

WEEKLY BULLETIN



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Architecture of The Mid-Twentieth Century

By HENRY-RUSSELL HITCHCOCK, A Lecture
 at the Detroit Institute of Arts, October 16, 1945

WITH THE WAR ENDED, the most significant fact for modern architecture would seem to be that we are now in the middle of the twentieth century. Brief though the war was for America, this simple and obvious fact serves to separate the post-war period from the pre-war period which was still in continuous sequence with the earlier part of the twentieth century. In its relation to architecture the early twentieth century seems to have been singularly worried about questions of time and the pace of contemporary stylistic development, and as a result of this, questions of architecture were perpetually debated in terms of up-to-date-ness or modernity. Was such and such a way of building true to our hopes for the twentieth century or was it merely inherited from the nineteenth? Was Frank Lloyd Wright say or Albert Kahn truly a modern architect in the sense of the European "International Style," or were they only "half-modern"? Was such a building too advanced or not advanced enough? Were traditional materials out-of-date and was their use a sign of reaction? Were only certain types of articulated structure, whether ferroconcrete or metal, to be considered truly modern?

Such were the questions which architects and writers about architecture (and indeed many laymen as well) perpetually disputed over in the period between the beginning of the century and 1939. It seems to me that now we are in the middle of the 20th century most of these issues can already be considered dated.

Only in a few cultural backwaters, such as the world of the American colleges, are traditional stylisms still seriously considered as appropriate in post-war building. It was a shock to me the other day in Princeton to see the Gothic gymnasium, burned during the war, rising again in Gothic style, and to hear that the various architects who have been concerned with the new library, now being planned, have all run up against the insistence of the college authorities that the exterior design shall be Gothic.

But nowhere else but in the colleges I think are such attitudes seriously maintained. Whether the realtors call their little houses "Cape Cod" or "Regency" has little to do with their actual style which is almost always contemporary, in however feeble or confused a fashion.

So that now we are in the middle of the 20th century, in considering architecture seriously we need hardly discuss what is modern and what is not modern and how modern one should be and all the supposed dilemmas concerning the choice of types

of construction and building materials in terms of their up-to-date-ness. The choice of building materials, for example, particularly since edifices employing the new synthetic materials have now been standing long enough for us to learn their maintenance problems both practically and visually, has little to do with their being more or less up-to-date. It is essentially a question of maintenance.

The advantage that the supposedly traditional or natural materials seem to retain is that they are often able to grow old gracefully, which is, alas, rarely the case with many of the newer materials which were introduced with such acclaim during the past 25 years. It is not that such materials should not be used, but that they should be re-studied and perfected in the light of maintenance experience.

In many cases, indeed, wartime technical developments, as with plywood, although they took place in the aircraft industry, or some other non-architectural field, may well prove applicable to the improvement of new materials for architectural use today. In inexpensive construction particularly it is evident from the present state of many prewar and wartime housing developments that the use of inexpensive methods of construction and surfacing materials can be dangerous indeed.

I should hate to prophesy that our model housing of the prewar period would deteriorate into slums as do much of the model housing of the 19th century, but, alas, some of the earliest public housing developments have already a rather dismal air now that their newness has worn off. It is not altogether unfair to say that only the rich can afford cheap construction, since only they can be expected to pay for frequent and elaborate rehabilitation.

Although it is obvious that much existing housing can be humanized and made more sympathetic by additional planting, the wellknown collegiate device of shroud-

ing architectural errors in ivy is at best but a makeshift. Therefore, I hope that the middle of the 20th century will find us more critical of the probable lasting qualities of materials and particularly the surface materials of our large-scale inexpensive building.

Why, one wonders, was the development of prefabricated construction in metal and wood, which was well advanced in Victorian England, cut short after the mid-century? My guess is that after a few years the structures, which had mostly been shipped to the tropical ends of the Empire, were too obviously very difficult, if not impossible, to maintain.

As we are encouraged, because of wartime experience, to hope for further developments of prefabricated and semi-prefabricated techniques, which were certainly most successful as used for temporary wartime structures, we must give particular consideration to problems of maintenance lest a good idea be run into the ground again by popular reaction against a shoddy appearance after a few years.

As the criteria in which we will presumably be discussing architecture in the next decades will probably not be stylistic since, like the middle ages we are coming, for all the variety of our technical means, to have essentially only a single acceptable way of building, what other criteria than those of up-to-date-ness can we use in considering building problems and architectural qualities?

It seems to me that when one removes the element of more or less modernity from modern architecture and considers all the architecture since the beginning of the century which has a good right to be considered modern since it is clearly not a mere continuance of 19th century historicism, we can distinguish two main types of work which are, in general, the product of two different types of architect or architectural firm. On the one hand we have the architecture of bureaucrats,

(See HITCHCOCK—Page 3)

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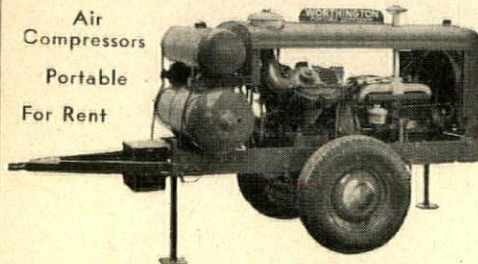
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frequent painting, order implicit both in the type of construction and in the methods of production for which the plant is designed—these are the principles which are basic to all good architecture, although they are arrived at in industrial architecture for non-aesthetic reasons they are not without their aesthetic values.

It is hardly necessary for me to illustrate with slides here in Detroit these qualities in modern factories. I only wish they were equally evident in other types of 20th century bureaucratic architecture. Unfortunately in housing the problem of scale confuses the issue. Factories are not built to the human scale and no one, therefore, expects them to be cozy or warmly sympathetic. The most one can ask from the human point of view is that they provide physically comfortable working conditions and all the time we seem to discover that mere aspects of the physical environment that might seem to be purely matters of decoration, the use of colors and such things, are found to play a part in increasing human efficiency.

The entrance of women into more and more types of industry will doubtless not bring back the curiously idyllic conditions in the Lowell textile mills of one hundred years ago where one of the girls read to her fellow workers the novels of Dickens and the essays of Emerson as they tended the looms. But it has certainly increased the recognition of the fact that even the more delicate amenities in factories offer returns in quality and quantity of production.

In housing, on the other hand, the very technical virtues of large scale planning and repeated units of construction dehumanize, and while the architectural eye is better pleased by the order and clarity of a large-scale development, it is understandable that the individual dweller may frequently hanker after the fleshpots or, should I say, the flowerpots the realtor promises him in an individual home of his own, as superficially different as possible from that of his next-door neighbor.

It is unlikely that we will turn the Americans who are to be housed in large scale developments into 18th century English aristocrats, proud to live in the dignified anonymity of a Georgian square. It behooves the bureaucrats, therefore, to provide in public housing some of the spiritual amenities for the individuals. But the best community buildings such as those at Center Line provide for the small community as a whole.

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GRAND RAPIDS CHAPTER MEETING

Grand Rapids Chapter, A.I.A., is scheduled to meet jointly with the Lansing Engineers' Club on Tuesday, November 6th, in Lansing.

An exceptional man has been obtained for this meeting; Arthur J. Boase, a special editorial representative of the Engineering News-Record. Mr. Boase conducted extensive investigations during the summer of 1944 in current design and construction in Brazil, Argentina and Uruguay. Articles covering his investigations have appeared in the October 19, 1944, April 19, 1945, and June 28, 1945 issues of the Engineering News-Record; and his articles are reviewed in the September 19, 1945 issue of PENCIL POINTS.

He will speak on "Building Design and Construction in South America," and he will illustrate his subject with slide views of outstanding structures and construction operations. We have been fortunate in obtaining Mr. Boase for this meeting; it is his first appearance in Michigan, and after reviewing his bookings for the next several months it is probable that he will not get back in this territory for some time.

SAGINAW PLANNING CHIEF ON ASSOCIATION'S BOARD

Robert B. Frantz, Saginaw architect and chairman of Saginaw's municipal planning commission, was elected a director of the Michigan Association of Planning Officials at its initial meeting recently in Lansing. George F. Emery, Detroit city planning director, was named chairman of the organization.

Russel O. Koenig, secretary of the Saginaw city planning commission, attended the meeting with Frantz. The group was organized for the exchange of information and to encourage public interest in community planning. It will have annual meetings in October and the directors will meet three times a year.

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SAMUEL C. ALLEN, architect, has moved into new and larger quarters at 204 Bearinger Bldg., Saginaw, Mich.

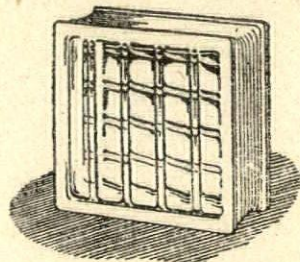
CHRISTIAN W. BRANDT has reestablished his architectural office at 201 S. Center St., Royal Oak, Mich. The telephone number is Lincoln 2-6110.

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Hitchcock—(Continued from Page 1)

and I mean no evil connotation in using the word bureaucrat, nor do I even necessarily mean merely the architectural products of government agencies, though in the field of housing and the T.V.A., the work of government agencies ranks high in this sort of building. No, to me an even more characteristic field of bureaucratic building is industrial architecture and the typical case of the bureaucratic architectural agency is the great Detroit firm of Albert Kahn, Inc.

On the one hand, then, we have the large scale architecture, whether governmental or industrial, which is the product of highly organized architectural offices (which have themselves been characterized sometimes as factories whose product is working drawings) and on the other we have the architects who are geniuses. In using the term genius I no more wish to beg the question by a necessarily favorable connotation than I mean to beg the question in the case of the other sort of architecture by calling it bureaucratic, an adjective which to many people has become a sort of swear-word.

My friend Virgil Thomson, the music critic of the New York Herald Tribune, insists there has been since Beethoven a *genre chef d'oeuvres*, that is to say, a classification of musical works which by their scale and their ponderousness are intended to vie with the symphonies of Beethoven. In his estimation it is far from being even probable that composers who work by choice only in this "masterpiece category" will necessarily produce fine masterpieces. So it is far from being my implication that all architects who have worked as individual artistic geniuses in modern times have succeeded in producing works of genius.

In the work of one or two, however, the quality of genius has been widely recognized, and one of these men, Frank Lloyd Wright, is sometimes considered, both by himself and others, as a sort of Beethoven of American architecture. In many ways, Wright and his architecture may be considered the perfect counterpoise to the firm of Kahn and its architecture. Not because a building by one is better than a building by the other but because they are in a certain sense incommensurable and the mid-20th century requires both sorts.

It is true enough that the categories exist in terms of the work produced and the method of production and it by no means follows that were Wright to handle a large scale housing development or a large industrial plant that the resultant product might not fall in the bureaucratic field, since it would be very difficult, if not impossible, to carry through such work the intensely personal qualities which give his characteristic work their quality, while at the same time it would be necessary for the mere physical carrying-out of such a project to develop an articulated organization more comparable to that of the bureaucrats than the present Taliesin Fellowship.

Indeed, at this very time, Le Corbusier in France, whose executed work on the whole has belonged in the genius classification, is as a member of the Committee of Eight in charge of the reconstruction of France, providing himself with a large bureaucratic organization from whose drafting boards whole new cities are to flow. Even in the executed work of Le Corbusier we can distinguish between the individual villas by which his reputation

was first made and the housing developments such as Pessac in which for a time it seemed that his reputation might be permanently lost.

There is, I think, little fear that Mr. Wright will turn from the architecture of genius to the architecture of bureaucracy. Indeed, when I saw him several weeks ago in New York he said to me apropos of Le Corbusier, that "an architect must have sunk very low indeed if he were willing to work for his government!" Which is, I suppose, the obvious type of bureaucratic architectural activity.

I have seen here in Detroit some specimens of Albert Kahn's early individual work which might lead one to believe that had he not preferred to develop what I suppose is the finest private bureaucratic architectural organization in the world he might have made a stab himself at the architecture of individual genius. But on the whole the two classifications remain separate and only become confused where certain clients, seeking a monumentality of architectural expression, which they do not merit, have sought to obtain from the bureaucratic architectural organizations which they employed for sound practical reasons works which vied superficially with the rare works of true architectural genius.

The early 20th century liked to dream of city building but for economic reasons projects such as Le Corbusier or Wright's then seemed purely Utopian. But now, we find that the European cities, which were drastically bombed in the war, are consequently in a position to undertake large scale reconstruction which will practically constitute in many cases the building of new cities. Moreover we have lately learned that here in this country during the war we built not only innumerable military towns but also a full-scale city of 75,000 at Oak Ridge, Tennessee.

It is quite obvious that building on such a scale must be predominantly in practice the work of bureaucrats, for the state, whether it be represented by a mysterious Manhattan District or by more normal political organs, can only function through technical organizations that are assimilated by their bureaucratic organization to its own bureaucratic structure.

It is obvious, however, that although the Europeans may have little money and little time and little energy to spend on the works of individual genius in architecture which are the counterpoise to bureaucratic architecture and which can lift acres and acres of building that is worthy but almost certainly dull by providing a focus of richer and more intense interest, they have fortunately for such necessary foci of interest the remaining monuments of many architectural geniuses of the past.

The English need build no new cathedral of London at the center of their rebuilt city since, fortunately, Wren's St. Paul's still stands. In this country where we have no such opportunities for large scale rebuilding we would also lack such heritages from the individual genius of the past, not only because in our briefer history we have had fewer architectural geniuses and thus we have had less opportunity to produce worthy monuments, but because in our lack of piety we have too rarely preserved the worthy monuments we did possess, so that they might leaven our new cities if we ever get around to build them.

It is fortunate, therefore, that we have in Frank Lloyd Wright a 20th century genius in architecture with whom few European contemporaries can vie. Yet it must be admitted that one of his finest monuments,

the Midway Gardens in Chicago, was destroyed as pointlessly, for supposedly economic reasons, as Richardsons Marshall Field's store. Ironically, Wright's Imperial Hotel in Tokyo still stands, a monument to leaven whatever sort of bureaucratic architecture the Japanese may eventually employ in rebuilding Tokyo.

In some ways it is easier to consider the character of bureaucratic architecture in relation to industrial plants than in relation to housing. That is particularly true here in Detroit where your factories seem always to have been finer than your provisions for housing those who work in them. Also, I have myself been working for the last few years in the Pratt & Whitney Aircraft plan in East Hartford, built by Kahn, Inc., and I can speak from personal experience of the qualities of good 20th century industrial building.

Many of the elements that are thought to give architectural quality to most buildings are necessarily lacking in a large modern plant. To a considerable extent once a sufficient area is covered, with the supports properly spaced, planning in the old-fashioned sense is something that the plant lay-out department revises every Monday morning, since within the covered area necessary, special features such as locker rooms, toilets, cafeterias and so forth are purposely placed either below or above the level on which the machine tools and the elements of the production lines are freely and frequently moved about to meet changing demands rather more frequently than a housewife moves around her various articles of furniture.

Thus a factory lacks the expressive interest that arises from the articulation of parts in plan which gives expressive meaning to structures which are at once similar and more complex. Similarly the continuity of the construction over large areas, no matter how ingenious in principle the construction may be, is monotonous. That major element of aesthetic quality in architecture, interior space composition, hardly exists, since the areas are so great and so filled with subsidiary movable features, power lines, pipes, etc., as well as blocked by large machine tools that the sense of space is indefinite and without boundary.

Finally, except occasionally for power plant stacks, modern industrial plants usually lack emphasis externally. The attempts that were once made to provide such emphasis by a more monumental treatment of the administrative office blocks were fortunately being given up even before the war. Although the expression of an office block necessarily differs from that of a production area it is properly as continuous in structural treatment and as internally void and elastic.

But if most of the more characteristic forms of architectural interest are lacking from present day factories and will presumably continue to be lacking from those of the post-war period, it is not true that factories are devoid of architectural qualities, nor that they do not have aesthetic virtues and vices which permit one to say legitimately that one factory is better than another in other than structural, functional ways. These qualities, however, are on the level of amenities. Perhaps the major change in factory design from the late 19th century is the emphasis on amenities. Where once a factory was thought to be a blot on the horizon and the area where it was located necessarily blighted, a 20th century factory is often the most visually agreeable object in a large area.

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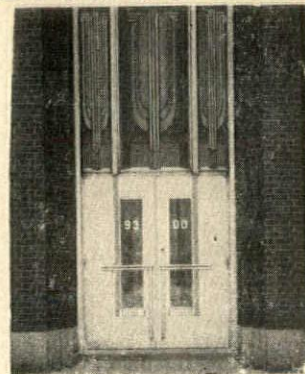
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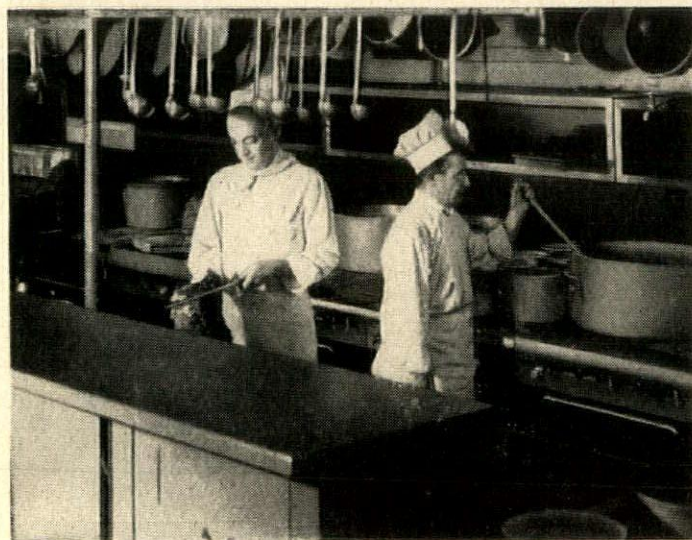
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SHORTAGE OF ARCHITECTS

By ROGER ALLEN, President, Michigan Society of Architects

The following is a talk by Mr. Allen, at the Michigan Construction Industry Council, called by Gov. Kelly, in Lansing, on Sept. 18, 1945

AT THE REQUEST of Governor Kelly, the Michigan Society of Architects has just completed a very rapid but comprehensive survey of the number of draftsmen needed by the profession in Michigan. We were trying to ascertain whether it would be possible to get some of these men out of the service a little sooner, which would be a very fine thing and I hope it can be done to a certain extent. We have discovered that, as of today, the architectural offices in the state need 422 more men than they now have. That may not sound like a great many in comparison with the building crafts, but 422 skilled architectural men can produce plans representing a high dollar volume of building. As a matter of fact, this represents about 20 per cent of the total men now engaged in the profession in Michigan. Our greatest shortage is in junior draftsmen, because they were comprised of the younger men who went into service.

Of course, I don't think it would be quite right to say that if it comes to a show down between private work and the State work, undoubtedly the State work will get done first. State work is more desirable, for several reasons. You can work with the Buildings and Construction Division, which has acquired a mass of information on materials of substantial aid to the architect. If it is absolutely necessary to get the plans for a State program out at the present time, that can be done, but it may well be at the expense of private building.

As a matter of fact, the thing bothering the architectural profession more than anything else at the present time is a matter Mr. Holden touched on slightly, and that is the matter of shrinkage in the total building estimates due to the fact that building costs are high. In some instances, where the cost is up 100 per cent, a good many private projects are going to be killed.

I think that it might be a very good idea to separate planning from actual construc-

Meeting of Detroit Chapter
THE AMERICAN INSTITUTE OF ARCHITECTS
Engineering Society of Detroit, 100 Farnsworth Ave.,
WEDNESDAY, NOVEMBER 28, 1945
Board Meeting, 4:00 p.m. — Dinner, 6:30 p.m. — Program, 8:00 p.m.
SPEAKER: Mr. Arthur J. Boase, Chicago, Special Editorial Representative for Engineering News-Record, on leave of absence as manager of the Structural Bureau of the Portland Cement Association.
SUBJECT: "BUILDING DESIGN AND CONSTRUCTION IN SOUTH AMERICA."
Mr. Boase made a three-months tour of Brazil, Argentina and Uruguay during the summer of 1944 to study and report for Engineering News-Record on construction practices of South American engineers and architects in the field of reinforced concrete building work. He was chosen for the assignment because of his reportorial ability and knowledge of reinforced design as well as American building codes.

tion in the consideration of the State's program. I think that one of the most valuable things about the \$5 million State aid program is that it is, in the best sense, long range planning. Many of those jobs are not going to be built immediately, and on all of those jobs the architects and engineers have had much more time to complete plans than they would under ordinary circumstances. That means we are going to get better jobs. Also, the cost might be less, because you might be able to investigate new methods and materials coming on the market in this postwar period.

I think the State would be very well ad-

vised to have all the planning documents ready or in the course of preparation, so that the State Administrative Board will be in a position to take advantage of any change. I believe very wholeheartedly that there is going to be a tremendous building expansion in the United States in the next four or five years. But on the other hand, building does not proceed in a straight line, it is a succession of high peaks and low depressions. Anything that the Governor and the State Administrative Board can do to level off those peaks and those depressions will certainly be to the advantage of the construction industry.

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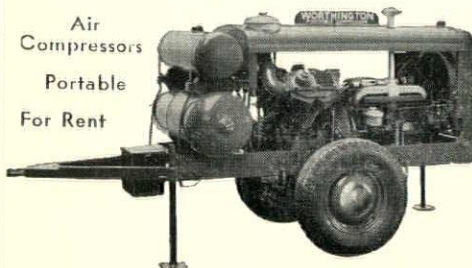
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"The House of Tomorrow spells doom for love and simple eccentricities"

From Vogue, Oct. 1, 1945 By Marya Mannes

Anyone who views post-war morals with alarm need only look at Tomorrow's Small House, as a recent exhibition at the Modern Museum calls it. It is, in model form at least, an absolute guarantee of chastity. The designers of the future have made sin impossible by a series of architectural principles far more potent than statutes or sermons.

In the first place, this pre-fabricated dream is two-thirds made of glass. Not glass bricks, not frosted glass, just window-glass—the stuff you see through. Every corner of the room is thus flooded with light, abolishing shadow. This would be all right if the room fronted on virgin forests. But the house of the future consists very often of a row of such rooms all facing on a common terrace or patio. Anyone on that terrace can, by simply walking from east to west, look into all the rooms at any time. This would be discouraging to all but the most brazen exhibitionists. There are curtains at hand, to be sure, but drawing them across the mammoth panes would be a rather crude advertisement, if not downright misleading.

The architects have, with fiendish ingenuity, done away with hallways, cubby-holes, attics, or any enclosed space where darkness or the shutting of a door could ensure at least a modicum of privacy. The modern house, in fact, is remarkably free of doors. Instead, there are movable screens, often slatted, movable partitions, easily displaced, and a number of other devices by which the fourth wall—the shield of man—is dispensed with.

Even innocent children have no privacy. Not only is one of their walls made of glass, but the wall between their beds can contract and disappear at the touch of a finger. Moreover the kitchen wing is often so designed that Mom, taking her pre-fabricated roast out of the deep-freeze, can keep her young in oblique view across the terrace at all times. She can also see the guests at all times, as the kitchen is only a gleaming sanitary extension of the living room. There is thus no opportunity for Dad to take the gents into the back room as there is no back room.

Possibly, the architects were designing this house only for the kind of wholesome American family that functions happily without love. But what happens when Louise grows up and has a fellow in after supper? At least the front porch of her mother's day was dimly lit or had lilac bushes in front of it; and Mom and Dad usually had the delicacy to stay inside the house. But where, in this crystal palace of the future, can Louise get away from her folks?

The small house of tomorrow spells doom not only for love but for the simple eccentricities that made Uncle Ralph and Aunt May such amusing, if at times trying, people. Uncle Ralph can't try on his helmet of World War II without a battery of eyes turned on him from the terrace in pitying derision. Aunt May can't practice ballet positions in her underwear without danger of being committed to a place which has more privacy than she needs. And deviation from the norm will be magnified in direct proportion to the amount of light shed on it.

Architects, in their frenzied campaign

for maximum lighting, seem to have forgotten the benefits of dark. Darkness is not only the mother of romance; it is the seedbed of imagination. It need not be total darkness; a small lamp lighting the page of a book creates a special island surrounded by dark seas—a kind of optical privacy. But the new designers will have none of that. The room must be evenly lit, so that everything in it is apparent, at night as well as in day.

They forget, too, that hearing grows with darkness, as anyone who listens to music knows. Full vision is an enemy of full listening. It is hard even to speak softly and foolishly in a very light room. Night-club owners have known that a long time. But not architects.

It would be unfair to deny all the advantages of modern housing: brightness, airiness, economy, and sanitation. The fact that you can't get away with anything in a transparent house means also that a lot of minor vices will be forced to disappear: sweeping the dirt under the bed, sticking gum under ledges, examining your moles. The inhabitant must be presentable at all times, since he is at all times visible. It will produce a truly beautiful race.

On the other hand, will the race be produced? Is not modern housing the first step towards race-suicide? Supposing the brave new citizens can overcome their stodgy notions of privacy—is not exhibition as dangerous to love as inhibition? If Junior Sees All, will he ever be impelled to Find Out? Will not the human race become little else than specimens in glass laboratories, stewing in their own culture?

Architects are people too. They had better watch out. They had better provide their houses with at least one dark, unwholesome corner, or resign themselves to the horrid fate they are meting out to their unsuspecting clients.

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New light has been shed on the subject by an opinion of Attorney General John R. Dethmers. Whereas in the past there has been considerable interchange of architectural and engineering seals, the opinion states this is contrary to the intent of sections 2 and 22 of the Act.

The pertinent part of this ruling follows:

"In answer to your first question, we are of the opinion, in accordance with the statutes above set forth, that a separation must be made so as to require architectural plans to be sealed by registered architects, engineering plans to be sealed by registered engineers, and surveys and plats to be sealed by registered land surveyors. We do not believe that it was intended by the legislature that the above terms should be used interchangeably or synonymously."

Watts A. Shelly, Executive Secretary, Michigan State Board of Registration for Architects, Professional Engineers and Land Surveyors, 307 Transportation Bldg., Detroit 26, Michigan.

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P. M. O'MEARA

Patrick M. O'Meara, nationally known architect of Catholic institutions, died in St. Louis, Mo., on Oct. 27, of a respiratory ailment. His age was 55.

An architect there since 1923, Mr. O'Meara also maintained offices in Detroit and Minneapolis. He had designed most all of the newer Catholic buildings in St. Louis as well as an addition to St. Mary's Hospital, a part of the Mayo Clinic, at Rochester, Minn.

Born in West Bend, Wis., Mr. O'Meara was graduated from Holy Angels School in 1904 and from West Bend High School in 1908. He studied with the Department of Architecture at the University of Notre Dame in 1909-10.

After serving for a while as a grade school teacher in Wisconsin, he practiced

architecture in Wisconsin, Minnesota, North Dakota and Iowa from 1911 to 1916. He became a junior member of the firm of Damon & O'Meara in Fort Dodge, Iowa in 1916. Six years later he became senior member of the firm of O'Meara & Hills of St. Louis, Minneapolis and Detroit. Since 1939 he headed P. M. O'Meara & Associates of St. Louis, Minneapolis and Detroit.

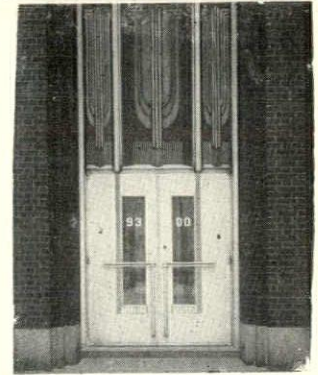
Mr. O'Meara specialized for thirty years in ecclesiastical architecture. He designed churches, hospitals, motherhouses and colleges throughout the Midwest. His firm received a certificate of merit from the St. Louis Chamber of Commerce for the design of the De Paul Hospital in 1920.

He was a member of the American Institute of Architects, St. Paul Athletic Club and Michigan Society of Architects.

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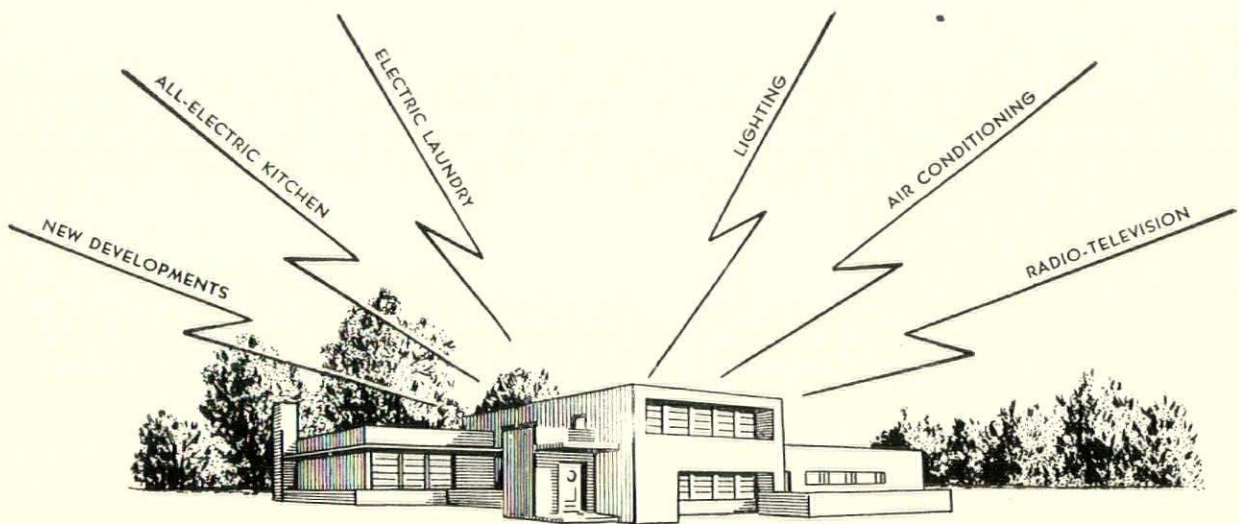
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Volume 19

DETROIT, MICHIGAN, NOVEMBER 20, 1945

Number 47

National Construction Situation

By THOMAS S. HOLDEN, President, F. W. Dodge Corp., New York City

*A Talk at the Michigan Construction Industry Council,
called by Governor Kelly, in Lansing, Sept. 18, 1945.*

I THINK I can illustrate the over all situation by reviewing hurriedly some of the facts that have been brought out here. The last two gentlemen have indicated needs for private construction in the state of Michigan—immediate and urgent needs—of \$350 million, plus \$50 million of public housing. There is \$400 million, with no public ordinary construction in it at all, state or local. \$400 million is a somewhat larger amount than the total volume of yearly contracts that was ever bid in the state of Michigan at the price levels that prevailed in the particular years for which they were recorded.

This, I think, illustrates the situation the country over. The immediate, urgent needs are probably beyond the capacity of the industry to take care of next year.

You, Governor Kelly, made the statement earlier that the largest percentage increase that the industry had ever had in a given year was 62 percent. I confirm that figure exactly. A 62 percent increase over this year will not give Michigan \$400 million in construction in 1946.

That is typical of the whole country. There are urgent private needs for construction of all kinds, beginning with deferred maintenance and repairs, the production facilities which are needed and which have been given a green light by the WPB, and very particularly housing shortages, which are very acute almost everywhere in this country. I have a report of the Citizens Housing Council of New York; they are strongly urging the building of temporary housing to take care of emergency needs.

Our own records of postwar projects planned indicate, for the 37 states covered by our field staff, a total volume of postwar projects of nearly \$16 billion. About half of this total, or \$7,775,000,000, represents work reported in the design stage. Of that, a little better than one-third is private and about two-thirds is public. We know, of course, that in all these tabulations it has been easier to get large volumes of public work reported than private.

The volume of private work that we have reported is larger than the contract volume for the area we cover than in any of the years 1938, 1939, or 1940. This does not include anything in the way of deferred maintenance, repair projects, and so on, which are primary and urgent needs. It seems to me we have a situation similar to that existing during the war, when WPB, in making construction allocations, had to consider the claims of various agencies,

Meeting of Detroit Chapter

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the Army, the Navy, the Maritime Commission, and way down to the small voice of the civilians. Now the industry itself, when we are freed from regulations and restrictions, has to deal with the claims and demands of these many agencies of government and also these private needs.

On the matter of federal policy, I have here an extract from the report issued last June by the House Committee on Postwar Economic Policy and Planning. It speaks of the large volume anticipated in the postwar years in order to meet the total needs of the country, both private and public:

"Under these circumstances, government may be in the position of competing with private industry for its share of the volume of construction materials and equipment that will be available at the war's end. The committee believes it is important to avoid such a competitive race between public and private demand for limited construction facilities immediately after the war."

The report goes on to recommend that the

federal government not make any appropriations as aids to state and local governments, because of the fact that they expect a large enough construction volume without a federal aid program. It recommends that state and local government construction should be held in reserve to meet future situations which they do not expect to take place now. I am not only in accord with that but I testified before that committee, stating my belief that the volume of demand would be such that no emergency program was necessary. There is danger of our getting into a boom situation if everybody tries to push everything at once with all possible speed. The pump needs no priming. Pump priming at this stage would be the most dangerous possible course, not only in terms of creating great competition for materials and manpower but also possibly creating a postwar inflation such as we had in 1919-1920, which was very disastrous, but which would be much more disastrous this time.

We have talked about four bottlenecks: (1) government controls, which until two
(See HOLDEN—Page 3)

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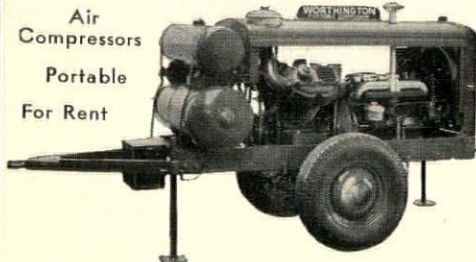
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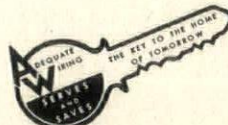
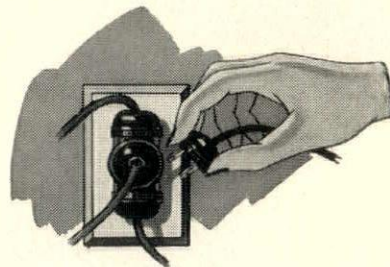
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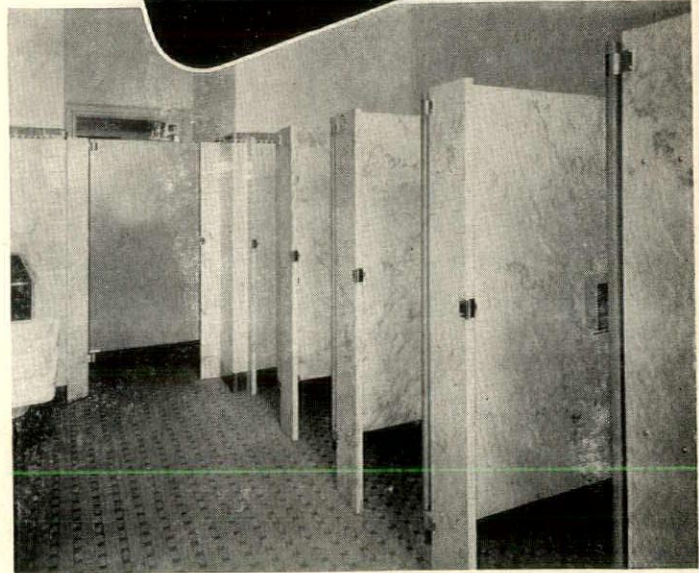
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WEEKLY BULLETIN

Holden— (Continued from Page 1)

months ago were an obstacle; (2) materials; (3) prices and price controls; and (4) manpower.

Government controls are being released. The material supply situation is much better than most people expected. Until VJ Day we were led to believe that lumber was going to continue critical for quite a long time. Since then it appears that, with the cessation of buying by the armed services and with the cessation of ordering by industry for the terrific war-time boxing and crating needs, lumber is becoming less tight and is coming into the market now at a fairly rapid rate. I do not anticipate that lumber is likely to be particularly critical next year. I am told that clay products are now rather more critical than lumber.

With reference to prices, if OPA is able to maintain price controls on materials in this period, prices of materials may not be a problem next year. Prices of finished construction may be a reason why people, both private and public, will hesitate to let their contracts. When bids are received undoubtedly many projects will be postponed by reason of the high costs.

We are watching with great interest the attitude of OPA with regard to ceiling prices on houses for sale. Apparently the prevailing sentiment in Washington is against that. I think it would be bad. We need to relieve the housing shortage; to get supply caught up with demand so that we can get rid of rent controls. At present rent controls are the principal deterrent to apartment projects. Property owners should be free to set their rents in some relationship to the cost of construction.

These first three bottlenecks are much less serious than anticipated. The principal bottleneck is apt to be manpower. It was feared a year or so ago that we might be faced with terrific unemployment. Now the question is, where are we going to get the men to carry through this construction program. There are also closely related questions. What will the wage scales be? Will we have unrest in the labor field and work stoppages? I do not know the answers to these questions. I do know that manpower, particularly skilled building craftsmen, is going to be a very critical factor during the early stage of the revival of building. At best, we cannot carry through the total private and public program that is planned in this country.

You have spoken of degrees of urgency.

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I think this yardstick is going to have to apply to everyone trying to put through a project. *The urgency of need should determine what we do.* If the need is urgent, we do not have to be quite as concerned over cost levels. Furthermore, there are certain other things to be considered. We probably can go ahead at this time faster with the types of projects that use principally common labor—highways, for instance. I think projects that require high quality materials and workmanship probably would do better at a later period than in the next few months. We know that the war has brought about a deterioration in performance.

In 1942 the industry was faced with stepping up its production to meet the needs of war construction. We turned out a volume of construction that year larger than in any previous year in the country's history. The country's needs including war housing were met in a highly satisfactory manner. Manpower was recruited fairly rapidly. This was possible because a great many projects were not of the exacting type. They were of a temporary nature such as cantonment buildings, etc. Thus we might be more successful next year in securing manpower for the type of projects which will not require a large number of skilled workers and high quality materials.

We hope we will be able to meet these growing pains without too much friction and without serious interruption in the upward trend. We are not going to get to peak postwar volume in 1946—perhaps not even in 1947. This industry is the most flexible industry we have, but it cannot double its output from one year to the next.

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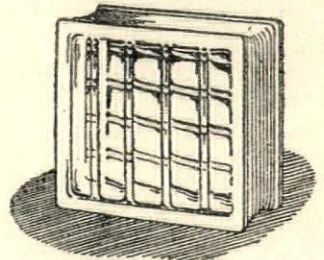
THERE WAS A BIG DISCUSSION at the (Grand Rapids Chapter) meeting about unification, or rather the last steps in unification. Man and boy now I have been listening to speeches about unification for many's the year. The subject of unification and the subject of women are alike; everybody's in favor of it but nobody knows just how to handle it. I notice that most members of the chapter do not look favorably on the idea of giving up their charter, although most of them have never seen the charter and wouldn't recognize it if it came up and bit them in the leg. I have been trying to remember if I ever saw it, and I don't think I ever did. However, this is an understandable enough trait; the charter does mean something, although it stays out of sight. It seems to me that unification in Michigan is about as complete as you can expect it to get. The actual forms of unification may not have been completed, but to all intents and purposes the profession is united. United, sometimes, in the bonds of Holy Deadlock, as A. P. Herbert put it.—Roger Allen, in Architectonics.

BULLETIN—In a recent issue of The Bulletin, I was erroneously listed as Chairman of the Jury of Fellows.

Mr. Frederick W. Garber, F.A.I.A., of Cincinnati is Chairman of the Jury of Fellows, and I am only a member of it.—Clair W. Ditchy.

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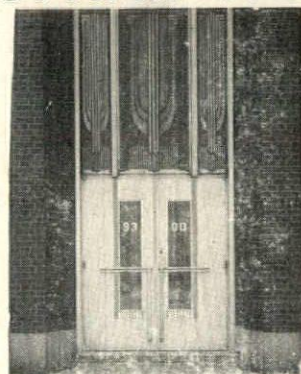
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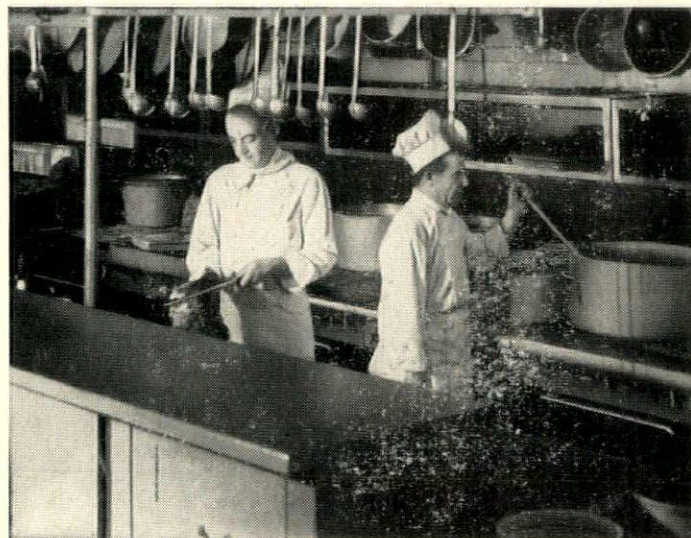
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EDITOR—TALMAGE C. HUGHES

120 Madison Avenue, Detroit 26, Michigan

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Volume 19

DETROIT, MICHIGAN, NOVEMBER 27, 1945

Number 48

Georgian Picks 'em to Win

An architectural draftsman who came to Detroit from Atlanta, Ga., recently was the first 1945 winner in the weekly "Pick The Grid Winners" contest staged by the Detroit Free Press. Thomas W. Conrad, of Webster Hall Hotel, turned the thick with a perfect entry for the games of Sept. 29.

He will receive a \$100 war bond as the top prize.

Conrad is employed by the architectural firm of Harley, Ellington and Day Co. He took up architecture after serving for 13 years as an Army officer. He was in the artillery in World

War I. Now 50 years old, Conrad still follows all sports closely. He is particularly meticulous in the attention he gives to football, especially Southern football.

Conrad has been athletic-minded for a long time. He was graduated from Georgia Tech in 1917 after he had been the regular second baseman on the Tech baseball team and assistant manager of the football team. Johnny Heisman coached the Tech football team in those days.

Some months ago Conrad replied to a notice in the Bulletin that draftsmen were needed in the Detroit area. After coming to Detroit, he remarked that "Southern hospitality is traditional, whether or not it really exists, but I never expected to be greeted by Detroit in a form of hospitality quite so substantial, and so soon after my arrival in your northern city."

"Thanks to Detroit and thanks to you for your effective employment service. While I was in the employ of Fraser-Brace Co.

and also Graham, Anderson, Probst & White, at the Naval Ordnance plant at Camden, Ark. you gave me the names of several Detroit firms. As a result of correspondence, I am now happily situated with Harley, Ellington & Day."



Conrad

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Meeting of Detroit Chapter

THE AMERICAN INSTITUTE OF ARCHITECTS

Engineering Society of Detroit, 100 Farnsworth Ave.,

WEDNESDAY, NOVEMBER 28, 1945

Board Meeting, 4:00 p.m. — Dinner, 6:30 p.m. — Program, 8:00 p.m.

SPEAKER: Mr. Arthur J. Boase, Chicago, Special Editorial Representative for Engineering News-Record, on leave of absence as manager of the Structural Bureau of the Portland Cement Association.

SUBJECT: "BUILDING DESIGN AND CONSTRUCTION IN SOUTH AMERICA."

Mr. Boase made a three-months tour of Brazil, Argentina and Uruguay during the summer of 1944 to study and report for Engineering News-Record on construction practices of South American engineers and architects in the field of reinforced concrete building work. He was chosen for the assignment because of his reportorial ability and knowledge of reinforced design as well as American building codes.

STANTON SPEAKS ON MEMORIALS

Henry Francis Stanton, F.A.I.A., spoke on War Memorials at a recent meeting of the Rosedale Park Woman's club, in Detroit.

Stanton was recently made a Fellow in The A.I.A. "for his integrity, ability and devotion to the advancement of the profession of architecture, for uniform excellence of design and executed work, and high standards of practice." A captain in World War I, he has made a study of war memorials.

ANNOUNCEMENT

The drawings, specifications, and files of
EDWARD X. TUTTLE, ARCHITECT

formerly of Battle Creek,

have been acquired by

PHIL. COWLES HAUGHEY, A.I.A.

and are available for reference at his office

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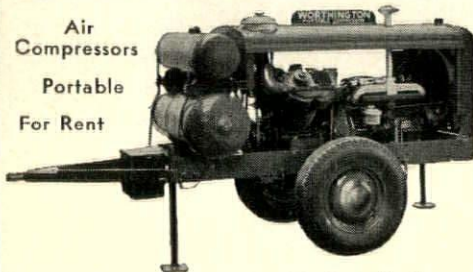
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PLANNER AND DIRECTOR: OTIS WINN

*From Detroit—Today and Tomorrow,
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When he was graduated from the Architectural College, University of Illinois in 1929, Otis Winn won a scholarship to the Lake Forest College Foundation for the study of architecture, landscape architecture, painting, and sculpture; there won the three-months, competitive, Edward L. Ryerson European Architectural Fellowship for a year's study on the continent. With the winner of the Landscape Fellowship he toured Europe in a Ford, studying large-scale housing and community developments, which at that time were well advanced in most countries of Europe.

He says he started with the idea of studying the historical development of architecture, ended by combining this with the evolution of city and community building. When he returned to this country in 1930, he worked for three years in the Architectural Department, State of Illinois, designing state buildings.

In 1923 he did an interesting thing—he made an analysis of 33 cities and towns seeking the best place to locate as an architect—and chose Detroit.

In Detroit Winn worked as an architect for several years with the Austin Company on a wide variety of industrial plants. Next, as the Associate Architect with the Detroit Housing Commission, he supervised the more than twenty million dollar, public, low-rent housing program for the development of the three-thousand-plus dwelling units in the Herman Gardens, the Charles, the Parkside Addition, and the Brewster Addition Projects.

During the year following his work with the Housing Commission he was a member of the Architectural firm of Lyndon, Smith, and Winn, specializing in schools and industrial buildings, and in 1941 he opened his own office for independent general practice of architecture, but with primary interest in community and city development work.

During the war he has been the architect on a number of war housing projects, and in 1942 was employed by the Federal Government as the Chief Supervising Architect for the war housing program of the Detroit area.

Since his days with the Housing Commission in 1938 Winn has been interested in the community building possibilities of the International UAW-CIO, believes that

organized labor will eventually be the strongest force in the country to bring about a sound social and economic development of our communities. From the inception of the UAW-CIO International Housing Department Winn has been their Housing Consultant, outlines their housing and planning program thus:

- 1—A broad program to educate (a) members, and (b) the public in general.
- 2—A legislative program for work on federal, state, and community levels. Last year, he says, urban re-development legislation was written for nearly every state in the union, or amendments to existing legislation were drawn up. Result: some model laws were passed and signed, some were amended, a few, as in Michigan, were distorted by opposing interests.
- 3—A stimulation of consumer-cooperative groups on the local Union level for the development of houses in planned communities with the necessary community facilities.

These three steps are a continuous, simultaneous process in various stages of development. The UAW-CIO Housing Department supports both private and public housing, whatever machinery is necessary to do the job well.

Mayor Jeffries recently reappointed Winn to the City Plan Commission for a second term. He is a member of the Detroit and Michigan Chapters, American Institute of Architects, the American Society of Planning Officials, and the Special Design Consultant Committee of FPHA.

As one of the active directors of the CHPC, he feels this Council has an extremely important function, hopes our membership will broaden rapidly to reach more Detroit citizens, because:

"This Council should be the most widely supported organization in Detroit."

NEW FIRM

Thurston R. Jahr, A.I.A., and Robert H. Lyman have opened offices at 21904 Michigan Ave., Dearborn. They will conduct a general engineering and architectural service.

Jahr has been associated with Bennett and Straight until America entered the war when he started working for both the army and navy, mostly on airfield planning and layout. He is a graduate of the University of Michigan, 1934, with the degree of Bachelor of Science in Architecture.

Lyman has been with the Dearborn city engineer's office for the past 13 years.

FLINT AIRPORT

Giffels & Vallet, Inc., engineers of Detroit, have been awarded a contract by the City of Flint, Michigan, to develop an over-all airport plan for Flint and the surrounding area, according to an announcement today by M. W. Cochran, head of the Airport Division of the engineering firm. The Airport Division of Giffels & Vallet has completed more airport planning projects than any other firm in the country, the job for Flint being the 89th airport project on which this company and its engineers have been engaged. These include airports throughout North, Central and South America, for the United States Army and Navy, as well as for airline companies and a number of municipalities.

Giffels & Vallet are at present performing similar assignments for the City of Toledo, Ohio, as well as for Ann Arbor and Pontiac, Michigan.

The airport at Flint was recently turned back to the city after having been used for several years by the Army Air Forces which did a lot to develop the airport to its present state. At the present time the airport, which has an area of approximately 600 acres, is listed as Class 3 and will be expanded into a Class 4 airport.

The development that was performed by the Army will save the City of Flint a great deal of money, and while it is now a satisfactory field from the Army standpoint, some rearrangement should be done to make it more practicable for civilian use, according to Mr. Cochran.

"The plans for the expansion will retain the same runway pattern, and it is expected that the administration building and the existing hangars will be retained," Mr. Cochran said. "Probably the expansion will require the addition of two or more hangars to provide future facilities for commercial planes, including private plane storage hangars. Doubtless additional hangars will be necessary to house executive type planes because of the importance of Flint as an industrial center," Mr. Cochran stated.

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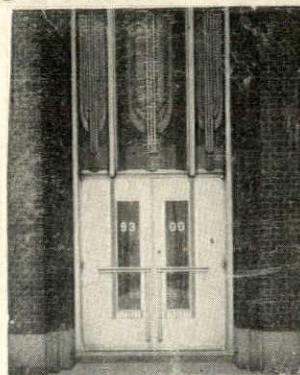
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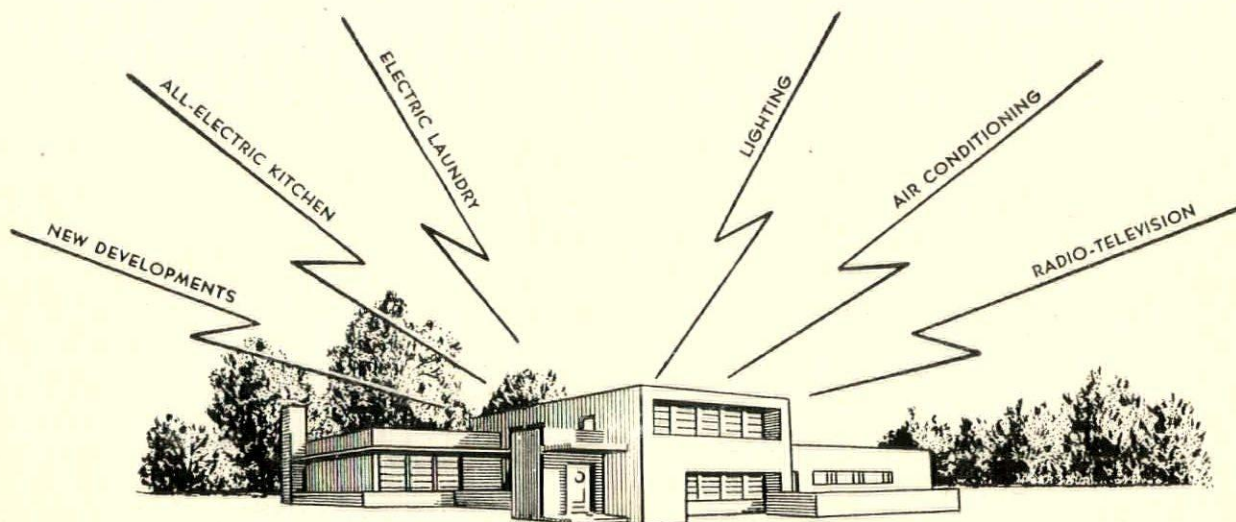
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