



NEW YORK CHAPTER OF THE AMERICAN INSTITUTE OF ARCHITECTS
115 EAST 40th STREET
DECEMBER, 1946

IN CONVENTION ASSEMBLED

The New York State Association of Architects held its post-war convention—the first in five years—on October 17, 18 and 19 in Buffalo. A pleasant congeniality pervaded the gathering, although the serious business sessions brought out the anxiety all architects now feel over the strictures preventing the healthy growth of construction. The Wyatt Program was denounced as a flat failure and there were extensive discussions of the current construction impasse. These were finally expressed in a resolution, passed unanimously, urging the removal of OPA restrictions on new and altered buildings and on prices of building materials, and advocating an increase in ceilings as to veterans' income.

The New York Chapter was represented by 12 delegates, including of course Perry Coke Smith, the Chapter's President, also Ward Fenner, who was elected Secretary of the Association, Arthur C. Holden, who conducted the panel discussion on housing, Addison Erdman, who was in charge of the roundtable discussion on hospitals, Henry Churchill, who was Chairman of the city planning forum; also Albert G. Clay and Sidney Strauss, who, with Frederick G. Frost, Sr., were a part of the Convention Committee which had planned the excellent program. Ralph Walker, Robert Weinberg, Julian Whittlesey and Jacob Moscowitz took active part in the symposia on City and Neighborhood Planning. Others present from New York were Kenneth K. Stowell and Cornelius J. White, State Architect.

A feature of the Convention was the well displayed Exhibit of Members' Work. No need to describe the excellent section representing the New York Chapter's part in the show, as this was on display at the Architectural League of New York prior to the Convention. In connection with the Exhibit a prize was offered for the best small house, built or projected since

1936, containing not more than 25,000 cubic feet. With pride we report that first prize went to Pomerance & Breines of this Chapter, second prize to George Nemeny of this Chapter, and first Honorable Mention to Daniel Schwartzman, also of this Chapter. Panel Discussions were held on Housing, City Planning, Industrial and Commercial Buildings, Hospitals and Schools, all very successfully conducted.

One criticism which might be leveled at the Program Committee was that these discussions took place simultaneously, resulting in the well-known *embarras de choix*. Note to next year's Convention Committee: Can't Panel Discussions be staggered?

Another feature of the Convention was an invitation to our architectural colleagues in Canada to join in the debates. This good neighbor gesture was reciprocated by an invitation from the Ontario Association of Architects to cross the border into Canada where the American delegates were royally entertained.

The Convention was in charge of Vice President C. Storrs Barrows acting for Matthew del Gaudio, President of the Association, whose recent illness prevented his attendance.

Publicity note: A story on the Convention appeared in the Tribune of Sunday, Dec. 1.

PRESS RELEASE

The efforts of the Public Relations Committee to present the specific value of the architect to the public have been crowned with further success by the publication of a symposium on the Construction Impasse in the New York Times on Sunday, November 24th.

The canvassing of a few of the leading members of the profession in New York was made in the belief that the architect, as coordinator of every phase of building, is best qualified to make a concrete contribution to public utterance on the causes and cure of the current building impasse.

Two columns were devoted in the Times to abstracts of letters from the members questioned, all of whom had made prompt and comprehensive replies.

INSURANCE FOR ARCHITECTS

Adequate insurance to protect the architect against errors of commission and omission in his plans and specifications is available under a policy now carried by a number of architectural firms individually. The coverage is exceedingly broad and includes negligent acts on the part of the firm, its predecessors, or any person employed by the Assured during the term of the policy, including sub-contractors employed by the Assured for whose work the Assured may be liable.

Although the London Underwriters thus far have insured only individual firms, a group of twelve engineering firms has made a formal request for quotations on group coverage. The advantages of such an arrangement for a group such as the New York Chapter are obvious, since a blanket policy would conceivably average a more favorable premium per member firm than is possible under the existing rate of \$9.00 per year per employee. In order, however, to establish a group rate the insurance company requires specific information.

All members who are interested are asked, therefore, to write in to the Chapter office the number of employees, exclusive of stenographers and office boys, engaged by them. Since the rate for this type of insurance decreases as the number of policy holders increases, a large group of participants is highly desirable.

OCULUS NOW A QUARTERLY

The appearance of the *Oculus* at spasmodic intervals is to be remedied by regular issues on a three-months' schedule—December, March, June and September.

Any material to be published should reach this office at least fifteen days prior to the publication month.

COMMITTEE WORK

Activities

This Committee under the Chairmanship of Ward Fenner has planned a stimulating series of monthly Chapter meetings through next May at which guest speakers will address us on general subjects of immediate interest to architects. The November meeting led off the season with a discussion and clarification of the purpose and limitations of architectural journalism. Leslie Cheek spoke for the Forum, Henry Saylor came up from Washington on behalf of the Journal, Emerson Goble represented the Record and Thomas Creighton used the experimental November issue of Progressive Architecture as the basis of his provocative talk on critical evaluation in the professional publications. The enthusiasm of the audience confirmed the suspicion that this meeting—in subject matter and speaker—would set a high standard for those to follow during the winter and spring. No let-down is anticipated for December 17th, when President Edmunds will address the first chapter dinner meeting of the year on problems confronting the building industry today.

Public Relations

By far the most absorbing and far-reaching of the projects supported by the Public Relations Committee has been the work now being accomplished by a group of volunteers from the New York Chapter at Halloran Hospital. The original impetus was given by Robert Carrère, who called at the Chapter office last summer to put before us an appeal that had come to him from the American Red Cross. That body had requested the help of a group of architects who would advise and assist the paraplegic war veterans at the hospital in designing houses for themselves. A volunteer group was selected to serve under the Chairmanship of Mr. Carrère, consisting of Albert G. Clay, William Jensen, William Potter, Harold Sleeper and Harvey Stevenson. They began in October a series of discussion conferences with those in the paraplegic wards and with the Housing Committee of the Paralyzed Veterans Association, holding sessions each Monday and Wednesday evenings, with two members of our committee of six attending in rotation. As a result of this intensive study of the problems of the man paralyzed from the waist down and thus confined for life to wheelchair living, the committee, instead of designing complete houses, directed its efforts solely towards perfecting standard units in which as nearly as possible every technical modification and mechanical

device necessary to comfortable housing of paralyzed veterans would be included. While communities and individual family situations make the problem of each paraplegic different, each man is doomed to hospital living until existing housing is adapted or new housing planned around his requirements. Preliminary blueprints were completed a week ago for special bathrooms, bedrooms, work and exercise rooms, and details of doorways, corridor clearance, window and closet levels and garage features. In the meantime Perry Coke Smith offered to have scale models made in the workshop of Voorhees, Walker, Foley & Smith; the first, the bathroom, is now ready and will be presented to the paraplegic group this week. Mr. Smith felt these would have an inestimable morale value to the patients but that to enable the committee to perfect its research findings it would be desirable to conduct an actual field test in the form of a full-sized demonstration, incorporating the standard units, immediately adjacent to the paraplegic wards. Accordingly, he enlisted the aid of the Staten Island Chapter who immediately guaranteed to undertake the construction. Mr. Smith then visited Col. Stanley, commanding officer at Halloran and obtained permission to put up the building. Kenneth Milnes, President of the Staten Island Chapter, says construction will begin at once, so that the demonstration should be ready by the first of the year. The veterans will thus have easy access to the typical units and the committee hopes to perfect its findings by the clinical information thus derived. Final revisions will be made and the complete set of blueprints will then be made available to any disabled veteran seeking aid in the adaptation of his home to his needs, as well as to Federal, State and City Housing Authorities who have already expressed their willingness to cooperate. The plans will be distributed through the New York Chapter, A. I. A., the Red Cross and the Paralyzed Veterans Association.

Word of mouth news of the project has already reached distant communities. Requests for the plans have come from Syracuse and Schenectady; Dr. Dinken of the Department of Physical Medicine in Denver (Col) General Hospital, came in to the office to see them, and the Town of Lockport, New York, telephoned that it would conduct a drive to raise material and labor for two paraplegic veterans who lived there. Lockport asked for publicity material—the blueprints of the standard units and a sketch of the type

of house that could incorporate them. Harvey Stevenson at once undertook to design an exterior—within four days he turned his sketch over to E. P. Chrystie, who made the rendering, and in another five days the result of their labors was on its way to Lockport. Although the research on the standard units is still in progress, the individual need of the discharged veteran is so immediate and so urgent that advance information in the form of a set of blueprints marked "preliminary only" is released when especially requested.

We who have been associated with this venture from the start feel that its significance can hardly be overestimated. The contribution of the architect here is specific and unique; in this case it has been voluntary, generous and untiring and already the effects are reaching far beyond the small group originally involved. Red Cross and Hospital authorities believe the technical and mechanical devices set down in these blueprints will benefit not only paraplegics but all crippled, infirm or disabled persons and enable them to lead active, productive lives once their material environment ceases to confine them and is instead controlled by them.

You can support the New York Chapter work in several ways. There are many paraplegics in Halloran ready for discharge as soon as suitable housing can be arranged for them, either in their own homes or in various types of rental housing. If you have a practical solution call the Chapter office for information or individual requirements. It is conceivable that the program at Halloran will expand and we will need special speakers or extra members to augment the work of the original committee, and in that event we will call on you to contribute time, effort and your special skill.

Technical

This most energetic of the Chapter Committees has scheduled one dinner and two luncheon meetings a month, and even these can hardly crowd into the allotted time the wealth of material they have to present to the large and enthusiastic groups of members attending. So much valuable information is unearthed at these gatherings that transcripts of them will be sent out each month to all Chapter members, the press and interested publications.

ADVT.

Columbia University announces the return engagement of Harold Sleeper and Frederick Woodbridge in their "Practical Course for Home Builders" during the Spring session. Your clients would profit by attendance at these evening lectures.