

the mississippi architect

11-3

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the mississippi architect

Volume 11, Number 3
April, 1981

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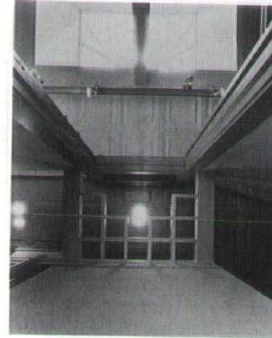


Cover:

Old bricks and new ideas. The essence of architectural preservation with panache. (From a photo of McCormick Book Inn, Greenville.)

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From the Editor: Raze not, want not. Editor Robert Ivy salutes the recycling efforts of Mississippi architects.

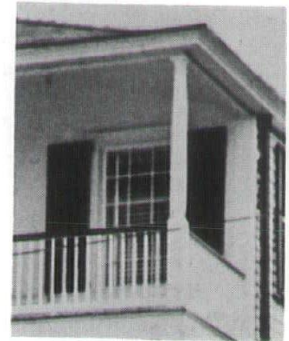


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Let Us Now Praise Famous Men. Former **Mississippi Architect** editor Joe N. Weilenman is elected to the College of Fellows of The American Institute of Architects.

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From The Editor

Robert Ivy, Jr.

Spring brings the pilgrims to Mississippi. When azalea pops out, dogwood blooms, and the thatch greens up, we hit the streets with the visitors from Kankakee to see our buildings anew.

Spring of 1981 drenched our state with new life. As we poise on the brink of another scorching summer, we at the **Mississippi Architect** want to salute our state's architects. Filled with optimism, good sense, tight budgets, and a sense of style, they have saved and invigorated valuable "used" structures from Greenville to Columbus as their own offices. By filling their offices with fresh paint and plaster, architects have filled them with energy and hope.

Mississippi's architects have realized that our state is a garden: unfilled, underutilized buildings stand in orderly, shaded rows north to south, parallel to the cotton patch and the railroad tracks, ready to be picked. And that is where so much excitement lies.

We are rich in cottages, mansions, cotton factors' offices, depots, mills, and dairy barns. Even an abandoned gas station holds promise within. These existing structures require the enrichment of capital and concern, logical planning and perspiration to force their natural poetry.

Look at the work your fellow architects and designers have accomplished with their own offices. Some renovated historical structures; others recycled shoestores. All took existing structures and made them their own.

Preservation in trained architects' hands has been transformed from the dry province of the intellectual or sentimentalist to the vital, neon-flashing, right-on-the-money, sure-fire, genuine edge of adventure. And context, which we feared as a snare for sixty years, may prove to be the key to larger freedom as architects.

Hooray for the recycled building!



To The Editor:

Who speaks for Urban America outside the fifty or so largest cities in the nation? Who effectively answers the "Brooklyn Syndrome" in which a solution to urban problems that seems to fit in Brooklyn or Boston or Baltimore becomes the cookie cutter for HUD to enforce throughout the land, whether it fits in the small town environment or not?

The "Center for Small Town Research and Design" at Mississippi State University has the unique potential to address this question if it truly develops into a Research Center for Urban Design for small towns. This does not mean a center for quick sketch problems rearranging the public elements on the town square, but rather a catalyst to bring together multi-disciplined research in Architecture, Urban Planning, Sociology, Politics, Law, Government, Transportation, Hydrology and others to address the problems of this region, much as the Universities of the Northeast have addressed the problems of the densely developed urban centers of their region.

Like it or not, just as we are experiencing a tremendous shift of people and industry to our region, we are entering an era of shrinking expectations of Federal Government to solve the problems that accompany that growth. Without research that develops a positive direction, the South will only duplicate, in its own way, the problems that now plague the Northeast and Midwest.

Recent publicity regarding sinking water tables in Northeast Mississippi, hazardous waste disposal sites, flood plain ordinances, and highway congestion, to name a few, should sound a warning bell for the public that we are experiencing a kind of growth and urbanization that must be addressed and guided before we lose the very things that we hold to be worthwhile about our region.

Sam H. Kaye, AIA
Columbus, Miss.

To The Editor:

Through the medium of **The Mississippi Architect** we would like to notify Mississippi Chapter, A.I.A., members of a service now available from the Architecture Library at the Mississippi State University School of Architecture. We have distributed a list of our library's holdings to five public libraries around the state: Greenville, Jackson, Biloxi, Hattiesburg and Meridian. These lists may be used to identify books which then may be borrowed on

interlibrary loan through a local public library.

As the only Architecture Library in the state, we have a commitment to provide access to our specialized holdings to architects in Mississippi. We hope AIA members and other interested persons will take advantage of this service when they need reference material on Architecture and related subjects. Sincerely,

Thomas W. Henderson
Architecture Librarian

Where Architects Work:

Light in Darkened Rooms

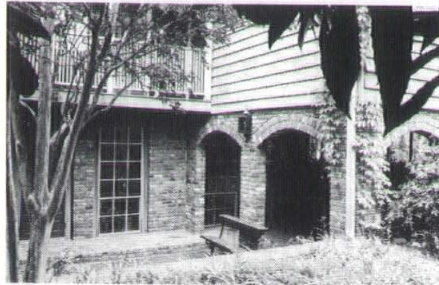
By Robert Ivy

Mississippi architects have enriched their own offices with the freedom of fresh light in darkened rooms. In some cases they have renovated historic structures, such as Skip Tuminello did with his late 18th Century building; in others, they totally reworked interiors and exteriors, as Evans and Eley did; and in some cases, exteriors have been left intact and new motives loosed on the interiors, as Barlow and Plunkett's office demonstrates.

In all cases, the architects represented herein are sharing with us their personal statements, more personal in many cases than their own homes. In all cases, the architects represented have taken older buildings and have made them their own.

George Johnston, of Ben Ledbetter's office in Corinth, comments on the particulars of Ledbetter's recycled office. These statements serve as a comment on the other offices as well.

Lack of color hinders the presentation of these remodelled offices, for Mississippi architects are using color as an integral design element. However, the accompanying photographs speak for themselves. See what our native architects have done in their own places of business. Read, look, and enjoy.



*Godfrey, Bassett & Tuminello
Vicksburg*



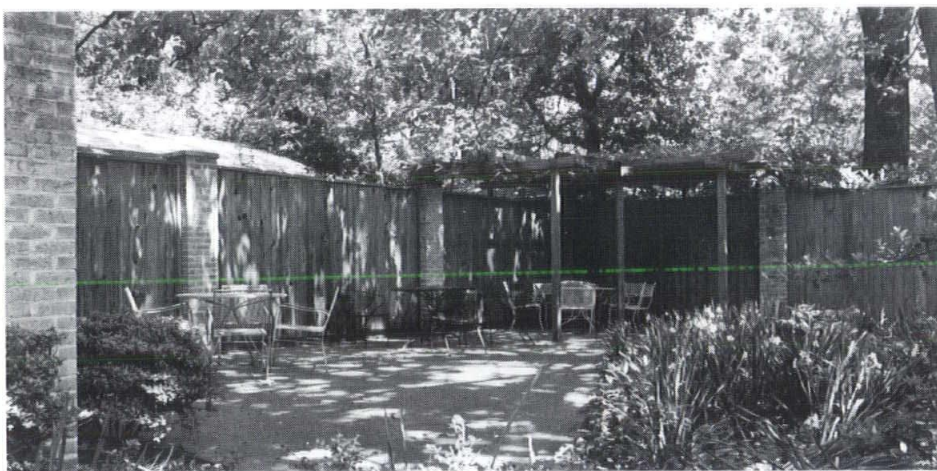
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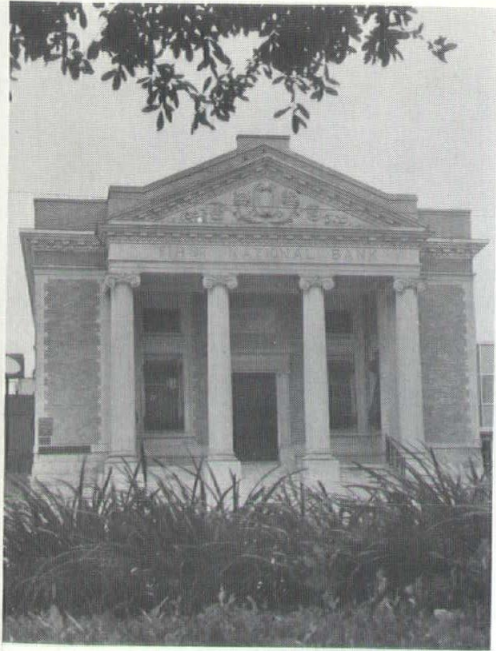
Barlow & Plunkett (1-2)
Jackson

The Design Collective (3-5)
Jackson

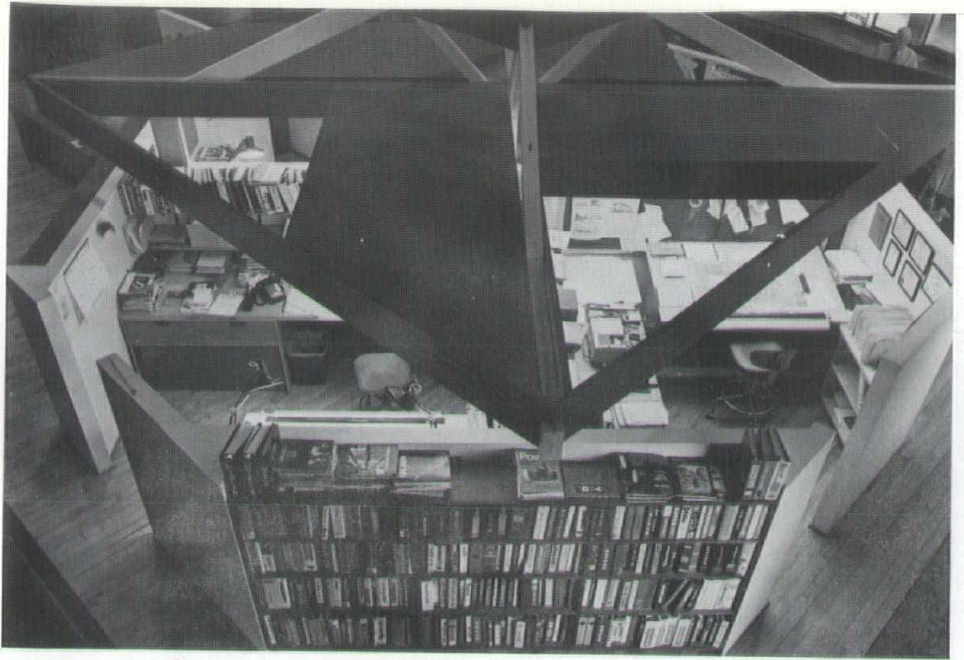
Virden, Fields & Alexander, Ltd. (6-8)
Greenville

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Columbus

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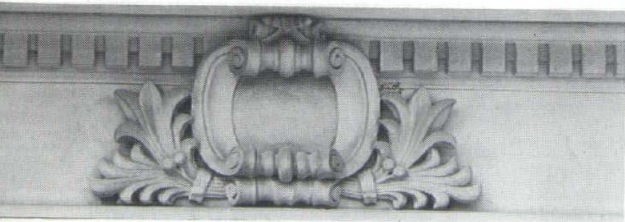
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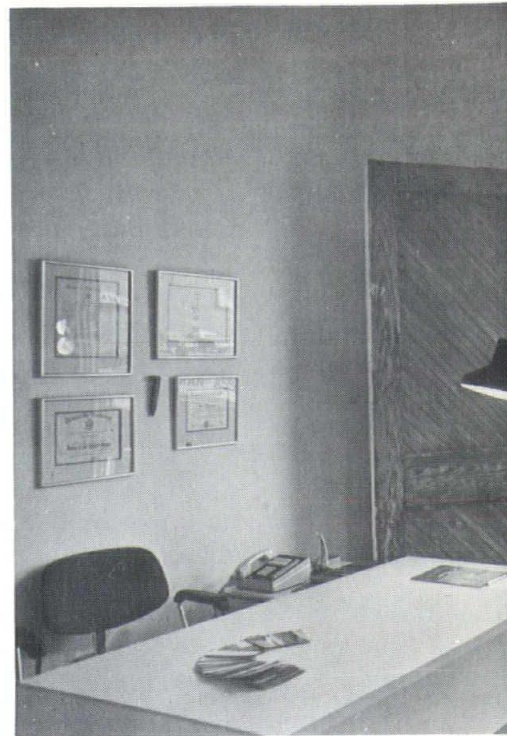


*Goodman & Mockbee (12-13)
Jackson*

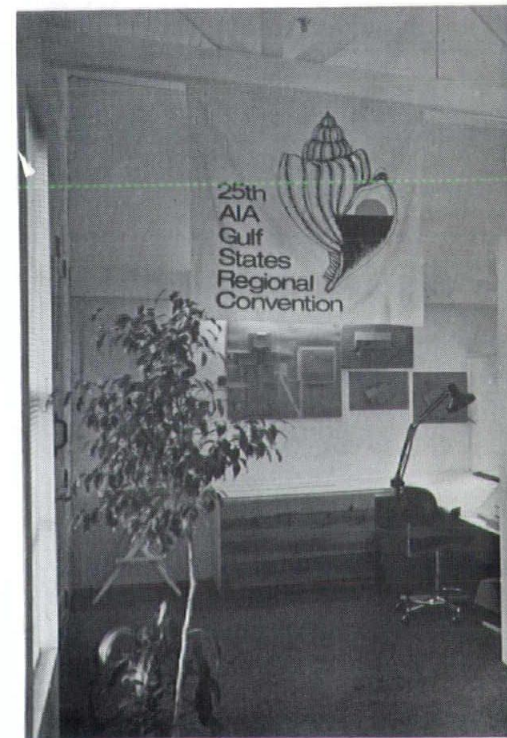
*Weilenman Associates (14-16)
Greenville*

*Evans/Ely, Architects (17-20)
Jackson*

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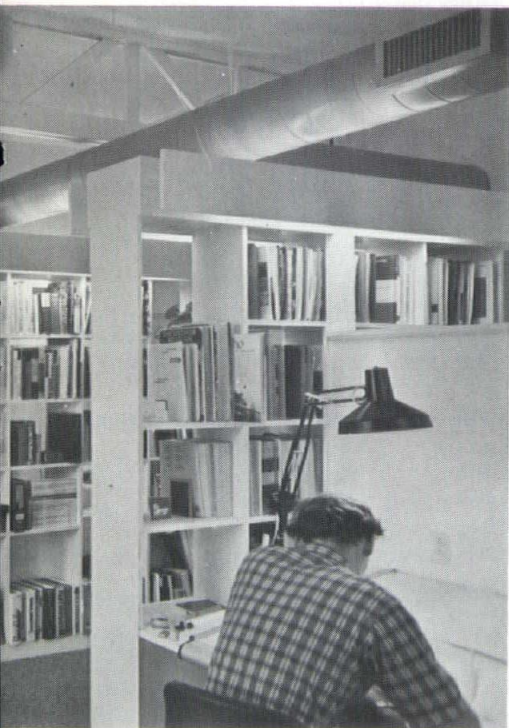
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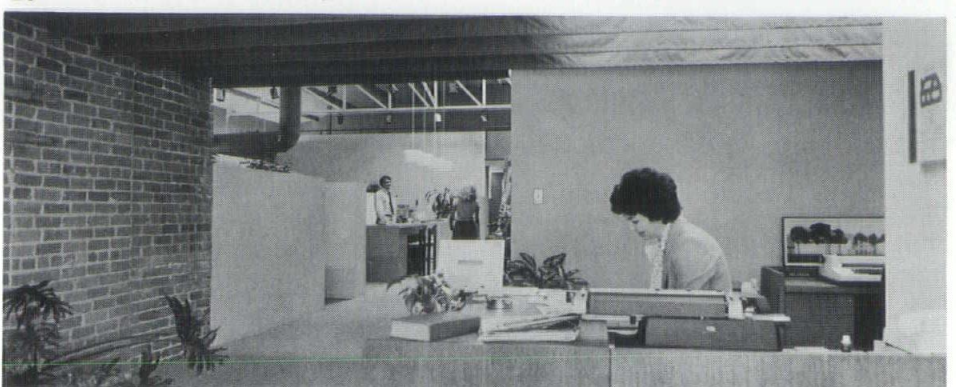
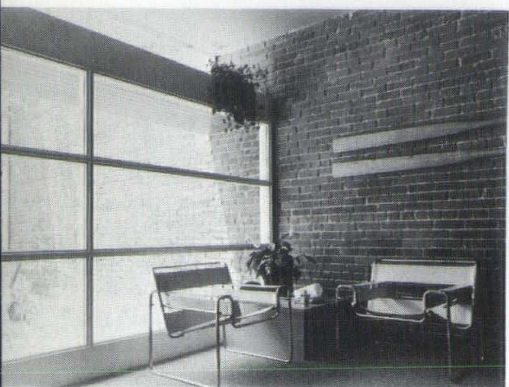
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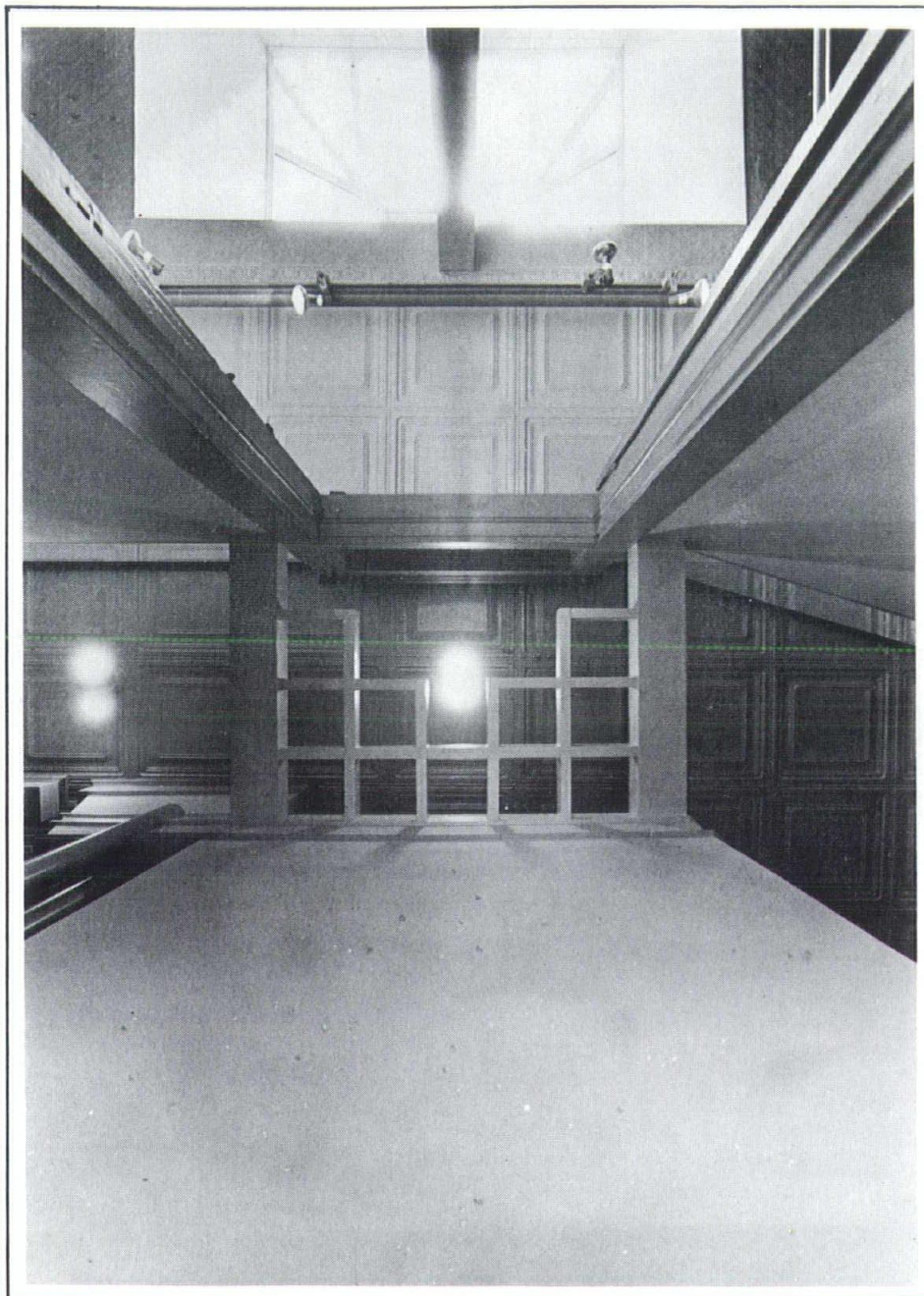


Ledbetter Associates, AIA

Corinth, Mississippi

by George Johnston
Ledbetter Associates

1



Photos by Ben Ledbetter, AIA

The new offices for Ledbetter Associates Architects in Corinth, Mississippi are a product of that firm's attitudes toward architecture: a concern for the process of decision-making as well as for the manifestations of the decisions made. Progress and design are considered to be inseparable, linked together in a dynamic union of change and adaptation. According to the firm's principal, Ben Ledbetter, "There is no **single** 'design process', but rather a constant design and **redesign** of process to meet the challenges of a particular program. Process and design happen simultaneously. They are one and the same."

In the case of adapting the upper story of a downtown commercial structure for use as its office, the firm was faced with several challenges: to move into the building immediately in such a manner that both the office operation and the office construction could co-exist; to demonstrate to downtown merchants an attitude for renovation as the city embarked on a revitalization program; and most importantly, to provide for the special needs — both physical and emotional — of an architect's office while respecting the character of the existing structure. In reconciling these demands, common themes developed simultaneously: adaptation of the new to the old; juxtaposition of the new beside the old; and superimposition of the new on the old. These themes gave direction to the endeavor.

The existing two-story brick structure, built in 1917, is located on a prominent corner site facing the Alcorn County Courthouse. One in a row of vernacular commercial structures, the building has seven one-window frontal bays and seven two-windows side bays for an overall dimension of fifty feet by ninety-five feet. The second story, reached from the right-most frontal bay, had been organized with a large central lobby off of which offices on the building's perimeter opened. A central row of wooden columns divide the

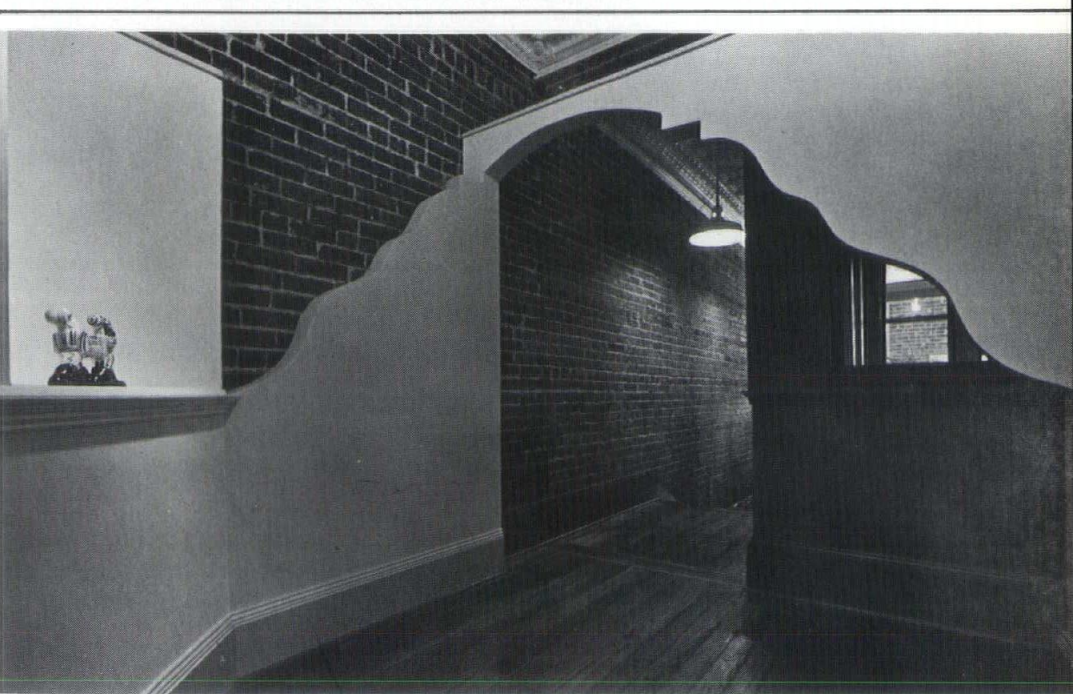
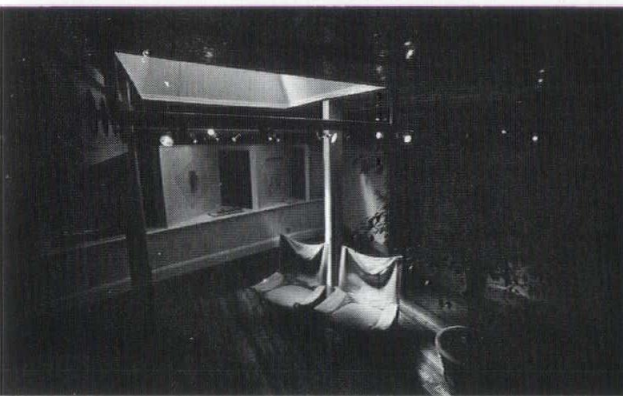
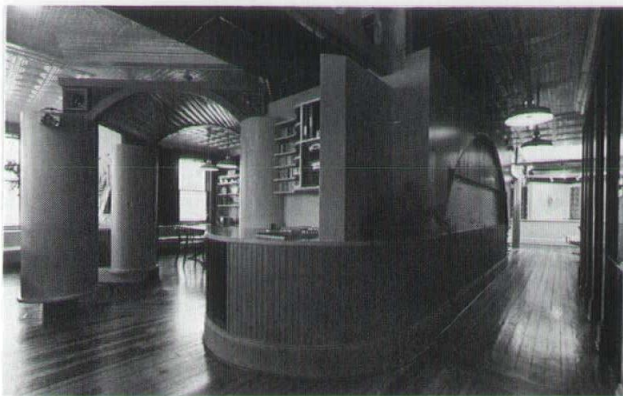
rchitects

space longitudinally.

Initially, the decision was made to occupy the rear one-third of the upper floor while renovation proceeded in the forward two-thirds. This would allow for the subsequent refurbishing of the rear portion of the building as rental office space. Since construction of the offices was to begin immediately, fundamental decisions were made quickly concerning layout and organization. As work proceeded, a great deal of improvisation was allowed through an ongoing dialogue among the office members as well as close consultation with the carpenters about means and methods. Thus, the design scenario was allowed to change as each decision impacted on the next and as ultimate questions of intent coincided with immediate questions of detail.

The primary attitudes toward the detailing of the new offices were born, to a great extent, of the existing fabric of the building. The beaded-board wainscoats, the transomed doorways, the stamped metal ceilings, the exposed wooden columns, and the coved base mouldings all served as cues — elements to be adapted to new uses and to serve as foils for new forms. The original wainscoats remain as they were, but where new walls are inserted, the wainscoating is often extended to provide a continuity with the old. Transomed doorways removed from one area are reused elsewhere as a redistribution of the existing fabric. The stamped metal ceilings are a prime ordering device in the spaces. New walls never touch the ceiling except with bands of glass. Where old walls are removed, their cornices remain as reminders of their locations. New elements, such as air ducts and lighting tracks, are juxtaposed with that ceiling, floating below it.

The row of wooden columns is newly painted and between them is suspended a horizontal reference beam implying the underlying, latent structure. Perforated with circles, the beam superimposes itself over both



- 1 - Entry
- 2 - Studio
- 3 - Circulation Core
- 4 - Reception
- 5 - Entry Passage

Continued on page 14

The Future of Historic Preservation in Mississippi



By William C. Allen
Mississippi Dept. of Archives & History

The 1980s promise to be a challenging decade for historic preservation in Mississippi. Faced with a sagging economy and threatened by withdrawal of federal financial support, local preservationists will have to develop self-reliance and more fully exploit what resources are available to them. Proposed cuts in the Reagan Budget will certainly hurt traditional preservation programs, such as the National Register of Historic Places, and will force Mississippians to look around them and not to Washington for assistance. Even though federal dollars for preservation may dry up, the economy will force people unaccustomed to thinking in terms of restoration, rehabilitation, adaptive reuse, and recycling of older

buildings to consider the very real advantages offered to them by historic preservation. But this is not something new to the state. One reason Mississippi is blessed with such an impressive stock of historic resources — everything from Longwood in Natchez to brick storefronts in Shaw — is due to the generally Spartan economic climate which precluded waste. We are again in the grips of depression and inflation which, while not friends of preservation, certainly aid in the retention of existing structures.

Because of economic conditions, historic preservation will be forced to compete in the marketplace along with many other interests. It will be necessary, therefore, to move the cause of historic preservation from

the estroerica of sentiment and aesthetics out into the financial arena. Here a convincing argument can be made to support adaptive reuse as a means to satisfy residential and commercial building needs. A report published in 1979 concluded that rehabilitation of existing buildings is preferred to new suburban development because it: (1) consumes 45% less energy, (2) requires 50% less land, (3) creates 45% less pollution, and (4) consumes 55% less capital investment. Statistics also prove that rehabilitation creates more jobs and takes less time to complete than comparable new construction. In the face of simultaneous inflation and depression, preservationists offer a sensible approach to affordable

Until recently, most of the thrust of historic preservation was directed at "landmark" buildings which were generally restored and opened as museums. The earliest example in Mississippi is the restoration of the House on Ellicott's Hill, known as "Connelly's Tavern" which was restored by the Natchez Garden in 1935. (See before and after photos.)



development.

The sheer economic sense of recycling historic buildings should be enough to ensure their preservation. An additional incentive, however, is provided by the Tax Reform Act. This legislation, passed in 1976, allows owners of historic depreciable buildings to amortize rehabilitation costs over a five-year period or to take accelerated depreciation on the value of the rehabilitated building. Without question, the Tax Reform Act promises to play the most vital role in the historic preservation movement of the 1980s. Its significant impact has already been felt. Over \$25,000,000 of private investment has been leveraged in Mississippi in rehabilitation projects across the

state. Examples include the Henley House in West Point, which has been recycled into apartments; downtown Natchez is enjoying a visual renaissance as important nineteenth century storefronts are restored and the long vacant upper stories are made into desirable apartments. A pleasant turn-of-the-century printing plant on Jackson's State Street has been turned into attractive offices, and a deteriorated hotel in Vicksburg now accommodates a retirement home. Each of these projects was made financially feasible by the favorable tax laws and have made substantial improvements to the character of their community.

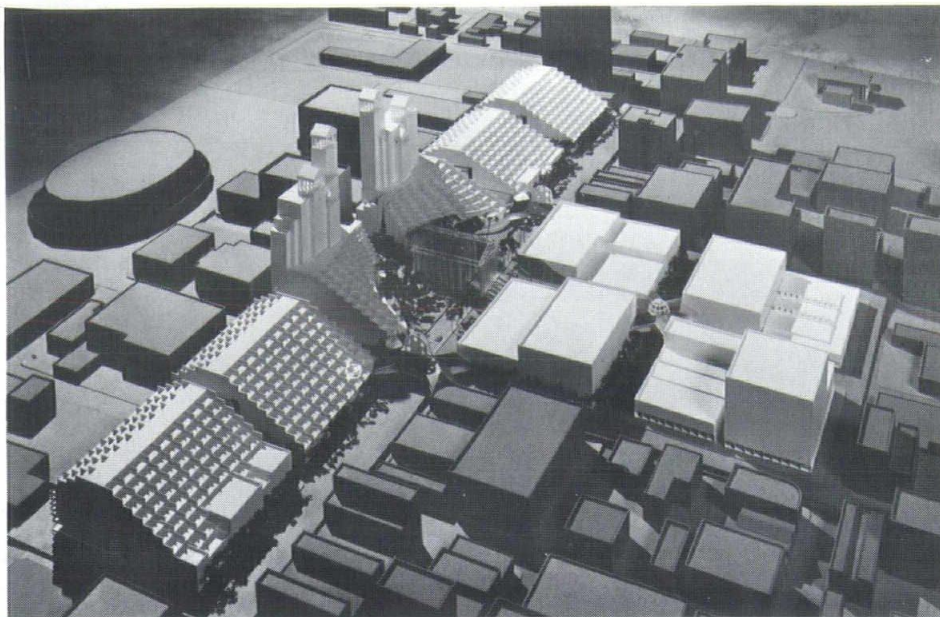
While preservationists may be proud of these accomplishments, an increased effort must be made to

educate the public about the value of historic structures and the financial advantages of preservation through adaptive reuse.

To help manage architecturally significant environments, more communities should be encouraged to establish design review boards as authorized by the Mississippi Legislature in 1978. The function of such boards is to regulate construction in designated historic districts to ensure that new designs are compatible with, but not necessarily imitations of, the existing buildings in the neighborhood. Exterior alterations to historic structures would also be analyzed for appropriateness and

Continued on page 16

MSU Design Charrette: SOLUTIONS



The School of Architecture at Mississippi State University held a "Design Charrette for an Urban Retail Center" on January 24, 1981 at Starkville. The program, funded by a grant from the National Endowment for the Humanities, was jointly sponsored by the New York University Institute for Retail Management, and the School of Architecture at Mississippi State.

Six prominent American architects attacked the real problem of revitalizing the urban retail core of Richmond, Virginia. The plan of attack split each architect off into a team headed by that architect, backed by a faculty representative, and staffed by fourteen students, per team from the School of Architecture.

The solutions, which were represented by models, drawings, and in one case by a multi-media show, were presented to the public on Saturday, January 24 at a Review Session. A Review Panel of prominent architects and developers evaluated the projects, probed each solution's thesis, attacked or lauded, and summarized the week's proceedings.

Design teams consisted of the following architects:

- Team #1 — Paul A. Kennon, FAIA of Houston, Texas. Faculty representative — Dennis B. Jones.
- Team #2 — Stanley Tigerman, FAIA of Chicago, Illinois. Faculty

representative — Michael J. Buono.

- Team #3 — Hugh N. Jacobsen, FAIA of Washington, D.C. Faculty representative — Gary A. Shafer.

- Team #4 — Peter D. Eisenman of New York, N.Y. Faculty representative — Kirk Train.

- Team #5 — Robert A.M. Stern of New York, N.Y. Faculty representative — Henry P. Hildebrandt and Ronald W. Murray.

- Team #6 — Charles W. Moore, FAIA of Los Angeles, Calif. Faculty representative — Robert M. Ford.

The Saturday Review Panel included eight top professionals:

- Kent Bloomer, Professor at the Yale University School of Arch.
- John Burgee — Principal of Johnson-Burgee Architects of New York, N.Y.
- Stuart Cohen — of the Chicago architectural firm of the same name.
- George Hite — Senior Vice-President of the Dayton-Hudson Corp. of Minneapolis, Minn.
- J. Scott Meyer — Vice-President of Carter Hawley Hale Stores, Inc., Los Angeles, Calif.
- James B. Selonik — Senior Vice-President, Federated Department Stores, Inc., Cincinnati, Ohio.
- William Turnbull — Principal of William Turnbull Associates, San Francisco, Calif.
- Charles Zucker — Architect and Associate Director of the National Endowment for the Arts.



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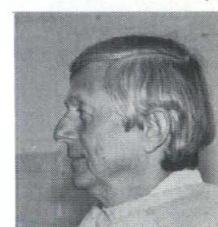
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Charles W. Moore's team offers one of six solutions

Robert A.M. Stern, AIA

Charles W. Moore, FAIA

Paul A. Kennon, FAIA

Peter D. Eisenman, AIA

Stanley Tigerman, FAIA

Hugh N. Jacobsen, FAIA

The Saturday Review Panel

Joey Henderson, student,

Paul Kennon, FAIA, and

Dennis Jones, faculty

Gary Shafer, faculty

and Hugh Jabosen, FAIA

Peter D. Eisenman, AIA

Robert A.M. Stern, AIA

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Photos by Fred Frank, AIA

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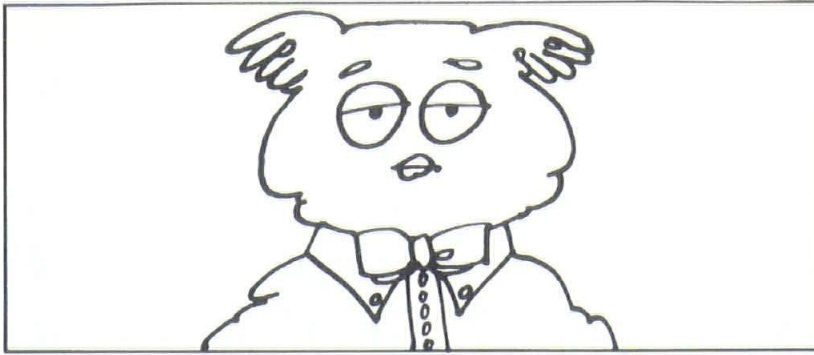
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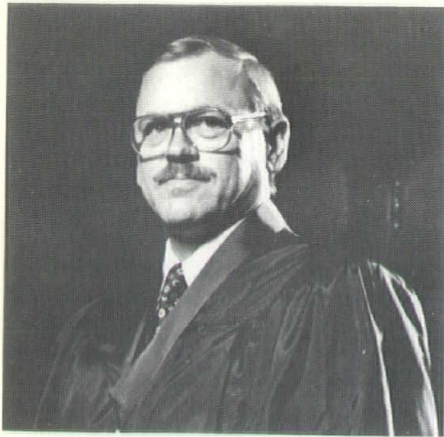
*Ledbetter . . .
Continued from page 9*

new elements and old as a comparison between the two. Vines, which run the length of the building, are able to grow along the beam toward the natural light from end of building to center skylight. The cove mouldings are continued at the bases of new walls and are applied elsewhere to lend scales to new expanses of gypsum board. At the entry, an arch eroding in scallops toward the floor reveals a corner of the conference room and signals clearly the transition to interior space.

The drafting area, which stretches across the front width of the building, is unimpeded by solid partitions. Instead, lattices dividing the individual stations provide a sense of privacy, as if between good neighbors. A translucent barrel vault of corrugated fiberglass provides a festive connection to the research library. The print room and the materials room remain basically unaltered except for fresh coats of paint.

The natural characteristics of materials and color are used ebulliently throughout. The foils for all the colors are the glossy white of the metal ceilings contrasted with the golden glow of the newly refinished wood floors. At the top of the stair, entry begins as a progression of pinks. The reception area brings together those pinks with the refracted light of glass blocks as well as the deep plum of the conference room and the lavender of the perforated beam. The beam continues to the exterior wall where it terminates at the central window which is painted to match on the exterior. The drafting area in white and green is punctuated by the yellow ribbon of the light track and the aquatic green of the air duct.

All of these elements — the forms, the detailing, the colors — are seen as a collage, each existing over, under, beside, and beyond the others. Threads are interwoven to tie the composition together. Those threads, however, are not merely the means to an end. They exist as an idea in which the means **are** the ends — in which the process is the design and vice-versa. Through the overlaying of ideas and the constant refinement of attitudes, a unique architectural harmony transcends. Or as Ben Ledbetter sees it, "We played the role of the architect as facilitator — we helped the architecture to happen." □



Joe Weilenman Elected to Fellows

Greenville architect Joe N. Weilenman, AIA, has been elected to the College of Fellows of the American Institute of Architects. Weilenman is among 91 architects in the United States to be selected in 1981 for this lifetime honor bestowed on AIA members for notable contributions to the profession of architecture. Investiture of the 91 elected Fellows took place May 18 at the AIA's National Convention in Minneapolis/St. Paul.

A native Greenvillian, Weilenman is a principal in the firm of Weilenman Associates in Greenville. He was graduated from the Auburn University School of Architecture with a Bachelor of Architecture in 1957.

An AIA member for 16 years, Weilenman served as president of the chapter in 1976. He served on the National AIA Design Committee from 1971 through 1974 and was chairman of the Gulf States Region Honor Awards Committee in 1973. He was also a member of the Construction Specifications Institute, Mississippi Chapter.

Chapter president Paul Roberson noted Weilenman's "most outstanding achievement for the Mississippi Chapter has been the organization and founding of the Mississippi Architect magazine wherein he served as editor from its inception in 1970 through 1975 and contributing editor from 1975 to the present. This publication provided the Mississippi Chapter with a prestigious and quality public exposure it had never had before and still enjoys," the president said.

Weilenman was an early leader in the Mississippi Chapter's Mississippi State School of

Architecture Advisory Board which assisted in establishing Mississippi's School of Architecture at Mississippi State University. He has continued in an advisory capacity and still coordinates the school's relationship with the chapter.

Weilenman received Design Honor Awards from the Mississippi chapter AIA for Deer Creek Park in Leland, in 1972; the Bank of Lake Village (in association with Virden & Roberson, Greenville) in 1976; and the C & G Depot Complex, Greenville, in 1980. Other significant projects include the Ewing Education Building at Delta State University (in association with Kennington, Ltd. and James McAdams, AIA) in Cleveland; the Salvation Army Complex, Greenville; the Nature Interpretive Center at the Leroy Percy State Park, Hollandale; restoration of the historic Burris house in Benoit; the Social Science Building at Mississippi Valley State University, Itta Bena; and libraries in Drew, Ruleville, and Moorhead.

A former member of the Greenville Beautification Committee, Weilenman has served as president of the Greenville Art Association and the Friends of William Alexander Percy Memorial Library, Greenville. □

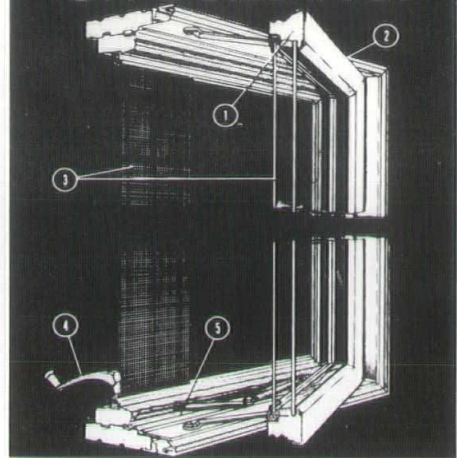


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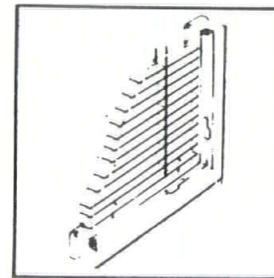
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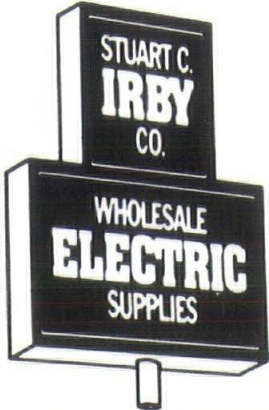


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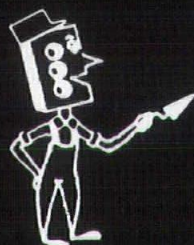
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*The Future of Preservation . . .
Continued from page 11*

sensitivity. Such authority is an essential element to any serious strategy to preserve the character and special ambience of historic neighborhoods. In 1955 Natchez became the first city in Mississippi to establish historic district zoning for a small area around the Adams County Courthouse. That area has since been expanded to include a much larger historic district and the authority of the architectural review board has been extended to include all "landmarks" within the city limits. While it cannot guarantee the preservation of all sites under its jurisdiction, the architectural review board does provide the appropriate public forum where questions concerning the management of historic resources can be debated.

A recent attempt to establish historic district zoning in Jackson was defeated in a vote by the city council. Preservationists in the Belhaven area had pushed for the authority to control alterations and development in their neighborhood. Their efforts were met with powerful opposition from local realtors whose interest in fashionable Belhaven was something less than altruistic. The failure to secure approval of this legislation again points up the need for more preservation education. Had realtors and city fathers appreciated the potential benefits of historic district survey, zoning, such as neighborhood stability or improved community appearance, the vote may have favored the preservationists. Improved public education should also be directed at contractors, architects, planners, bankers, and indeed everyone whose daily decisions affect the historic resources of Mississippi.

Mississippians take pride in the impressive landmarks for which the state is famous. More importantly, however, they are discovering that the local railroad station, the row of brick stores, the vernacular Queen Anne cottage, and the log dogtrot are also irreplaceable fragments of the state's history and therefore worthy of preservation. They are not only expressions of the architecture, craftsmanship, and tastes of a former epoch, they also help to provide Mississippi with a unique identity found nowhere else. The 1980s challenge preservationists to retain and enhance the fragile historical environment in all its many dimensions and to ensure a legacy for generations to come. □



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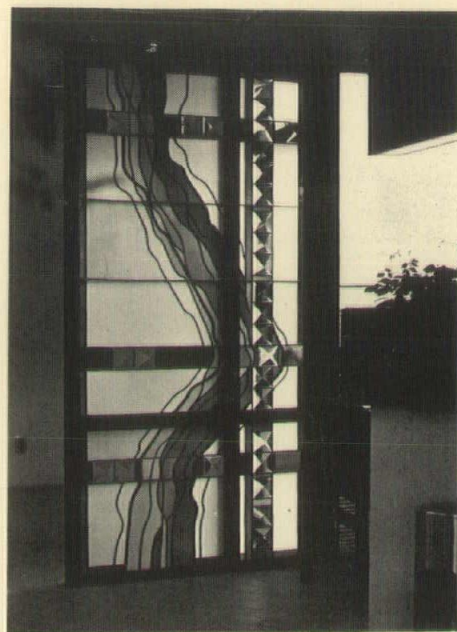
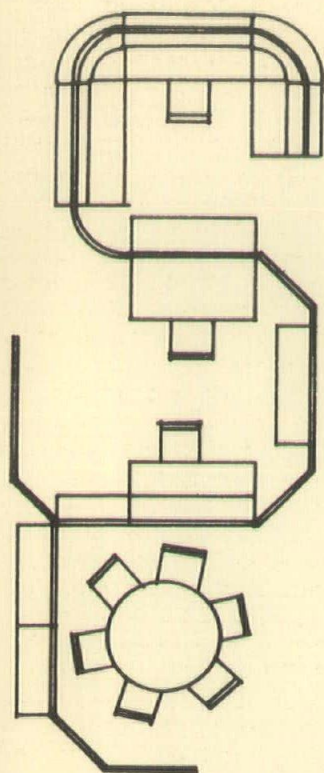
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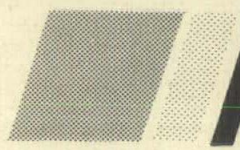
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