



O C U L U S

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THE NEW YORK CHAPTER OF THE AMERICAN INSTITUTE OF ARCHITECTS
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DECEMBER MEETING

The monthly meeting was held at the League on the evening of December 20th and the holiday spirit was exemplified by appropriate table decorations and a wassail bowl at which the executive secretary acted as Hebe to the 51 Olympians clustered around it.

The business of the evening consisted in the adoption of an amendment to the Chapter by-laws lowering Associate Members' dues from \$15 to \$10 per year, and an open forum to discuss the burning question of governmental architecture.

The topic was approached from two points of view: 1. Selection of architects by appointment. 2. Selection by competition.

Charles Butler, Chairman of the Institute Committee on Public Works, gave a brief outline of the present status of government work.

The floor was then given to Mr. William A. Delano who put forward the arguments in favor of direct appointment of architects for public work, and he was followed by a number of other speakers from the floor.

Following the discussion of the appointive method, Edgar Williams introduced the competitive viewpoint, and was followed by several other speakers.

No formal resolution was adopted by the chapter, as the entire discussion was designed as a means of enlightening the Institute Committee on Public Works as to the general feelings of individuals of the chapter about the matters discussed. Mr. Butler and his two fellow committee men present, Mr. Gray of New Haven, and Mr. Larson of Philadelphia, expressed appreciation of the opportunity to be present, and stated that they had received valuable suggestions for their guidance in discussing the matter with the federal officials with whom they are in contact.

The chapter went on record last year as formally approving the competitive method of selecting architects, and there has been no change in respect to this.

Mr. Williams' paper brought out four major points:

1. That government architecture, whether Federal, State or Muni-

NEXT MEETING

JANUARY 24

PUBLICITY FOR THE PROFESSION

Architectural League at 6:30

As a salesman the architect is a wash-out. Bring your body to this meeting, and your brains if you have any. Hear some new ideas, and contribute some yourself. Some bright boys have worked hard on a new plan and want your advice and help.

1. That the finest architecture of a country, should be the finest that a country can obtain.

2. That no committee, group or bureau can, as a group, create superior work, the conception and execution of which rests solely upon the creative impulse of the human spirit.
3. That any continuous development of a profession must depend upon new ideas and new blood to carry it on to high achievement.
4. That in our case free and open competition is the American way.

There seemed to be general agreement on the first three points. The fourth was definitely covered by last year's resolution.

Another point made by several speakers, and which received practically unanimous consent, was that, whether selection be by appointment, or competition, it should be regional; that is, for any given job the selection should be from a group limited geographically.

During the discussion your reporter could not but think that regardless of the method of selection, both the government and the architect should recall the advice of the vizier to his shah: "Sire, you must remember that for the leader of any enterprise you must provide a steed with four legs: information, authority, responsibility and reward. Lacking any one, failure is assured." Federal architecture has been limping along with at least two stumps.

NEW APPOINTMENT

On November 7, 1938, President Charles D. Maginnis appointed William H. Gompert as Representative of the American Institute of Architects on the American Standards Association Sectional Committee, Correlating Building Code Requirements for Design Loads in Buildings.

Mr. Theodore Irving Coe, Technical Secretary of the Structural Service Department of the Institute, has been designated to serve as Alternate on the Correlating Committee.

Mr. Gompert announces that this is a committee of the American Standards Association working in cooperation with the United States Bureau of Standards, and has for its purpose considering matters of general interest with respect to Building Codes throughout the country, and to act as an advisory committee to the American Standards Association. It also intends to examine recommendations and to harmonize conflicts. It will act upon matters brought before it with relation to the development of Building Codes, and to inaugurate improvements where it is deemed advisable.

As a basis for its work the Committee accepts in principle the arrangement of a Building Code recommended by the former Department of Commerce Building Code Committee subject to such revisions as it might consider advisable.

Mr. Gompert regards this matter as vitally important to the Architectural profession and the building industry, and has expressed the wish that the members of the Chapter will display their interest by communicating with him and making suggestions which they think should be considered by the Committee in carrying on its work.

As a guide to those who wish to give some thought and study to the subject, he announces that a report of the Building Committee of the Bureau of Standards dated 1925 and entitled "Minimum Live Loads Allowable for Use in Design of Buildings (Elimination of Waste Series)" can be secured by communicating with the United States Department of Commerce, Washington, D. C. This report contains an exhaustive study of the Minimum Live Loads of Occupancy and Contents of Buildings, also

the Minimum Live Load Requirements allowed as a basis of Structural Design, etc.

A comparative schedule has also been prepared by the Bureau of Standards showing the wide variation in the allowable live floor loads in various types of buildings as permitted by the Building Codes of the various cities throughout the United States. This document can also be secured by communicating with the Bureau of Standards, United States Department of Commerce, in Washington, D. C.

If any members of the profession have encountered instances where they believe that good, safe practice would permit a reduction of live floor loads for the occupancy or contents of buildings or for the structural design; or instances where, in their judgment, the loads should be increased; or should any one wish to recommend new procedures or methods for simplification in planning and designing buildings with particular relation to the subject to be considered by the Committee, he will greatly appreciate learning of these views at an early date.

INSURANCE SIMPLIFIED

The New York Fire Insurance Rating Organization has now definitely approved the "Completed Value—Builder's Risk Form" for use in New York State. This form was evolved by the Institute in collaboration with the Associated General Contractors of America.

This new form does away with the old methods with their cumbersome bookkeeping, and the ever-present doubt as to whether or not the interests of all parties to a construction contract were covered.

CRITIC'S CRITIC

Sir:

I trust that it will not be out of order to call attention to the *fin de l'année* comments of Lewis Mumford in the *New Yorker*, in which three recent architectural efforts receive quite a bit of praise, almost refuting the old adage "you can't be right with Mumford."

These Sky Line critiques are, of course, the only pieces that begin to compare with the vital body of literary and dramatic criticism in lay media which is so essential to the well-being of an art.

I am tempted, however, by his remarks on Rich's Twenty-Third Street Post Office, to venture to reconstruct his impressions as follows:

"By Gropius, that's a pretty damn swell looking job, even if it is classical. But, if it's classical, I don't like it, so I'll say it's not, thank Heaven, either Georgian or Federal in design; it is only faintly reminiscent of the classical."

Oh yeah, Lewis?

G. A. H.

KENNETH M. MURCHISON

An appreciation of Kenneth M. Murchison cannot be written without being influenced by the recollection of his bright and buoyant character. His own wish would have been farthest from anything that had the semblance of a eulogy, therefore the thought of him naturally is directed in a lighter vein.

"He was no saint. He may have had faults. The sun has spots but they are invisible, being obscured by its effulgent rays."

He had weathered a number of physical shocks and professional disappointments, nevertheless up to the last moment he was characteristically witty and humorous.

On the day of his death he traveled to Newark and attended the Christmas meeting of the New Jersey Chapter of the A.I.A. and spoke with his usual keen wit and ready humor. Ken's speech was so appreciated he had to take several bows.

He was a natural leader and always succeeded in getting results from groups and committees by creating enthusiasm with good-natured cajoling and making assignments in a jocular manner. No one in the profession could lay bare the faults and shortcomings of his fellow Architects as could dear old Ken, but this was always done with such jolly and good-humored banter that the target of his shafts enjoyed the witticisms as much as the others.

Few knew that he composed music, had written the score for a comic opera and for a number of years past had orchestrated or written the music played for the pageants at the Beaux-Arts Ball.

He was so highly regarded in the musical world that he had been made a member of the Musicians' Union to enable him to conduct orchestras, which he had done on many occasions.

While discussing music he once told me whenever he undertook composing music or conducting an orchestra that as he thought of the music he could distinctly hear the strains in his mind without the benefit of any instrument playing.

His artistic, musical and oratorical talents were only a few of the many accomplishments and endowments he possessed, but all might be summed up in the words of the Bard, "His life was simple and the elements so mixed in him that Nature might stand up and say to all the world, 'this was a man!'"

WILLIAM H. GOMPert

CODE CHANGE

Architects doing work in New York City will be interested to know that the Administrative Code was amended June 24, 1938, by the Council.

The Chapter receives regularly notices of Building Department regulations. These can be seen at the Chapter office, and a limited number can be bought at a nominal price.

MEMBERSHIP CHANGES

New Members:

Anthony J. Daidone
Aubrey Butler Grantham
Louis Bancel LaFarge
Eldredge Snyder
E. Jerome O'Connor

Associate Member:

Sanford B. Wells

Members Deceased:

DeLancey Robinson
Frank E. Vitolo

Resigned:

George deGersdorff
Parker Morse Hooper

Transferred:

Harrison Gill (to Tennessee Chapter)

Memberships Terminated:

Alfred Busselle
George Barr Kayser

CANDIDATE

The name of the following candidate has been presented for membership in the Institute:

Louis William Feldmann
31 Union Square, N. Y. C.

Proposers:

Harvey Wiley Corbett
Charles B. Meyers

Pursuant to Section 6, Paragraph 3, of the Chapter By-Laws, members are requested to submit within ten days for the information and guidance of the Committee on Admissions, privileged communications relative to the eligibility of the above-mentioned candidate.

CONCRETE

The American Concrete Institute, in a spirit of cooperation, have suggested that architects might like to tell them just how concrete should be improved to be more useful and esthetically acceptable.

To this end, a joint session of the N. Y. Chapter and the A. C. I. has been arranged at the A. C. I. convention Friday evening, March 3, at the Hotel Roosevelt.

Three or four members of the Chapter will present papers on the subject, and all members are cordially invited to attend what will be an interesting and instructive evening.

LIBRARY GIFTS

The response to Miss Waters' request for books was encouraging. One public spirited member has offered the Chapter a complete set of the Octagon and its predecessor, the Journal, if the Chapter will have them bound. Will any one match this generosity by donating the cost of binding which will be about thirty dollars?