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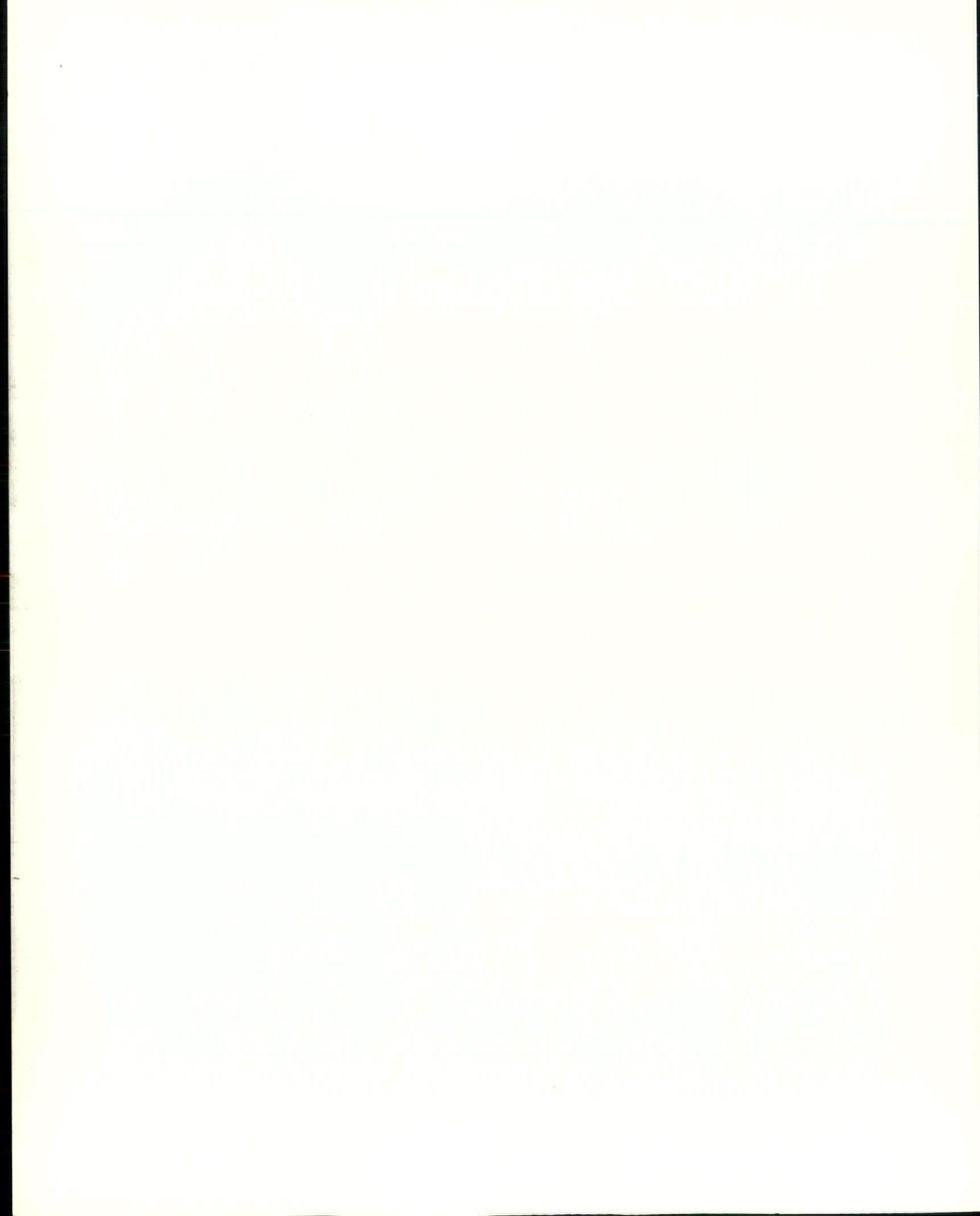
Modern Domestic Architecture

If the Architect Will Not Lead---

Builders Shy---

Craftsmen

Something New in Elevators



Modern Domestic Architecture

Aggressive manufacturers will continue to urge the introduction of new structural and decorative materials. Many of these are excellent and they are very attractively presented by modern publicity. So the possibilities in leisurely progress are interesting. We might explore this or that material, or this or that trick in planning, or construction or decoration. But so long as the time-honored set-up involving the speculative builder persists, and so long as good building is a luxury, the progress of housing is likely to be slow.

I shall briefly discuss modern housing under the heads: community planning, group construction, and mass production. They are already beginning to influence the character of home architecture and we can begin to see something of what may develop.

Community planning admits of certain principles such as the interdependence of people in a modern group, and the existence of certain conditions of modern living. Our planners have based their ideas on the English garden cities. The gridiron plan is avoided and the whole treatment is open and informal. The unity of the whole effect controls the slight variations in form and treatment of the single dwellings. Designs are repeated many times but the types are so alternated as to avoid the appearance of monotony. In Radburn, New Jersey, Henry Wright has adapted an English ideal to American requirements. The unit of subdivision is the "super-block" whose nucleus is the school, and of course the playground group. In relation to parks each family has its own yard but they also have ready access to the public space for recreation and circulation.

Group construction has long been used in apartment structures. Usually it does not produce low-cost housing but this may in part be attributed to the land costs involved. Apartment development has often been a high-pressure method of extracting returns from high-priced land. Certain economies inherent in the mere act of large-scale construction are available here for housing. In these projects the architect finds a new opportunity. Good group planning is followed by unit dwelling planning based on proper orientation, efficiency as to cost and operation; attractiveness of the whole building complex as well as attractiveness in the various apartments.

As to the single house, there is a desperate need for a better commodity at a lower cost. Architecturally the prospects here are good, with a whole community planned as one design and carried out with sufficient

variety in the units that make up the pattern. The margin of profit, however, is so slight in the well-built small house that there may not be much real gain in this kind of production.

The other way is through increased factory production and new fabrication of parts for dwellings. It is only natural that in an industrial age we should endeavor to apply industrial methods to the production of housing. That is what the prefabricators are trying to do. Thus far their efforts go only part way and their success has been modest. Insofar as I know, no fully prefabricated house in rooms or sections has been placed on the market, and I know of none in which all the parts are brought to the site requiring only rapid assembly. The term prefabrication is therefore only one of convenience. In spite of its tentative character, however, the arrival of the completely fabricated dwelling to be merely assembled at the site would have such a decisive effect on architectural practice and appearance, and on the whole housing industry, that I should like to indicate the possibilities.

Prefabrication is not exactly new. Before the War, at Forest Hills, Long Island, Grosvenor Atterbury, the New York architect, was building prefabricated concrete slabs cast in a plant at the site. These dwellings were tentative in design for at that time no one, at least in the vicinity of New York, dared depart from a conventional style to make a more consistent use of a new material. These houses proved to be costly and instead of a settlement for workingmen as intended, Forest Hills became a rather exclusive suburb, though not entirely due to building costs.

A high degree of standardization and complete fabrication seem, with the other features, to offer the best bet for new values in housing. The possible savings in prefabrication will lie largely in mass production, factory control of manufacture, and the limiting of field work to simple assembly. Other things being equal, the system that lends itself best to this organized production will obtain the best results.

There can be no great progress in housing without more efficient production. No house, however skillfully fabricated, can expect consumer acceptance unless it is good to look at and comfortable to live in. The housing industry is just beginning a new day in the production of homes. Successful new methods will result in tremendous activity in building and better homes for people everywhere.

—W. I. Bennett.

(From the *Bulletin of the Illinois Society of Architects*)



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If the Architect Will Not Lead---Who Will Lead the Architect?

By N. MAX DUNNING, F. A. I. A.
Chairman, Structural Service Committee

If we think back to the days preceding the beginning of the search for prosperity — which was said to be lurking just around the corner — we will recall a new movement stirring in the air.

Under the urgings of rugged individualism the construction markets were filled with materials and products embracing an unlimited range of size, form, weight, thickness, and innumerable other factors.

Trade names and practices had superseded the plain meaning and definition of every-day language and, in specification writing it was, more or less, every man for himself.

Into this scene of confusion and wastefulness came The American Society for Testing Materials, the American Standards Association, the Federal Bureau of Standards, and other interested agencies, to undertake the work of establishing standards for materials and manufactured products and the elimination of waste through simplified practice recommendations.

In the inception of the work it was recognized that to be effective and insure the widest possible acceptance of the standards established their formulation must be, in every respect, a collaborative effort in which every interest would contribute its part and in which the consumer and the public interest would have active representation.

That this was accomplished is convincingly shown by a survey of the sponsors for the many specifications and standards, which have been and are being developed, and the personnel of the multitude of sectional committees responsible for the detail work.

It was to be expected that the eyes of other interested groups would turn toward the architect when consideration focused on the materials, products or methods entering into the work of construction.

We have heard much, although perhaps not from the profession itself, as to the leadership of the architect in the field of building activity.

Here was opportunity, in the opinion of those who understood the relationship of the architect to the materials of construction and his stewardship as the accepted representative of the ultimate consumer, knocking at the door.

Here was work going forward related to matters of vital interest to the architect.

Here was effort in the public interest, with the reward of participation an enrichment of knowledge and experience concerning the things of the practical side of the architect's every-day work.

Here was the opportunity to cooperate with others interested in a common problem where cooperation would stimulate the qualities of leadership and dissipate, without argument, the tradition of the flowing tie, the spats and cane, and the pretty drawing—as the architect's only tools of trade.

The Institute through its Structural Service Department, endeavored to accept the responsibility of the

architect for this cooperative effort and with the interest and assistance of a limited number of Institute members managed, fairly well, to play its part until the spell of depression fell on all points—north, south, east, and west.

Up to that time an unbelievable amount of work had been done in the development of standard and tentative specifications and simplified practice recommendations of use and value to the architect and the construction industry.

In general these specifications were developed under the sponsorship of one or more interested groups or organizations, of which The Institute was one, the detail work being done by sectional committees composed of representatives of every interest, such as, producers, distributors, consumers and the public.

The architect was recognized as the logical representative of the consumer or general interest.

Those who have not followed what has been accomplished and the extent of the work now in hand would find illuminating reading in the Specification Lists of the A. S. T. M., the A. S. A., and the Bureau of Standards.

With the unavoidable curtailment of Institute activities, during recent years, the Structural Service Department was put on short rations. A year ago it suffered a severe loss in the death of its efficient Technical Secretary, F. Leo Smith.

For nearly a year following the passing of Mr. Smith, the work of the Structural Service Department has been cared for on a temporary basis by the curtailed staff at The Octagon. However, it was fully recognized that The Institute could not maintain its place and prestige in this work without a Structural Service Department and the services of a Technical Secretary.

Ways and means were discussed by The Board to insure the continuation of the Structural Service Department in the fundamentals of its work, and to maintain the contacts already made by The Institute. In the hope that, for the present, these things may be maintained on a limited scale, and in order that the Structural Service Department may take on renewed life and activity, Theodore Irving Coe, A. I. A., has been appointed as Technical Secretary on a part-time basis.

There is a growing feeling of optimism for the construction industry as the spell of depression passes. Times and conditions move forward with changes on every hand.

Architecture in the future will mean more than a well planned building with a pleasing exterior. We live in an age of science, and of material things. Increasing attention is being given to the character and quality of materials and methods of construction.

If the architect is to justify his right to leadership in the field of building, his knowledge can no longer be limited to the aesthetic but must include the practical as well.

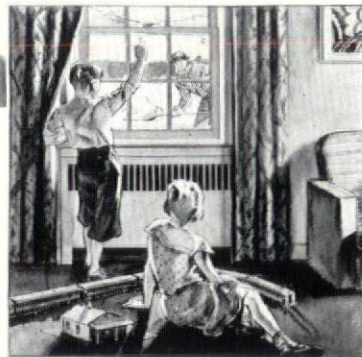
If the architect will not lead who will lead the architect?

(From *The Octagon*)

We note the appearance of the first issue of Northwest Architect, a beautifully arranged magazine, published by the Minnesota Association of Architects.

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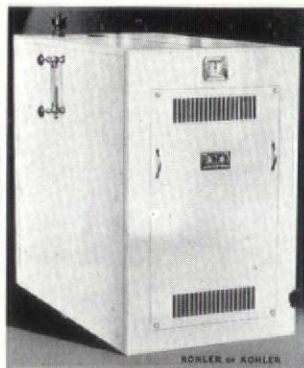
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Builders Shy at Bidding as Federal Bureaus Seek Reason for Dearth of Skilled Help on Construction Work

For some time past general contractors have been shy of federal projects. The publications fostered by contractors have milled over the situation so extensively that surely government officials could not possibly be uninformed as to the conditions existing throughout the country. The public, however, has not been cognizant of these conditions and will not be informed until newspapers, generally, follow the example of the Dow Service Daily Building Reports edited by Myron L. Matthews.

In a recent article Mr. Matthews cited the reasons why contractors were shy of federal projects and cited instances of lack of interest in advertisements for bids on housing projects. All of this can be remedied, he writes, by the application of effective correctives. Regarding one project he writes:

"A few weeks ago it was reported that in the Southern states two large housing projects were advertising for contractors' estimates. Whereas the experience of a year or two ago would promise at least 18 to 24 bidders, only 9 bidders took out general contract plans on each of these housing projects and not a single bid was turned in on either one of these jobs.

"Why should this be? First, contractors after bidding low with a bare chance to make a dollar, cannot, even though the credit risk is as good as gold, wait for their progress payments for 30 to 60 days after they are due. Contractors, with few exceptions, after the hectic years through which they have passed have got to have the turn-over of their funds as per contract. This is especially true of the subcontractors, without whose services the principal contractor cannot carry forward his work. If the general contractor cannot get his money and as a result cannot pay the subcontractors when due, the latter, after a few experiences of the kind, loses interest in figuring future work of the same or similar origin. When this becomes general the general contractor cannot any longer turn in a general estimate because he cannot get the subestimates necessary on which to base his general bid.

"A feeling is prevalent among contractors that Federal inspection supervision of work in progress has been too severe and technical.

"Why is it hard to get skilled help? Perhaps in the lean years many skilled mechanics have taken up entirely new fields and are now satisfied to stay there. Maybe infirmities, old age and death have taken a large toll of skilled workers, now making up a portion of the scarcity. Private construction volume has increased steadily for about two years and mechanics make more pay on private jobs because hours are longer—the work is not spread so thinly. Next, W. P. A. has absorbed over the country as a whole, according to a W. P. A. news release of July 29, 53,000 carpenters and 28,000 painters. The release does not mention bricklayers, electricians, plumbers, etc. Perhaps a lot of skilled workers are on the W. P. A. pay roll and satisfied to stay there with a steady long-time sure job. Once off the W. P. A. pay roll, to take up a post on a contract job, they may feel it would be too uncertain about getting back on W. P. A.

"These are the things which seem to be, in part at least, the answer to what the Treasury Department wanted to know. There are probably other matters which are not mentioned here. It is entirely likely, however, that all of them are equally easy to solve."

(From Stone)

Craftsmen

The unforeseen exigencies of the past four hectic years have taught us all lessons which could not have been gleaned by any other means. Although the sacrifice was great and in many instances most painful, it has been worth the while—if we have emerged wiser and better men and women. I am reminded of the quotation, "Nor deem the irrecoverable past—As wholly wasted, wholly vain, If, rising on its wrecks, at last—Do something nobler we attain." (Longfellow) We have all, I hope, profited by what has happened and this I hope will teach us a lesson.

The most salient factor that we as architects have to consider is the present day dearth of artisans, mechanics, etc. During the past four years we haven't had any appreciable and usual number of apprentices—who were learning the various branches of the building trade. Coupled with this is the fact that many who were engaged in the building industry—had, from necessity, to engage in any kind of other gainful occupations, private or governmental, in order to eke out an existence.

These two facts have left the personnel of the building industry in a much depleted, poverty stricken, and undermanned condition. Somehow we must try to rehabilitate the building industry and right here comes forcibly to my mind the matter of how this can be done.

We must sell our young men on the idea that—rather than working for a college degree—it would be better judgment to learn a trade. We are turning out too many men with college degrees—who when they are thrown on their own resources find it hard to earn a day's wages. Enrollment of our young men in technical, trade, and vocational schools should be encouraged.

We as architects are supposed to have, aside from our technical training, a superficial knowledge of the various trades that make up the building industry. We admire—and, I hope, compliment—an artisan, be he plumber, plasterer, or painter. So long as he is a real artisan—who accomplishes what the architect is after in a skilful manner—he gets our approbation and praise and he deserves it.

During these past four years we have regretfully seen the passing on of some of our beloved craftsmen, and I needn't mention names. Let us hope that those remaining, with the aid of our technical schools, will again give us a fresh crop of craftsmen who will rejuvenate their depleted ranks.

H. W. BUEMMING.

Loans for 8,700 Homes Provided by B. & L. Associations

More capital was provided for new home construction in June by the savings, building and loan associations of the country than in any previous month since

June, 1931, according to the United States Building and Loan League. Reports from its member organizations showed that in June the sum of \$28,253,000 was advanced for the construction of about 8,700 homes.

The Federal Housing Administration reported that in June a total of \$48,250,655 in mortgages was accepted for insurance from financial institutions approved by the administration. Of that amount 35 per cent was for new residential construction.

Morton Bodfish, executive vice president of the United States Loan League, also stated in reporting on the June activities that the sum of \$110,182,000 was loaned by the various associations for all purposes, being distributed among approximately 50,000 families.
(From Stone)

Something New in Elevators

Many people have thought of the wonderful convenience an electric elevator would be in the home. But most persons have dismissed the idea immediately because of the expense involved.

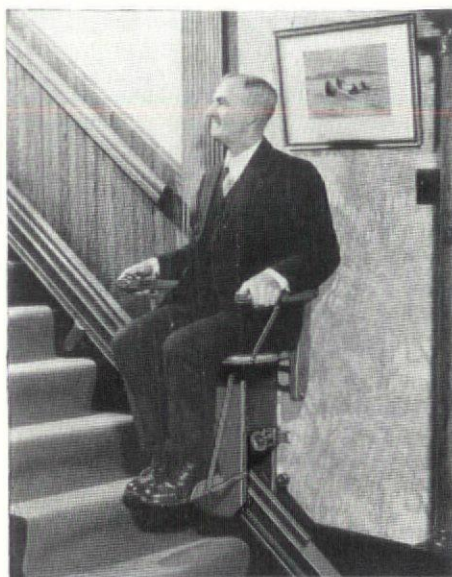
Now comes the *Wecolator*, an inexpensive elevator for home use which seems to do all the tricks that any one would desire in an elevator — without the unpleasant features of high cost and building alterations.

The elevator is an electrically operated chair which rides on a small track attached at the side of the stairway. This track goes around corners wherever you please, and the mechanism of the chair is such that it remains steady and upright regardless of the angle of the track.

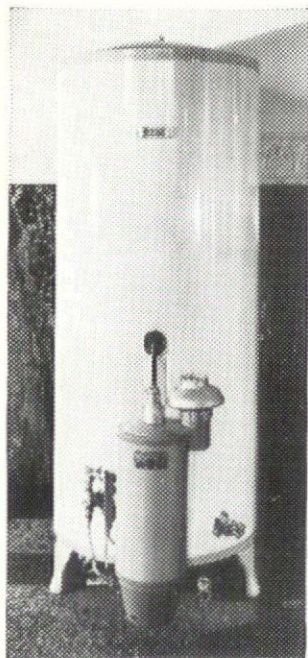
Every precaution has been taken to make the elevator absolutely safe and fool-proof in operation. It is built

sturdily enough to carry the fat lady in the circus with perfect ease. Heat treated alloy steels are used where stresses might be great. The operator can send the chair up and down at will and controls are located at both the top and bottom of the stairway as well as on the arm of the chair itself.

The installation of the elevator does not interfere in any way with the normal use of the stairway. The chair is folded out of the way when not in use. The entire elevator may be quickly removed from a building without leaving any trace of its having been installed. This elevator is known as the *Wecolator*.—Ed.



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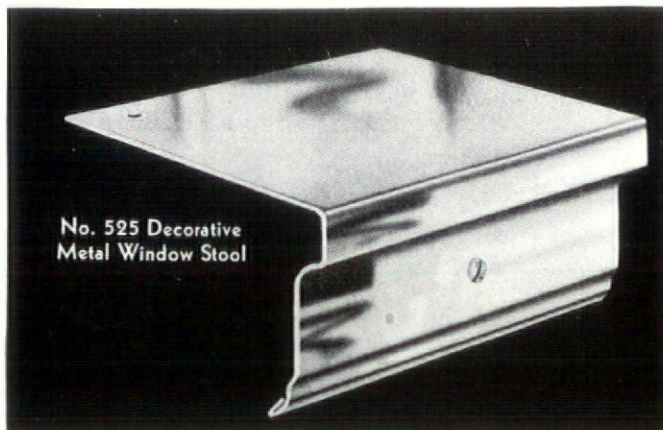
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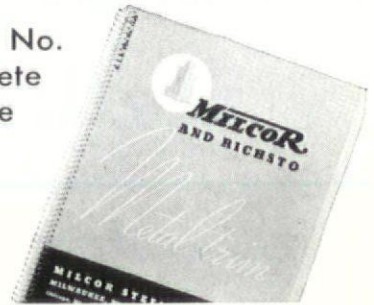


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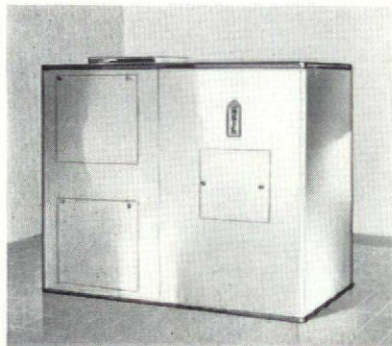
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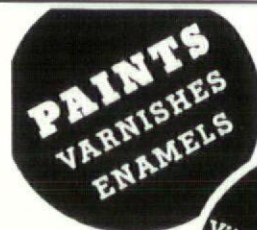
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