

Oculus

NYC/AIA Continuing Education Off to a Running Start: A Series A Course Catalogue and CEU's

Approximately 55 attendees learned about Flat Membrane Roofing, and earned .2 CEU's in the process, at the first of a series of free evening seminars sponsored by AIA, PC and CSI, held at chapter headquarters on Oct. 23rd.

The program turned out to be a real "how to" (or "how not to") clinic, as specific details were analyzed and critiqued as reference material was recommended for further study. Comment by members after the program was most favorable.

Our next session will be Nov. 20 and will be on Concrete and Cement Technology. Three top experts in the field, Ray Huen, Reginald Hough, and Phil Maslow will share knowledge and insights about the possibilities and limitations of concrete, gained over years of work with our best architects on our most prestigious buildings. Application will again be made for AIA accreditation for CEU's and we are now advised that AIA will keep a record of CEU's earned by a member for a fee of \$3.00 per entry. Based on our October turnout, members are advised to be early enough to secure a place. Refreshments will be set out before the meeting to ease the delay between work and a late supper.

An Evening with Jane and Ben Thompson Held at Cooper Union's Great Hall



Jane and Ben Thompson, pictured above, took their road show out of Boston and into The Great Hall in Cooper Union on Oct. 13. It was the first meeting of the 3 day First National Conference on Urban Design. The evening was sponsored by the Chapter. Jane and Ben hypnotized the audience with a 3 screen slide projection show set to music and described by Ben. The screens took the audience from Finland to Boston.

AIA/CCNY Evening Program: results of a summer survey of all area architects are still coming in and it appears that this program of eight to ten session evening courses will expand. As of this writing at least five and possible more courses have stimulated enough interest to be viable offerings this year. These courses would be: The Architect and the Law, The Architect in Construction Management, The Architect as Developer, Environmental Psychology, Energy

Conscious Site and Landscape Design, Building Rehabilitation, and The Form and Function of Specifications. Respondents to the original survey will receive registration material shortly. Members who did not respond to the survey, but who now wish to participate in the program, are advised to contact Richard Spronz at 516-781-8009. □

*Ronald Woodward, Chairman
Continuing Education Committee*

**Document Sales at Chapter:
1:00 to 4:00 p.m.**

Once again we remind members that, with a reduced chapter office staff (two less than in 1973), we have had to confine the hours of taking orders for documents over the phone and at the front desk to afternoons between 1:00 and 4:00. It is by these and other measures that the chapter operating budget has been held almost down to the dollar amount of 1969-70. □

**City Compiling List of
Consulting Architects and
Engineers**

The Department of General Services of the City of New York is compiling a list of qualified consultant architects and consultant engineers that are interested in performing professional services for the Department. All Consultants are invited to submit Federal Form 254 or an equivalent brochure that describes your general professional experience. This information will be kept on file and referred to in the selection of Consultants for projects to be designed in the coming year.

Correspondence should be addressed to:

Department of General Services
Division of Public Structures
Bureau of Building Design
Room 1416
Municipal Building
New York, NY 10007

**St. Vincent's Hospital
Expansion Plan Opposed**

St. Vincent's Hospital plans new high-rise construction between 11th and 12th Streets on Eighth Avenue and has applied to the Landmarks Commission for a certificate of appropriateness because the work would occur within the Greenwich Village historic district.

A special committee, Milton Glass, chairman, including Charles Hughes, Wids de la Cour, chairman of the Historic Buildings Committee; Donald Whelan, chairman of the Health Facilities Committee; Jay Fleishman and George Lewis reviewed a presentation by representatives of the architect, Ferrenz and Taylor on Oct. 19, and Charles Hughes testified at the Landmarks Commission hearing on the 24th.

He expressed reluctance to criticize the work of the architect because our committee did not know enough of the constraints imposed by the Hospital, but he went on as follows:

"It was the unanimous sense of the committee that the profile of the proposed tower, with its very large-scale cantilever, would be in its own way a very prominent landmark not compatible with the small scale of Greenwich Village. A less aggressive tower, more of a background building, would be less disturbing.

"The New York Chapter/AIA does not comment on the design of individual building buildings except as they may involve consideration of urban design, urban planning, zoning or - as in this case -

a historic district. We did not attempt to evaluate the Hospital's program or the architect's reasoning in arriving at this particular form. We have confined ourselves to commenting on the end result as we think it would affect the quality of the area." □

George Lewis

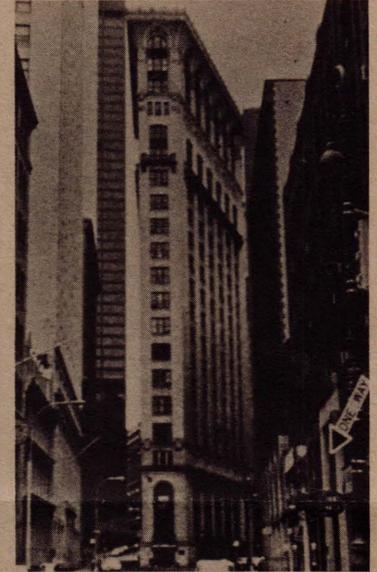
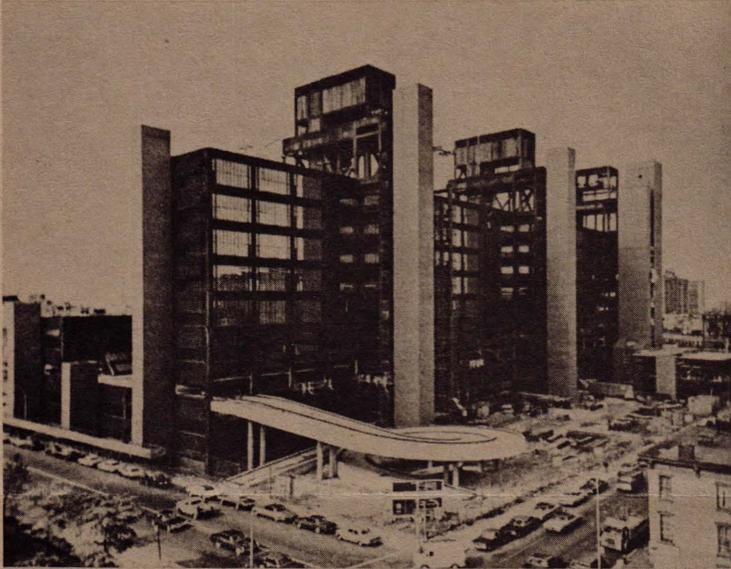
**New York Chapter
The American Institute of Architects**
20 West 40th Street
New York, New York 10018
212/730-1221
George S. Lewis, Executive Director

Executive Committee 1978/79
Charles E. Hughes, President
William J. Conklin, 1st Vice President
Joseph Wasserman, Vice President
John Belle, Vice President
Iris S. Alex, Secretary
Ralph Steinglass, Treasurer
Jonathan Barnett, Director
Michael McCarthy, Director
Rosaria Piomelli, Director
Bertram Blumberg, Director
Laurie Maurer, Director
Martin Raab, Director

Oculus Editors
Denis Glen Kuhn
Kenneth Ricci

Cathanne Piesla
Chapter Staff Member

New AIA Guide Hits Bookstores



Recent construction such as the Woodhull Medical and Mental Health Center 1977 by Kallmann & McKinnell/Russo & Sonder Assoc. Architects left (photo courtesy of the Facilities Improvement Corp. by H. Bernstein Assoc.) is featured in the Guide as well as demolished construction such as the Singer Tower 1907 center (photo from collection of Elliot Willensky) and the General American Insurance Co. right (photo by Margaret Latimer) which are contained in the Guide's Necrology.

Those of you who have been concerned over the past ten years about the demolition of many significant buildings of which you were fond, about the quality of new construction built during this period and about the fact that one of your favorite books, the AIA Guide to New York City, hasn't reflected these changes, can now rest easy, at least about your book.

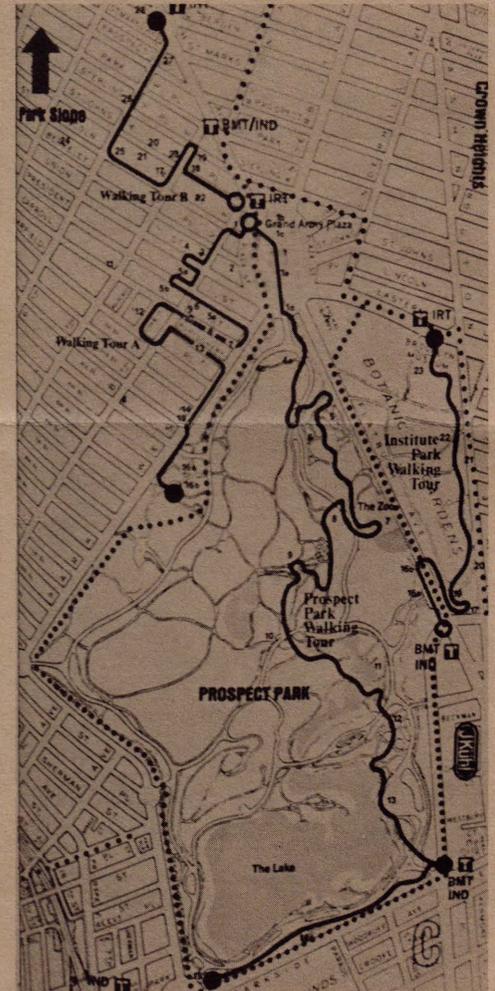
A new expanded version of the by-now familiar Guide, first published in 1967, has been released recently. It has 652 pages compared with the original 416. This expansion is largely attributable to increased coverage of buildings in The Bronx, Brooklyn, Queens and Staten Island, to the addition of a Necrology (listing of demolished and otherwise vanished buildings) and by excellent coverage of the construction that took place during the last decade.

Upon picking up the familiar shaped volume with the familiar typography (perhaps not noticing the heavier weight or different background), one is shocked to see that, yes, the Singer Building really has been demolished, or, yes, Waterside really has been built. With this informative new volume tucked in your hip pocket, you can fearlessly roam the far reaches of the city, free from the fear that the little wood framed Greek Revival house you seek has been replaced by a concrete Leviathan.

When the AIA Guide first appeared in '67 it was an extraordinary book. It still is.

continued on page 4

As with the previous edition the Guide contains sectional maps of the City with significant buildings located and dependable walking tours laid out.



AIA Guide

continued from page 3

It is comprehensive on a scale that matches the scale of its subject. Yet for all its careful inclusiveness, authors Norval White and Elliot Willensky have retained a discerning and critical eye.

The Guide originated as a way to commemorate the Centennial of the founding of our Chapter in 1967, when the AIA held a convention here. The second edition, which took two and a half years to produce, was begun largely by the encouragement of the original publishers, MacMillan. Suggestions for revision were received from many sources, a number in response to a request made in *Oculus* a while ago. Christopher S. Gray, Director of the Office for Metropolitan History, was one person who contributed greatly to the new volume. The new book may in fact turn out to be better known than its predecessor: it is on prominent display at major bookstores and has been chosen as a Book-of-the-Month Club selection.

Larry Levine

*New York Chapter
American Institute of Architects*

*AIA Guide to New York City
Revised Edition*

*by Norval White, Elliot
Willensky*

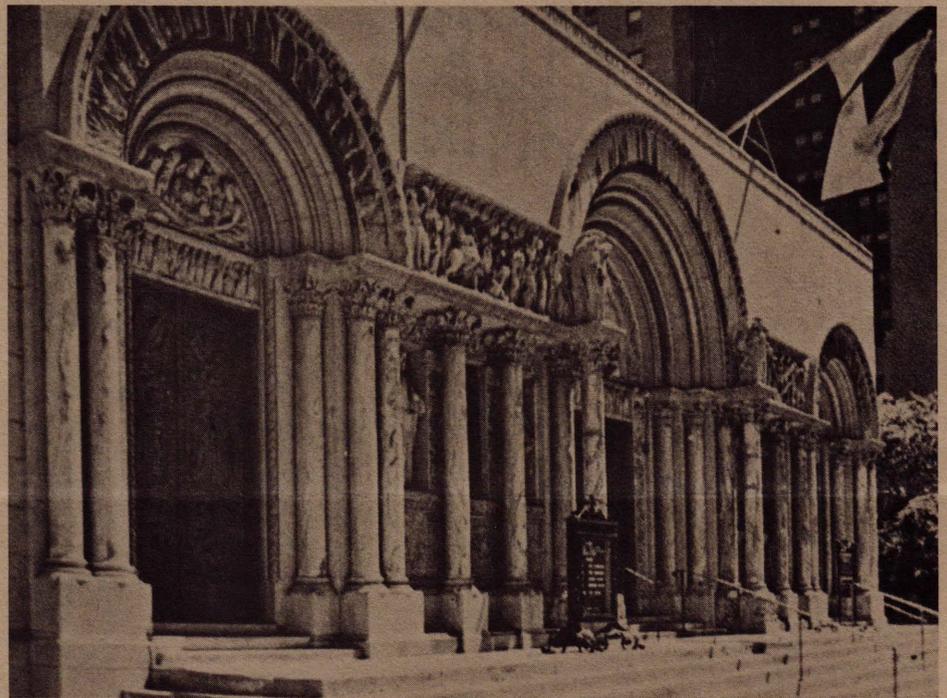
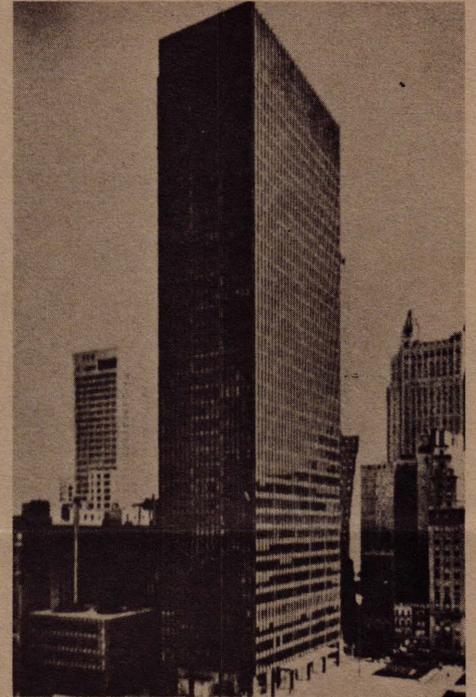
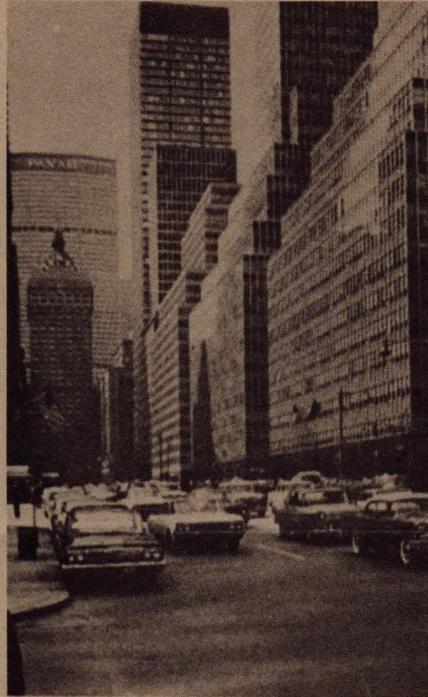
653 pages

Collier Books

\$14.95 hard cover

\$ 9.95 soft cover

*(Chapter members can purchase
the soft cover at the Chapter
for \$7.95.)*



The Guide juxtaposes historical and contemporary structures which are proximate to each other such as St. Bartholomew's Church, 1919, by McKim, Mead and White (bottom photo by Norval White) and the Bankers Trust Co. Building, 1963, by Emery Roth and Sons (top left photo by Alex Langley) and The Seagram Building, 1958, by Mies van der Rohe and Philip Johnson; Kahn & Jacobs (top right photo by Schechter Assoc.).

Some Observations on Learning and Knowledge in the Historic Building Process or History is Full of Failures

In the last decade, the number of building material and system failures seems to have increased substantially. The steady increase in construction volume alone does not appear to account fully for this phenomenon. History, after all, is full of failures. Unfortunately, today, the events surrounding failures are so intertwined with questions of liability that often we lose sight of the larger meaning to the profession.

Every time a new material or system is introduced, an experience base has to be developed. Historically this process was an empirical one. The technical changes were often small and development took place over a long period of time. The technical or design changes were relatively small variations within a standard practice and were allowed sufficient exposure time for evaluation of performance and impact. Although written documents were scarce, the results were generally known because professional education consisted, to a large degree, of actual observation of and participation in the building process. Innovations were clearly identifiable within the continuum of traditional practice. Professional memory, which served as the repository of the empirical knowledge, was based on small variations in traditional methods tested over long periods of time.

In the last century, this process began to telescope. New materials and methods proliferated to meet new problems. The rate at which new systems and materials were introduced increased

tremendously. The empirical knowledge base that traditionally served the profession became increasingly unable to cope with the frequency and amplitude of change. By necessity, newly introduced materials or systems could no longer be evaluated from direct knowledge based on observation of actual performance. Field experience was gradually replaced by laboratory testing.

Some of the earliest testing programs - for example, the stone selection process for the Renwick Gallery in Washington, D.C., or for the House of Parliament in London - were in fact limited only to compressive strength analysis and freeze/thaw resistance testing. Today's testing is of course more complex and relies on simulation of field conditions. Often these new materials and systems have excellent individual performance characteristics. It is difficult however, to determine performance under composite conditions due to the large number of possible variables. Likewise, the effects of time are difficult at best to simulate in the testing laboratory.

The impact of increasing frequency and complexity of technical change can be demonstrated by the juxtaposition of examples from different periods. The Hagia Sophia in Istanbul was constructed during the age of Justinian in the 6th Century with a very flatly curved dome that collapsed shortly after completion. The replacement dome had ribbing and substantially more curvature. The two sides open with fenestration were

filled to reduce possible displacement of the supports of the dome. Centuries later this was further reinforced by the construction of large buttresses at the sides. Although some sections failed during major earthquakes and were replaced, this basic structural configuration evolved over several centuries.

When this experience cycle of several centuries is placed against several modern examples of failures, a central problem becomes apparent. High-rise construction essentially has developed in the last 70 years and most recent structures only have development base of at most 20 years. The design variables introduced into the Hagia Sophia concept were few, and had been empirically validated over a very long time period. In present day construction, these variables are far greater in number and have a comparatively short empirical history.

Some very unsettling conclusions seem to come out of these brief considerations. If, in history, the introduction of a few new design variables required several centuries to be empirically resolved, can we safely telescope this process - even in the light of modern sophistication - without a loss of true empirical knowledge. Our dwindling experience base and the resulting shrinkage of professional memory will undoubtedly have unforeseen consequences for the profession. □

Theo Prudon

TIMES Comes Around to Samton's Criticism

The Oct/77 issue of *Oculus* reported on the Chapter's disappointment with the *NEW YORK TIMES'* Home Design magazine of September 25, 1977.

Michael De Courcy Hinds, a Home Section Reporter for the *TIMES*, is "looking for material for news-features...focus on new elements of architectural and interior design." The articles will narrowly spotlight a unique aspect of the design and will refer to the rest of the house plan in only a few pertinent instances. Any novel design problem and solution that can be linked to topical issues such as health, inflation, pollution, etc. would be what Hinds is interested in, and those made in suburban residences where *TIMES* coverage has been uneven will be of particular interest. □

Cathanne Piesla

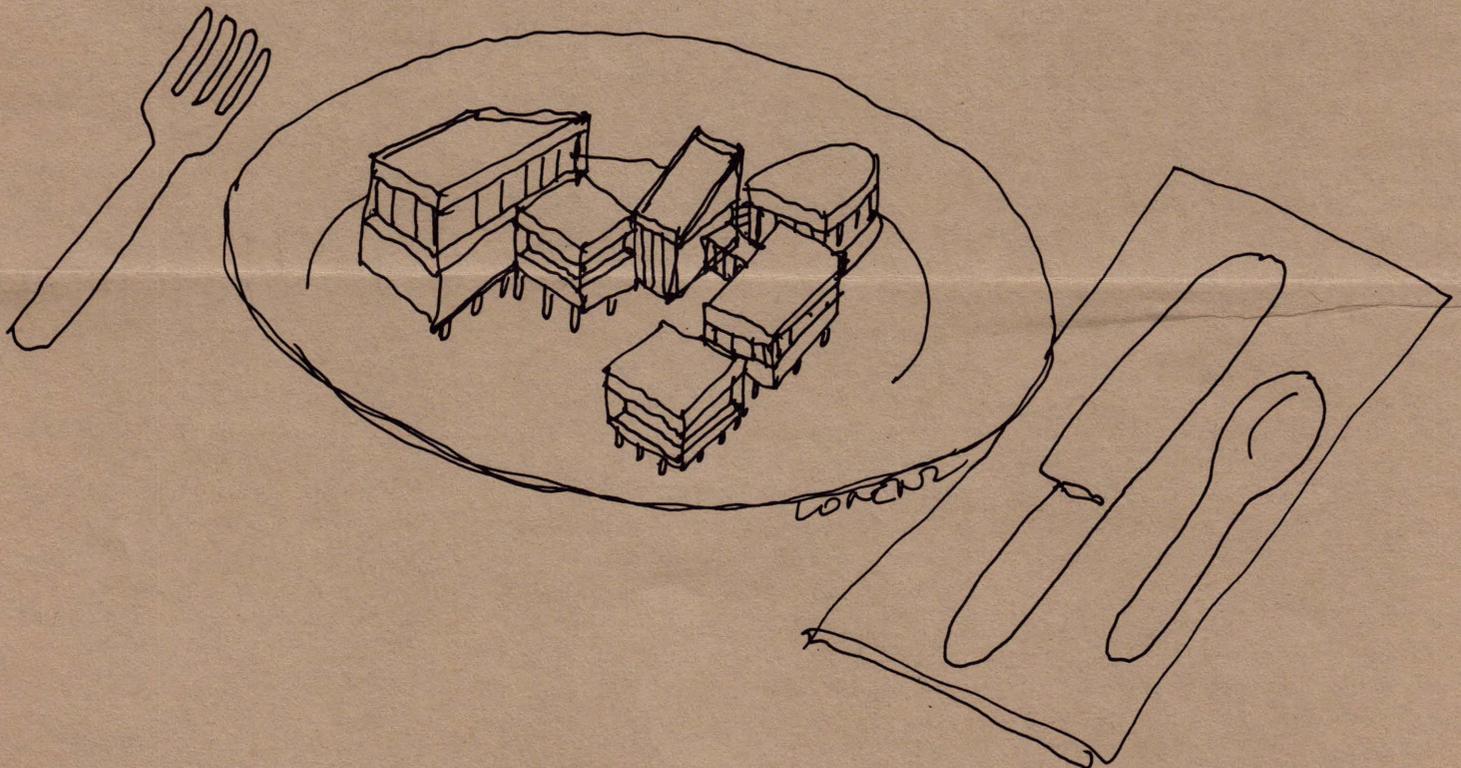
AIA Fellows: Procedures for Nominating

The Institute may bestow a fellowship on a member of at least 10 years standing who has notably contributed to the advancement of the profession through outstanding accomplishments in one or more areas of design, science of construction, literature, education, service to the profession, public service, historic preservation, research, urban design, government or industry, and architectural practice.

Those wishing to nominate candidates should communicate with the Chapter's elected Fellows Committee, members of which are Ezra Ehrenkrantz, Charles Warner, Hamilton Smith, Bernard Spring, Gillet Lefferts and Alan Schwartzman. The Committee has begun to meet and will, in the spring, recommend names to the Executive Committee for nomination

by the Chapter, after which detailed portfolios must be prepared for submission to the Institute by Nov. 1. The Institute considers these, and those elected are inducted at the AIA annual convention.

Nominations may also be submitted directly to the AIA by five fellows or any ten members. The Chapter office will provide detailed information including a copy of the AIA document "Principles Underlying Advancement to Fellowship." □



Petit fours d'Huxtable

Drawing by Albert Lorenz.