

p PROGRESSIVE **a** ARCHITECTURE

newsletter

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July 1949

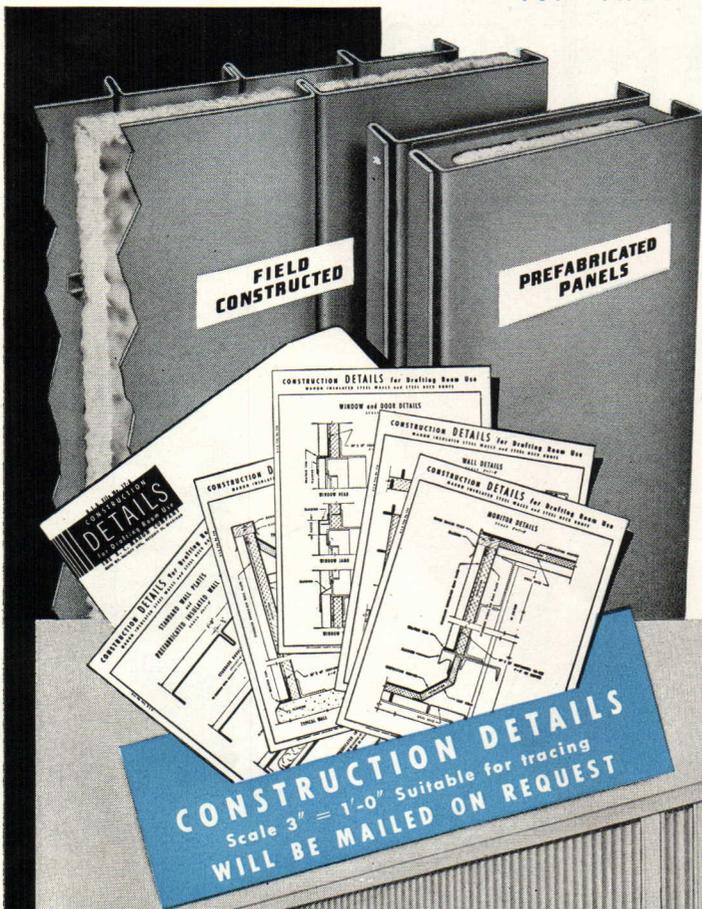
- Prices continue to drop, in spotty fashion, in building materials market. Producers' Council says "shortages of building materials and equipment have disappeared," and it is the experience of most architects that specified materials can now be obtained without construction delay. High point of production was in October 1948 (61% above 1939 average) and only fear now is that trend toward "buyers' market" may develop into slump that would affect other parts of economy. Recent sharp drop in metals on commodities exchange has raised this question. However, most sober analysts look at still-great demand for needed buildings and are confident of profitable activity for a decent period ahead.
- Pessimists are largely those who don't realize the picnic is ended. As W. W. Williams, chairman of the Committee for Economic Development, says, "Many businesses still need to learn that the war is over, that their particular sellers' market is gone, and that they must resume the normal practice of pricing and marketing their products aggressively to promote sales."
- Architectural activity has dropped in the larger metropolitan areas, with some firms that have been constantly busy since before the war finding time to look around for new work. In general, especially in the smaller towns and cities, work is holding up and very few practitioners are seriously worried. In very recent weeks the appreciable drop in bid prices has resulted in brand-new activity and the revival of some projects that had been shelved. Also, many farsighted architects are turning to institutional work--particularly schools and hospitals--with the result that "specialists" in these fields are finding competition stiffer than they are used to.
- The movie based on the novel called The Fountainhead, by Ayne Rand, has been shown to several preview audiences. Produced by Warner Brothers, it stars Gary Cooper as the architect-hero who blows up a housing project because someone had inaccurately translated the design he had slipped to an incompetent colleague. The picture, even more clearly than the book, indicates Miss Rand's concern with discounting the professional's social responsibility and applauding the individual who thumbs his nose at other people.
- Perhaps fortunately, the picture is most ineptly directed and poorly acted, the development of the story and the characters is so jerky, and the eye-rolling and jaw-working are so nearly burlesqued, that it is doubtful if the picture will become popular. If it should, it could set architecture back further than the Columbian Exposition did.
- L. Sonneborn Sons introduced a new plastic finish called Phenoplast to the trade recently. It is a liquid finish applied like varnish which forms a tough, rugged, transparent surface on woods, metals, masonry, or composition surfaces.
- Lehigh University announces summer seminar (July 5 - August 13) in product design. Lecturers will include Teague, Birren, Kepes,

Arens, Dreyfuss, and other excellent teachers. Fee is \$500; food, an additional \$100.

- Many correspondents have asked what happened to practice of Sheldon Brumbaugh, Klamath Falls, Ore., architect, after his death. Answer is that Edward N. Hewitt of Detroit, in association with Murdo Morrison and John Howard of Birmingham, Mich., moved to Klamath Falls and bought Brumbaugh's practice. They intend to finish uncompleted work and continue in tradition of community service that Brumbaugh established (see October 1947 P/A).
- National Bureau of Standards reports on studies of lightweight aggregate concretes. Findings in summary are that concretes 1/5 the weight of ordinary concrete are possible, exhibit low thermal conductivity, but develop little strength. Other lightweight aggregate concretes developing compressive strength of 1000 to 7000 lbs. per sq. in. weigh 1/3 to 2/3 as much as sand-gravel mix, and lose some of thermal insulation value. Lightweight concretes in general have high absorption and high shrinkage factors, cost "considerably" more than common material. Savings will result from reduced loads and heat insulation.
- American Society of Planning Officials announces a new Planning Advisory Service, with research and advice for planning agencies on their individual problems. Cost is based on population, starts at \$25 for cities under 10,000 population.
- "Baltimore Plan," hailed by some groups as answer to slum clearance and housing problem, is in reality merely a strict policing of dwelling, health, and fire ordinances, accomplished on an orderly, block-by-block basis. It is regulatory rather than creative. Baltimore Mayor says, "It is designed to relieve somewhat the worst slum conditions until such time as the slums can be torn down and satisfactory housing supplied."
- Philadelphia's City Planning Commission announced recently plans to develop a 350-acre section in the northeast part of the city as a residential community by changing the old street pattern and requiring by-pass of traffic. Buildings going into the area will have to comply with new pattern which calls for looped interior streets within superblocks which will have play areas and paths. Commission points out that with this scheme street improvement will cost taxpayers less.
- HHFA'S Economy Housing Program, hailed by some as an effort to interest home builders in economical methods of construction and rationalized organization, and condemned by others as a move toward smaller houses cheaper because of scrimping, is moving slowly. Directors' Digest, polling real estate editors, finds that "38% of all home builders in the country will be producing low-priced homes before the end of the year." Raymond Foley, HHFA'S Administrator, told group of savings banks officials recently that they must develop "an informed willingness to make financing available for prefabricated housing or for simplified designs, and a readiness to promote and encourage local acceptance..."
- Douglas fir plywood industry has a potential in excess of 2,500,000,000 sq. ft. in 1949, despite business slump at start of year, that industry's Association believes. Last year's total production was 1,963,000,000 sq. ft. Distorted distribution largely as result of war brought overloading and subsequent bad wholesale price break in some areas--resulting in price drops of as much as 50% at contractor level.

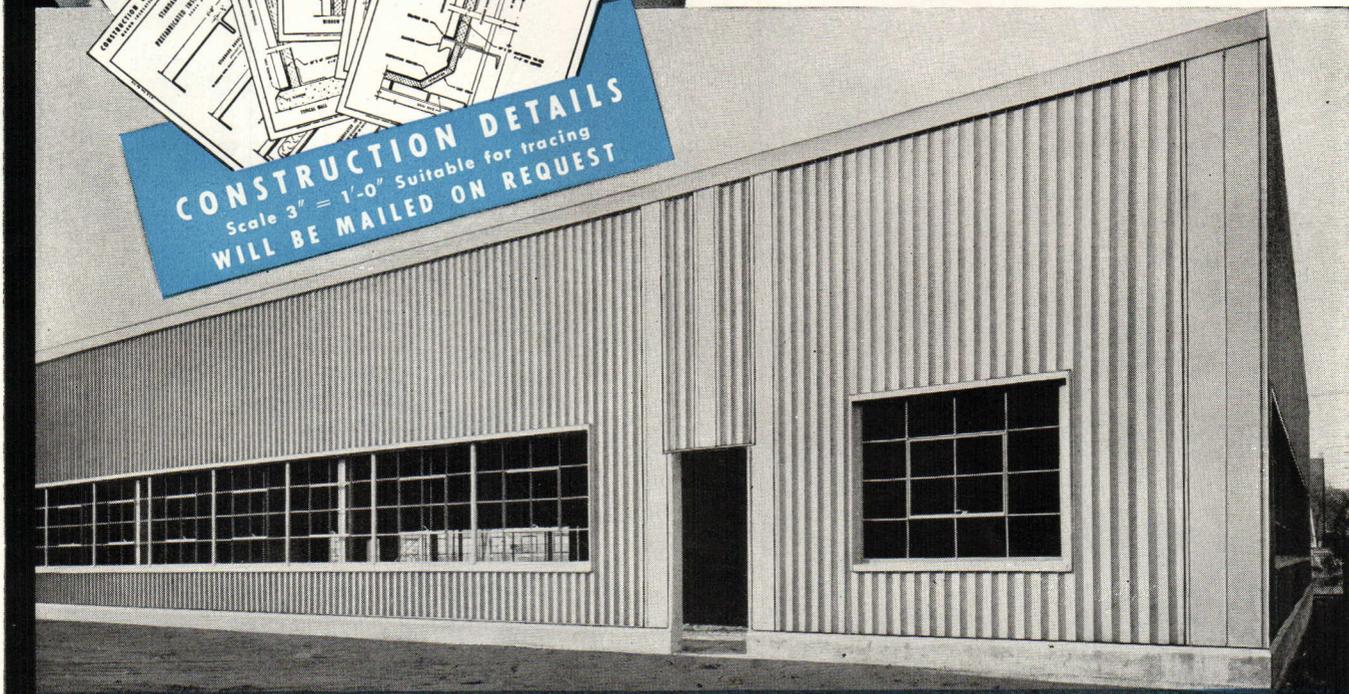
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GREAT

Sylvania's New Flexi-Module Lighting System Illuminates Herpolsheimer's—Modern Allied Store

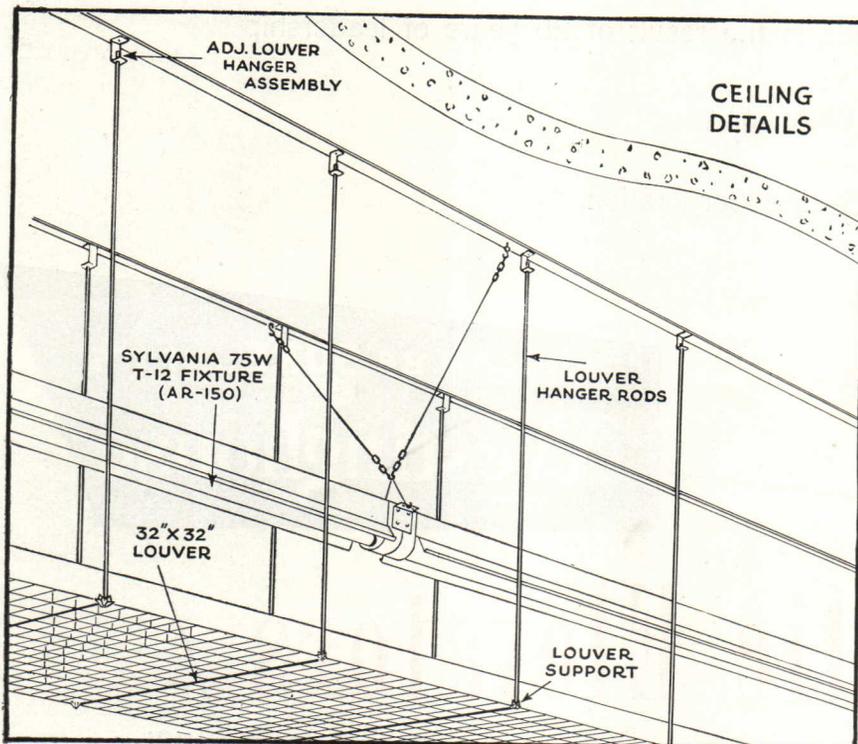


"A store lighting system is satisfactory only when it adapts itself to modern merchandising practice. In the new Herpolsheimer store, the combined engineering skills of Allied Stores and Sylvania have made such a system possible!" — George L. Ely, store designer.

Herpolsheimer's, 95,000 square feet of ultra-modern store in Grand Rapids, Michigan, has the most advanced merchandising lighting devised—a flexi-module ceiling conceived and designed by George L. Ely—and executed with specially designed fluorescent fixtures by Sylvania Electric!

Briefly, this form of lighting was designed to give great flexibility, with the accent on *selling*, and eliminate any distracting influence on the shopper. Soft, glarefree, yet plentiful light is supplied by Sylvania's new 75-watt, T-12, 8-foot, *instant start* Warmtone fluorescent lamps. Mounted in tandem 18" above the louvers on 32" centers, these fixtures depend on a plug-in duct wiring system for their power.

The louvers that form the flexi-module ceiling consist of cells 3" high x 3" wide x 3" long. They are made up into panels 32" x 32". The lighting fixtures behind them can be quickly moved for whatever concentrations or effects of light desired. Directional and decorative lighting is more readily adapted to this system than any other.



Flexi-Module Ceiling Details

The flexi-module ceiling needs no sub-frame of channels, complicated hanging arrangements involving hinging or other costly devices. Hangers of required length are attached to existing ceiling or slab, 32" on centers. Upper end of hanging rod has device which may be attached to various types of ceilings in various ways to meet requirements. For maintenance or changing, panels are lifted from hangers and slid over to adjacent ceiling!

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