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## THE WISCONSIN ARCHITECT

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Producers' Council Club of Wisconsin

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## Special Notice

The Wisconsin Chapter of the A.I.A. invites the Members of the State Association to attend its January meeting to be held at the City Club, Milwaukee at 6:15 P.M., January 30, 1941. The meeting will be in charge of the Specification Committee of the Chapter, Mr. E. O. Kuenzli, chairman. Subjects will include: Lumber, Grading, Plaster Patching, Glass Cleaning, and Sheet Metal work required in Heating and Ventilating. Dinner at 6:15 P.M. Eighty-five cents. A return post card will be mailed to each member of the 7th district of the State Association. These are vital matters. Arrange to come.

LEIGH HUNT, *Secretary*

## Notice of State Association Board Meeting

The Board of the State Association *by resolution*, will hold its February meeting in Madison, Wisconsin with the 6th District at a time and place to be agreed upon by the 6th District. Notice will be published in the February issue of the WISCONSIN ARCHITECT

## Minutes of the December Meeting of The Producers' Council Club of Wisconsin

Mr. Carl Eschweiler, of the Wisconsin Chapter of A.I.A., and Mr. E. J. Shrang, of the Seventh District of the Wisconsin State Association of Architects, were guests at the regular Producers' Council Club business meeting held Monday, December 9th, at Karl Ratzsch's restaurant. The following members were present:

H. N. Hilton, Aluminum Co. of America
M. Banshaf, Armstrong Cork Company
E. B. Kennedy, Crane Company
R. E. Welton, General Electric Company
R. D. Diedrich, Johns-Manville Sales Corp.
N. J. Klein, Kawneer Company
G. E. Ryan, Kohler Company
G. F. Gerlach, National Lead Company
W. T. Dortch, Pittsburgh Plate Glass Co.
E. T. Anderson, Universal Atlas Cement Co.

Mr. Hilton, the President, presided over a discussion on the projected programs for the forthcoming year, until April, 1941. It was suggested by Mr. Eschweiler that attendance at the Informational Meetings could be improved by spending a greater proportion of the money available for good programs and speakers, and less for entertainment. The outcome of the discussion was a decision to form a joint committee composed of one member each from the A.I.A., Wisconsin State Association of Architects, and The Producers' Council Club, which committee will formulate plans for the 1941 programs.

Mr. Hilton again informed the members that the Wisconsin Architect is in search of good articles for its publication. This is an excellent opportunity for our members, and it is suggested that you send your articles in for publication.

Respectfully submitted,

W. J. FLUECK, *Secretary*



## Facadism

By RUSSELL WALCOTT

In Howard Shaw's office almost twenty-five years ago, a stranger turned up in the drafting room one morning and was placed at a table next to mine. Within the first half hour he let it be known that he had worked with Charles Platt and professed to have known Stanford White almost like a brother. The old fellow was an amusing wreck. In a shiny soiled suit, with a frayed Vandyke beard half covering a dirty collar and a black string tie, he looked like the typical "artist" of those days. He would draw languidly all day, smoke countless cigarettes, destroy roll after roll of tracing paper, all the while mumbling hazily and half audibly to himself, and accomplishing practically nothing for the benefit of Mr. Shaw's purse. I remember how he amused us by his formula for being a successful architect: "All one has to do is to sit in a beautiful, paneled office in an immaculate white flannel suit. When a client comes in, don't notice him. Just look at the ceiling and murmur, as if to yourself, 'Exquisite! Exquisite!'" Then he'd chuckle a little, light another Egyptian Deity and add, "Yes, create an artistic atmosphere and you cannot help being a success."

I suppose he never tried it out, because there was small probability of his ever having a white flannel suit, to say nothing of keeping it immaculate. I never tried it either; but in those days, although his theory was exaggerated and absurd, there was more truth in it than there would, or could, be today. For architecture then was stylism, sometimes pure and almost always simple; and not many architects had yet emerged from their ivory — or celluloid — towers, those secure book-lined fortresses of precedent which kept them and their goddess Beauty insulated from defilement by the modern world.

Not all, but most of us, in those pre-war days, had been educated to believe that architecture was simply a succession of styles and that it was neither right nor proper to break too far beyond the rules of these styles as they were handed down to us by Vignola or Palladio or Scamozzi or Blondel. It had already grown necessary sometimes to make restrained concessions to the needs of modern life, for the elevator, rising real estate values, subways, and the chugging auto were changing the tempo of our cities even then; but most of us, looking out from our high sacristies of art, just got down another book and learned how to add adroitly another "order" to the lower tiers of columns. And thus we appeased the needs of business for a while and kept the goddess sacred. When there was a residence to do, we could always look into the "White Pine Series" and concoct an authentic Colonial. Architecture was tradition, tradition was style, style was always decoration — the costume in which we dressed the skeleton of lumber, concrete, and steel. And there we were, placidly content in the security of a creed which told us what was art.

It is not unfair to say that when we planned we always had a style for the building in mind so that the use and meaning of the plan was often limited by the aesthetic demands of that style. I think no one will deny that facades were much more important than plan

or than economics of the structure. This was the holy doctrine of Blondel which, alas, is still held sacred by many aesthetes in 1936.

One of the really enlightened competitors in a recent government building competition told me that after receiving the program he thought it would be helpful to talk to the individual whose job it would be to manage the building in the future. So he spent several hours with that practical man, learning facts about the department and its workings, finding what was the most desirable column spacing, story heights, elevator capacities and locations, the probable growth of this and that section, how best to light this portion and that, what divisions needed certain storage space immediately available and what kind and why, and what was the most efficient means of connecting and coordinating the different parts of the office force. In a couple of hours he collected a good many important facts which were not thoroughly covered in the program nor available from the Fine Arts Commission. As he rose to go, he thanked the building manager for giving him so much time; and to his astonishment the manager thanked him, saying: "I appreciate what you have done. It is most unusual. In all my long experience, and in the experience of many other men I know whose job it is to operate departmental buildings here, you are the first architect who has ever consulted one of us about the practical operation of a government building before the scheme, in general, was decided on."

Architects, of course, were not the only ones who were trained to think of architecture as a succession of styles. It was the popular conception, particularly emphasized by the privileged few who were able to toy with expensive domestic architecture. Before the depression almost all clients — fully ninety per cent of mine — came in with a picture of a pretty house they had clipped from a garden magazine, or at least with a burning desire to materialize the memory of some lovely setting they had seen in their travels through Europe, New England or along the James. Appearance was their first thought, almost always, and thus the plans of these suburban houses became in the manner of Blondel, "convenances" to be fitted to a scenic shell as best one could. Residence architects didn't mind; it was so easy, provided they had a few shelves well filled with books.

Easy at first. But during the decade of the twenties, I noticed that this method of approach became harder to follow successfully. And the reason was that business, with a constant outpouring of new devices and materials which added to our comfort and pleasure and a little to the efficiency of building, was complicating and confusing the ancient archaeological principles of design. I noticed that the industrial architects were beginning to break free from the past but domestic architecture didn't; it stuck doggedly to the old way, trying to hide the new things under the synthetic scenery of any chosen age, although with increasing difficulty and expense. They tell me that one of the librarians who presided at the lectern in Yale's great cathedral of literature, "where nothing is quite what it seems," had a



sense of humor about this attitude of ours. On Washington's birthday, when a lot of alumni come back to look around, he hung a sign on the aged (with acid) latch of the worm-holed (with an awl), antiquated (with a sandblaster) portals which read: "Gentlemen, the Library Is Inside."

And yet, in spite of our efforts to preserve tradition, business with its insistence on new things and particularly with its methods of creating them by mass production which employs economy, accuracy, continuity and speed (elements which domestic architecture abhorred), kept forcing us to face around. The result was that domestic architecture got trickier and trickier because we kept trying to use the modern techniques while still sticking to the sentimentalities we thought were art. The strange thing was that only a few of us noticed our own confusion. Why, in 1927, when a client asked me in all seriousness if the fireproof "Colonial Farmhouse" we were building for her could be made safe from injury from a falling airplane, I only laughed and said: "If you can tell me how far the plane is going to fall and at what speed, I think I can get an engineer to figure it for you." The real absurdity of her question never reached my mind.

I who was one of the worst archaeological scavengers began to be bored by the results I was producing; but I didn't understand the reason for my boredom nor did I try to understand, until one Sunday afternoon when I was suddenly shocked out of my complacency by a trifling event which no one else probably noticed.

I had just finished an Elizabethan house for an Indiana broker. Behind the panel walls and underneath the flagged and punched floors everything was strictly fireproof; in the knotty pine bookcases of the library whose design we had pilfered from the Metropolitan, was space for an experimental television set ingeniously concealed; underneath the old oaken stairway was an outlet for the most modern humidifier we knew how to specify in those days before the use of air conditioning became common; within the oak panels of another room was a secret door giving access to a practical laboratory with vent ducts, zinc counters, and a hundred twentieth-century gadgets. Outside, the ancient sagging room, which rose above the halftimbered walls, concealed aials for sending and receiving messages by air; each heavy roughened slate was held in

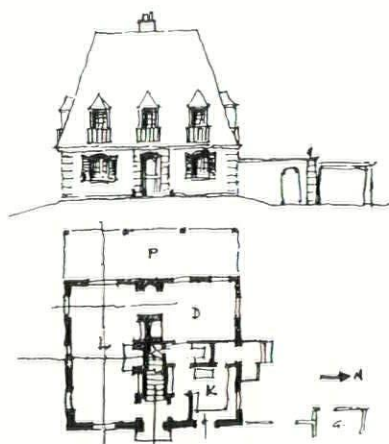


FIGURE 1

place by copper nails and each dowel in the rugged timbering covered a bolt by which the "hand-hewn" tracery was fastened to the structure underneath. In some of the leaded windows was a picturesquely broken pane, and if you looked carefully you could see a little wire that instantly hid itself inside the wall but could carry messages in an electric jiffy to a burglar alarm. And out of one of the lovely, old, twisting Tudor chimneys I knew there came a vent from the gas boiler in the basement.

But that Sunday afternoon the lay person saw only the gables peaking through the trees, noticed only the discolored stones, the soft effect of rough brick walls, the half-opened casements — just picture glimpses from the sunken garden of a nice old English house. And I, with a highball in my hand, was warm with satisfaction because some people at the party had said they liked this pretty scene that I had helped to make.

And then the terrible thing happened. The owner arriving late from a hurried trip to New York, set his autogyro down upon the lawn not two hundred feet from my medieval scene. The soda in my drink got flat. He had not staged this awful contrast but it was a shockingly successful demonstration of the extent to which I, and my contemporaries, had gone in our unconscious perpetration of lovely anachronisms. It awakened all my sleeping suspicions about the value of my sometimes pretty contributions to the thing we called architecture; and it suddenly made me want to try to think. So as soon as I could, I maneuvered my mass production coupé out from the shadow of the six-car, fireproof garage that looked like a 17th Century tythe barn in Gloucestershire (which formed one side of the cobbled court), and motored home moodily while the satisfaction of being considered a successful residence architect in 1928 dimmed considerably. If architecture was scenic design, then I was all right; but I began to suspect there ought to be more to it than that.

Certainly it was ridiculous to keep on trying to fit modern mechanical conveniences into the shell of some adapted style which one had meaning and purpose but now no longer did. Soon, perhaps, it would be impossible to make most of the popular styles of architecture fit the requirements of modern life, modern living was changing so from the quiet, secure existence it once had been. If our sense of humor failed to save us, then business would, inevitably. We couldn't go on this way much longer without going nuts.

But it was a difficult problem. I didn't want to go in for this new style which some called "modern" and others "modernistic." I had done a couple of bathrooms in the latter style and I didn't like to think of them. Even if I had the courage and the ability to be rational about architecture, how would a well-grooved practitioner like me start to go about it? There was only one answer. Thinking. You had to find a way into the unknown by yourself, without help from any one — even a client; you had to dig into the secrets of honest architecture all alone; no more copying or adapting even from the most modern past of Le Corbusier or Gropius or Van der Rohe. That was the trouble with the products of most of our new American opportunists who were already treating the philosophy of

(Continued on page 5)



## Announcement by the Milcor Steel Company

"Quiet" is the keynote of a new improvement to the well known line of Architectural Metal Trim manufactured by the Milcor Steel Company.

In keeping with the modern demand for sound insulation in hospitals, libraries, schools, and other public buildings, they have announced that its complete Metal Trim line is now available with Insulmat sound-proofing.

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(Continued from page 4)

these modern thinkers as just another fad in decoration.

To acquire a respectable knowledge of new materials and to learn how to use them efficiently would require more imagination than I had ever had to draw upon, because the limit of imagination had been the size of the library and the number of my trips to Europe. If I didn't look at my books, it might prove whether, after all, I had the capacity for any real imagination. I didn't like to take this horrible risk of finding out; but by the time I had reached home that Sunday evening, the prospect of the new adventure in imagination seemed to have infinite possibilities for interest which the old way didn't have, and it seemed worthwhile to try it out.

With satisfaction I soon began to see how far ahead I was of that time in 1920 when I first designed a house for myself. It had been a puerile, stagey casing for a compact but badly handicapped little plan. (fig. 1.)

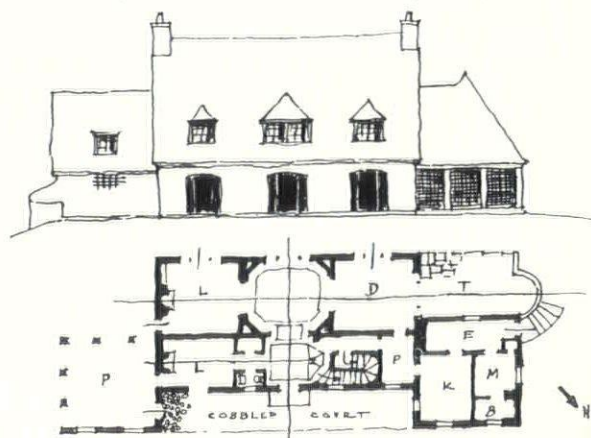
The second one, in 1929, I had labored long and hard at. It was drawn in the years of my first questionings when I was trying to think and not to copy. But I hadn't then learned to break away from the old habits of design and in two years of serious struggle I accomplished nothing discernible. However, having the money and wanting a house, tired of trying longer for the ideal that was beyond my reach, I finally knocked out another meaningless style chassis that crippled what might have been a nice plan for that site. The scenery is of the same popular type as No. 1, although on a grander scale of cost. Only one thing did my tired ambition achieve: while the front is as stereotyped as a shoe, the living side has wide, muntinless steel doors from floor to ceiling that no "provençal" cottage ever saw. Frankly, the big dark masses look like hell from the lawn, but who cares? We live nine months of the

year inside looking out and the clear expanse of glass is a great satisfaction.

Since 1930 I have been working "off and on" at another plan. I knew why I had failed so dismally with my second house and wanted to try again. Meanwhile I watched a thousand new materials come on the market, saw a hundred different types of prefabricated unit houses given publicity and slowly became accustomed to the starkness — or cleanness — of modern forms in industrial design as well as in architecture. An inherent beauty born from the spirit of honesty and use seemed to be entering these forms. Realizing that I would still have to erase a lot of prejudices if I was ever to approach the interesting concept of architecture I was searching for, I began to clear away many old restrictions that had been imposed by education, custom and sentiment, while trying to retain those ideas which were intelligent and useful. That sounds easy; but try it sometime! I knew I was through with lots of things: axis lines that looked swell on a drawing but led up blind alleys actually; the imposing effects of wasted space; those picturesque sloping roofs that had so crippled my first two second floor plans; and the bottleneck dormers that necessarily ensued; garage connections through kitchen to the hall (for I employ no chauffeur and usually enter and leave the house in a car); muntins in windows; double-hung windows; wood floors that continually need waxing and often refinishing; niggardly little cornices in places where protection is needed from rain or sun; and many other habits I could reject now for personal reasons but had often fought hard for.

I find I want to relate the inside plan to the outside plan more completely and effectively than I ever have, and to make the plan satisfy scientifically the demands of climate and the requirements of site as far as I am able, to secure a pleasant life for my family rather than to please the conventional eye of a cautious stranger who may drive along the road. I want to make the layout compact (although that does not necessarily mean small), comfortable, convenient and as effortless as possible both in use and appearance. I want it to be flexible, because I found in the two other houses that flexibility is a valuable element for my family today. Once, "circulation" was supposed to render rigidly fixed spaces usable, but I find that if I can make these hitherto fixed spaces usable for different purposes at different times it is better for my manner of living than to depend on circulation.

(To be concluded in February Issue)





## Only Architects Can Collect

*Editor's Note: The following article is a reprint of the opinion by Justice Rosenman mentioned in the article "Only Architects Can Collect" in the December issue.*

American Store Equipment  
& Construction Corporation }  
v. } SUPREME COURT  
Jack Dempsey's Punch Bowl } SPECIAL TERM  
et al } — PART V

Opinion by Justice Rosenman:

The principles and precedents with respect to the effect of statutory licensing provisions upon actions for compensation for services rendered by unlicensed plaintiffs have been discussed by me in *Shorten v. Millbank et al.* (N.Y. L.J., March 2, 1939, p. 976, aff'd App. Div., April 28, 1939). The question to be determined is whether or an agreement by one who is not licensed but who should be licensed according to statute is merely *malum prohibitum* so that a recovery thereon may be permitted; or whether it is of such illegality that public policy will actually ban any recovery thereon even though the unlicensed party has performed the services undertaken.

It is conceded that plaintiff here has no license as an architect. It could not, in fact, be licensed (subd. 2, sec. 1476, Education Law). The provisions of the Education Law relative to licensing of architects were promulgated "to safeguard life, health and property" (subd. 1, sec. 1476, Education Law). In principle, too, "any professional service such as consultation \* \* \* planning, design, including aesthetic and structural design, or responsible supervision of construction, in connection with any private or public buildings, \* \* \* or the equipment or utilities thereof, or accessories thereto \* \* \* (subd. 6, sec. 1475, Education Law) necessarily involves, at least to some extent, the safeguarding of life, health or property. Such were a substantial portion of the services required by the contracts to be performed by the plaintiff. Though there were other services to be rendered, such as designing, arranging and decorating, there were also the preparation of plans and the supervision of construction work which are the usual functions of an architect.

Subdivision 1 of section 1476 and subdivision 6 of section 1475 of the Education Law are almost identical respectively with the first portion of section 1450 and subdivision 6 of section 1449 thereof. It has already been held judicially, (*Dinan Co., Inc. v. Slater*; 132 Misc. 454, aff'd 225 App. Div., 750) that compliance with section 1450 was a necessary requisite to a recovery for engineering services. (That case was decided upon the statute as enacted in 1927; but there has been little change in the section as it reads today). The

same principles are applicable to architectural services; for both professions involve the safety and lives of the general public who use their structures. Consequently, plaintiff here cannot recover, for it cannot show compliance with the architectural licensing statutes.

The plaintiff contends, however, that even if it did perform certain architectural services, nevertheless it can recover for all those portions of the contract not involving such services, and that the architectural services, if any, amount only to about 5% or 10% of all services undertaken to be rendered. However, there is no means of segregating the good from the bad portions of the contract in this case. The contract was entire and indivisible; to plan, contract and furnish a complete unit. If the plaintiff had sold the interior furnishings and decorations, the contract could have been separated at least to the extent of permitting recovery for the merchandise sold. Here, however, were only services, ideas and supervision. They cannot be separated into different classes — legal and illegal.

The general rule still persists that "if any part of the consideration for his contract was contrary to public policy, the whole promise fails" (*Metz v. Woodward-Brown Realty Co.*, 182 App. Div., 60,65). Where, as here, the "defendant's promise arose out of

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and is indissolubly linked with plaintiff's illegal bargain" (*Sturm v. Truby*, 245 App. Div., 357,360), there can be no separation of acts to support proportional recovery.

To sustain the legality of the balance of the agreements would lead to widespread disregard of the licensing statutes. It would be easy for any construction contractor to thwart the purposes for which the licensing of architects was enacted by merely providing in his contract that architectural services would be given gratis, so long as the contractor were awarded the contract itself.

Another contention of the plaintiff is that it is not generally engaged in the practice of architecture. Subdivision 6 of section 1475 of the Education Law,

however, provides that "a person practices architecture within the meaning and intent of this article, who \* \* \* does perform any professional service such as \* \* \* are called for by these agreements. One instance of rendering such services is sufficient to bring a person within the category of practicing architecture. It is not necessary, under this provision, that a person make a regular business of performing similar services before he is obligated to comply with the licensing sections.

Judgment for defendants. Thirty days' stay and sixty days to make a case.

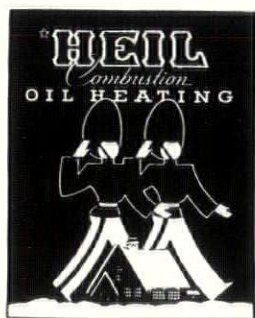
Affirmed by the Court of Appeals on May 21, 1940

21 N.Y.S. 2nd, 117  
258 App. Div. 794

283 N. Y. \_\_\_\_\_  
174 Misc. 436

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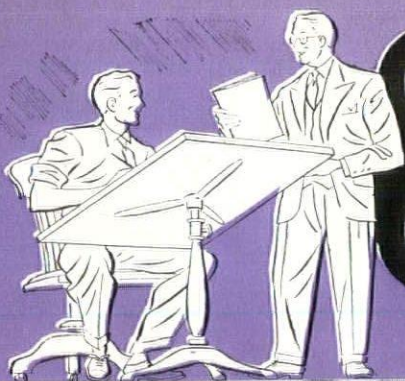


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