The Architecture of the Americas at the Corcoran Galleries, and it continued long after the closing session with an excursion to Williamsburg and various functions in Washington and New York.

A number of interesting exhibits in addition to the one at the Corcoran were arranged by the various governmental agencies, showing work done by the Office of the Supervising Architect, the Government Housing Program, and the National Capital Park and Planning Commission. An arresting display was also prepared by a group of the younger Washington architects to point out some of the weak spots in the grand plan of a large city and to urge the architectural profession to take the leadership in attacking city plan problems yet unsolved. Here is a challenge that might well be taken up by Chicago architects as it applies to their city.

For members of the Chicago delegation the visit to the Capital offered the added pleasure of again meeting with the group once facetiously known as the Washington Branch of the Chicago Chapter. Among those who now seem more at home in Washington than in Chicago are Messrs. Blouke, Cheney, Colean, Dunning, Ferrenz, and Klaber.

Washington weather was unusually hot, as perhaps it always is in September, and one wished for the cooling comfort of a linen suit and a tall drink. While the latter was to be had barely outside the doors of the Convention room, custom decreed that dark business suits were in order. The heat was entirely forgotten, however, under the spell of President Maginnis, whose charm, wit and tact made even the most routine proceedings quite delightful. May we all have his mellowness of character and distinguished appearance as the years pass on us!

The annual meeting of an organization of such broad scope and wide geographical distribution must necessarily devote a great amount of time to reporting the work accomplished by the numerous committees that shoulder the load of Institute business during the other fifty-one weeks of the year. Approval or disapproval of this work must be shown and instructions must be given for the following year. This procedure at times seems very slow and ineffective. Some matters do seem important enough to warrant immediate action. A sign that this view is held by many was the applause that greeted one young Chicago visitor who claimed the floor and said in effect, "Must we go back and report that the Convention has accomplished nothing?"

The report of the Committee on Federal Public Works was a fair example of the vast amount of work done during the year by the committees and especially by their chairmen. Charles Butler, heading this committee, has been constantly suggesting the advantages of employing private architects to the heads of the numerous bodies engaged in public works. Various bills introduced in Congress during the past session indicate a growing appreciation of the value of the services of architects engaged in private practice. On the other hand, a warning was given of the increased activity of state and municipal architectural bureaus and the general trend towards bureaucratic practice of architecture in the larger centers of population. So far there is little evidence of concerted effort to counteract these tendencies. More active participation in civic life was suggested as the one hope of the architect if he wishes to have sufficient influence to keep this work in private practice.

Mention was made of the danger of government withdrawal of regional competitions for public buildings if architects do not show more interest. Analysis showed that the inducement to enter such competitions is not as great as it might be. To make them more attractive to members of the profession, two proposals were made. The first was that the chosen architects be allowed more authority in the preparation of final drawings and in supervision of construction. The second was that others than the one prize winner be put on a preferred list or given a chance of obtaining commissions on work of a similar nature.

John H. Carmody, the new administrator of the Federal Works Agency, present to hear the Federal Public Works Committee's report, made a short but impassioned plea for the help of the architects in eliminating the inefficiencies and incongruities of the construction industry and in the reduction of building costs.

The Committee on Education at one of the most inspiring sessions of the Convention announced the retirement of five of its "hard-drinking, poker-playing, vile old men" and expressed the wish that younger men would be appointed to take their places. C. C. Zantzinger presented what, to architects, were amazing figures to show the scope of the Committee's work. During the last fifteen years the Carnegie Corporation has made available to the A. I. A. over $160,000 for the training of teachers of art and art appreciation in the colleges and universities of the country. Announcement was made of the Corporation's final grant of $50,000 for this purpose.

Royalties from the sale of Henry Adams' "Mont-Saint-Michel and Chartres" now amount to $17,000; the proceeds to be used biennially to enable a young professor of architecture to do research work in some subject that held the

interest of the late Henry Adams and is absorbing to the recipient.

One of the measuring sticks of architectural education, the list of accredited schools, has become so obsolete that the Association of Collegiate Schools of Architecture has set about to prepare a new accredited list. This action brought two questions before the Institute, both of which could be given much consideration: 1. Is accrediting a good thing? 2. If so, how can accrediting best be accomplished?

The Institute was urged to continue its wholehearted support of the National Council of Architectural Registration Boards and of the Mentor System, which was defined as "doing what architects have always done; taking young men and advising them and helping them to become our competitors." Tribute was paid to Emery Stanford Hall as "the boy who put it over" and a rousing acknowledgment was given Mr. Hall who, in spite of recent illness forced himself to attend some of the meetings.

Registration laws were passed during the year by Arkansas and Alaska and seven of the eight states still without such laws are attempting to pass them. Assistance and advice of the A. I. A. is being given wherever possible.

Housing, having been placed in such a prominent position on the program of the previous convention, was given a lesser but still important place this year. William Stanley Parker for the Committee on Housing brought out several pertinent thoughts. Since the problem of really low-cost housing has not yet been solved, the adoption of rigid types and set precepts in housing was condemned as restricting further original thought in a field where advantage must be taken of every opportunity to reduce cost.

High costs of housing material and labor reared their ugly heads again at this point and found many on the floor to do battle against them. There is strong individual feeling on the subject of building costs and the underlying reasons for them, but only great wisdom, tact, and fearless concerted action will provide a remedy. The matter of labor relations was considered of sufficient importance to place in the hands of a separate committee and it was suggested that it be made the theme of the next convention. Architects and their clients have been kicked in the solar plexus so much that they should not hesitate to tread on somebody's toes in attempting to dispose of the "inefficiencies and incongruities" of the building industry which Mr. Carmody mentioned.

It was gratifying to hear that definite steps have been taken by the profession and government agencies to put small house and remodeling work in the hands of architects. Max Dunning told of the Federal Home Building Service Plan which has offered in behalf of some 375 independent architects a modified architectural service available at a fee commensurate with the means of home buyers of small and moderate incomes. Reduced fees are made practical by the repeated use of the same plans; there is absolute insistence on architectural supervision where such is available.

The Convention was also appraised of the fact that the HOLC has been engaging independent architects to supervise all but the smallest of its repair and modernization jobs. These small items add up to an impressive total when it is considered that most of the 140,000 homes acquired in the last three years have had to be reconditioned, repaired, or modernized.

The Convention, by unopposed action on a resolution, recognized the importance of broadening its professional representation and at the same time maintaining its high ideals. Details were left to the Committee on State Organization which has already done much to bring the Institute and the state societies closer together. As an indication of the trend, it is interesting to note that at the time of last year's convention there were fourteen state societies, four of which were affiliated with the A. I. A. Today the state societies number twenty-seven and of these sixteen are affiliated or in process of affiliation. It is expected that the Board of Directors will submit a program of unification to the 1940 convention for action, this program to be based on the findings of the Institute committee working with a committee from the State organizations.

The office of State Association Director was officially written into the by-laws, thereby giving the state association members a voice in Institute affairs between conventions.

An effort is being made to alter the character and scope of the official Institute publication, "The Octagon," that it may be made more interesting to the profession outside of the A. I. A. This movement has the support of the state societies and any suggestions for such revision are earnestly solicited by the committee appointed to revise The Octagon.

One of the most satisfying tasks of each succeeding gathering of the architects is the honoring of those who have made such contributions to the profession, and through them to society, that they rise above the heads of the rest of us who still walk with the mortals.

Honorary memberships were conferred upon two men who in widely divergent manner have helped the cause of architecture in America — Everett H. Crosby, for his work in connection with the restoration of Nantucket Island, and Nathan Straus, for all that he has done to eliminate substandard housing and to foster a real housing program for the nation.

To Louis Madelaine of France and Henry M. Fletcher of England were given Honorary Corresponding Memberships. Seventeen Fellowships were awarded and it was with great pleasure that the Chicago delegation heard the names of Pierre Blouke and Eugene Klaber read with citations listing their accomplishments in the field of housing.

Election of officers and directors resulted as follows: Edwin Bergstrom of Los Angeles, Cal., President; Dean Walter R. McCornack of M. I. T., Boston, Mass., Vice-President; Charles T. Ingham of Pittsburgh, Pa., Secretary; John R. Fugard of Chicago, Ill., Treasurer. Newly elected regional directors are: Gordon Kaufmann, Los Angeles, Cal. (Sierra Nevada Dist.); J. Frazer Smith, Memphis, Tenn. (Gulf States Dist.); Benedict Farrar, St. Louis, Mo. (Central States Dist.); Professor Rudolph Weaver, Gainesville, Fla. (South Atlantic Dist.); Alfred Shaw, Chicago, Ill. (Illinois-Wisconsin Dist.); Leigh Hunt, Milwaukee, Wis., State Association Director. Five other directors carry over.

No convention report would be complete without brief mention of the trip to Williamsburg which followed immediately upon the closing of the Convention. Just at dusk on Thursday, about 160 of the members and guests sailed down the Potomac. As the boat passed Mount Vernon, the searchlight swept along the tree lined bank until it picked up the dim white form of the plantation house. Suddenly floodlights were switched on and for a brief moment we had a fairy glimpse of what might sentimentally be described as our best loved building. After a delicious dinner and a night spent on bunks measured for Lilliputians, we arrived at Old Point Comfort for breakfast and a bus trip through old Yorktown to Williamsburg.

There the day was spent going through the restoration

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Coordinating with the Seventy-First Convention of the American Institute of Architects occurred the two sessions of the state associations of architects, the first on September 24, the second on September 25. About fifty representatives of these societies and associations from all over the land attended. Leigh Hunt, state representative on the A. I. A. Board, presented his report on the 24th. Both affiliation and unification were discussed under Chairman Fugard and Vice-Chairman Holmes.

At the second session the Illinois Society of Architects was represented by Woltersdorf, Llewellyn, Ferrenz, and Palmer. The resolution passed by the I. S. A. Board of Directors on society delegate representation in the Institute was presented, slightly amended, and carried for presentation before the A. I. A. Board.

The question of a separate and distinct national organization was again brought up. The concensus of opinion, however, again held that one national body, framed into the existing A. I. A., had decided advantages over two national bodies.

In the Institute Convention a committee composed of three A. I. A. directors and three state association men who are A. I. A. members was created with instructions to report to the Institute Executive Committee before the next convention. This committee shall also present their plan to the chapters and state associations and register the views of these bodies.

It was settled that the next A. I. A. convention shall be held in the Middle West, the place to be determined later.

Dean Rexford Newcomb of the Department of Fine Arts, University of Illinois, in his illustrated lecture on architecture in America, devotes a section to the efforts of the Chicago School. Within the last five years the American Museum of Modern Art has collected much material on the Chicago School and published it in pamphlet form. Last June Dr. Giedion, 1939 Norton Lecturer in the Harvard School of Architecture, spoke in Chicago on the Chicago School. Dr. Giedion roused local interest in this subject and because his treatment seemed not entirely adequate, the Bulletin is moved to present in this issue what may be considered an authoritative presentation of this local architectural history.

Mr. Hugh M. G. Garden, who writes the article, was an early and prominent leader among the Chicago School designers and his essays as a practicing architect of those principles mark him as an authority on this subject.

The Bulletin is alive to its responsibility in presenting from time to time the history of movements in architecture that have occurred in Chicago and the State of Illinois. The libraries and architectural schools who bind and preserve the Bulletin look to it to present source material in this field for architectural writers. An instance of this is the article about the building of the town of Pullman (June-July 1934 Bulletin), written by Irving K. Pond, who was first assistant to S. S. Beman, architect for Pullman, when this town—the first industrial housing project of note in America—was projected.

Professor Talbot Hamlin writes in August "Pencil Points" on "Some Restaurants and Recent Shops." His penetrating analysis of architecture and his criticism are always interesting. In this article appears a statement on remodeling that deserves iteration and reiteration until the remodeling architect is roused to his responsibility toward the public in what he may be called upon to perpetrate for a grasping and taste-lacking client.

Mr. Hamlin says, "Surely the architect of any building alteration must consider the old portions of the building he is altering as an essential part of his problem. That this is not always done can be seen again and again in our city streets, where the architectural forms on an existing building are mutilated and cut through in any old way, without any regard for the final total effect. Thus, when the Straus Building was altered, the alterations merely cut off the old great Corinthian columns at middle height, leaving the upper halves as poor forgotten elements above. Now, the old front may not have been an architectural masterpiece, but it did have consistency and a certain brutal magnificence of pattern. What one gets today is merely an ill-digested absurdity."

Every American city offers architectural horrors of this sort. There is an instance in Chicago's banking section. The Chicago National Bank Building in Monroe Street, later known as the Central Trust Company Building, with its carefully designed classical facade with pedimented portico, done in the first decade of this century by the architects Jenney and Mundie, is now a garage. A granite front perhaps twenty feet high stretches across the lot at the street line; openings disregard the ordonnance of the old facade which appears above; the old facade is decapitated in that the entablature has been removed, exposing the columns and pilasters with a ragged and broken architrave; a piece of unforgivable architectural criminality.

From here perambulate two blocks east to State Street, Chicago's premier retail district, and see how structural lines of taller buildings are entirely disregarded by the remodeling tenant and his architect in the slapping of plate glass, marble, bronze, and what have you, across the front, letting twenty stories and more of building appear to the eye to hang indiscriminately in the air unsupported.

How absurd for architects and others to talk of the beauty of architecture, of our city streets, when such crimes pass unnoticed and the building owner permits tenant alterations to destroy all architectural decency.

Hardwood trees, such as oak and beech, are more exacting in the soil and micro-organisms needed for their growth than are cone-bearing trees.

Illinois Society September Meeting

The first monthly meeting of the Society year fell on September 19 and was freighted with the unconventional from beginning to end. Instead of meeting in a club or restaurant in Chicago, the Illinois Society of Architects—by prearrangement of the Program Committee—took chartered busses at 3:30 P. M. in Chicago and sallied forth to the number of 58 to the Wisconsin city of Racine, where they were to be shown through the best advertised building in America, conceived and designed by the world's most talked of architect. At Racine the Chicago contingent was supplemented by those from other cities, making a total of 66 members.

Wisconsin adheres to standard time by state law, so the arrival at Johnson Wax Company's new office building occurred at 4:30 P. M., and for an hour and a half the members were interested, surprised, puzzled, and amused. While being conducted through this new office building, designed by Frank Lloyd Wright, they asked many questions, saw the joining of materials in new and, perhaps, questionable ways.

They beheld, first of all, on the exterior a fortress-like structure without windows or portholes, whose walls—they learned later—were four inches thick on the outside of face brick with concrete backing, about two inches of insulation, and again four inches of masonry and concrete on the inside, a total thickness of ten inches. They saw exterior offsets in masonry between stylobate and shaft, and again, crowning the shaft, offset with cornice and roof falling back to what may be called an attic story, all of glass tubing set horizontally in mastic and wired together, looking from a distance for all the world like sheet aluminum. They saw the much heralded flower-stem column with flaring heads like morning glories, tied together to their neighbors with narrow concrete tie beams, leaving the concave squares or diamonds open to be filled with the aforementioned glass tubing. They viewed the general office with its office desks, posture chairs, waste paper baskets, all designed by the architect. They saw the gilded birdcage elevator enclosures with cylindrical elevators. They walked over glass tubing in the floors. They visited the ladies' powder room in the basement and observed the nifty fittings and stall enclosures of the toilets. They wondered why a chromium bar extended over the bowl parallel with the back wall at about 4′-6″ height. They visited the assembly room, private offices, lunch room, handball court, parking spaces sheltered by a domed concrete ceiling, and had many questions to ask of the Johnson Wax Company's chicerone. They thought of the probable action of materials assembled and joined in a never-before-tried way, the upkeep cost of the building, and its probable life. They learned from the chicerone that the advertising value of the Johnson Wax Company's sensation in building is so great that the company can afford to write off the entire cost, running about $1,000,000, in a very limited number of years.

The heating of the building is by concealed steam pipes under the concrete floor. The female help in the offices were quoted as saying that the heat of the floor, never exceeding 80 degrees and held between 70 and 80, is always pleasant and when they go outdoors, they feel that they are walking barefooted.

The questions arising in the minds of the visitors were endless and cannot be pursued further here. About six o'clock Wisconsin time, the busses carried the company to Hotel Racine where a fine dinner was served and the regular meeting followed.

President Gerhardt introduced the new members, as well as the Racine architects who had come to welcome the Illinoisans. Secretary Fairclough read the minutes of the June meeting held in the Real Estate Board rooms. The President explained the meaning of references in the minutes to affiliation with the A. I. A. and on delinquent members. A resolution to amend the by-laws, giving the Board of Directors more power in dealing with delinquent members, was put and carried. This amendment is:

"The Board of Directors shall from time to time post on the bulletin board of the Society, the names of all delinquent members, and may, at its discretion, notify the members of the Society by publication in the Bulletin of the Society, or otherwise, the names of those delinquent members who have been expelled for failure or refusal to pay their indebtedness to the Society."

A. Reyner Eastman of Rockford, Illinois took the floor to invite all the members of the Society to attend the statewide meeting of the Society to be held in Rockford on October 14.

The finale of the evening was the address, or better, the answers to questions put by members to Mr. B. E. Wiltscheck, the builder of Johnson Wax Company's now famous office building. The work was done on a cost-plus basis. Interesting, indeed, was the information gleaned on how a designer-genius supplies information to the builder so that the genius' ideas may be carried out, lacking all system of procedure, rules of operation, checking and verification. Frank Wright was again pronounced a pioneer.

The members piled into their chartered busses for a two hours' ride back to Chicago, the ride furnishing an opportunity for quiet reflection and wonder. Some wondered whether the definition of architecture should not be modified to mean building to serve modern advertising needs, to be thrown on the scrap heap after a year or two or five, when the novelty shall have worn off and the cost of the building has been returned to the owner through the sensation he has created.

We all remembered the much advertised pictures and verses of Phoebe Snow who rode the road of Anthracite and never got a speck of soot on her immaculate dress.

Come to I. S. A. Rockford Meeting

Rockford, third largest city in the State of Illinois, has been selected for this year's statewide meeting place of the Illinois Society of Architects. It is situated within 18 miles of the southern boundary of the State of Wisconsin and was named for the shallow bottom ford used by the early Galena and Chicago Stage Coach line. Rockford is the seat of Rockford College, founded in 1849, it being the second oldest women's college in the United States and the Alma Mater of the late Jane Addams.

Rockford can attribute its growth to its natural resources, water power and fertile prairies. It was once a central location for sawmills, which contributed to Rockford's present leading industry—manufacture of fine furniture. "Furniture in relation to architecture" is the theme of the meeting's after-dinner talks.

Frank I. Johnson, the dean of furniture designers, and Ernest Swartz, an outstanding younger designer who will illustrate his talk with drawings in color, have been secured by a very active local committee headed by Frank A. Carpenter and assisted by Gilbert Johnson, Raymond Orput, and A. Reyner Eastman. They have selected Hotel Nelson for general headquarters, where room-rates are $2.50 for single and $4.00 for a double room. A business meeting, found so interesting to members who attended the Champaign meeting, is again planned for the early afternoon, followed by a tour of the city.

For Sunday morning after breakfast, a tour is being planned to Stronghold, the estate of the late Walter Strong, publisher of The Chicago Daily News, thence to White Pines Forest State Park Lunch at the Lodge. Return to Chicago will be via Dixon and Oregon.

The Illinois Central R. R. time-schedule fits our wants best to Rockford. It has a train leaving Chicago at 8:30 A. M. and another at 3:10 P. M. The 3:10 train reaches Rockford at 5:14 P. M., leaving ample time to prepare for the 6:30 dinner. The fare is $1.72 one way, or $3.30 round trip. The trip to Racine on September 19 by chartered bus having proved satisfactory and pleasant, the same means of travel to Rockford is under consideration. The same busses would be used for the Sunday morning tour to Stronghold and return to Chicago. Complete details will be given in the announcement which will be sent out at an early date.

—Leo J. Weissenborn

Be on the lookout for your notice of the Illinois Society's November 28 meeting in Chicago. The program will include a symposium on the Chicago School of architecture. Leaders in this movement forty and more years ago, still alert and active, will take part in this discussion.

Messrs. Dark and Grey point out that John Vanbrugh was knighted "generations before (Gilbert and Sullivan), but this honour came to him on account of the hideous architecture that survives in Blenham Palace, and not for his licentious plays."

Chicago Chapter September Meeting

The first monthly meeting of the Chicago Chapter, A. I. A. year occurred on September 11 with 25 men present (20 members, 5 guests). They met at Normandy House for dinner and after dinner the meeting, though small, was serious and much of importance was discussed. The invitation called it a pre-Convention meeting, but things other than pre-Convention business were taken up. In the absence of Secretary Senseney, Vice-President Loebl read the minutes of the June 13 meeting held at Lake Zurich Golf Club.

President Roberts, in welcoming Irving K. Pond back after an accident and protracted confinement in hospital and home, felicitated him on his splendid appearance and vigor. Then Mr. Roberts turned to the subject of reorganization in the A. I. A. The Chapter's vote on the question of admission of the Illinois Society as an affiliate to the A. I. A. was 91 in favor and 8 against. The names of three newly elected Chapter members were announced.

The question of fledgling architects without practice, without placement, was reported upon by Jerrold Loebl. To keep these men interested in their profession, to get them acquainted, encourage enthusiasm and camaraderie, the newly created atelier is felt to be essential. Paul Schweikher has been elected director of the atelier, with twenty-one young men now members.

The President reported on the architects' ball — Architects' Ball, Inc. is the official name. Past performances were reported on, the financial incompetency of the last effort in the Drake referred to, and the ball for next winter heralded with enthusiasm. Cooperation was asked. The beneficiary of the ball will be the atelier.

John R. Fugard announced that the 15th International Congress of Architects, earlier announced for Washington, D. C. beginning September 25, has been officially cancelled by the President of the United States. The reason—tumult in Europe. The A. I. A. Convention, however, will not be interfered with and an attendance of 1200 architects is expected in Washington. Fifteen state organizations have affiliated with the Institute. There are in existence thirty state organizations. The complete A. I. A. corporate membership at this time is 2,969. There are 14,800 practicing architects, according to latest figures. Members of state associations and societies want better representation.

President Roberts broadcast the invitation of the Philadelphia Chapter, A. I. A. to traveling architects to stop in Philadelphia and taste the hospitality of that Chapter.

The President suggested that the Chicago Chapter extend an invitation to the A. I. A. to hold its 1940 Convention in Chicago. Carl Heimbrodt put the motion to the meeting and it was carried.

Thomas E. Tallmadge, chairman of the Pre-Convention Committee, in a self-depreciatory vein pictured himself in past conventions as a picket without, rather than a delegate within the hall of the convention. He announced that the Chapter was notified from Washington that it was entitled to one additional delegate because of the unexpected good standing of the Chicago membership in the payment of dues. He spoke on state association representation. Victor Matteson, F. A. I. A. and a director of the Illinois Society of Architects, stated that the present representation of one delegate to every 250 state association members was unsatisfactory and that the I. S. A. directors had endorsed his plan in principle, namely, that state society representation in the Institute be calculated on the same basis as in the Chapters, with the Institute members in the state societies remaining uncounted; this to apply only where practice and ethics standards are on a par with those of the Institute. John Fugard warned against pushing any change in representation too fast. He thought five years should be allowed to iron out all the differences. I. K. Pond held that the question of representation should be left with the A. I. A. and not forced by state societies. John Fugard said that the urge for affiliation came from within the A I. A.; that the urge for unification came from without the A. I. A.

Pre-Convention Chairman Tallmadge posed the question what to do to revive the building industry generally. His view was to ask for Federal action to overcome the lag in the building industry. The meeting did not support him in this. President Roberts asked the Chapter on this question to endorse the resolutions passed by the Regional Convention of Architects at Notre Dame University on June 23 and 24. These resolutions are printed on page 24 of the August 1939 "Octagon." A resolution to endorse was put and carried.

Carl Heimbrodt spoke at length on that old vexed question — the small house, meaning one whose cost is below $7,500. He is testing out a plan on a limited service basis.

The meeting adjourned at 10:30 P. M.

School of Design Begins New Semester

The School of Design, 247 East Ontario Street, Chicago, which embodies the principles and educational methods of the Bauhaus founded in 1919 in Weimar by Dr. Walter Gropius, opened its fall semester on September 26. In addition to the full-time course for day students seeking training in architecture, landscape architecture, town planning and scientific subjects, the night school classes offer a program of activities from 6:30 to 9:00 o'clock. The night course includes a choice of drawing and color work, photography, basic workshop, lettering, modeling, weaving.

Members of the faculty and associates will give a special lecture course for educators in all fields, covering a variety of subjects. The dates of these lectures have not yet been announced.

L. Moholy-Nagy is Director of The School of Design.

The Passing of Irving K. Pond

Irving K. Pond, nestor of the architectural profession in Chicago, journeyed to Washington on September 21 to meet his many friends from all over the United States assembled at the 71st Convention of the American Institute of Architects. He carried his eighty-two years very well. It was a surprise to many of these friends to find him looking so well after his automobile accident and months of recuperation in a hospital and at home. He was seen at social functions and Institute sessions on September 25, 26, and 27. On the 28th he felt ill, stomach ulcers that had troubled him periodically through his mature years again making their presence felt. On that day he took a cab from the Willard Hotel to Emergency Hospital for treatment and on September 29 at four o'clock in the afternoon, he died.

On Saturday, September 30, a funeral was held in Washington with about fifty in attendance, the officers and directors of the A. I. A. being honorary pallbearers. The body was cremated and the ashes taken to Ann Arbor, Michigan, Mr. Pond's birthplace. A funeral service will be held in Ann Arbor in the near future.

Memorial services are planned to be held in Chicago, where the many organizations in which Mr. Pond played an important part, will participate. The time is not yet fixed.

For a brilliant decade, from the year of "Pinafore" to the year of "The Gondoliers," the life of the country is set to the music of the country; on a middle plane, to be sure, but on a plane of genuineness that will long survive both the era of its florescence and the self-conscious dignity of works composed in the illusion that grandeur and dullness are synonymous.

—From "The Story of Gilbert and Sullivan" by Isaac Goldberg.

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buildings. W. G. Perry, senior partner of the firm in charge of the restoration, accompanied the groups and passed charming and invaluable comment on matters of architectural interest with which no ordinary guide would have been familiar. The work has been done with a scholarly approach that amazes even the most skeptical. Nor is it just a lifeless archaeological restoration, since such engineering problems as supporting new superstructures without disturbing old walls were met and solved. One thought can well be carried away from Williamsburg by traditionalist and modernist alike: if we can solve our problems as successfully as did the architects of Colonial Virginia, then those who come after us and view our work may yet be proud of it.

—W. Lindsay Suter

The Chicago School

By Hugh M. G. Garden

In this fast-moving age the "Chicago School" is almost forgotten and recent press and platform statements showing a lack of understanding of the part played by Chicago architects in the initial days of what is now variously called the "Modern Style," "Functional," "International," etc., and which now sweeps the world like an influenza epidemic, seem to justify a short review of those days following the invention of the "Skyscraper" in Chicago when Chicago architects pointed out the way for all who followed them.

The Editor of the Bulletin has asked me, as an eye-witness and participant in those activities, to undertake such a review.

There exists in the souls of all designers of buildings a restless urge to give their designs some quality of arrangement which they can recognize as "art," and this urge results in what we call architecture. Not content with mere functional building, the architect insists that his productions shall express his own conception of what is orderly, proper, and—he hopes—beautiful, or at least good to look at. In this urge he is abetted by those he builds for; for all people seem to feel the need for beauty in their habitations.

Through the ages this has resulted in some astonishing performances which at times have crystallized into what we call "styles" and their subdivisional "periods".

From time to time changes in living conditions or in methods of construction have brought about a radical and sometimes abrupt change in design with some fragments of preceding fashions lingering over to cloud the new expression. Such an abrupt change was the introduction of steel as a principal material for construction of walls, displacing solid masonry and opening up to the architect the possibility of wide-spanned openings and slender vertical supporting members. The invention of the elevator or lift as a quick and fatigue-saving means of vertical communication, added to the use of steel, made possible a vast increase in the height of buildings and a more intense use of small portions of land.

The aesthetic expression of the new construction, while swift to make its appearance, was not immediate and many of the facades of the early experimental buildings of the late seventies and eighties, although often more honest in expression of skeleton construction than many later buildings, were appallingly crude.

This crudity was made clear to Chicago architects when Henry Hobson Richardson of Boston erected for Marshall Field the large wholesale store building (the site is now a parking lot for automobiles) in Chicago. This structure, although traditional and of solid masonry construction, was a highly original example of the regularity and simplicity of pure masonry design for which Richardson became famous. It pointed a way to all American architects toward simplicity and swept into the discard the multitude of meaningless gew-gaws that had survived from the Victorian Gothic revival that preceded it.

To Louis H. Sullivan of Chicago, it opened a new road from the strange but interesting originalities he had been perpetrating and down this path he quickly advanced to the development of the brilliant personal style for which he has become famous.

The Museum of Modern Art of New York has recorded this development in their "Exhibit of Early Modern Architecture, Chicago 1870-1910," and has established the chronology of the development with short biographies of the leading architects and illustrations of the principal structures with comment on each. To this excellent bit of work I am indebted for many of my facts which might otherwise remain controversial and from it I quote the following to make clear what is meant by the "Chicago School":

"The influence of Sullivan's style was so great that it attracted a group of young architects who formed under his leadership the Chicago School.

"The free non-traditional architecture of the Chicago School retained its vigor until about 1910 when the stylistic revivalism which had made its first striking appearance in Chicago with the World's Fair of 1893 vitiated its force."

From the same source I also quote the following:

"Sullivan led for two decades a considerable group of architects known as the Chicago School, but he alone made of the early skyscraper an aesthetic invention."

The tall commercial building was the outstanding contribution of American architects in the second half of the nineteenth century.

It emerged gradually, following a number of technical developments preceding the year 1880. These included, in the fifties, the first use of metal to replace masonry bearing walls; the introduction of elevators, making multiple stories possible; methods for fireproofing metal structural members and the development of effective pier foundations; and, to quote again from my previous source:

"Finally in Chicago, by the late eighties, the protective masonry shell came to be carried entirely by the metal framework in which Bessemer steel replaced cast and wrought iron. The skyscraper, imminent for more than a generation, thus became an actuality."

Thus the invention of the skyscraper furnished the spring from which the Chicago School flowed as the nucleus of a stream of modern art expression that flows world-wide and architecture was, I think, the first of the arts to respond to the modern urge as distinguished from traditional art.

For the Chicago School was not concerned exclusively with the designing of skyscrapers and, with the possible exception of Sullivan, its members were not especially conscious that they constituted a "School". The name, as I remember, appeared first in the architectural press of the day and may have been coined by Montgomery Schuyler or Russell Sturgis or another of the editorial writers and critics of the East. Also, the Chicago School included many men not resident in Chicago. But it was definitely Midwestern and its center was in Chicago.

In 1880 Leroy S. Buffington of Minneapolis, inspired perhaps by ideas of Viollet-le-Duc, and undoubtedly conscious of what was going on in Chicago, had dreams of metal "cloud-scrapers" and through the versatile hands of his designer, Harvey Ellis, an artist of the first rank, produced a design for a multiple story, castle-like office building in the Richardson manner which formed the basis of Buffington's claim that he was the inventor of the skyscraper. It was an effective design, as was everything that Ellis produced, but was considered a dream and went not much farther than the publication of the drawing.

In like manner, there were men in St. Louis, St. Paul, Indianapolis, and others in Minneapolis as well as farther west, who were quick to see the opening through which poured the light of freedom from traditional restraint.

The great flood of architectural publications, which in the succeeding years of stylistic revivalism made every architect's library a prerequisite to practice, had scarcely begun and in consequence the architects of the Chicago School, books being scarce and the money to buy them as scarce, were only too glad to forget about precedent and proceed quite naturally to make their own designs as Sullivan urged them to.

It was Sullivan who invented the slogan "Form must follow function," and the young architects about him understood easily enough what he meant and went confidently on to create new forms as each problem demanded. And they did this without conscious thought that they were doing anything extraordinary.

The continuous horizontal window, since rediscovered in New York with much acclaim for originality, was actually produced in Chicago, not only by Sullivan (who in fact did not at first make them quite continuous but merely narrowed the dividing piers) but by several others in the ordinary course of practice, quite without thought of any epochal significance.

Thus in 1907 a factory building requiring continuous work benches under the windows was designed with continuous horizontal windows as a matter of course.

This inconspicuous structure, scarcely noticed then or now, has found an honored place in the Museum's exhibition of significant structures with the following critical comment: "This factory has real architectural quality based only on the character of the ferro-concrete structure. At this early date a factory at once so simple and so well studied in its proportions was unique."

Mention of ferro-concrete in the above suggests that in considering the problems of the new construction, ferro-concrete, which followed rapidly on the heels of steel, is but steel in another form in most of its applications. Of the new possibilities opened to the designer by ferro-concrete in applications peculiar to itself, I shall have no space in this short story to speak. The sequence is obvious and not essential to a record of the Chicago School.

Louis Sullivan was, of course, loud in proclaiming his "New Deal" in architecture and was echoed by his immediate pupils; but the others of the Chicago School were less vociferous and I think less conscious of their importance—which is as it should be.

In the light of later days and larger undertakings, it is seen that not much of the work done prior to 1910 was important and before the assault of the wrecker and the alterer, an appalling amount of it has disappeared along with its authors. But its significance as an aesthetic expression at a time when American architecture was emerging from chaos into a definite trend remains at least in the minds of a few white-haired old gentlemen.

That large and expensive buildings growing more or less old fashioned should be destroyed as a relief from high taxes is a phenomenon of American cities. The wiping out of the capital investment and the conversion of their sites to parking lots or other taxpayers seems a strange loss of wealth, not only to their owners but to the taxing bodies that caused the destruction. At any rate, this trend, particularly in Chicago, is the cause for the disappearance of many interesting if unprofitable buildings, many of them examples of the work of the soon-to-be-forgotten Chicago School. The automobile, besides throwing all city plans out of joint, is responsible for many changes and today the old-fashioned buildings go and in their place the "parking lot" reigns supreme.

I shall not attempt to record the names of the men composing the Chicago School, except its founder, because I would almost certainly forget some of them, which would be unfair.

There is, however, one other who has played an outstanding part in the movement who, because he is still living—very much so—and because of some peculiarities and antagonisms, I shall refer to as "Hamlet"—a pseudonym that will be transparent enough. It is necessary to mention him, for how can there be anything to Hamlet without HAMLET!

But this is the story of the Chicago School and the book says that, except for a few brief years while wings were sprouting, he is not to be classed with the Chicago School or with Louis Sullivan, but is one apart, alone, a great triumphant star of the first magnitude. And in truth he is a great star, a great artist, possessor of —everything; determined, too, that all shall know it, without either false or real modesty. As he strides down the aisle toward the dais, the spot-light knows instinctively which way to turn, and turns.

But he *is* a great artist.

Equally at home as architect, as Master surrounded by his pupils, as lecturer or debater on the platform, or as author with pen in hand, Hamlet stands alone and confident, a magnetic personality. Possessed of an erect, trim figure with good square shoulders—despite his more than sixty years—a leonine head of white hair, a vibrant voice and a nimble wit, he asks for no sympathy or affection from his brother architects and, alas, gets none or little.

But he *is* a great designer.

Like all great designers, great artists, he makes his design from the instinct that is within him and then invents a beautiful theory to go with and explain it. And it is certain to be a perfectly splendid theory even if you know it is an afterthought. Also he has an excellent sense of humor, can laugh at himself and so is to be forgiven a great deal of buncombe. The balance, that you feel you cannot forgive, you must for he *is* a great designer.

He is, of course, a supreme individualist and egoist. Ruthlessly so, for he knows no other way but his own and will admit none.

Also he is a showman. The printed page and the center of the stage are for him and, like all showmen, he requires an audience. If there be none, he will find a way to attract one and, like that other great showman, he believes that there is a prospective client born every minute.

He gets about too, as he must to keep up the supply of audiences; the Orient, Europe, are as much his stage as is his native land. Recently he has completed a group of lectures before the Royal Institute of British Architects. And, if one may judge from the reviews, he has "mowed them down" in London as he has elsewhere.

If we may judge from past performance, there will be a sharp upcurve in Britain of a certain type of design, which imitations will fall far, far short of the work of the one and only Hamlet.

In his itinerant showmanship he has perhaps made his greatest, if inadvertent, contribution to Modern Art. For he carries and sows the seed—good sound seed too—of basic honesty in design that Sullivan taught. He is a prolific and indefatigable worker. From his facile mind and pencil flows a stream of fresh and beautiful designs. Too often they have the same quality that distinguishes a certain musical composition called "The Flight of the Bumble Bee," which serves as medium for the technical display of skill by violinists and, to my mind, establishes a new "low" as music. There is too often an insistent buzz to Hamlet's work.

I have described a great artist, but I have not yet called him a great architect. I do so now. His influence has been tremendous and it has been, on the whole, good.

From the score of years when Sullivan dominated the architectural scene in Chicago, the heyday of the Chicago School, the sound of his words and deeds passed first to Europe and remained there to come back to us later as an echo, scarcely recognizable, of functional architecture.

It is to be remembered that until Sullivan spoke, architectural chaos and revivalism were practically world wide and that after he had spoken his message was heard in Europe, the very seat of eclectic architecture.

In Holland, in France, in Austria, in Germany, in Finland and the Scandinavian countries and in Italy, men began to discard their textbooks and dare to make their own designs. The best of them admit their debt to Sullivan and the Chicago School. But it is inevitable in any art that no artist can long endure the acknowledgment of his debt to anyone. And so we have a score of new genii who proclaim themselves the anointed sages of the great new art.

But I think that without Sullivan and the Chicago School, we would never have had that glorious "second prize" design in the competition for the building of the Chicago Tribune by Eliel Saarinen, a design that completely revolutionized architecture in America, that completely won over the winners of the Tribune competition and made them followers of the author of the second prize design, and that brought to an abrupt stop the ascendency of the stylistic revival.

Mr. Saarinen is now our fellow citizen and he too is a great architect and a great teacher, greater than Hamlet, for with him architecture comes first and its author after.

There is so much to regret!

While Europeans were taking up and nourishing the seeds that Sullivan had sown in our own country, as the Museum pamphlet states, "the free non-traditional architecture of the Chicago School retained its vigor until about 1910 when the stylistic revivalism which had made its first striking appearance in Chicago with the World's Fair of 1893, vitiated its force." Thus Chicago was the birthplace of the new art and the place of its temporary obscuration.

What if it had been otherwise? What if Sullivan's influence had gone on at home as it did abroad? What if the Chicago School had not faded under the stylistic revival? I think that the intervening wasted years might have produced other good architects and certainly the grammar of modern architecture would have been vastly richer than it now is.

And certainly we would not now have a group of foreign professors of art coming over to teach us what it is all about.

But, of course, there would have been no living with Sullivan.

And as for Hamlet? Things have been just perfect for him. He could not long have borne the beatification of Sullivan and he would not have been the one great star that was never dimmed by the clouds that obscured the Chicago School.

So perhaps after all, it does not matter—much—except to a few old white-haired gentlemen who will soon go the way of their works into parking lots and be as little remembered as the Chicago School.

The Pharos of Alexandria, world-famous lighthouse, guided ships by its wood fire beacon for 1500 years.

Federal Costs — Building Costs

So far in 1939 the Federal deficit expenditures have been running at over 10 million dollars a day, including Sundays and holidays. The flow of pump-priming expenditures has provided an expensive and inefficient supplement to the reduced contributions from business, but under the abnormal prevailing conditions it has been a highly important supplement.

Our total national income amounted to 64 billion dollars last year, according to the Department of Commerce. The amount in 1929 was almost 83 billions, and in 1932 it was only 40 billions. The number employed in 1929 was 35.5 millions and in 1938 it was 30.8 millions. The average per capita income of these employed persons was $1,475 in 1929, but only $1,293 in 1938, so the total earnings of the workers amounted to 42.4 billions in 1929, and to 39.8 billions in 1938. The earnings of the workers in building construction in 1938 were only 44% as great as in 1929.

It is not astonishing to find that the pay rolls of Federal employees were 38% greater last year than they were in 1929, but it is most impressive to learn that the pay rolls of the workers employed by state governments were 60% greater in 1938 than they were in 1929.

Since the end of 1935, the Federal Home Loan Bank Board has been collecting data on the cost of building a standard six-room house, and the results give us more reliable figures on the subject than have ever before been available. The average cost in 1936, which is taken as being equal to 100, was in reality about $4,863. The materials cost about twice as much as the labor. The entire reduction in the cost of building since the summer of 1937 has been due to decreases in the cost of materials.

Labor costs started at 98.1 at the beginning of 1936 and they had risen to 111.5 by May of this year. Material costs were 98.7 at the beginning of 1936 and they increased to 110.6 by August of 1937, but since then they have fallen to only 102.7 by May of this year.

These new cost data reflect in their details the greatest weakness of the construction industry, which is its almost complete lack of integration. It consists of great numbers of independent groups of artisans, laborers, architects, contractors, manufacturers, dealers, and promoters, each seeking its own advantage. In some of the 90 cities the labor costs for this standard house are equal to only about one-quarter of the entire expense, while in other cities they amount to half of the total. In some of the cities the two sets of costs combined are about one-third greater than they are in others of the cities.

The construction industry operates under conditions which many earnest students of social problems would like to impose by law on most other industries. It represents a minimum of concentration of capital; it is hardly at all monopolistic; it has great numbers of small independent operating units; a large proportion of its labor is highly organized; it is almost completely independent of Wall Street. The important qualities in which it is sadly lacking are economy and efficiency.

—The Cleveland Trust Company Business Bulletin.

Chicago's Committee on Standards and Tests

At the August 8, 1939 meeting of the City Council, Mayor Edward J. Kelly informed the Council that, pursuant to the authority conferred on him by Article 302 of the Building Ordinance, he had appointed a Committee on Standards and Tests consisting of the following members: Ralph R. Leffler, Julius Floto, Frederick Thielbar, Alderman Arthur G. Lindell, Alderman James J. McDermott, Alderman George D. Kells, and Richard E. Schmidt, Commissioner of Buildings.

Timur or Tamerlane (1333-1405), conqueror of Persia, Central Asia, and a great part of India, lies buried in his tomb, Gur-Emir, at Samarkand in Turkestan. This tomb is now undergoing complete restoration. The aim is to produce all the splendor the tomb originally had. Timur dreamed of making Samarkand capital of the world. To this end he invited noted architects from everywhere to come to Samarkand. Many distinguished buildings survive.

P. O. Competition Judgments, Regions 7 and 8

Acquiescing in the strong appeal for Federal architectural competitions for post offices and customs houses made by the younger members of the profession, the Government has instituted a series of competitions by regions, the competitors being restricted to residents of the particular regions. Results of two of these are here given.

Region No. 8 architects were invited to compete for a post office and court house at Leavenworth, Kansas, a $250,000 building. The region has 750 registered architects. Sixty signified their intention of entering the competition. Twenty-five entered. William B. Ittner, Inc., of St. Louis, was the winner. Honorably mentioned were: Arthur R. Mann and Robert E. Mann, Hutchinson, Kans.; Joseph D. Murphy and Kenneth Wischmeyer, Charles Lorenz, Associate, St. Louis, Mo.; Robert B. Bloomgarten, D. Kent Frohwerk, Kansas City, Mo. The jury were Gerrit J. de Gelleke, Milwaukee; Albert Kahn, Detroit; John O. Merrill, Chicago; Robert F. Daggett, Indianapolis; and Charles F. Cellarius, Cincinnati.

Region No. 7 architects were invited to compete for a post office and customs house at Evansville, Indiana, a $600,000 building. The region has about 2,800 registered architects. Seventy-eight designs were entered. Harry S. Manning of Chicago was the winner. Honorably mentioned were: Skidmore & Owings, Chicago; Mollenbrook, Foley & Scott, Berea, Ohio; Paul Gerhardt, Jr., Chicago. The jury were Robert C. Jones, Minneapolis; F. B. Murphy, Washington, D. C.; Lorimer Rich, New York; Ernest John Russell, St. Louis.

Irving Kane Pond, nationally known Chicago architect, died in Washington, D. C., September 29, aged 82. Besides being a leader in architecture, he was conspicuous in literature and acrobatics, with a particular love for the circus. A more detailed review of Mr. Pond's life and work will appear in the next issue of the Bulletin.

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Frank B. Long, Chicago architect with a 49 year association with the firms of Holabird & Roche and Holabird & Root, died September 28 in Chicago, aged 75. He was born in Middletown, Ohio, and graduated from the University of Illinois. He had become an expert in hotel planning and arrangements through his practice. Mr. Long was active in the planning of the present Cook County Court House and Chicago City Hall, Holabird & Roche, architects.

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Howard G. Hodgkins, architect practicing in the Chicago territory until the World War, died in Chicago on September 15. He was about 75 years of age. About 1914 or '15 he left Chicago for Pittsburgh where he was employed by the Mellon interests. In recent years he again lived in Chicago and resorted to small house planning for real estate interests. He became a member of the Illinois Society of Architects in December 1909, keeping up that membership until 1929.

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Edwin Hawley Hewitt, noted Minneapolis architect, died there August 11 after a year's illness, aged 65. Mr. Hewitt was born in Red Wing, Minn. He graduated from the University of Minnesota in 1896 and continued his professional studies at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology and L'Ecole des Beaux Arts, Paris.

He began practice in Minneapolis in 1904; from 1911 with Edwin H. Brown, firm name Hewitt and Brown. After Mr. Brown's demise, the firm became Hewitt, Setter and Hamlin, which was dissolved a year ago.

Among Mr. Hewitt's outstanding works in architecture are: St. Mark's Episcopal Church, Metropolitan Bank Building, Northwestern Life Insurance Building, and Northwestern Bell Telephone Building, all at Minneapolis. He was architect of the Fort Snelling post chapel, of the Charles S. Pillsbury residence, and his design for the Chicago Tribune Tower was placed among the ten best.

Mr. Hewitt was a Fellow of the American Institute of Architects.