



OCULUS

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THE QUESTION

What does the A.I.A., and this Chapter in particular, offer its members? How often we are asked this question!

"Just as much as you put into it," one is tempted to answer but this is, in fact, only a partial truth, for one gets much by the mere fact of membership.

ALL THIS AND NO WORK

For example, the initials A.I.A. after an Architect's name carry prestige in the eyes of fellow architects, of the public, even of the courts. Every member benefits from the A.I.A.'s Code of Ethics for the guidance for professional conduct, and from its Schedule of Recommended Minimum Fees. He can attend a host of local, regional and national meetings on a variety of subjects, from aesthetics to the legal and technical aspects of architecture, in addition to which there are purely social meetings and the opportunity to meet fellow members.

Every member also benefits from the A.I.A.'s active programs for enlightening the public as to the Architect's place in society; for keeping the public aware of the many facets of an architect's work; for the employment of private practitioners for the design of public buildings; and for the establishment and maintenance of proper registration standards.

Of even more importance every member benefits from the successful efforts of the various committees whose work encompasses an almost limitless range of professional and social projects, and from the resulting prestige accruing to the A.I.A.

And of course every member receives the publications which report the manifold accomplishments of the A.I.A. These include the *Bulletin*, the *Journal* and various special national reports, while our Chapter members receive also the *OCULUS* and the multitude of Chapter notices and reports and in addition, the *Empire State Architect* which tells of statewide activities of the New York State Association of Architects, membership in which is included in the Chapter's corporate membership dues.

10 CENTS A DAY

All these benefits are automatically a part of corporate membership in this Chapter. They would by themselves be worth far more than the cost of membership in the A.I.A., in the Chapter and in the State Association, since the cost of all three memberships combined amounts to only about 10¢ a day for new members, and less than 14¢ a day for the "old timers."

THE REAL ADVANTAGE — OPPORTUNITY

The above benefits are small indeed compared to the chief advantage of National and Chapter membership, which is the opportunity to take a vital part in A.I.A. activities.

In so doing each member can work with and learn from leaders in our profession and those in many other fields such as Art, Science, Sociology, Politics. He can develop his own ideas on an endless variety of subjects and to express himself effectively for the betterment of society, of the profession and of his own practice. As an individual each Architect can do little that is effective,

whereas as a member of the unified and hardworking group that comprises the A.I.A., he can command the attention and respect which the A.I.A. has built up over the many years of its existence.

What are some of the specific opportunities open to members?

PUBLIC WELFARE

In the field of public welfare there are opportunities for working with professional and civic leaders towards improving social conditions by helping to raise standards in zoning, city planning, housing, etc. Current notable examples of effective work are the Chapter's Monograph on the Significance of the Work of the City Housing Authority, its recommendations for improving and re-planning East Mid-town Manhattan, its present studies of zoning, and its inauguration of a Small House Consulting Service. Those who participate in such activities certainly benefit from the study, the contacts and the prestige which such work brings to them as individuals as well as to the A.I.A. as an organization.

AESTHETICS

In the field of aesthetics there are opportunities to serve on chapter committees and public boards to the end that Architects and others may be rewarded for outstanding work and that the public standards of taste and appreciation of architecture and the allied arts may be raised. For example, the Committee on Architectural Criticism and Aesthetics conducts meetings to study and discuss various types of projects from huge housing developments like Fresh Meadows to the aesthetics of the small house, while the committee on Awards recognizes good architecture by bestowing the Apartment House Medal and the City Planning Medal, and honors laymen for outstanding contributions to the field of architecture by awarding Honorary Associate Membership in the Chapter. The Chapter is also represented on the Fifth Avenue Association's Awards Committee, and on such public commissions as the Fine Arts Federation.

ETHICS

In the field of professional ethics there are opportunities to learn what other members of the A.I.A. think about the standards governing the profession, and to express ideas on all phases of this subject in informal discussions, in committee meetings, and in the various Chapter, State and National publications. For example there is currently a reoccurrence of the old controversy as to where the line should be drawn between legitimate public relations and the kind of advertising which is detrimental to the profession. Only by expressing themselves on such subjects can Architects develop and maintain a code which will serve their best interests and those of the profession as a whole.

PUBLIC RELATIONS

In the field of public relations there are opportunities to work for wider recognition of the importance of the Architect and of the scope of his services. Again this is a chance for each member to express his own ideas through periodicals, the daily press, the radio and television. Valuable experience can be gained by working

with the Chapter's professional Public Relations Counsel and with various sub-committees such as the Editorial Committee which publishes the OCULUS, the Exhibitions Committee which has arranged a series of Chapter and public exhibitions including one at the Museum of Science and Industry and an exhibition which is now being displayed at all the public high schools within the Metropolitan area. There is also the Speakers' Committee which fills requests for members to talk about various phases of architecture at meetings and on radio and television broadcasts, and a committee which entertains visiting Architects from far-off places and helps them meet the people they want to meet and see the things they want to see.

EDUCATION

In the field of education there are opportunities to work with students and draftsmen to acquaint them with the many and varied aspects of professional practice and conduct and to assist them in proper preparation for the registration examinations. Liaison is maintained with the National Council of Architectural Registration Boards. In the past year the Education Committee has checked on school curricula, particularly with respect to drafting schools, and it has organized a series of educational exhibitions and talks by experts in their respective fields. The LeBrun Scholarship Committee has conducted a design competition on a nationwide scale, this year's subject being "A Suburban Railroad Station." The Brunner Scholarship Committee awards each year scholarships for study and research in specific phases of architecture. The exhibit of architectural models now touring the high schools of this area was prepared under such a scholarship. Members who have participated in these educational activities have found that they are not only stimulating but an excellent opportunity for re-evaluating one's own knowledge and philosophy.

TECHNICAL

In the field of professional techniques there is an opportunity to participate in research and study of building techniques and especially of new methods and materials, and in the application of such techniques to provide better physical environment. The frequent lunch meetings, field trips and evening meetings conducted by the Technical Committee have included such diverse and interesting subjects as cost estimating, thin wall construction and panel heating as well as talks by outstanding authorities on the latest developments in artificial lighting and use of daylight.

PROFESSIONAL PROCEDURES

The Professional Forum Committee offers opportunities for discussion of a wide variety of subjects such as social, economic or political problems as they relate to the profession of architecture.

The Legislative Committee investigates laws affecting architectural practice and recommends to the membership appropriate action.

The Codes Committee affords an opportunity of working with City and State authorities to insure the constant revision of building codes in order to keep them up to date.

The Fees and Contracts Committee provides an opportunity for members to participate in the discussion of contracts and the formulation of schedules of charges that will assure adequate compensation for architects' services. During the past year it has achieved notable success in arranging more equitable compensation for

architects under contract with public works and state housing agencies.

ADMINISTRATIVE

Of course neither the National A.I.A. nor this Chapter can function without the backbone of its officers or organizational committees and these offer still more opportunities to members for stimulating activities and worthwhile contacts. A wide variety of choice lies in such committees as the By-Laws Committee which helps us to run smoothly; the Finance Committee which keeps an eye on Chapter funds; the Admissions Committee which maintains the high caliber of membership; the Committee on Unification, now at work with other A.I.A. Chapters in the Metropolitan area; the Activities Committee which coordinates the schedules of all the previously mentioned committees; and the Chapter Register & Yearbook Committee, which keeps track of who is who.

A VITAL MEMBERSHIP

Last but not least, there are opportunities for sharing in the work of the Membership Committee, that most important group whose untiring efforts constantly renew the life force of the organization by interesting eligible men and women in the New York Chapter, its work, what it has to offer them, and what they can contribute to the Chapter and the profession. It is a testimony to the success of their endeavors that membership in the New York Chapter has risen from approximately 400 in 1942 to 600 in 1946, until now it numbers well over 800.

The youth and vigor of the Chapter's officers and committee members and their accomplishments in their manifold programs furthermore give the lie to any charges that the Chapter is an "Old Fogey" organization.

Let us not be complacent about the present situation. The A.I.A. needs the participation and support of all who are eligible for membership if it is to maintain its present activities and expand into the many fields in which it should be active, just as surely as each eligible individual needs the A.I.A.

NEW CHAPTER SLATE

Our By-Laws provide that the Nominating Committee, which was elected at the last Annual Meeting of the Chapter, shall propose a slate of Officers, Directors and members of the Elective Standing Committees to be voted upon at the coming annual meeting in June. The Nominating Committee will meet shortly to adopt a slate for the following:

President, Vice-President, Secretary and Treasurer, each for a one year term; two additional directors, each for a three year term; four members of the Jury for the Medal of Honor; a chairman and two members of the Committee on Nominations; three members of the Committee on Professional Practice, and two members of the Committee on Fellows.

The New York Chapter is probably one of the few organizations the Nominating Committee of which is elected by the members rather than appointed by the Executive Committee. This procedure was provided in the Chapter By-Laws to assure a thoroughly democratic method of choosing the members to fill these important positions.

The Chairman of this year's Nominating Committee is Robert W. McLaughlin. Have you any suggestions for him?

COST ESTIMATING

Last month the OCULUS reported a meeting on Cost Estimating at which architects were cautioned against attempting to make their own preliminary cost estimates, especially on the basis of cost per square foot or per cubic foot. The wide variation of such rates for buildings of apparently similar type and by different architects was cited, and the recommendation was made that architects leave estimating to contractors who can furnish reasonably accurate cost information if preliminary drawings and specifications are sufficiently complete.

This procedure is all very well if the preliminary drawings have reached this stage. But what if a client wants to get some idea of the cost of a building before drawings are more than schematic indications, or even perhaps before a line has been drawn? How can the contractor help then? He can't. The Architect is on his own.

What can he do? Tell his client he has no idea of how much the job will cost? Under some circumstances that is perhaps the only thing he can honestly do. Usually, however, this situation is one where the Architect can prove or disprove the claims of the profession as to analytical ability. If the Architect has done jobs similar to the project under consideration he should be able to arrive at a reasonably accurate approximation of the cost by using the unit costs developed from his previous jobs and adjusting them with respect to cost cycles, location of the job and as many other variables as enter into the comparison. Sometimes the unit costs used are square foot cost, sometimes cubic foot costs, or they may be cost per room, cost per bed, or cost per student, etc.

If the Architect has no figures from his own jobs which he can use, his task is indeed more difficult for more factors must be considered many of which are not obvious, at least upon superficial study. For example, the tightness or spaciousness of plan, the economy or extravagance of construction and finish or unusual requirements of the client can cause an error that may make an estimate worthless. Nevertheless if enough jobs by others are skillfully analyzed and the average results used, the possibilities of serious errors are reduced, and the Architect can perhaps still furnish his client with sufficiently accurate information to suffice until preliminary drawings or even working drawings and specifications are complete enough to permit accurate estimating by contractors.

Any preliminary estimates based on comparison with other jobs should of course be subject to even greater qualifications than the usual statement that it is not a guarantee. It is often wiser to present a tabulation of square feet or cubic feet with a statement that such and such a rate should be possible based on the actual costs of stated specific jobs with adjustments in accordance with recognized price indices.

The type of arithmetical analysis referred to above is also extremely valuable when a client in preliminary conferences wants to know how many of his requirements he can have for a particular sum of money. If a sufficiently accurate unit rate can be established by analytical study it may be possible to tell the client, with appropriate qualification, that he may have so many square or cubic feet, or so many rooms, and that if he wants more it will take more money. This procedure can also be applied by the Architect as a check on the

development of the plans, especially during those stages when both client and Architect are tempted to make everything "just a little bit larger."

How different this approach is from the negative one in which an Architect states that he can give no idea of costs. How often this has led to the client's being unwilling to do anything or perhaps to his spending good money for complete preliminary studies or even working drawings and specifications only to find that contractors' estimates are so high as to make execution of the project impossible.

Applied with skill with the proper qualifying explanations and with a high degree of honesty the analytical approach can do much to overcome the all too common idea that architects are unrealistic and ignorant when it comes to the value of the dollar.

But beware of the "ifs." Lack of skill and lack of proper qualifying explanations are bad enough for the reputation of the profession. How much worse is lack of honesty, such as in the case cited recently by the Chairman of the Professional Practice Committee in which a client was deliberately misled about costs, by an architect who has since openly admitted that he wanted the job of making working drawings and specifications even though he knew that the cost of the building as designed would preclude its construction!

Let us not avoid the dollar sign. Let us on the contrary, as a Chapter, do more toward learning skillfully and honestly to interpret its relationship to the buildings which we design.

FLOWER SHOW

Anyone visiting this year's Flower Show at the Grand Central Palace in search of inspired suggestions for the integration of architecture with landscape would have been disappointed. The most imposing structure among the garden layouts was the facade of a Gunnison Home entered through a small lawn with undistinguished floral borders, its rear wall being omitted to leave the interior as embarrassingly exposed as that of a doll's house. The largest display, that by the Daybreak Nurseries occupying the centre of the Palace floor, consisted of a double garden with an informal lawn at one end and a more stylized arrangement of masonry pool and flagged paths at the other, the transition between the two elements confused by a small octagonal domed gazebo constructed of various disparate items of "ornamental" metal.

On the second floor was a rather pleasing presentation by W. & J. Sloane of a living room, dining room, and terrace, carried out in pale fabrics, blond woods, and a strongly Chinese vocabulary as a background for floral arrangements. But perhaps the most interesting exhibit of all, outside of the flowers themselves, consisted of the forty or fifty entries in an entirely new class. In this group seeds or seed vessels were assembled in their natural colors on vertical wood panels. An infinite variety of effects was achieved ranging from that of tapestry to that of Grinling Gibbons carving. This medium offers many possibilities for the development of semi-permanent decorative features in residential interiors. As distinguished from the well-known winter bouquet made up of the same type of material, but usually seen in a free-standing vase, these panels give the impression of being integral parts of the wall to which they are applied.

WASHINGTON MEETING

Comments heard round and about the Chapter Office indicate that New York will be out in full force at the coming Convention of the Institute at Washington.

The dates are May 10 to 13. For those who are planning to submit entries in the Honor Awards Program, may we remind you that material must be shipped on or before April 20.

The March Bulletin of the A.I.A. gives complete details of the program and lists the matters to be voted on. Our Chapter delegates will be instructed on how to vote at the Chapter Pre-Convention meeting on April 25.

PROGRAM FOR STUDENT ASSOCIATES

A projected series of informal meetings for Student Associate Members of the New York Chapter was inaugurated at Columbia University on Wednesday evening, March 29, by Walter Kilham, President of the Chapter. The scheduled speaker, Gannett Herwig, was unable at the last minute to appear and Mr. Kilham took over, following the program originally proposed by Mr. Herwig. In spite of the fact that his talk was completely "off the cuff," Mr. Kilham gave a most interesting story. He described the method of presentation to a client of one of his firm's recent projects, a New England Junior-Senior High School. Starting with his original appearance before the Board of Education, he outlined the procedure by which his firm was selected, the growing pains of the project as its program was gradually developed out of numerous conferences with the Board and other interested groups in the community, the ultimate day when completed preliminary drawings were voted upon by town referendum, the sorry days during which he found himself in the middle of pitched battles between local factions, and the great day when construction contracts finally were awarded and ground was broken.

The most interesting aspect of Mr. Kilham's address was the discussion of the personality problems that confront an Architect in his dealings with his clients. When the Architect is dealing with a Board composed of a number of men from varying walks of life these problems are multiplied to the point where the Architect is more of a psychiatrist than an Architect. In this particular project one of the most helpful men on the Board was the school bus driver who succeeded in having a functional bus platform shelter substituted for the classic portico desired by other members of the Board. Mr. Kilham was also grateful for the great help given him by one member of the Board who was himself an Architect and who acted as his interpreter in passing information on to lay members of the community. He also mentioned how, in the four long years during which the project was developing, opposition and counter opposition arose within the community over relatively insignificant considerations in the building's development, a condition which many other Architects have noted on other similar projects.

The Student Associate Group of the New York Chapter which was tormented last year now numbers 38 members. We hope to hold a series of such discussions at the various architectural schools in order to give these future practitioners a broad understanding of the practical problems which Architects must meet in their practice. This plan should also lead naturally to more active interest in the work of the Institute. In fact, at the meeting the other evening at Columbia, the students expressed a desire to come down to our Chapter Technical lunches. The President of the Student Associates said he would

discuss with the Faculty the arrangement of their program to permit these trips in the class schedule. The Student Associates would like to sit at tables where they could meet some of the "older" members. In this we will be glad to give them every encouragement.

HOMES FOR NEWLYWEDS

The April issue of the *Ladies Home Journal* contains photographs and plans of a house designed by Edward D. Stone, A.I.A., intended to be built by amateurs. The title is "You Can Build Your Own Home For Half the Price."

It is gratifying to note that the OCULUS is being recognized by other publications—*The Ladies Home Journal* has sent us tear sheets with the request that if their article is mentioned in the OCULUS, they be furnished with copies for their files.

LETTER TO THE EDITOR:

Mr. Platt has a point when he objects to architects being associated with one type of building. However, for the purposes of answering inquiries to the A.I.A. office for recommendations — the Register seems to be the best idea.

My short experience has proved that most business men (such as are numerous in New York City) are anxious to find someone experienced in their own particular field. This condition is unfortunate and should be discouraged — but it does exist.

The officers and the committee in charge of the year-book, namely, Snow, Hutchins, Lawford and Tauch, certainly rate our thanks for a fine job.

George C. Rudolph

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CANDIDATES

According to the By-Laws of the Chapter, names of candidates for membership shall be submitted to all members before consideration by the Committee on Admissions. Information received regarding the qualifications of the following candidates will be considered confidential:

Corporate Membership:

- Harry Lewis Alper
- Sponsors: Joseph Martine & Charles B. Meyers
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