

OCULUS

NEW YORK CHAPTER AMERICAN INSTITUTE OF ARCHITECTS



MAY 1962

CONFERENCE DISCUSSES U. S. AESTHETIC PROBLEMS; "ANTI-UGLIES" ON THE MARCH

BY MARIETTA MEYERS

On April 3 the "First Conference on Aesthetic Responsibility" was held at the Hotel Plaza under the sponsorship of the Design Committee of the New York Chapter with the cooperation of the National Board of Directors of the AIA.

The conference was attended by almost 500 people. It is interesting to note that only 120 were architects. There were almost 100 representatives of the arts, 27 of business firms, 10 from government and 72 from the press. The press came as far as Missouri and London as well as from the metropolitan New York area and articles appeared in the *New York Times*, *Herald Tribune* and *Villager*, to name a few.

At the onset a statement of purpose was given to each participant:

"This conference was conceived for the purpose of inspiring community activity to fight our country's ugliness.

"We must engage in this struggle if we are to develop culturally as well as scientifically. We are fighting immensity, the corporate mind — a total machine society, in defense of our democratic life.

"We are fighting the pressure for cheapness in the midst of our greatest period of prosperity. We have never been richer and poorer at the same time. More production and consumption seems to lead to lower standards of workmanship instead of longer lasting and more beautiful products and buildings.

"We believe that broad citizens' Committees on Aesthetic Responsibility must be established throughout the nation to arouse public awareness of aesthetics, to re-educate people to see, to bring pressure on everyone responsible for our visual environment to stop this desecration of our Country."

The three questions discussed were, "What are our Aesthetic Values?", "What are the Aesthetic Responsibilities of Government,

Business and institutions?" and "Who is responsible for Ugliness?". Each question was discussed by a different panel of six speakers, and followed by a question and answer period.

Perhaps the most penetrating statement was made by *August Heckscher*, Special White House Consultant on the Arts: "A civilization begins to manifest itself when men and women have begun to take thought about what it is they construct, and why, and to what end. It begins to be a living whole when the idea of beauty has found its place alongside the pressure of utility and the spur of need.", but he pointed to the general apathy of the American public to this end. "What is required is readiness to undertake on a large scale the kind of public works which are truly public — in the interests of the citizenry; and truly sense that they serve the highest works — in the sense that they are made to endure and to be judged by future generations."

Stage Designer *Jo Mielziner* felt that "our aesthetic values have been disastrously lowered by the standards set by public works and by the publicly accepted chaos in our city planning."

Daniel P. Moynihan, Special Assistant to the Secretary of Labor, offered some official hope: "To date there is no policy, but this will be rectified shortly. Today our buildings ought to be built in a manner that is distinguished and

which will reflect the dignity, the enterprise, the vigor and the stability of the American government. They ought to represent the finest contemporary architectural thought; design must flow from the architectural profession to the government rather than vice versa . . . A portion of the cost of public building ought . . . to be allocated to the purchase of fine art as part of the general embellishment of the building, as part of the design of the building itself."

Burnham Kelly, Dean of Cornell's College of Architecture, proposed a creative arts study committee to "take a fresh look at programs, teaching materials, and teachers in the hope of opening to citizens of the United States at long last the power to communicate by line and form as well as by word or by abstract symbol".

"The primary motivating ideals in our mass culture are the ideals of materialism and egalitarianism", said *John L. Schimmel*, psychiatrist. "Egalitarianism is the more serious, a more dangerous ideology in terms of aesthetic values". There can be no room for aesthetic values in a society that not only idolizes its materialism but believes in an equality that flattens out differences between this man and that".

In summarizing The conference, Design Committee Chairman *Richard Snibbe* made an appeal for "the establishment of broad citizens' committees throughout the nation to arouse public awareness of aesthetics and to take action to stop our country's desecration."

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Another local development in the "aesthetic responsibility" cam-

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NEW YORK CHAPTER

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NEW DATE SET FOR INSTALLATION OF OFFICERS

By special request of the Institute the New York Chapter is revising its policy of installing in June of each year its new Officers, Executive Committee members and Elective Committee members. At the Chapter's Pre-Convention Meeting the membership voted to support the action of the Executive Committee in changing the date when the new Chapter administration takes office to January 1st of each year.

The change was requested by the Institute coordination and administration of Chapter affairs. The January 1st date coincides with the change-over of all National Committees. Institute Officers will continue to take office in the Spring following the Annual Convention.

The New York Chapter has appointed a special "ad hoc" committee to study the mechanics of initiating this change-over and recommend the necessary revisions to the Chapter By-Laws. This special committee will present its recommendation to the Chapter membership at a special Chapter Meeting to be held on Wednesday, June 6th. The Annual Luncheon for the installation of a new administration, normally held at this time, has been postponed.

The present administration and committee chairmen will necessarily continue in office until such time as they are properly relieved.

CONGRATULATIONS

On May 15th, 1952, Mrs. Margot A. Henkel joined the staff of the New York Chapter, AIA. This little-noticed event turned out to be one of the luckiest in chapter history, for today, as Executive Secretary, she has become almost indispensable to this organization. 'Margot', as she is familiarly known, heads a small but very efficient staff, and is in the background of every chapter activity.

On this 10th anniversary of Mrs. Henkel's devoted service to this chapter, all members join OCULUS in thanking her and in hoping that she will remain with us for a long, long time.

LANDMARKS PRESERVATION COMMISSION APPOINTED

Mayor Wagner has established a permanent twelve-member Landmarks Preservation Commission and appointed *Geoffrey Platt* as Chairman. The twelve members have been appointed for terms of one, two, or three years. The membership will at all times include an architect, a realtor, a historian qualified in the field, a practitioner of the fine arts, a landscape architect, a city planner, and at least one member of the Art Commission.

Mr. Platt was also Chairman of the temporary committee that laid the groundwork for this new committee. Of the thirteen members of the original committee, only two others, Chapter President Frederick J. Woodbridge and Robert Curtiss, were appointed to this new committee.

The mission of the new committee will be to designate for preservation buildings, structures, monuments, or other works of historic or esthetic importance, the surrounding of such works, and groups of buildings or districts whose general character is historically important or uniquely valuable in design or location. Within one year, the committee is to prepare a "detailed legislative program for the effective protection of those portions of designated landmarks that fall within public view." It will also recommend appropriate action, when requested,

to other public agencies.

The article in the *New York Times* announcing the establishment of the new committee also included excerpts from the last issue of the OCULUS, under the subhead "Architects Decry Razing of Penn Station." Mr. Platt was quoted as saying, with regard to the protest, that he "personally regretted that his commission had come into being too late to try to save the terminal." The same article announced, without further explanation, that Park Commissioner Newbold Morris had "given up the idea" of moving the 84 Doric columns from the exterior of the station to Flushing Meadow Park. He still hopes, however, to use some of them in a suitable setting, the article said.

John Dixon

BOOKS

"Wood in Architecture" by Finn Monies — F. W. Dodge Corporation — 111 pages. Illus. \$6.95. Translated from the Danish.

This fine little book makes no pretense of being a detailed history or technical handbook. The distinguished Danish architect-author makes his aims clear at the very beginning of the short text: "to give an account of an architects' opinion of wood and its uses in his own profession" — and "to suggest some of the esthetic possibilities inherent in the use of wood in contemporary building."

Through the excellent, short, but to the point commentary and the wonderful black and white photographs of particularly good detailing, one can feel his respect for wood and its proper use.

In the chapters "Wood and Houses", "Interiors", "The Detail", "Texture and Finishes" and "Wood in Large Structures" Mr. Monies fulfills his aims without giving any pat solutions. His approach to the subject and the layout of the book are as restrained as the simple, understated architecture presented.

Wood in Architecture is useful not only for the student or young architect but also as a refreshing challenge to those who may not have used wood to its fullest esthetic capacity.

Robert Beattie

PRE-CONVENTION MEETING HELD

At the pre-convention meeting of the N. Y. Chapter held on April 10, a slate of 40 chapter delegates was elected. These delegates, who otherwise will go to the 1962 AIA Convention at Dallas uninstructed, were urged to support the candidacy of chapter member *Robert W. Cutler* for Secretary of the Institute for the coming year. It was also decided that the chapter will support the proposed by-law change which will make the First Vice President the President-Designate, and oppose the one which will permit the formation of professional affiliates by local chapters.

Several other resolutions were presented from the floor and were acted upon favorably, including one condemning the action of the Commission on Fine Arts of the District of Columbia in connection with its arbitrary rejection of the FDR Memorial design.

LeBRUN TRAVELING SCHOLARSHIP

The \$3,000 LeBrun Traveling Scholarship, granted biennially by the chapter, was awarded this year to James S. Daley of Stillwater, Oklahoma.

Mr. Daley, a student at Oklahoma University School of Architecture, was the winner of a nationwide competition for the design of an architect's headquarters building.

Runners-up in the competition were Dale R. Johnson of Newton, Massachusetts, who received First Mention and Bruno Ast of Champaign, Illinois, with an Honorable Mention.

BRUNNER PRIZE WON BY ULRICH FRANZEN

The Brunner Memorial Prize in Architecture of the National Institute of Arts and Letters will be conferred on *Ulrich Franzen* at the Joint Annual Ceremonial of the National Institute and the American Academy of Arts and Letters on May 24, Pietro Belluschi making the presentation.

The \$1000 annual prize differs from other prizes in architecture

in that it is given to an architect who shows promise of contributing to architecture as an art, in keeping with the aims and purposes of the National Institute.

ARCHITECTURAL LEAGUE NAMES NEW OFFICERS

Robert Allan Jacobs has just been elected president of The Architectural League of New York.

Mr. Jacobs, of Kahn and Jacobs, succeeds *Robert W. Cutler*, of Skidmore, Owings and Merrill.

Elected at the same time were six vice presidents, one for each of the League's categories of membership. They are: *Ulrich Franzen*, architecture; *William C. Pahlmann*, design and craftsmanship; *Joel Marder* (re-elected), engineering; *Robert L. Zion*, landscape architecture; *Robert Sowers*, mural decoration; and *Betti Richard*, sculpture.

Minor L. Bishop, secretary, and Ronald Allwork, treasurer, were both reelected for another year.

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paign — somewhat more direct in its approach than the discussions of the recent conference — is the formation of an ANTI-UGLIES organization. It is now being established by a group of young architects who are anxious to promote public recognition of — and demand for — better architecture and urban design. It is intended to function as an out-spoken observer of the physical environment of the city, scrutinizing everything from major building complexes to street signs and litter baskets.

Like the ANTI-UGLIES in England (to which it is in no way formally related), the formation of the local group is a reaction to the proliferation of urban ugliness by indifferent public officials as well as by the "anything goes" school of short-sighted real estate speculators. The approach will be on several fronts. One will be in the area of organized letter-writing to editors of newspapers; to the Mayor, the City Planning Commission and other public officials; and — not least — to the sponsors of the projects in question. Radio interviews will be arranged. In some cases the most effective weapon may prove to be orderly public machines coordinated with well timed and strategically placed press releases. Endorsement and support will be solicited from community leaders who have a parallel interest in the improvement of the urban environment. To insure possible moment, **before** plans are advanced beyond a chance of change.

The ANTI-UGLIES Club is still in the formative stage and would welcome expressions of interest from others in the professional community of architects. As yet it has no official home, but inquiries may be addressed to Leon Brand, 69-81 108th Street, Forest Hills 75, New York.

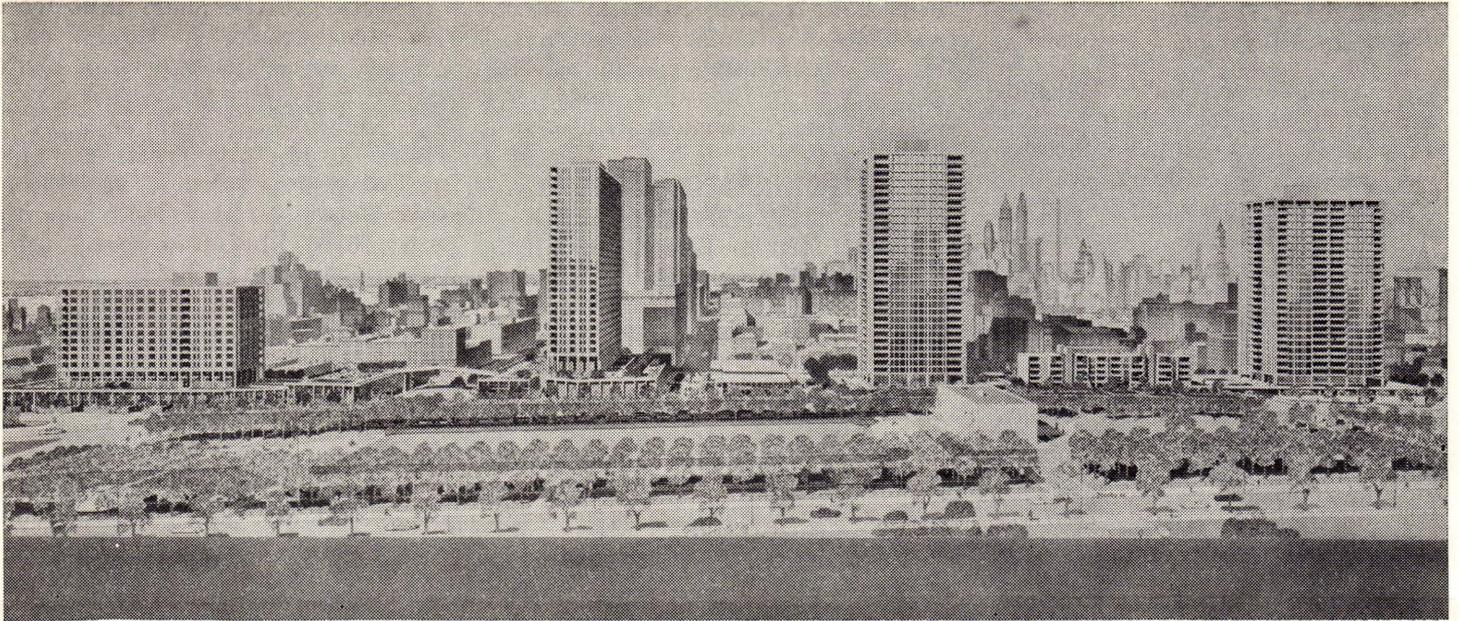
Saul Ellenbogen

* * *

What architects can do to counter ugliness is a continuing concern at many levels of our professional organizations. No one is guilty of deliberately plotting ugliness; we merely have the cumulative results of vast and protracted indifference. Ugliness didn't first occur yesterday, to be sure. It is equally certain that it won't go away tomorrow, or ever, without a lot of collective zeal.

But there is another way to attack ugliness: it is based on the premise that every architect in New York cherishes a few favorite places that bring delight. The source of his pleasure may be a single building, or a grouping around a plaza; an interior space, or a small quiet park. Whatever the place, he finds in it certain qualities of light, color, mass, and composition that defy the surrounding monotony. If we keep these images before us they will be an immediate standard of comparison for what we are doing today. And it's a good idea to keep our own aim high as we take potshots at others.

S. Hart Moore



Renewal plan for Brooklyn's Cadman Plaza, to which the Chapter has given its support (see p. 6)

HIGHLIGHTS OF 1962 STATE LEGISLATION

From the standpoint of the architectural profession, the 1962 session of the New York State Legislature was an extremely busy one. Among the session's highlights were: (1) the enactment of a state university construction fund designed to accelerate expansion of public higher education facilities in the state; (2) authorized construction of new state office buildings in Binghamton, Utica, Rochester and New York City; (3) defeat of all corporate practice bills in committee, as advocated by the New York State Association of Architects and the New York State Association of the Professions; (4) defeat of bills to void agreement exempting architects, engineers from liability for injury to persons or property caused by negligence. (one such bill had already passed the Assembly); (5) Passage of all of the Multiple Dwelling Law bills supported by NYSAA and the important bill validating plans filed before December 15, 1961 was signed into law; (6) Passage of several Multiple Residence Law amendments approved by NYSAA.

For the first time in many years not a single bill was introduced downgrading or lowering admission requirements. Nor were any amendments to the Education Law introduced changing provisions to practice architecture. The Education, Professional Practice, and Legislative Committees will con-

tinue their studies to bring about desired changes at the 1963 session. One bill before the Governor, approved by NYSAA, will permit a U. S. citizen architect, registered in

his own state, to apply for a permit from the Education Department for a single project in this state. This privilege is now restricted to foreign architects.



WOMEN'S ARCHITECTURAL AUXILIARY

Mrs. Max O. Urbahn was elected president of WAA at the annual meeting held May 2. She succeeds Mrs. Robert W. Cutler, president of the first board, for whom she served as Alternate on the Founder's Committee. Other officers elected for the 1962-63 term are: Mrs. Morris Ketchum, Jr., Mrs. William E. Delehanty, Mrs. Douglas Haskell and Mrs. Samuel Juster. The Nominating Committee which presented the slate was headed by Mrs. John S. Burrows and included the Mmes. W. O. Biernacki-poray, Matthew W. Del Gaudio, David L. Eggers, and Edgar Tafel. Others of the first Board retiring were two Founders: Mrs. Irvin Leslie Scott and Mrs. Harold R. Sleeper.

"The new Board plans to complete ways and means ideas originated prior to election, and we shall, of course, continue the successful Doric Cotillion", Mrs. Urbahn has stated.

Robert Price, legal counsel of WAA, appeared before the Executive Committee April 18, with suggestions for new methods for increasing revenue.

A scholarship grant of \$2,000.00 at Cooper Union was made at the annual meeting. Prof. Esmond Shaw accepted the grant on behalf of the School. Previous grants to Columbia University and Pratt Institute brings the total to \$7,000.00 in funds made available for scholarships by the Auxiliary, and we wish the lengthening line of WAA scholars every success.

It is not too early to send in the name of your favorite debutante—or a young escort—to the Doric Cotillion Committee. Mrs. Robert W. Cutler will again serve as Chairman of the Thanksgiving gala and will be happy to give you any information desired. Her address is: 17 W. 54 St., New York, 19, N. Y. Tel: CI 7-4436 — CI 6-1288.

CINCINNATI COMPETITION

The Cincinnati Association has announced its sponsorship of an A.I.A.-approved competition for the design of a "symbolic structure" to be erected as part of a waterfront historical park. The competition is open to all architects registered in any state. The architect placing first will be given the commission to design and oversee the project and will receive an advance fee of \$6500. Second and third prizes of \$2500 and \$1000 will also be awarded. Copies of the program and registration forms will be sent promptly upon receipt of application addressed to: Walter A. Taylor, F.A.I.A., School of Architecture, Ohio University, Athens, Ohio. The closing date for registration is May 15, 1962.

WESTCHESTER CHAPTER DINNER-DANCE

The thirteenth Annual Scholarship Dinner-Dance of the Westchester Chapter will be held at the Briar Hall Country Club in Briarcliff Manor on Thursday, May 24th, at which time a scholarship in the amount of \$1000 will be awarded to a graduate of a Westchester County High or Technical School who plans to continue his studies at an accredited University or College with a view toward a career in Architecture.

The Club is spacious and attractive, the view from the terrace remarkable, the music and entertainment of the best. Principal speaker will be D. Kenneth Sargent FAIA, Dean of the School of Architecture, Syracuse University.

Tickets may be obtained from James W. Peck, 4 Brookside Avenue, Pelham, New York or by phoning his New York office, MU 3-5700.

ARCHITECTURAL TOUR OF JAPAN

M. Shima, Japanese architect, has worked out a detailed itinerary for a 21-day tour of Japan. The tour, to be organized by New Orient Express, is to cost a total of \$1014 including round-trip air fare, based on group rates. Anyone interested should get in touch with Mr. G. Iseki, New Orient Express, 375 Park Avenue, New York.

COMING EVENTS

MAY 7-11	A.I.A. Convention — Dallas, Texas
MAY 9	Wednesday, 5:45, Dining Room Younger Architects Meeting
MAY 16	Wednesday, 5:15, Gallery A Hospital and Health Discussion Group
MAY 22	Tuesday, 5:15, Gallery A Technical Committee Lecture: "Structural Concrete"
JUNE 6	Wednesday, 12:30, Dining Room Annual Luncheon
OCTOBER 10-13	New York State Association of Architects Convention — Whiteface Inn, Lake Placid, N.Y.

CHAPTER OFFICE NOTES

● **CHAPTER DUES** According to the by-laws of the chapter, annual dues for 1961-1962 were payable on October 1, 1961. Members who have not yet sent in their payments are reminded to do so at once.

● **AIA DOCUMENTS** A newly introduced series of contract forms between architects and en-

gineers is now available. They are:

- C-101 Architect-Engineer, Percentage basis
- C-111 Architect-Engineer, Multiple of Direct Personnel Expense
- C-121 Architect-Engineer, Fee plus expense

Since proceeds from the sale of standard documents form an important source of Chapter revenue, members are urged to make their purchase through the Chapter Office.

COMMITTEE ACTIVITIES

Office Practice

The editors have received the following communication from a member of the committee: "Due to the resounding lack of response from the solicitation in the February issue of the OCULUS for information based on first-hand experience in the recent use of the quantity survey form of bidding or the employment of modular drafting standards, this committee senses that there is insufficient interest among the Chapter membership to warrant pursuing either subject further. On the odd chance that perhaps a certain amount of procrastination, which plagues us all from time to time, or an understandable reluctance to revive unfortunate past experience, but certainly not a desire to secrete a good thing from one's peers, has

precluded a reply, we once again, and finally, sincerely ask for a resume of experience on either subject."

Anyone with (fortunate or unfortunate) experience is requested to notify H. Bourke Weigel at PL 2-9700.

Legislative

At a recent meeting, the committee discussed a pending bill on supervision of construction and alterations. The bill, City Council Intro. No 52, would require full-time supervision on construction of new buildings over 30,000 cu. ft. in volume or major structural alterations costing \$10,000 or more or increasing the cubic content of a building to 30,000 cu. ft. or more. The supervisor would have to be a licensed construction superintendent, a registered architect, or a

licensed professional engineer. The bill is sponsored by a group of construction superintendents in the city. The committee was opposed to the bill as written. It was the general feeling that small projects might require as much responsible supervision as larger ones, that architects and engineers might not be able to be present at all times on a construction project, and that the term "licensed," rather than "qualified" might lead to legal problems involving the Education Law.

Hospital and Health

In line with its efforts to bring order to the laws and regulations governing hospital planning and construction, the Committee has written Commissioner Edward Thompson requesting a meeting to review Fire Department requirements.

This department is concerned with the storage and handling of oxygen, combustible gases, refrigeration, internal fire alarm systems, fire telegraph systems, and sprinklers, in addition to routine fire prevention housekeeping. Since the recent catastrophe at Hartford Hospital, fire prevention inspection and the routine of obtaining certificates of occupancy clearances have become especially stringent.

The Chapter does not propose the relaxation of safety requirements, but only suggests that such requirements be systematized and published. At present architects doing hospital work have no available Fire Department Code.

Civic Design

The Chapter has given its support to the urban renewal plan for Cadman Plaza, Brooklyn, drawn up by M. Milton Glass and Whittlesey & Conklin, Architects. Chapter President *Frederick J. Woodbridge*, appearing before the City Planning Commission's public hearings on the Housing and Redevelopment Board's proposal, called it "a truly effective and suitable reuse of this beautiful and desirable site."

He stated that the Chapter's Civic Design Committee had studied "the many proposals and revised proposals which have been made since it was first announced in

1959, and the many goals and desires which have been expressed by various community groups with respect to this project" and concluded that "there are not enough structures either of architectural or structural merit to warrant any attempt at selective clearance and conservation." He said that the Chapter did not believe that the buildup at Cranberry and Fulton Streets, proposed as a memorial to Walt Whitman, was worthy of retention.

"The Chapter welcomes the imaginative use of the various measures and aids afforded in Federal, State and City legislation which are being combined to produce an integrated development serving the complete spectrum of income groups," he added.

Fees and Contracts

A group of five architects representing the entire architectural profession in New York met with Milton Mollen, Chairman of the Housing and Redevelopment Board, and the members and staff of his board to discuss City Mitchell-Lama Architect's Fees. *Frederick J. Woodbridge*, President of the Chapter, was present, and the committee was represented by Chairman *William F. R. Ballard*, *George D. Brown*, *Frederick G. Frost, Jr.*, and *H. I. Feldman*, Mr. Feldman also representing the Architects Council. Mr. Ballard presented the case for equating fees to State Division fees, inasmuch as the work was the same, and for basing fees on percentage of cost rather than on the number of units. Mr. Mollen said that the Board was sympathetic to some adjustment of fees and appointed a three-man subcommittee, which has met with members of the chapter committee to explore the matter further.

Historical Buildings

Late in February *Walker O. Cain* requested the assistance of the committee in efforts to save the Library at West Point from imminent destruction. The Library was said to be "the only prominent major school building remaining at West Point with any great historical association and architectural interest." Early in March, however, it was reported that the building had already been half de-

stroyed to make way for an expansion of other facilities, and the matter was dropped.

A letter from *Robert C. Weinberg* alerted the committee to the neglected state of the Old Merchant's House at 29 East 4th Street. The house, built in 1830, is remarkable for the extent to which it has remained unchanged in interior design and furnishings since the middle of the Nineteenth Century. It is operated as a museum by the Historical Landmarks Society of New York, control of which is vested in four trustees. Mr. Weinberg contended that the trustees have failed to undertake repairs and maintenance essential to the preservation of the structure. Inspection by committee chairman *Otto J. Teegen* confirmed the need for repairs which are being listed in order of urgency at the request of the Trustees — who reported among their problems the lack of funds and deterioration of the neighborhood.

MEMBERSHIP

WELCOME NEW MEMBERS

The New York Chapter extends its warmest welcome to the following new members:

Corporate

Joseph A. Capano
Edward S. Connell
Paul Grossman
Leon J. Haft
Stephen J. Kagel

Poy G. Lee
Vincent Moscarella
Salvatore Scutaro
David W. Smith, Jr.
Walter L. Steinharter

Associate

James T. Burns, Jr.
Alexander N. Loisos

John J. Loftus

CANDIDATES

Information regarding the qualifications of the following candidates for membership will be considered confidential by the Admissions Committee:

Corporate

Donald J. D'Avanzo
Irving A. Mennen
Henry Arthur Raemsch

George Henry Warren, Jr.
Ronald Edwin Woodward

Associate

Louis Bobrowsky

Howard Roy Kronland

Harry Orthos

John F. Parkinson

Sponsors:
Olindo Grossi and
H. Seymour Howard, Jr.
Joseph A. Daidone
and Donald E. Freed
David Basch and
Edward M. Dweck
Elisabeth Coit and
Gustave W. Iser

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