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A Classic Answer . . .

. . . To An Eternal Question

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A Classic Answer . . .

. . . To An Eternal Question

By FRANCIS P. CHURCH

An Editorial reprinted from the New York Sun of September 21, 1897

We take pleasure in answering at once and thus prominently the communication below, expressing at the same time our great gratification that its faithful author is numbered among the friends of The Sun:

Dear Editor:

I am 8 years old.

Some of my little friends say there is no Santa Claus.

Papa says "If you see it in The Sun it's so."

Please tell me the truth, is there a Santa Claus?

*Virginia O'Hanlon,
115 West 95th Street,
New York City*

Virginia, your little friends are wrong. They have been affected by the skepticism of a skeptical age. They do not believe except they see. They think that nothing can be which is not comprehensible by their little minds. All minds, Virginia, whether they be men's or children's, are little. In this great universe of ours man is a mere insect, an ant, in his intellect, as compared with the boundless world about him, as measured by the intelligence capable of grasping the whole of truth and knowledge.

Yes, Virginia, there is a Santa Claus. He exists as certainly as love, and generosity and devotion exist, and you know that they abound and give to your life its highest beauty and joy. Alas! how dreary would be the world if there were no Santa Claus! It would be as dreary as if there were no Virginias. There would be no childlike faith, then, no poetry, no romance to make tolerable this existence. We should have no enjoyment, except in sense and sight. The eternal light with which childhood fills the world would be extinguished.

Not believe in Santa Claus! You might as well not believe in fairies! You might get your papa to hire men to watch in all the chimneys on Christmas Eve to catch Santa Claus, but even if they did not see Santa Claus coming down, what would that prove? Nobody sees Santa Claus, but that is no sign that there is no Santa Claus. The most real things in the world are those that neither children nor men can see. Did you ever see fairies dancing on the lawn? Of course not, but that's no proof that they are not there. Nobody can conceive or imagine all the wonders that are unseen and unseeable in the world.

You tear apart the baby's rattle and see what makes the noise inside, but there is a veil covering the unseen world which not the strongest man, nor even the united strength of all the strongest men that ever lived, could tear apart. Only faith, fancy, poetry, love, romance, can push aside that curtain and view — and picture the supernal beauty and glory beyond. Is it all real? Ah, Virginia, in all this world there is nothing else real and abiding.

No Santa Claus! Thank God he lives, and he lives forever. A thousand years from now, Virginia, nay, ten times ten thousand years from now, he will continue to make glad the heart of childhood.

The President's Letter

By

Robert P. Woltz, Jr.

President,

Texas Society of Architects



The time has come once again for an outgoing President to step down and yield the reins of the Texas Society of Architects to your new President. I would like to extend to Jack my best wishes for a most successful year at the helm of T.S.A.

For me, the year 1959 has gone extremely fast. I am humble and proud to have served you as your President. My only wish is that you feel that I have served you well. I have sincerely tried to do this but feel that there are many places where I could and should have done a better job.

In reviewing, it was with extreme pleasure that I represented the T.S.A. working in cooperation with the State Building Committee and the Architectural Advisory Committee to the State Building Committee on the development of the Capitol Area Development Plan.

I will long remember the many fine men that I have

come to know and work with throughout this year, especially those with whom I have had the pleasure of "breaking bread" at the various Chapter visitations throughout the state. At each of these functions, the Chapter Members treated me royally, rolling out the red carpet for my visit with them.

To me, the 20th Annual Birthday Convention was a huge success. I want at this time to thank all of the living Past Presidents who gathered with me at that Convention for making this a 100% affair. I shall long cherish the pleasure of presenting each of the Past Presidents with his plaque representing the service to the Texas Society of Architects. It was with extreme pleasure that I received the photograph presented me of the "Featherlite" Corporation of this group of my friends and consider it a privilege to now be counted in this group.

I would like to make the recommendation that I made to the Board recommending each Chapter have at some time during the year a TSA Program inviting the TSA officers for such a meeting. I hope that all you new, incoming Chapter Presidents and Secretaries will make every effort to attend all of the TSA Board Meetings.

Upon stepping down, I would like to say "Thanks" to those who have worked with me and have made my year the success that I hope you feel it has been. It is a year in my life that I will always remember and step down with an humble thanks for putting the faith and responsibility in me and my judgment that you have.

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The Texas Regional Organization of
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Harold E. Calhoun Editor
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OUR COVER

The Christmas greetings of the Victorian era rival in beauty the best cards of our own age. The spirit is the same if technical skill does differ. We thought the 19th century Christmas card showing a child sleeping while the family in background trims the tree on Christmas Eve a fitting companion for the classic Christmas letter featured on the opposite page. The early American card, entitled, "Christmas Dreams," is part of the famed Hallmark Cards Historical Collection on exhibition each holiday season and we are most grateful that we may send it to you with our Best Wishes for a Joyful Yuletide Season.



A merrier Christmas because of architecture

BY DR. JOHN C. KNOWLES

Pastor, First Christian Church, Houston

WE will have a merrier Christmas this year because of our new church building — not just because we are happy to have it, but even more because of the very environment it creates for us.

The birth of Jesus was announced as “good news of great joy which will come to all the people;” and the note of joy rings triumphantly through the pages of the New Testament. It is also the dominant note of our new church building. To enter its doors is to be reminded that the followers of Jesus of Nazareth are a joyful people. Every room and corridor, and particularly the sanctuary, is light and bright and cheerful. They speak eloquently of the job that is so much a part of the Christmas Season, and,

Editor's Note: The stimulating and refreshing remarks of Dr. John C. Knowles are greatly appreciated by the Texas Society of Architects. They give vivid meaning to the purpose of the profession and are a tribute to the work and insight of Hamilton Brown, F.A.I.A., Houston, who designed this church. The project was cited by a panel of judges in the Architecture, 1959, competition. The bright interior of the First Christian Church, Houston, is shown on the opposite page.

in fact, is inherent in the Christian Faith.

During the past few months I have thought back many times to some of earliest conferences with our architect. He tried to tell us of the extreme importance of the environment created by architecture; and while we understood what he meant (at least to some extent), I must confess that I felt he overstated his case. Today I am convinced that he did not exaggerate.

I have seen the “personality” of our church change in the ten months we have occupied this new building. We are a friendlier, happier, more joyful people than ever before. And the people who visit us and the new members who become a part of our fellowship sense this immediately. Everywhere I go in our city, these are the kind of comments I hear:

“First Christian is the friendliest big church I have ever seen.”

“You have the most wonderful fellowship in your church.”

“All your people seem to enjoy their church relationships so much.”

Even the little children are affected by it. A typical comment was made recently by one little girl who visited the kindergarten for the first time; later she said to her mother:

“Mommy, I like my new church; it is *such a happy place.*”

And so it is! At least one of the important reasons it is is the environment provided by our building, working quietly but constantly upon member and guest alike.

This is not the only reason we expect to have a season of Joy this Christmas; but we know it will be more joyful than before because of our new church building.



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The Christmas of Old

The Victorian era was a golden age of Christmas

merriment that has been preserved in a magnificent collection

of antique Christmas greetings.

AN eccentric 19th century Englishman who died in 1912 at the age of 85 is largely responsible, by a curious twist of fate, for an increasing amount of knowledge on the origin of our modern American Christmas traditions.

The man was Jonathan King, a passionately dedicated collector who devoted 60 years of his life — excluding nearly every other interest — to amassing in his London house more than a half-million Christmas cards published from 1843 onwards.

A major part of the King collection, lost for nearly 40 years, is now part of the Hallmark Historical Collection, the largest privately owned greeting card collection in the world. From this material curators have pieced together a remarkable record of what they call “the golden age of Christmas” — the Victorian years that saw Christmas revered and celebrated in a fashion unknown to any other generation.

King, whose father was an early greeting card publisher in Britain, began his collection in the 1850's, only a few years after the first Christmas card was published. This historic greeting, designed in 1843 by John Calcott Horsley, a widely known artist of the period, for Sir Henry Cole, director of the Vic-

toria and Albert Museum, is also now a part of the Hallmark collection, a copy having been unearthed in England this summer.

Albert, Victoria's consort, introduced the Christmas tree to England in the same era that saw the first Christmas card developed. The prince, curiously, was a close friend of Henry Cole and also to Charles Dickens who published the first, and most famous Christmas story in the 1840's — “A Christmas Carol.”

It is to Prince Albert, then — perhaps pining among the staid Britons for the *gemuetlichkeit* of his native Bavaria — that we owe the inspiration for these Christmas customs now so firmly established in America.

It was an age that glorified Christmas. The old Christmas customs described by Washington Irving, for example, were revived. Cartoonist Thomas Nast defined, once and for all, the figure and characteristics of Santa Claus. Clement Moore's “A Visit from St. Nicholas,” written in 1822 suddenly achieved wide popularity.

The Cole-Horsley card also bears the now universal greeting, “A Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year to You.” It depicts a joyous family seated at Christmas dinner,

and the Christmas charities of feeding the hungry and clothing the needy — scenes that were to be repeated again and again on Christmas cards in subsequent years.

THE Hallmark collection, which is housed at the greeting card company's headquarters in Kansas City, Mo., contains some 40,000 examples of the cards published between 1840 and 1910 both in England and the United States. In this country, the first known Christmas card dates from about 1850.

The Christmas greetings of the Victorian era rival in beauty the best cards of our own age of advanced technical skill. Many of the most famous artists on both sides of the Atlantic were employed to design them; ingenious mechanical devices were originated to animate cards much as they are today; the symbols of Christmas — the robin, Santa Claus, holly, mistletoe and carolers — first became popular on cards of that age.

Today, a century later, Hallmark artists and technicians make valuable use of the collection as research material. It is also available for exhibition in historical and art museums, at antique shows, and in the retail stores featuring Hallmark products. A special collection is cur-

rently being selected for exhibition next year when Hallmark will observe its fiftieth anniversary.

Its founder and president, Joyce C. Hall, began the antique collection with a small number of examples acquired during the 1930's. The collection of Carroll Means, New Haven, Conn., antiquarian, was added in the late 1940's, and it was later through Mr. Means that large portions of the King collection were acquired.

Hundreds of the best American cards of the 19th century also have become part of the collection. It was Louis Prang of Boston, an art-loving lithographer, who published the best early Christmas greetings in this country between 1870 and 1900. Prang, who conducted art and editorial competitions such as Hallmark was to do half a century later, published cards of such high quali-

ty that his name became famous even in England, the home of the Christmas card.

In England, the name of Kate Greenaway, whose paintings of children became world-famed, was closely associated with Christmas cards, as were those of Walter Crane and Robert Dudley, both well known artists of the era. In America, Prang commissioned work from such artists as Elihu Vedder, Douglas Volk and J. Alden Weir, all long forgotten but first-rate artists. The Currier and Ives illustrations, so popular today on Christmas cards, were not reproduced on cards until the 20th century.

THE merriment surrounding Christmas in the last half of the nineteenth century, with all its attendant Christmas customs, resulted from the passing of the strong

spirit of the Puritanism that had pervaded both England and the United States. The Christmas card custom, once so firmly entrenched, became itself out of fashion for a decade after the turn of the century with the influx of German post cards. It was not until about 1910 that American manufacturers such as Hallmark began to achieve success.

Jonathan King, poring over the massive scrap books of cards—more than 2,500 of which he filled with his samples — would have been surprised and delighted to know that his collection would so enrich and enlighten a generation of Americans as they celebrate Christmas more than a hundred years after the start of his task. The customs he noted so carefully are as popular as ever today.



The three cards shown here were among entries which won awards in a contest and exhibition sponsored by Louis Prang of Boston in the 1880's. Prang's firm produced the first quality Christmas cards to appear in America. These and others from the Prang collection are now part of the Hallmark Cards Historical Collection in Kansas City, Mo.

PLANNING A SCHOOL BUILDING?

If So, Here Are Some Good Reasons Why You Should Have a Set of Educational Specifications

By R. GRAHAM JACKSON

ABOUT the time World War II ended, there was an idea abroad in school building circles that perhaps schools should not be permanent structures — that they could keep better pace with progress if they were designed to be replaced every generation. But this appealing notion soon faded, despite the tremendous replacement rate that has taken place since the war in other types of buildings. What has become clear is that our public buildings do not share this replacement boom. Some of the temporary buildings thrown up in Washington during World War I have been removed so recently that the squirrels still miss them. So there is no such thing as a temporary school and, therefore, no escape from a long look into the educational future. Every expert has his own idea of how things are going to change and some of these ideas sound quite drastic. But the school board that ignores them is looking for trouble. Today's theories may well predict what new schools will be obsolete before their bonds are paid off.

Some of the changes are quite easy to spot because to some extent they are already with us. The teacher shortage is one of these. In spite of the pressure to improve the teacher's lot, it will take a major shift in salary and status to compete effectively against the lure of other careers. Meanwhile, the shortage is already showing in changed

teaching techniques and, more slowly, in changed school houses.

Few people really want the size of classes to continue to increase, but many are convinced that some stretch is inevitable. To help ease the tension of numbers, some educators advocate a program of larger classes with one fully trained teacher and one or two less qualified assistants to help out. This can mean different shapes and sizes for classroom rooms. Some believe that the university teaching system, with rankings of Professor, Assistant Professors, etc. must be extended down into the high schools, with an interlocking system of lectures and lab courses. This can mean more and bigger lecture rooms in the schools, combined with more and better laboratory space. The twelve month school year is another suggestion. This will mean summer air-conditioning in our area.

There are others who maintain that the answer is television, but there is vigorous disagreement whether TV, much as it might assist in teaching, can replace a number of teachers. A few observers even think that TV teaching requires not fewer teachers in class rooms, but more.

Until the answer to many questions of curriculum and teaching technique are clearer, there is one shrewd hedge available in school design: flexibility. Almost everyone agrees that it is worth going to

Editor's Note: The following address by Mr. R. Graham Jackson was delivered recently to a group of school administrators and school board members attending a School Facilities Planning Conference in Houston. Because of its excellent, informative and entertaining nature, along with the widespread interest it has aroused, it is being printed here in full.

some trouble and expense to prevent building a school house that will lock the teachers into present curricula and systems and thus prevent experimentation in class sizes, or prelude the possibility of going along with whatever teaching pattern evolves. For instance, more individual teaching can be made possible if large spaces can be subdivided to create rooms for three, five, or ten pupils in a special field. If at the same time two standard rooms can be combined, it is possible to free a teacher to work with one of these small groups.

Architecturally this means erecting long spans with few supporting columns so that partitions can be knocked down and classrooms rearranged without changing the basic school structure. It may mean building movable partitions. It means including conduit or raceways for TV and other transmission lines, even if you do not intend to use them immediately. The future is not just a problem of power outlets. For example: in the matter of larger classrooms, psychologists point out that it is important to offset the press of large audience teaching with compensating facilities, which give the children real privacy at some period during the day, two or three young children working in a small space, or when they are older, a system of booths or cubicles in libraries. With this in mind,

some research programs are even developing machines to teach certain subjects. Recording machines are widely used to teach languages. This would mean that the child would be entirely alone during a period of each day or week. These devices have some of the fascination of a pin-ball machine and they also have the advantage that when the child masters something, he advances immediately to the next learning task.

DURING one year recently, 48,000 adults attended organized adult classes ranging from evening courses in metalwork to amateur theatricals in school auditoriums. This has a direct meaning for school builders: put up school buildings so that the shops, some classrooms, the gymnasium and the theatre can be unlocked, heated and lighted separately. Plan these community areas for eventual air-conditioning, because they will be used in summer also. Adults are probably going to use the school houses more and not less. Increasing leisure time

is one reason for this. In the past fifty years the average industrial work week has shrunk from 51 to 40 hours. In the next 40 years, with the developments in solar and atomic power, many statisticians expect to see this work week halved. As advances in medical techniques extend active life, there is a new mass of elderly people. There are not really too many places besides school houses as a center for their activities in our communities. As our continent becomes more populous, this pressure will increase.

It becomes evident that two separate influences are constantly at work, changing and refining our attitudes and approaches to school planning. Stated simply, these factors are:

Changing concepts in education.
Technological advances in design and materials.

While it is impossible to measure relative importance of these two major influences on school planning, it is my opinion that architecture has and always should serve as an aid to education. In other words, new techniques we develop in regard to structure and new materials which become available, should serve one purpose alone. That is, to provide an environment which will permit education to develop to its fullest extent without any crippling restraint imposed by the building envelope with which we surround it.

In the quest for greater economy and quality in schools, both architects and educators have been taking a hard look at teaching methods to see how the achievement of these two prime objectives can be sharpened from their point of view. The result is a set of new educational concepts, which, though far from being firmly fixed as yet, are beginning to have a strong impact on the design of buildings to accommodate the new instructional programs.

School boards are seeing to it that competent, creative educators are available to work with competent, creative architects in solving school building problems. Good

architects alone cannot produce excellent schools, nor can good school administrators do the job alone. An excellent school plan comes into being through the team-work of good architects and good school administrators acting as co-captains of a well-balanced architect - educator team. Today we are getting that kind of cooperative planning for many new schools.

School people and architects alike have real reason to be proud of this progress. But there is much to be done — many barriers to break through — before we give our children better school plants. Architectural prejudice, or preconceived ideas about what a school should look like, unwillingness to accept new architecture, and the inability to understand our dynamic society, which requires dynamic architecture, are a cause of expensive sterility of school architecture.

Educational prejudice, or the attitude that "what's good enough for me is good enough for Junior" among people responsible for the education of the community, together with the demands of these same people who insist that their school buildings be as obsolete as their educational program, create great barriers to school building progress. Old building codes, and even some new codes, and the misinterpretation of both often dictate extensive construction expenses. What architecture needs is stimulation and not dictation.

THE technology of sound has not kept pace with the need for use of movable partitions and light wall panel construction. Open planning techniques and higher sound level teaching activities make sound problems more difficult to solve.

Structural columns get in the way of a changing curriculum and there is great need for economical structures enveloping large uninterrupted areas.

Thousands of small pieces of material go into an ordinary school building. These necessitate high

(Continued on Page 12)

MOSAIC
designed by Pierre Millous

STAINED
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GLASS



Mosaic Glass
1" thick,
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in reinforced
cement . . .
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architectural variety greet travelers

SOME of the most interesting sights to attract the attention of travelers today are found unexpectedly in new structures along the way.

Motels, filling stations, restaurants, churches, stores and other types of buildings are appearing in such unusual shapes as three-cornered domes, inverted umbrellas and wine glasses, or with roofs folded in accordion pleats or curved in two directions. Responsible for this architectural variety is a relatively new type of construction in this country called reinforced shell concrete.

Plane travelers landing at Lambert Field, St. Louis, see an outstanding example of shell concrete in the airlines terminal building there. Designed by Minoru Yamasaki, the 412-ft. long building is composed of three sets of intersecting barrel shells which provide not only ample interior space unimpeded by columns but also a superb view of the landing field through floor-to-ceiling windows.

Now nearing completion at Idlewild Airport in New York is another terminal building that has been compared to a soaring gull. Part of architect Eero Saarinen's aim in designing the building was to have it express the excitement of travel. Two wings of the building are built of shell concrete flared outward in such a way that they suggest the poised wings of a giant bird. The bubble-shaped Kresge Auditorium at Massachusetts Institute of Tech-

nology by the same architect is one of the first and best-known structures of shell concrete in this country.

Thirteen miles south of Venice, Fla., on U.S. 41, motorists come upon what appears to be a collection of intriguing square umbrellas. This is the Warm Mineral Springs Inn, a motel designed by architect Victor Lundy using a series of concrete shells mounted on concrete stems. Two different heights set the umbrellas apart. The space between is filled with glass to provide clerestory lighting.

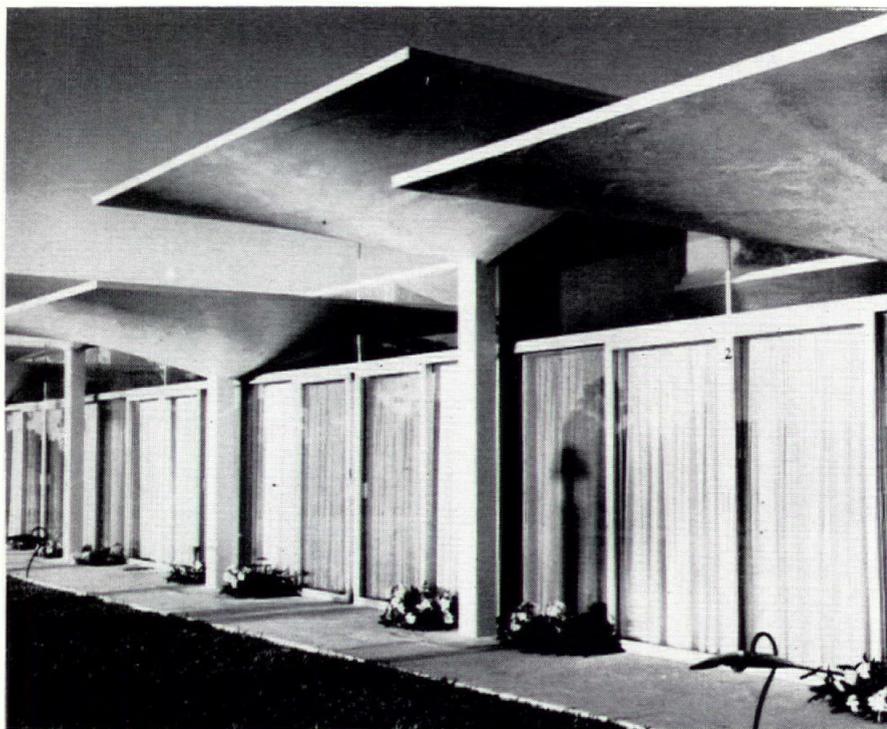
Shallow cones top 21 columns like a series of giant champagne glasses at the Ida Cason Callaway Gardens on U.S. 27 at Pine Mountain (Chipley), Ga. The concrete shapes are grouped together to form an open-air dining pavilion. Bright pennants and striped walls on adjoining buildings contribute to an unusual and festive setting.

One reason for the popularity of shell concrete is the variety of designs it makes possible. It utilizes the same principle shown in nature in an egg shell, which because of its curving surface can

withstand a surprising amount of pressure without breaking. Architects today are no longer restricted to rectangular shapes, but can obtain sculptural effects and symbolic forms resulting in many exciting, unusual and beautiful structures.

Motorists traveling along the Illinois Toll Road are generally startled to see an attractive restaurant astride opposing lanes of traffic. Five such "Oases" are provided at strategic spots, and diners can watch traffic approach and disappear underneath the building in which they enjoy their meal. The same type of prestressed concrete girders support the restaurants as were used for 217 overpass bridges on the Toll Road.

The longest highway bridge in the world, a 24-mile causeway over Lake Pontchartrain to New Orleans, was constructed of prestressed concrete piles, girders, and deck slabs. Tampa Bay Bridge on the Sunshine Skyway, Florida; Walnut Lane Bridge, Philadelphia; Richardson Bay Bridge on U.S. 101 in Marin County, Calif., and hundreds of other structures have been built of prestressed concrete.



Many exciting and interesting sights dot today's modern highways throughout the nation. These eye-catchers are the results of architectural variety and adaptable materials. The attractive motel, above, is roofed by a series of concrete "umbrellas" and can be spotted on U.S. 41 near Venice, Fla.

“ORDERS amounting to at least \$150,000 were lost — all for the want of a little tact in a letter.”

So goes the sad experience of a businessman cited by the Alexander Hamilton Institute in warning that “the most important, single, day-to-day job in business is the answering of the mail.”

The warning is contained in the Institute’s booklet, “Fixing Standards for Business Correspondence.”

“A successful business letter does not depend upon books or rules,” the Institute says. “The business correspondent should have a clear understanding of his responsibility to the man at the other end of a bargain and be dominated by a willingness to serve well.”

Three background fundamentals necessary to produce better letters follow:

1. *Know your job.* Unless you know your job, you cannot hope to compose a message that will impress the reader.

2. *Like your job.* Unless you like your job — in fact, unless you love it — you cannot put into your letters the enthusiasm, the sincerity and the life which are essential to better letters.

3. *Know your readers.* Learn just as much as you can about your

“BEST-DRESSED” LETTER

GETS MESSAGE ACROSS

clients, about the class to which they belong and about their business.

Concerning the important matter of the “Approach to the Message,” the Institute lists four factors:

1. Have something to say. If you have nothing to communicate, then you have no occasion to write.

2. Understand clearly what you want to express. Many failures in letters are traceable to befogged thinking.

3. Approach your message from the reader’s viewpoint. Your client is interested in how your ideas will benefit his interests. If you can help him solve his problems, he’ll be interested.

4. Write so your client will understand what you’re talking about. Merely because you know what you are talking about doesn’t mean that he will.

Under the heading, “Statement of the Message,” the Institute lists six guiding principles:

1. Assuming that you have a worth-while message and that you have approached your message properly, the most important thing is to get going.

2. Be brief. A ten-word telegram can be too long and a three-page letter too short, if they fail to tell the story. Other things being equal, brevity makes a powerful appeal.

3. Use simple words and simple expressions. They are most easily understood, and that’s what you want most — understanding.

4. Don’t try to be “clever.”

5. Beware of humor.

6. Be careful of slang. Slang is transitory—here today and gone tomorrow.

Emphasizing the importance of attitude, the Institute believes that the successful writer of business letters should observe these points:

1. Convince your reader in tone and manner that you believe your message, and he will accept your sincerity. Sincerity is half-sister to enthusiasm, which grows out of knowing your job and liking your job.

2. Old-fashioned courtesy still has a real place in business. Courtesy implies respect, humanness, politeness and decency.

3. Don’t argue. You may win the argument — and lose a client.

4. Be yourself — your own personality.

5. Don’t be stiff, formal and cold. Stiffness is not dignity. There’s nothing colder than a cold letter.

6. The greatest thing in life is friendliness. Let your letters breathe the spirit of friendliness. Everything else being equal, people like to do business with those who are friendly.

7. When you’ve told your story, stop.

Summing up, the Institute’s booklet says:

“Just as the best-dressed man is the one of whose clothes you are unconscious, so the best-dressed letter is the one in which the reader is nonconscious of everything except the message. So we get back to the function of a letter, which is to deliver a message.

“The rule of rules for every sort of written or spoken communication, for speeches as well as for letters, is: First, Have something to say; second, Know what you want to say; third, Say it; fourth, Stop.”

Texas Architectural Foundation

A dignified and thoughtful way to remember a departed friend is to make a donation to the memorial funds of the Texas Architectural Foundation. Chapters, firms and individuals increasingly are taking advantage of this method of demonstrating high regard through a constructive and meaningful expression.

All donations are acknowledged by the officers of the Foundation to the donor and the family or associates of the person memorialized. The application of the gift to further architectural education in Texas is explained.

Next time, send a check to: Texas Architectural Foundation 327 Perry-Brooks Bldg., Austin.

Jackson Cites Need For Low Cost Items

(Continued from Page 9)

labor costs to put them in place. What the architects need are more uniform units with which to formulate economical, beautiful school building solutions. I am not talking about prefabricated schools, or even prefabricated classrooms. I am speaking of a system of modular building units that fit together with less wasted materials and a saving of construction time at the jobsite.

There is a great need for low-cost, low maintenance units such as scuff-proof flooring materials, wall materials that will not require painting, simple and sturdy hardware, less complex heating and plumbing systems and fixtures, and good low-brightness lighting fixtures for low ceilings. There is also a need for sympathetic building trades to install these improved building materials.

The use of stock plans and the static thinking behind them is one of the greatest barriers of all. The people who build these barriers must be brought to realize that *good design* pays off — and actually *costs less* than poor design. The important economies of the day have come about through good design performed by competent planners who seek better answers — not stock answers. The 1920 architectural solutions cannot be used for 1960 schools.

The need for an accurate and true yard stick for evaluating school construction costs is urgent, because many school planners still try to compare their unit square feet costs as they do their golf scores. "Lower and better," most certainly does not apply to schools and even if it did, the comparison would be worthless because unit cost does not consider such variables as soil conditions, climate, site conditions, educational feasibility, quality of materials, strength of structures, maintenance costs and environmental controls, nor changes in the processes of education. Not every school architect has had to face the new, hard

questions, especially if his clients have been those who merely sit back and choose among the architects who happen to apply for the job. If it is true that the difference between a top flight architect and a mediocre one can mean some savings in the cost of the building and infinite differences in the functioning of the buildings, then school boards have cause to seek out architectural service rather than to trust the matter to the market place or to the "yellow pages."

THE kind of community which seeks its architect is the kind that asks the new, hard questions. Moreover, this kind of community expects its educators to describe what would go on in the building and why. Before the architect is on the scene, the educator will have been put to the test of reducing to prose the philosophy and practice to be found in the school.

Take, for example, the elementary school. It is held in certain quarters that an elementary school consisting of a number of equal-sized classrooms, strung along a corridor with one or two large spaces for physical education, assembling, and food service may not be the most effective way of arranging space for teaching and learning. The self-contained classroom, so revered through the years, where the teacher and her class work together all day is, of course, the easiest arrangement to organize and administer. Just divide the expected enrollment by the presumed class size, apply one or two rules of thumb, such as that the auditorium, if any, shall seat four-sevenths of the enrollment, or that the kindergarten, if any, shall be equal to one and one-half classrooms, and we are off.

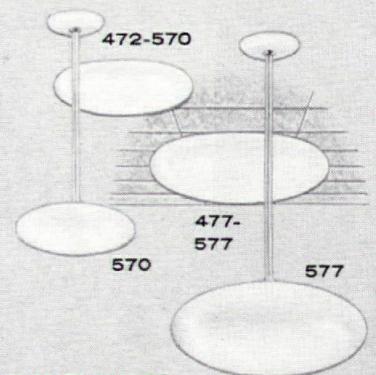
Having settled these matters by resort to formula, the school administrator can then return to administration, which is easier than leadership, and the architect can pursue photography or cosmetology, which is easier than architecture.

Each new school plant should be built three times. First, by the educators, in the form of written educational specifications which describe the education program; then, by the architect, in the form of architectural specifications and working drawings which interpret the educational program and its needs; and, last, by the skilled craftsmen of the contractor in the form of the completed building constructed according to the instructions of the architect.

The greatest waste in school construction in recent years results from the lack of sufficient attention to educational planning. Even where it is considered important, educational planning is not usually carried to a point of preparing detailed descriptions of educational programs to be housed.

This description is often called the Educational Specifications. It includes detailed descriptions of the groups of pupils to be housed—the kind of educational activity to be carried on in each separate room;

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the kind and amount of equipment supplies and furniture to be installed in each part of the building, as well as consideration of future expansion.

To date, greatest efforts by educators to obtain economies in construction have been through their architects. Efforts of educators and architects to produce modern functional simple structures, have produced major economies apparent to anyone who makes even superficial comparison of school buildings constructed in the twenties with those erected since World War II. While economies have been substantial, they have been essentially from cleaning up and simplification of building materials and methods.

GOTHIC Towers and Roman Columns are now considered expensive and unnecessary. We can list such physical improvements as better lighting, controlled thermal environment, effective use of color and new decoration schemes. Much of this good work is due to the initiative and imagination of school architects.

While school architects will continue to make further economies in school building construction, it seems likely that they have already made their greatest contribution by changing from ornate, historical structures to modern functional architecture with more space per dollar expanded. The next major improvement with resultant economy in school building lies with the educator and the amount and kind of educational planning that he does for each school.

Many educators have failed to give architects a well thought-out description of their educational program. In fact, many school architects report that they are not given a written description of any school program, either old or new. The only information that they obtained from school officials before they started to work were two small bits: the approximate number of children to be housed and the approximate amount of money available.

This lack of information results in buildings that do not fit today's

A UNIQUE, fascinating approach to the many facets of an important problem is scheduled for a Hospital Planning Seminar to be held in Austin on January 25th and 26th.

The Seminar is being sponsored jointly by the Texas Society of Architects and the Texas Hospital Association.

"We're going to dramatize the latest thinking in hospital architecture," said William R. O'Connell, chairman of the TSA Hospitals and Health Committee.

"Instead of having a lot of long speeches," O'Connell explained, "we're going to have architects discussing with hospital administrators

best educational concepts. For example, high school auditoriums continue to be built with all trappings and stage paraphernalia of legitimate stages of two decades ago. Whether a large spectator type of auditorium is desirable in a high school depends upon the wishes of local community leaders and educators. However, since an auditorium of this type represents a major portion of the cost of the high school building and since it probably is the most unused area within the building, it is desirable to re-examine the basic educational concepts behind such a unit.

Another case requiring new diagnosis is the school library. In the past and, unfortunately, many times in the present, school libraries appear to be cathedrals of learning, but, in reality, are mausoleums for books. The trappings and decorum characteristic of high school libraries would gladden the heart of a funeral director. To many, this is a complete antithesis of the library's purpose, for books are made to awaken the minds of children and to let imagination take flight. The auditorium and library are only two examples of the re-thinking that

the plans for a proposed new hospital."

The program will be centered around the hospital patient and the patient areas, O'Connell added.

"Much interest has been evidenced by the hospital administrators," said O'Connell, "and I hope we will have at least one architect present for each client or potential client."

Monday morning's session will be devoted to "elements of the patient's bedroom," with attention being focused Monday afternoon on the planning of a nursing division or nursing unit. Tuesday's program will feature planning of an "intensive care" unit.

must go on before a building can be designed to fit the educational program.

Much so called educational planning contributed by educators in many instances is an invasion of the field of the architect. Without recognizing that they are trespassing, school officials tell the architects that they would like to have brick used here, tile used there, rooms of particular size for this situation, a building of a certain number of prescribed stories with a specific brand of heating and ventilating system. In extreme instances, even blueprints have been prepared by educators and solemnly handed to the architects.

While playing architect, educators often overlook their real role in building a school: that is, to give the architect the best description possible of how the building will be used and the characteristics of the users. By having at his disposal a clear statement of a desired educational program which has official approval of the Board of Education, an architect can proceed to his planning directly.

(Continued on Page 14)

Worth A Try

(Continued from Page 13)

SINCE most educators and architects have never actually prepared or seen a set of educational specifications, these specifications can best be described by comparing them to architectural specifications which describe a school building in terms of physical materials, dimensions and shapes. In many instances, they even describe precisely the process to be used on construction. Educational specifications describe the educational program in terms of processes and activities to be carried on by various groups that use the building. More precisely, architectural specifications describe physical materials and measurements for school rooms. Educational specifications describe the people and what they will do within those rooms.

The recommended contents for educational specifications can be summarized in three major areas, (1) philosophy and curriculum, (2) administration and organization, and (3) non-instructional service requirements.

The development of these areas can be approached in a variety of ways. A recent school planning guide issued by the State of Michigan listed 25 questions, such as how will groups using the building be organized? What curriculum or programs will be housed? What special activities will require especially designed facilities?

Another approach is to outline the contents of the specifications from a study of various recommendations made by school planning authorities. In any event, the description of the educational program and how it is intended to operate are most important. The benefit from preparing educational specifications as reported by educators who have had experience with this building planning technique are of three kinds:

(1) Benefits to the school system in improving its regular activi-

ties, such as curriculum development; (2) benefits of direct value in planning specific new schools, such as forecasting precise personnel requirements and equipment needs; and, (3) benefits in facilitating the work of school architects and providing a tangible basis for estimating the cost of the proposed project.

All the aspects of school building that we have discussed must, in the end, be assembled to fit the budget, the program and the children. The tailor for this job is the architect, and after all conferences, directives, outlines and programs are completed, he must take his scissors into the cutting room, cut the pattern and send it to the contractor to be stitched together. Your school district should get a good fit out of it, and if you are a rapidly growing district, future alterations should not be too difficult.

You may get even more if your architect is a master tailor, a man whose imagination is a constant pull toward fulfillment of what made him an architect in the first place. It isn't just pride or ambition that makes people work in the PTA, or run for the School Board, and chances are that it wasn't just a choice of a clean, dry way to make a living that made him into an architect.

An architect is not a pure artist, but an artist of utility. Yet when all the practical aspects of the program have been met, when all the coat closets and thermostats, the chalk board, duct work and piping are figured, the most deeply utilitarian thing the architect can do for a community or parents, administrators, teachers and children is to give them a school building they like, or perhaps even love.

This is more than difficult. It calls for much more even than concentration and labor, or deep knowledge. It calls for sculpture and poetry. This may sound "starry-eyed," but for a moment recall how you may have been stirred into a kind of passive pleasure by certain buildings you have visited—a re-

ceptive state of being interrupted mentally in the ordinary grocery-earning routine of thought.

Perhaps you have stood in a cathedral and felt this aloneness with a building, sensed peace and security from the walls, and their unity with the space and the idea they enclosed. There are certain schools that can give you that. Do you remember loving a tree-house when you were a child? Have you sat in a living-room with glass walls and sensed the sympathy of the house for nature, and the seeming reciprocal sympathy of nature for the house and you?

Architecture is something that most people are not aware of in a primary sense. It is confused often with nostalgia, sentimentality, and awe, because these are a few of its most blatant tools. A building is silent and still while its users talk and move. So sometimes we think we are reacting to the users rather than the building. Yet the community that has a great building, or even a good building, gradually becomes aware of that fact, although it may take years. Because we all move in a man-made world, these fine buildings, belonging to everyone, should yield a great personal reassurance of man's eventual success in whatever it is mankind is trying to do.

SCHOOL houses offer a great opportunity for this. They belong to all of us and the children, who use them most, are a wonderfully aware and unprejudiced group. They are very responsive. Most of the man-made world into which they must grow up is harsh and ugly. If they can learn what is good by being sent to school in a pervasively good building, it is not too much to hope that they may form standards that will help improve some other surroundings which they will reach later.

So give your architect a fair site, a fair budget, and a good educational specification: he may improve your community the way nobody else can.

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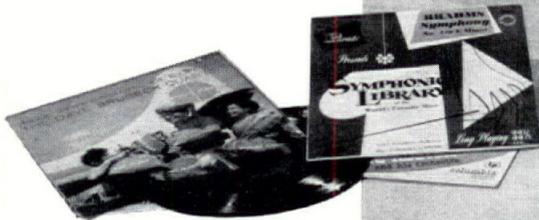
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