SAVING PENN STATION

Penn Station is to be demolished in June! Like ancient Rome, New York seems bent on tearing down its finest buildings. In Rome demolition was a piecemeal process which took over a thousand years; in New York demolition is absolute and complete in a matter of months. The rise of modern archaeology put an end to this kind of vandalism in Rome, but in our city no such deterrent exists. No opinion based on the artistic worth of a building is worth two straws when huge sums and huge enterprises are at stake.

Who is to say this is wrong? Dr. Johnson once said man is seldom more innocently employed than when he is making money. If true, how then are we to save Penn Station, a great architectural monument, which has among other things some of the finest Doric columns in the world—and a plan which never, so far as I know, worked the way its creators intended?

In another age with a different philosophy of the art of building it would have been easier to arouse public opinion. Today our sense of what constitutes a good building is at variance with the wasteful formal majesty of such monuments. But are these qualities really so wasteful and is it true that the human spirit gains nothing from them? The generation that conceived the station accepted the dictum: “Well building hath three conditions: commodity, firmness, and delight”, and the greatest of these was delight. In this they followed the tradition of centuries, a tradition which emphasized human as well as mechanical values, a tradition we have pretty well lost sight of (e.g., in our latest “iron curtain” skyscraper separating north and south Park Avenues).

So if you love grand architecture, write the Mayor’s committee of thirteen and Commissioner Felt that some part of this gigantic pile at least may be saved. For the Penn Station’s Doric colonnade is the finest of its kind on this side of the water, and second only to Bernini’s in Rome.

W. Knight Sturges

IMPROVING NEW YORK

The February issue of the A.I.A. Journal contains an excellent article by New York Landscape Architect Robert Zion entitled “Some Impractical Ideas for the Improvement of Cities”. Among Mr. Zion’s delightful, and humorously presented, schemes are “Instant Gallery” thrown up over side streets, “Parklets” on Kinney Parking lots, “Zoolets” tucked into neighborhoods, and suggestions that New York recapture enjoyment of its waterfront with restaurants on piers or barges, and by recreating some of the old water squares. If it had not already been proposed by our Civic Design Committee, Mr. Zion might well have included a midtown pedestrian mall.

Mr. Zion feels that planners in high places have been stricken with a terrible ailment whose symptom is the use of words like extravagant, impractical, unfeasible and uneconomical when they are confronted with any idea not based upon the criteria of efficiency and economy. His thesis is that most American cities, New York obviously included, are dreary and desperately in need of some of these “impractical” amenities. The question left unanswered is how, if ever, are they to become realities?

We believe there is hope. Imperfect as they yet are, many practical realities in New York today were once labeled extravagant, unfeasible, and worse. How, for example, could one justify the enormous cost of underground transportation? Why should the city spend taxpayers’ money to build housing for those who pay the least? What practical business enterprise would fail to use every square foot of a building site for producing revenue? And, most recently, who would stand up for the planning of public schools when stock plans are cheaper?

Subways, public housing, new zoning, and creative schools are among today’s “impractical” realities in New York. Perhaps water squares and zoolets will be next.

S. Hart Moore

GREETING AND WARNING

In a letter to President Woodbridge dated February 23, 1962, the new commissioner of the New York City Department of Buildings, Harold Birns, extended renewed greetings and assurances of cooperation to all members of this Chapter.

In attempting to solve the many problems which confront the daily operation of his Department, Commissioner Birns noted, however, “some misguided or unthinking persons doing business with this Department have, on occasion, removed official departmental records and plans from the offices of the Department. This has been the cause of considerable difficulty in the proper administration of the Department. It should be noted that any such removal, mutilation or misuse of departmental records is a felony under the Penal Law and makes the offender liable not only to a fine but to imprisonment.”
COLBERT AND HASKELL
ELECTED FELLOWS OF A.I.A.

Congratulations of the Chapter are extended to members Charles R. Colbert, Dean of Columbia University's School of Architecture, and Douglas Haskell, Editor of Architectural Forum, who have been elected to the rank of Fellow of The American Institute of Architects. They were granted the honor for their work in design and literature, respectively, and will be officially invested at the national convention in Dallas, May 7-11.

Dean Colbert has received national recognition for his school design. One of his contributions has been in urban school planning where play space is at a premium. His other contribution in this area is flexible planning that allows for a fluid educational program. He also has won design awards for the 150-Unit Motel de Ville, the Diaz-Simon Clinic, both in New Orleans, and for two residences.

Douglas Haskell has been in architectural journalism and criticism since 1925. He has been especially active as a proponent of urban development and renewal, and has spoken on the subject to Chambers of Commerce and other interested groups in some 60 U.S. cities. Editor of Forum since 1955, he also has contributed to other national magazines such as Reader's Digest, Harper's Saturday Review, and has prepared the annual article on architecture in the Britannica Book of the Year since 1959.

KETCHUM RECEIVES AWARD

Chapter member Morris Ketchum, Jr., FAIA, has been presented with the 1962 President's Award of Columbia University's Architectural Alumni Association.

The award, given to a Columbia School of Architecture graduate for outstanding accomplishment in the field of design, was bestowed by Richard B. Snow, president of the Architectural Alumni Association, at the Annual Alumni Day ceremonies on Feb. 12.

CONVENTION ISSUES

DISCUSSED AT MEETING

A special business meeting of the Chapter on March 12 considered matters to be acted upon at the Dallas convention. Special guests James M. Hunter, AIA Second Vice President, and Morris Ketchum, Jr., Director of the New York Region, were present to explain the background of the various issues, which included architects' expanded services, revisions to mandatory standards, and affiliate membership.

Expanded services is concerned with the many pre-design and post-design services frequently performed by architects today, but which are not specifically mentioned at present in AIA documents as part of normal architects' services. These services might range from selection of site and economic feasibility studies, to interior design, furnishing and equipment.

Mandatory Standards of Professional Practice have been rewritten by the Committee on the Profession under James M. Hunter, chairman, and are slated for detailed discussion at the convention. Members were asked to study the current issue of the AIA Journal, and to write in their comments.

Affiliate Membership concerns the adoption of a category of membership for practitioners in allied professions, such as engineering, in recognition of the essential collaborative roles they play in building and planning projects.

Chapter members were urged to attend the pre-convention meeting on April 10th for further discussion of the above and other matters, and for instruction of Chapter delegates to the Convention.

BOOKS


Basically this is a picture book of the buildings given Honor Awards by the AIA from 1949 to 1961. From the generally good black and white photographs the layman can get a pretty good idea of some of the better architecture of this country during the last twelve years, and the architect can obtain a picture record for his library.

As Philip Will states in his foreword, it is for the ordinary citizen that this book has been produced: to raise his level of understanding of the profession today. The introduction carries out this aim by giving a very short basic history of architecture with emphasis on the last fifty years.

The buildings of course, have been published before, and in a manner so that they can be better understood (more plans, elevations, details, description). Even considering the layman, for whom the book was produced, there seems to be a noticeable lack of these basics, which somewhat defeats the stated purpose of enlightenment.

However, one cannot help feeling proud of his contemporaries and the steps the profession has taken during the last twelve years. If some other citizens are as much impressed the book will have done a job.

Robert Beattie

LETTERS

Sirs:
The article by Richard Snow, "Hugh Ferriss — 1889-1962" brought back memories to one who had worked and served with and under him on many occasions for at least forty years.

So may I add "well done" to Dick Snow's fine article, which should be hung in the Chapter Office.

L. Andrew Reinhard, F.A.I.A.
Bronxville
CHAPTER PUBLIC RELATIONS EFFORTS MOVE AHEAD
By F. MARSHALL SMITH

In the past several years, architects have come to recognize a growing need to explain and “sell” the profession to the public. It was self-evident that this job could best be accomplished through the A.I.A. at a national level, and by its various local chapters. Both money and professional public relations counsel were needed to do the job properly. Dues had to be substantially raised, and were, in chapter after chapter across the country. In the beginning, results were slow in showing, and many an architect complained that neither he nor the profession could point to any tangible gains. This is no longer true, as the growing success of the New York Chapter’s efforts indicate.

The Chapter’s current Public Affairs Committee, ably chaired by Edwin B. Morris, Jr., includes Roy O. Allen, Jeanne Davern, Lathrop Douglass, Harmon H. Goldstone and Carl S. Meyer. Max O. Urbahn acts as liaison with the Executive Committee. Together with Jack Bernstein Associates, the Chapter’s professional public affairs counsel, they have put into motion a broad and ambitious program which already has begun to bear fruit.

The architect is shown to the general public in his role of planner and designer of better cities, homes, schools, and places of worship. He is shown to the business and financial community as a practical planner dedicated to the best interests of his clients, and as a professional who understands economics and can help achieve more profitable properties for investment builders and greater productivity for industry. The significant contributions he makes are being brought to the attention of school, church, and hospital administrators and other special interest groups. He is being brought to the attention of governmental and administrative groups as a qualified professional who can be a valuable aid in the development and administration of legislation and programs which affect human environment.

When the Executive Committee adopted, as a Chapter project, the proposal of a pedestrian mall to run between Fifth Avenue and Avenue of the Americas from 42nd Street to 59th Street, a public relations and publicity program was launched with widespread good effect (see OCULUS, Dec. ‘61). Efforts are continuing to keep the mall proposal a topic of interest.

Wide exposure was also secured for the Chapter’s opposition to the housing development proposed for Welfare Island, and its counter proposal to turn the island into a park. As a result of this effort, the housing development proposal was shelved for further study.

In another, prior public-interest project—modern zoning for New York City—the views of the profession were continuously publicized and brought to the attention of city officials. The Chapter’s efforts played a significant part in making our new zoning resolution a reality.

It was at a Public Affairs Committee meeting not too long ago that it was decided to have Ted Morris, committee chairman, meet with the School Committee to discuss the advisability of the Chapter writing to the Board of Education and offering its assistance in matters of school planning and building. As a result, the School Committee helped draft a letter from the Chapter to the board. The board subsequently announced that a panel of architects had been formed to advise on the construction and design of schools. The group is headed by Max Abramovitz.

It was not by accident that an architect was appointed to the City Planning Commission for the first time in New York City’s history. Mr. Woodbridge wrote a letter to the Mayor, and on the basis of this a press release was drafted and disseminated. An editorial was run in the New York Times which recommended that an architect be named to fill the vacancy on the City Planning Commission. And letters were sent, over Mr. Woodbridge’s signature, to the editors of New York City’s major dailies further pointing out the need for an architect on the commission. Today, an architect serves in that post, Harmon H. Goldstone.

The Public Affairs Committee and counsel also are working with magazines in a number of areas. Hospitals magazine was approached with the idea of doing a feature piece on the medical research program being conducted under the Hospital and Health Committee. The publication expressed interest in the idea and a suggested article on the project was prepared by counsel working with Robert Hyde Jacobs.

How can the individual architect participate in this program and benefit directly?

An article was recently prepared for the Department Store Economist magazine on the topic of “Good Architecture is Good Business.” Actual case histories of department store remodeling jobs were supplied by Ketchum & Sharp, who received credit in the article.

When Duri’s Review and Modern Industry announced that it would do a special report on industrial plant construction, our counsel visited with the editor in charge of the project. Chapter members who had indicated in their files that they did industrial work were called on to supply material. In addition, their names were given to the publication as candidates for a round table panel to discuss plant design, site selection, and other topics. As a result, two architects from the Chapter were chosen to join the panel discussion, which was intended to develop ideas and quotes for the special report.

Other opportunities such as this will arise during the year. If you have not already submitted background material on yourself, your firm, and your work, do so now, to Jack Bernstein Associates, Inc., 31 West 57th St., New York 19. Numerous projects are being developed in a variety of areas. Your participation can benefit the profession, the Chapter, and you.
All of the four placement agencies specializing in the design fields have many years of experience behind them.

The Career Builders Agency has so specialized since 1947, longer than the others. Ruth Forrest, present head of the organization, joined it in 1948. The majority of the openings she fills are in the fields of Interior Design, Office Planning, Graphics, and Industrial Design. She has been instrumental in the striking development of office-planning firms since World War II, having placed so many key personnel in them. Graduate architects make up almost the entire design staff in many of these firms: They place great importance on an architectural degree, which seems to carry more weight than years of experience.

The name of the agency has created a few problems for Miss Forrest. Many people assume that it offers vocational guidance. Although she is not in the business of guidance, she is prepared by her years of experience and what she calls "a feeling for people," to place the applicant in a position that really suits him and to give the employer the thorough service for which he pays.

Mrs. Fox, who operates the Contact Agency, confines her work as much as possible to the field of architecture. She has a number of long-term clients among employers and is confident that when she sends an applicant to one of them, he will get the job. She is particularly concerned about the morale of the professional man looking for a job. A few unsympathetic words or signs of impatience can shatter the applicant's confidence at a time when his professional dignity must sustain him. Mrs. Fox says that many who come to her are particularly sensitive because they have been "brushed off" at an office or another agency. She may find it necessary, after careful examination of an applicant's work and history, to advise him, tactfully, to lower his objectives. She is prepared to give the new employee advice on the idiosyncrasies of his boss, or even to tell him which of his co-workers he might better emulate. Even long after the placement is completed, Mrs. Fox will discuss questions of salary — even firing or quitting — with either employer or employee. If a man gets a certain "starting salary" for a probationary period, Mrs. Fox makes sure that it is renegotiated at the end of that time. Her greatest satisfaction, and she admits it may sound "too idealistic," is to place a man in the position that "will do him the most good."

Helen Hutchins specializes in the placing of Industrial Designers and Interior Designers, and like Ruth Forrest, she finds that she places an increasing number of architects, as the practice of what she calls "Interior Architecture" grows. She acquired her intimate knowledge of the design fields during her 11 years in Donald Deskey's office. Later she was Executive Director of the American Institute of Decorators, where she became personally acquainted with decorators from all over the U.S.

Miss Hutchins defines the role of public and private agencies simply: the public agency is intended primarily for the unemployed and often meets their needs admirably, without demanding a fee. The private agency, on the other hand, is more suitable for the employed person wishing to change jobs, because it has the resources to find jobs as well as fill known vacancies, because it is confidential, and because it operates over wider geographical areas.

Draftsmen's Exchange

The firm of Stitt Fineman, 17 East 45th St., has come up with a novel idea which can be of considerable advantage to the profession.

Termed by its originators the "Draftsmen's Exchange", the plan eliminates (1) the distasteful task of laying off trained personnel during slack periods, (2) projects that are undermanned during rush periods, (3) excessive overtime expense. It also ensures architectural personnel of more continual employment.

Says Ted Stitt: "If the work in your office slows up and you have trained personnel you are reluctant to lose, you notify us and we temporarily assign your idle draftsmen to other offices requiring extra help. These offices assume payment of the draftsmen's salaries until the men are returned to your office when you need them. When you, in turn, enter a rush period you advise us and we supply you with the necessary help from our draftsmen's exchange. All employee benefits, Blue Cross, etc., remain intact and there is practically no paper work involved."

The charge for this service is 10% of earned salary, payable on a weekly basis. The fee is paid only by employers who need extra draftsmen on a temporary basis. There is no fee to either applicants or employers who refer their extra employees for placement. For additional information, call MU 77660.  

James Cady

REMODELING COMPETITION

ENTRIES DUE MAY 15

Last year the House Consulting Committee of the Chapter held a competition for remodeled city houses which proved of great public interest. This year the Committee is repeating the competition, but expanding its scope to include development houses and private detached houses as well.

Any building completed within the past three years by an architect practicing in the Greater New York Metropolitan area may be entered. Also eligible are projected remodelings by architects, draftsmen, and architectural students.

Details of submissions, which were mailed to all Chapter members, are available at the Chapter office. Submissions themselves should be received at the office by 5 p.m., Tuesday, May 15. Judgement will take place on Friday, May 22. Jurors include Harold Edelman, Lewis Davis, Ulrich Franzen, Ilse Meissner Reese, and Stanley Salzman.
TEN LEGAL PITFALLS
ARCHITECTS SHOULD AVOID

Nathan Walker, legal counsel to the Chapter, pointed out in a talk to members last month that the architect is charged with knowledge of the law during the course of each commission. Obviously it is in his best interest to become familiar with legal pitfalls encountered by other architects, and by careful planning to avoid them in his own practice. Among the most common errors cited by Mr. Walker:

1. Obscure terms — In an owner/architect contract care should be taken to use clear, concise language. Words such as “practicable”, dear to every architect, must be clarified. From what standpoint is a project or detail practicable? Cost, structure, time and esthetics must all be considered and clearly spelled out to insure against litigation arising from such language.

2. Innocent statement — Written remarks concerning minimum and maximum costs, time limits, workmanship, etc. should be clarified to locale. Costs vary from state to state and a limiting framework is necessary. Correspondence, incidentally, has often been construed by the court as part of the contract documents.

3. Professional services — The exact scope of all services should be defined concisely in the contract. A written contract is necessary and must be expanded to cover any modifications to the original agreement. Verbal instructions and agreements are binding, but are not a basis for litigation.

4. Signatures — Obtain signed copies of all contracts and contract documents. No written contract and signature can be a basis for litigation. Most cases between architects and owners arise from the owner’s lack of initial understanding of the specific duties, responsibilities and rights of the architect. The owner and the contractor should sign contract documents, although the architect may identify them.

5. Fees — The time of fee payment should also be specified in the contracts as well as the customary proportions and manner of payment. A neutralizing clause in the contract is often a good safeguard, e.g., inserting the word “unreasonably” in the payment clause: “…the owner may withhold payment until he has approved all drawings and specifications, but such approval shall not be withheld unreasonably.” The neutralizer can also be effectively applied to the time of payment.

7. Arbitration — All disagreements between owner and architect are subject to arbitration, but the standard clause form does not specify where the arbitration shall take place. Advantages of amending the clause to read “…arbitration shall be held in New York City” are obvious and many. Not only will travel and working time be sharply cut, but any judgment awarded will be fully valid and supported by the laws of the State of New York. No claim of a contractor shall be valid unless in written form, based on a written authorization.

8. Codes — Professionals should be fully conversant with the latest amendments to the state building codes, and also whether the municipality in which the work is taking place has adopted those amendments.

9. Contract documents — Drawings and specifications must be adequate for building purposes and accurate for the bidding contractors to rely on. It should be stated in writing that the accuracy of the sub-surface borings is not guaranteed by the owner, since these are generally furnished to the architect and bidders by the owner.

10. Costs — Clarification of budget should be obtained and exactly expressed in contract. If the cost is not to exceed a certain figure it must be so stated, and the architect shall design to that figure.

Robert M. Bujac

BRUNNER SCHOLARSHIP

In addition to its normal business of administering the Scholarship, the Brunner Scholarship Committee, under the chairmanship of E. N. Turano, has completed the preparation of a list of outstanding buildings in New York with their locations, dates, and architects’ names. The list is primarily for distribution to visiting architects and others desiring such information. Copies are available at the Chapter office.

EUROPEAN ART TOUR

A six-week European art and architectural tour under the leadership of Chapter Member Jeffery Ellis Aronin has been announced by the University Travel Co. Suite 1381, 101 Park Avenue, New York 17, N.Y.

The tour will begin in New York on June 25, and will include visits to Glasgow, Edinburgh, Stockholm, Copenhagen, Athens, Rome, Florence, Venice, Milan, Nice, Paris, Amsterdam, London, Dublin.

Detailed information and reservations may be obtained by writing to the above address, or by calling MU 6-8558.

COMING EVENTS

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<td>APRIL 18</td>
<td>Wednesday, 5:15, Gallery A&lt;br&gt;Hospital and Health Discussion Group</td>
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<td>MAY 7-11</td>
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<td>MAY 16</td>
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<td>MAY 22</td>
<td>Tuesday, 5:15, Gallery A&lt;br&gt;Technical Committee Lecture: “Structural Concrete”</td>
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<td>OCTOBER 10-13</td>
<td>New York State Association of Architects&lt;br&gt;Convention — Whiteface Inn, Lake Placid, N.Y.</td>
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CHAPTER MEMBERS JOIN SCHOOL SELECTION UNIT

Three Chapter members and two engineers have accepted invitations from the city’s Board of Education to serve on an advisory committee to screen applications from private concerns and individuals for school design contracts.

Named were Alfred Easton Poor, L. Bancel La Farge, Frank G. Lopez, Structural Engineer William H. Eipel, and Mechanical Engineer Darl H. Hunt.

The willingness of the group to assist in the Board’s new design program “will insure the selection of architects and engineers on the highest professional basis, free of influence from any source”, said Board Member John F. Hennessy, liaison for school construction and repair programs.

The committee will serve for a term of one year as of March 1, 1962. It will take into account the background and experience of all applicants for design contracts and thereby enable the Board to make its final determinations “as impartially and professionally as possible”. The Board’s current building program lists 30 new schools for construction in 1962 and 28 schools for advance planning; the latter will probably reach the construction stage by 1963. About half the program is assigned to private architects; the rest is handled by the Board’s own staff of civil service architects.

PREVENTING AIR POLLUTION

The New York State Air Pollution Board, under the provision of Article 12-A of the Public Health Law, announce the adoption of “Rules to Prevent New Air Pollution” which will become effective April 1, 1962.

Chapter members involved in the planning for and construction of new sources of air pollution, or modifications to existing sources, may inspect a copy of the new Rules in the Chapter Office. More complete information is available from the Air Pollution Control Board, New York State Department of Health, 84 Holland Avenue, Albany 8, N. Y.

LEGISLATIVE

The committee has been particularly busy recently with matters involving the state and city government. Members attended a public hearing of the Buildings Committee for the City Council, at which a proposed Certificate of Occupancy Bill was the subject of long discussion. The bill, intended to reduce the likelihood of graft by eliminating the final inspection of building projects, was opposed by the committee. The consensus was that the bill would neither eliminate opportunities for graft nor expedite the issuance of certificates of occupancy. Furthermore, it was felt that the effect would be to turn over public police power to private architects and engineers, throwing more responsibility on them and introducing new temptation for the unscrupulous.

At a recent meeting with Commissioner Birns of the city’s Building Department, representatives of the Chapter discussed ways to improve the processing of plans in the department. Mr. Rutkins presented the recommendations of the committee, which were received favorably, with a promise of action.

Partly as a result of the committee’s efforts, the deadline for the completion of alterations filed under the old zoning law was extended to December 15, 1962.

Other items of considerable interest were reported. Section 26 of the Multiple Dwelling Law has now passed the Legislature and been signed by the Governor. It validates plans filed between October 15 and December 15 of last year, which otherwise would have been invalid because of a conflict between state and city regulations.

A meeting of the New York State Association of the Professions, in which the architects are represented, was held, it was agreed that none of the bills should be supported. Further investigation is required to determine the benefits of such legislation and to observe the effects of similar bills adopted in other states.

It was also reported that the Commissioner of Buildings has received approval from the Board of Estimate for his proposal to have the Polytechnic Institute of Brooklyn prepare a new building code at a fee of $700,000.

NEW PAINTING ON VIEW

Mr. Martin Janto has lent the first in a series of rotating art works to be hung in the Chapter office. The painting is called “Verdant Fantasy #3”, and will be on view for about three months. The plan is to present other artists in sequence for about the same length of time.

Mr. Janto studied at the Chicago Art Institute and is presently teaching at New York’s Browning School. His work has appeared in one-man shows in Paris, Rome, and New York, and hangs in the Artists’ Gallery, Collectors Gallery, and Camino Gallery, among others.

LECTURES CANCELLED

The series of technical lectures on New York City’s new Zoning Resolution, announced by the Pratt Institute School of Architecture and reported in the March OCULUS, has been cancelled.

MEMBERSHIP

WELCOME NEW MEMBERS

The New York Chapter extends its warmest welcome to the following new members:

Corporate

Ann M. Willis
Charles William Dry
Elliott Wilensky
John R. Campbell
John B. Hayden
Leonard Weinberg
Charles K. Robinson

Associate

B. W. G. Wilkins

CANDIDATES

Information regarding the qualifications of the following candidates for membership will be considered confidential by the Admissions Committee:

Corporate

Robert L. Ashbridge
Paul Frank Basile
Robert Cabrera
Henry M. Fournier
Emmanuel Mauheimer
Joseph George Merz

Stephen M. Olko
Consulting Engineers

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