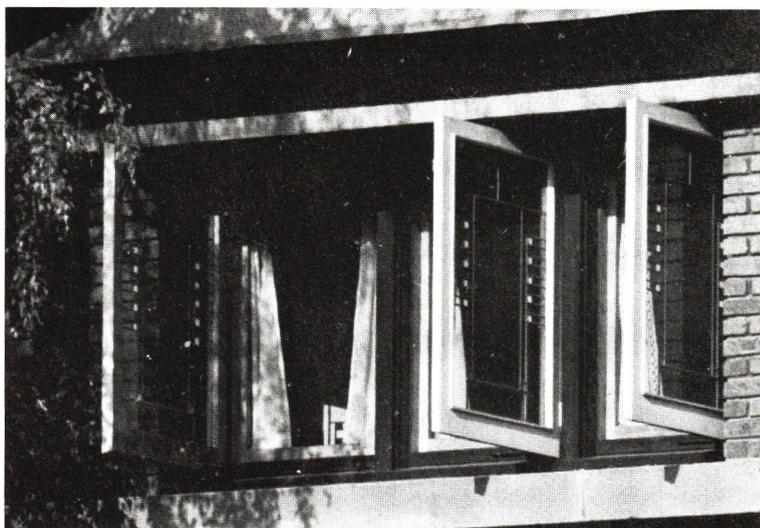


The
**PRAIRIE
SCHOOL**
Review

Volume III, Number 4

Fourth Quarter, 1966

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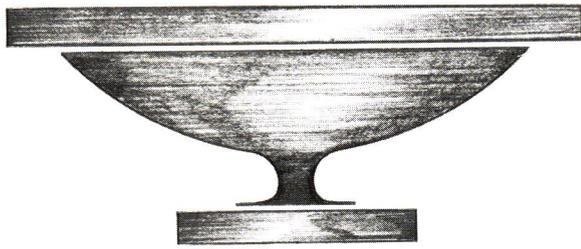


ABOVE: This is a detail of the J. F. Clarke house located in Fairfield, Iowa. This house was designed by Barry Byrne in 1915. It is decidedly Wrightian in detail and spirit but at the same time demonstrates a much more modern appearance than the Prairie houses done by Wright a decade earlier.

COVER: The great arched window of the J. F. Clarke house is as impressive today as when it was first built. The leadings may be described as reminiscent of Frank Lloyd Wright but the arch placed in a flat brick surface recalls the work of Louis Sullivan who also influenced the work of Barry Byrne in his formative years.

Except where otherwise noted, all photographs in this issue were supplied by Barry Byrne.

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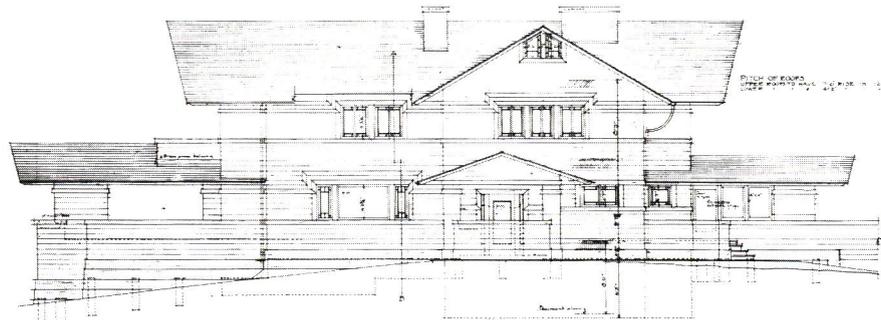
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*This is an elevation drawing of the C. F. Clarke residence
designed by Willatzen and Byrne and built in Seattle
in 1909.*

From the EDITORS

It has been brought to our attention that none of the institutions of higher learning in the midwest, or elsewhere for that matter, offer any courses devoted solely to the study of the modern movement in architecture. We refer particularly, of course, to the work done in and around Chicago in the fifty years after the fire of 1871, to parallel developments on the west coast, and to a lesser extent, the creative efforts at various other locations such as Kansas City, Puerto Rico, etc. At the same time, not nearly enough is known of the work in Europe during the early twentieth century, particularly that of Holland and the Scandinavian countries. Much of the outstanding modern architecture of these areas found its roots on the prairie of Illinois. Yet, for no good reason, not one architectural graduate in a hundred knows how much he and his architecture owe to these pioneering efforts.

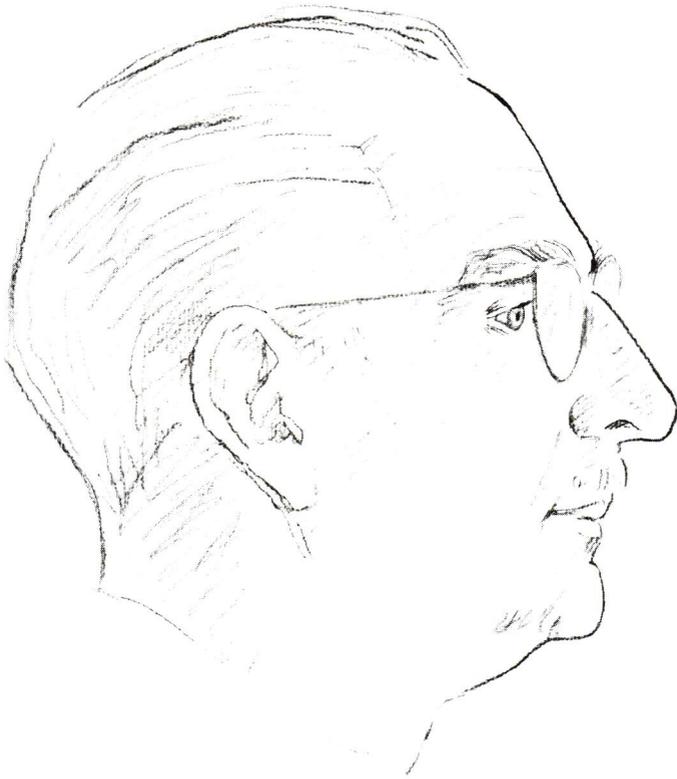
Perhaps it is appropriate to suggest that such studies could be a part of the program to be undertaken by The Chicago School of Architecture Foundation now headquartered at the J. J. Glessner house in Chicago. Staffing could be through a cooperative effort of the major institutions in the Chicago area. The Board of Directors of The Chicago School of Architecture Foundation has representatives of all the institutions which might be asked to cooperate in such a program. It would seem that with cooperation of this nature it would be relatively simple to gain accreditation for the proposed course of study. We are of the opinion that such a program should be aimed at the advanced undergraduate or graduate level with one important exception, the intelligent, interested layman.

If we are to develop a genuine lasting involvement and interest in architecture by the man on the street, then we must provide a means for advising him from whence it comes, what is important and why it must be respected and protected from loss. To have an architectural heritage, one must first realize what we have. This means teaching both the student and the layman. We suggest that it is never too late to begin, that The Chicago School of Architecture Foundation is the place to start, and the time is now.

Barry Byrne, Architect: His Formative Years

by Sally Anderson Chappell

*Sally Anderson Chappell received her Bachelor of Arts from Smith College in New Hampshire and later earned a Master of Arts from the University of Chicago. She is an instructor in the Department of Art at Mundelein College and is presently on leave of absence while completing work on a doctorate in Art History at Northwestern University.**



*Annette C. Byrne prepared this sketch of her husband for use in this issue of *The Prairie School Review*. Mrs. Byrne is an artist in her own right, having been engaged in the fields of typography, illustration and the graphic arts throughout her life.*

In 1917 the Chicago School was regarded as dead by one of its own members. Thomas Tallmadge said of the Chicago Architectural Club Exhibition of 1917:

What is even more to be regretted is the absence of any evidence that the 'Chicago School' as a potent style of architecture any longer exists. The two or three examples exhibited furnish perhaps as good a reason as any for its disappearance. The extravagances and solecisms in taste of which our Western style has been so constantly guilty have killed it in the domain of domestic architecture, its principle field. Clients, the wives of whom at least have received their architectural education in magazines edited in Boston and New York, now have turned back to pretty Colonial or the fashionable Italian. Where are Sullivan, Wright, Griffin and the others? The absence of the work of these men has removed from the show the last vestige of local color.¹

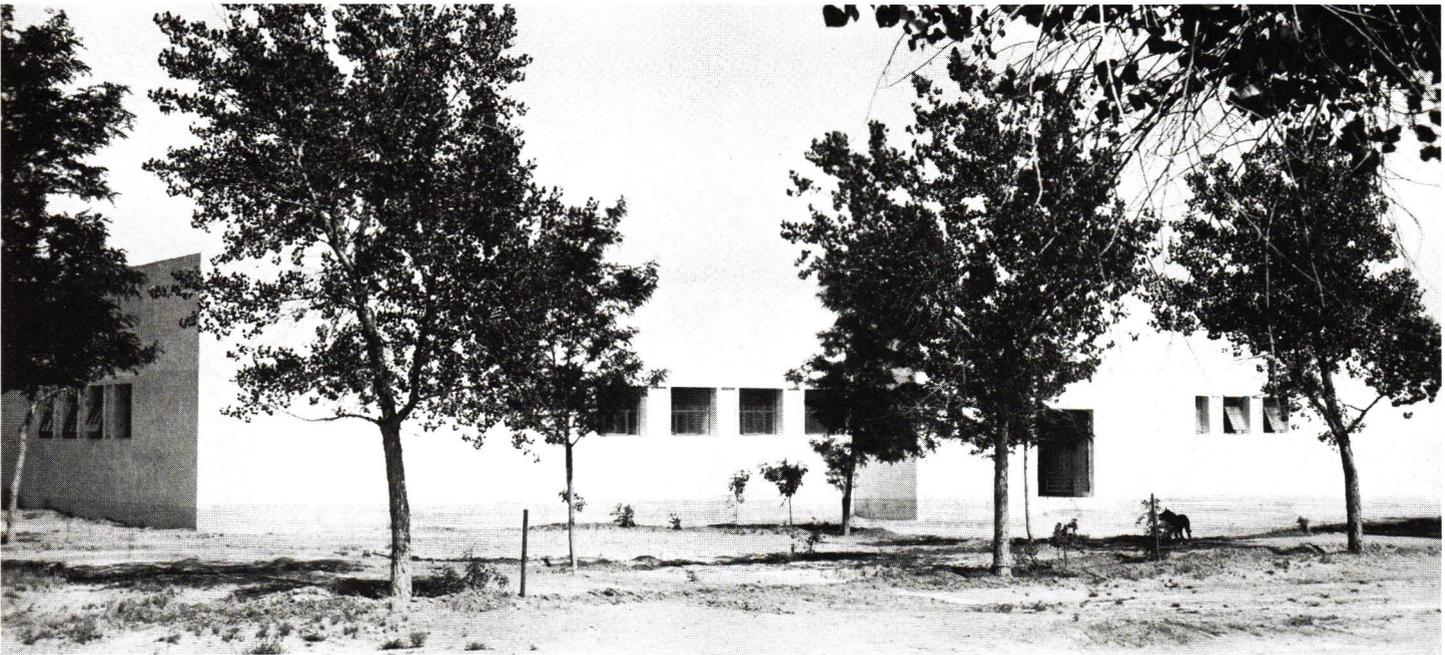
That the elegy was premature is now known to everyone, and recent scholarship has done much to trace the postwar work of the second generation of the Chicago School.² But the young architects around in 1917 must have had no inkling that, like Huckleberry Finn, they were merely watching their own funeral.

The Chicago School was not dead. The First World War proved but a hiatus in its long development. Even before the war the younger men had

1 Thomas E. Tallmadge, "Chicago Architectural Club Exhibition: 1917," *Western Architect*, XXV, April, 1917, p. 27.

2 Ed. Note: The term "Chicago School" has a number of connotations. The reader is referred to H. Allen Brooks' article "'Chicago School': Metamorphosis of a Term" for the best analysis of this designation of style. *Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians*, XXV, May, 1966, pp. 115-118.

* A number of persons have assisted in the preparation of this article. The author wishes particularly to thank Professor J. Carson Webster of Northwestern University for his counsel and criticism. The greatest source of help and information, however, came from Barry Byrne himself.



The Chemistry Building on the campus of the University of New Mexico was built in 1915. Barry Byrne had by this time begun to establish himself in Chicago with an enviable reputation for originality. Nevertheless, his work was still subject to a number of influences. The work of Irving Gill which Byrne saw during his California years undoubtedly influenced the design of this building.

found new areas of conquest. One of the most important was Francis Barry Byrne. Mark L. Peisch, author of *The Chicago School of Architecture*, notes this forthcoming development:

The Chemistry Hall at the University of New Mexico by Barry Byrne was built in 1915, at a time when the Chicago School, as we have defined it in the Introduction, had fallen apart as a cohesive group. Barry Byrne leads us already to a different generation and to different influences.³

It is curious that the work of Barry Byrne is still an unexplored aspect of the work of what today is usually called the Prairie School. Monographs have been written about many of the other members of the Oak Park Studio,⁴ but Barry Byrne has been neglected, except for frequent and almost always praiseworthy mention of his name in connection with the work of others.

6 It is not necessary to speculate in great detail about this omission in scholarly research. Perhaps it is simply that previous historians have been drawn to other members of the circle and time has not permitted examination of all members equally. Perhaps it is because Byrne's most original contributions to the history came in the field of church architecture. His links with the commercial and

3 Mark L. Peisch, *The Chicago School of Architecture*, New York, 1964, p. 84.

4 For references see Bibliography.

domestic architecture of his contemporaries are obscure. For these same reasons, however, his work was without precedent; it was by necessity, as well as by design, strikingly original.

He had assimilated the teachings of Wright during his seven years as an apprentice in the Oak Park Studio when he left for the West Coast. After four years in partnership with Andrew Willatzen in Seattle he left for California. It was here that he saw the work of Irving Gill and renewed his friendships with John and Lloyd Wright. They introduced him to Alfonso Iannelli, who was to become his collaborator in later years.

In late 1913 his former fellow-pupil at the Oak Park Studio, Walter Burley Griffin, called Byrne to take over his practice while Griffin went to Australia. Byrne accepted and worked uninterruptedly in Chicago until 1925 when he made an extended trip to Europe.

Byrne's work of this period shows his heritage from Wright and the beginnings of the evolution of his own style. During his trip to Europe he became acquainted with the works of Mies van der Rohe, Poelzig, Mendelsohn, Loos and others. The simplicity of the modern German movement appealed to him, and he seems to have found here nourishment for the predilection toward simplicity which was basic to his style from its earliest beginnings.

Another factor in the evolution of his personal style was favored by a curious twist of fate. Unlike