The Public Demands More Than Austere Functional Expression

By

William A. Boring, F. A. I. A.

The recent protest against the architecture of Radio City, New York, shows that the public resents the "machine and function" idea in architecture which has developed since the war. The people demand beauty, and are not willing to accept power as representing the highest value in the modern world.

Perhaps we will discover later that we are making our vast business combinations and our buildings and factories too big, and that we will have to change our ideals; either that, or we must change our ideals of beauty and modify them to enjoy the new forms which do not now appeal to the majority as being agreeable.

The machine and function idea cannot alone create nor guide us to beauty. Whether justly or not, the public gave evidence of its resentment against austere functional expression recently when it raised a protest against the designs of one of the biggest architectural projects of our age.

Much of this may have been due to the layman's lack of ability to understand the models and drawings of this project, but it certainly was sound evidence that the public's idea of beauty is not based upon the theory of functionalism, and this protest sent the architects back to express understandable beauty in these buildings.

We build marvellous machines today to do our physical work, but even if we should learn to crack the atom and extract from it all desired power, it is doubtful if we could achieve beauty of form and culture unless we look beyond the idea of material function and profit.

The element of beauty is necessary to us in the full enjoyment of life, and, since architecture is the truest basic expression of what we do and feel, it should be beautiful. We build in accord with our ideals, and when our ideal is one of beauty, our buildings tend toward beauty; even as nature, which grows everything on an established plan, develops beauty as a result.

The idea of beauty does not spring from the brain of genius as an inspiration fully formed and perfectly developed. It is a result of intelligence and painstaking endeavor to achieve beauty. The Greeks built three or four hundred temples of one general type before they achieved the Parthenon. In the School of Architecture our endeavor is to lead the student to an ideal of beauty, strength, and fitness.

The most insistent expression in architectural design since the World War is that of function. Much is written of this idea as though it were new and modern. In architecture it is claimed that function is the most important expression, and that the logical and necessary result of that expression produces beauty in design.

New values appear to have been created in the modern world, of which power is probably considered the highest value; and function represents power. There is no doubt that this quality is evident in all good architecture, but the raw exterior statement of its purpose on the outside of a building in no way insures it to be a beautiful one.

When the world was young, before man appeared, gigantic animals lived in the air, water, and on the land, perfectly adapted to their several functions. Were they alive today, they would comport well with some of our architecture and painting; but nature found them out of scale with the modified world which we know and set to work to bring all flora and fauna into a scale which we, of this epoch, find fitting and beautiful. Our buildings should be naturally agreeable to the men who walk the earth today, even as are the natural things we live among and which we find beautiful.

THE GRAVES' HOUSE, YANCEYVILLE, N. C.
FROM A MEASURED DRAWING BY ALBERT L. HASKINS

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The Graves House

By

Albert L. Haskins

THE Graves' homestead near Yanceyville, N. C., Caswell County, was built by Mr. Jeremiah Graves, first cousin to Mr. Porter Graves who for about twenty years was state solicitor for the state of North Carolina. Mr. Jeremiah Graves was born in 1785 and was a man of prominence throughout the county. During this period in the history of the country the settlements of any size were very few, making it necessary for a farmer to travel a great distance in order to sell his tobacco. It was after one of these visits to Richmond, Va., then about the closest and best market to this section, that Mr. Graves decided to build his home, and to copy the style of a home that he had seen while in Richmond. The home here is said to be almost a duplicate of the other. As may be seen the house was built during the period of the Greek Revival in this country, and was probably influenced by this order, but it is not strictly Greek Doric in its design, for this is far more delicate than is to be found in the other type. The delicacy in the details, and the beauty in design may be said to have been due to the fact that the site of the home was selected out in the country where more time and thought were spent on the design than if it had been built within a city.

The house was started in 1833 and it is thought that the carpentering bills and those for the brick which were made on the present site of the home by slaves under the supervision of an expert mason were paid in that year while the painting was completed and paid for the following year. All of these accounts and receipts are today kept in a bank at Richmond.

In the year of 1835 the father of the present owner was born, and in 1863 there was the beginning of the Civil War between the States with fighting going on throughout the entire county, but this beautiful old home suffered little if any. At the age of eighty-three the builder of this memorial to the Greek Revival days passed away. Mr. Robert Sterling Graves, grandson of the builder was born in 1870, and is now living in the old home.

During the years following the Civil War, known as the Reconstruction Period, we have the founding of the first Ku Klux Klan here at Yanceyville with their headquarters at the old courthouse designed and built by a French architect in 1858. One of the men during this time who incited in the negroes the desire to burn the homes of the plantation owners was Mr. J. W. Stevens, but again we have this architectural monument withstanding the ravages of man and time. Due to the trouble caused throughout this section it was necessary for the state to send troops from the western part of the state under the leadership of Col. Kirk, but due to the behavior of Kirk's troops the citizens of the county sent for federal aid, and this county was declared under military supervision.

After these ninety-seven years of innumerous experiences the old home still stands and is in a wonderful state of preservation. It is now owned by Mr. R. S. Graves, grandson of the builder.

At the time that it was built there were one or two adjoining red brick houses and an office which must have added greatly to the interest of this group composition.

The building itself is built of red brick with the wooden cornice and entablature influenced by the Greek Revival which we find here in the United States and the mother country. The east facade is composed of four coupled columns three feet in diameter which rise the height of the two stories while resting on the caps is a simple but beautiful pediment. The caps themselves are of the simple Greek Doric Order. The windows and entrance motif of the first floor are divided into three divisions, the large center with the small side openings while the openings themselves are covered with an elliptical arch. On the second floor the openings are of the same design and use the same motif except that here they are of the lintel treatment instead of the elliptical. Above the main porch there is a second floor porch supported by the columns with a small balustrade around it. The facade itself is fifty-one feet eight inches wide, and thirty feet high with a porch width of twenty-four feet.

19th Century Tradition Reflected In

ENTRANCE DETAIL

"BAYOU BEND," HOUSTON, TEXAS

JOHN F. STAUB, ARCHITECT — B. P. BRISCOE, ASSOCIATE

This Distinguished Southern House

LIVING ROOM, "BAYOU BEND," HOUSTON, TEXAS

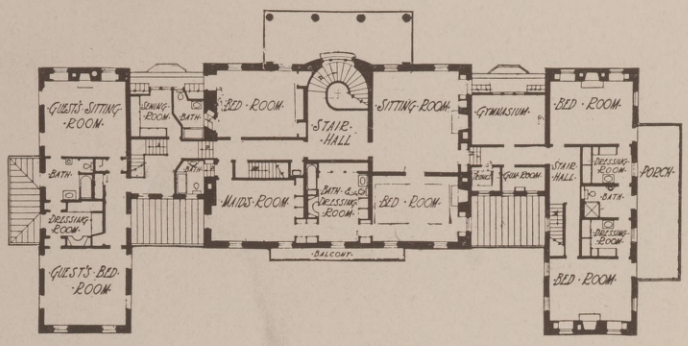
SOMEONE has remarked that, "in the domestic architecture of the Old South the high-water mark of art in this country was assuredly reached." If this be so, and we do not question its truthfulness, then it is indeed encouraging to see the younger men in the profession more and more turning to these old houses for inspiration rather than embracing those foreign styles which do not fit into our southern landscape so well. Already we have seen enough of this ill-adaptation of certain foreign precedent, throughout the country, meaning our experiment with the Spanish of a few years ago, to nauseate even the most ardent admirer of things Spanish. And the present attempt to import to our shores modern French, German and Swedish architecture for residential building will but add just so many more eyesores to those which already infest certain sections of the country. Le Corbusier, and his coterie of followers in this country are no doubt full of earnestness but they do not seem to be making many converts. Not many persons have been persuaded that their harsh and melodramatic designs are either logical or beautiful, or that the conventions they denounce are necessarily meaningless and ugly. The Eighteenth Century dwelling-house has proved itself both logical and beautiful. We do not need to experiment.

One of the most interesting country houses completed recently in the South is the residence in River Oaks, Houston, Texas, known as "Bayou Bend," designed by that talented architect John F. Staub with Birdsall P. Briscoe as associate. Few houses possess greater charm and distinction than does this house in Houston, which so well suits its fine location and historical environment. This house shows the influence of some of the old architecture of New Orleans yet it is handled in a fresh manner combining Greek Revival details in an original and interesting way. And if it is necessary to place a style label upon it then it might just as well be called Regency. The name does not matter. What does matter is that the total conception is vital. Every feature of it lives and contributes an appreciable addition to the life of the whole, and that whole eloquently reflects the life of today in its social and economic conditions and in its ideals.

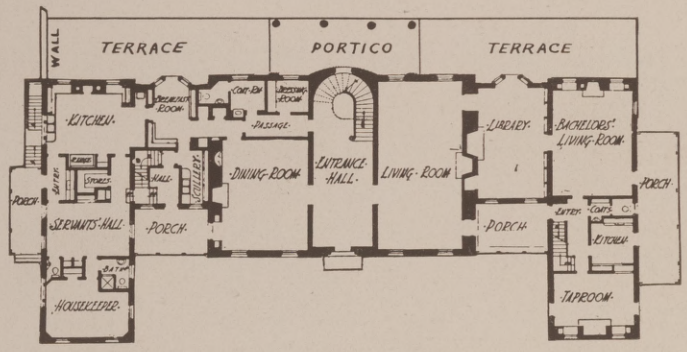
While the entire composition is characterized by sobriety and broad simplicity, all the details are note-

GARDEN ELEVATION, "BAYOU BEND," HOUSTON, TEXAS

JOHN F. STAUB, ARCHITECT — B. P. BRISCOE, ASSOCIATE



SECOND FLOOR



FIRST FLOOR

"BAYOU BEND," HOUSTON, TEXAS

JOHN F. STAUB, ARCHITECT

B. P. BRISCOE, ASSOCIATE

DETAIL OF BAY

DETAIL OF TERRACE

"BAYOU BEND," HOUSTON, TEXAS

JOHN F. STAUB, ARCHITECT — B. P. BRISCOE, ASSOCIATE

LIBRARY

BACHELORS' LIVING ROOM

"BAYOU BEND," HOUSTON, TEXAS

JOHN F. STAUB, ARCHITECT

B. P. BRISCOE, ASSOCIATE

DINING ROOM, "BAYOU BEND," HOUSTON, TEXAS
JOHN F. STAUB, ARCHITECT B. P. BRISCOE, ASSOCIATE

worthy for their engaging delicacy, their quiet richness, and the judicious restraint and insight with which they have been employed. The garden facade presents a composition typically southern plantation in flavor with its white columned portico and broad terrace overlooking a sweep of heavily wooded terra-firma. Of parpticular charm are the two bays in high relief which grace either side of the terrace. Cast against a broad expanse of pale colored wall, the sharp definition of this dark-toned bay creates an unusual study in contrast. The front and garden facades vie in interest and the one is no less distinguished than the other. The entrance facade is a happy composition with its center motive and extending wings. In the cast iron balcony, the full length windows and recessed doorway we have a following after the fashion of Nineteenth Century Louisiana. The walls are pale peach stucco accented by copper-brown blinds and sash.

The plan is worthy of careful study as it does represent a most logical and practical solution for the southern house. The central entrance hall leads directly through the house to the rear terrace. Into its curved end there is placed a charming winding stair to the second floor. At the right is the living room and to the left the dining room. The left wing is devoted to the service features, and the balancing portion to the right is the bachelors' quarters. This wing consists of the library, bachelors' living room, a serving kitchen and tap room. The second floor shows the same careful study which can be easily seen from an examination of the plan.

Of particular interest is the library, tap room and dining room.

Paneled walls and bookshelves in the library are of pine. Furniture is Early American. Side windows of the bay have glass shelves built across to hold a collection of Early American glass. The center window opens out to give access to the terrace.

The tap room is designed to hold the owner's collection of Americana. Ceiling beams, lighting fixtures and furnishings are antique. This room is at the end of the bachelor's wing, just beyond a small kitchen and a stair to the second floor.

Dining room woodwork is painted dark ivory glazed with opaque white to give the effect of rice glaze employed by Oriental artists. Above the chair rail, walls have a painted design of flowers in Oriental character upon a gold background.

The house stands as an unusually successful solution of the problem of designing a country house which shall embody the traditions, social as well as architectural, of a locality rich beyond most communities in traditions of both kinds.

HOUSE OF S. C. DOBBS, JR., ATLANTA, GA.

COOPER & COOPER, ARCHITECTS

BREVARD WILLIAMS, INTERIORS, DECORATOR

LIBRARY, HOUSE OF S. C. DOBBS, JR., ATLANTA, GA.

COOPER & COOPER, ARCHITECTS

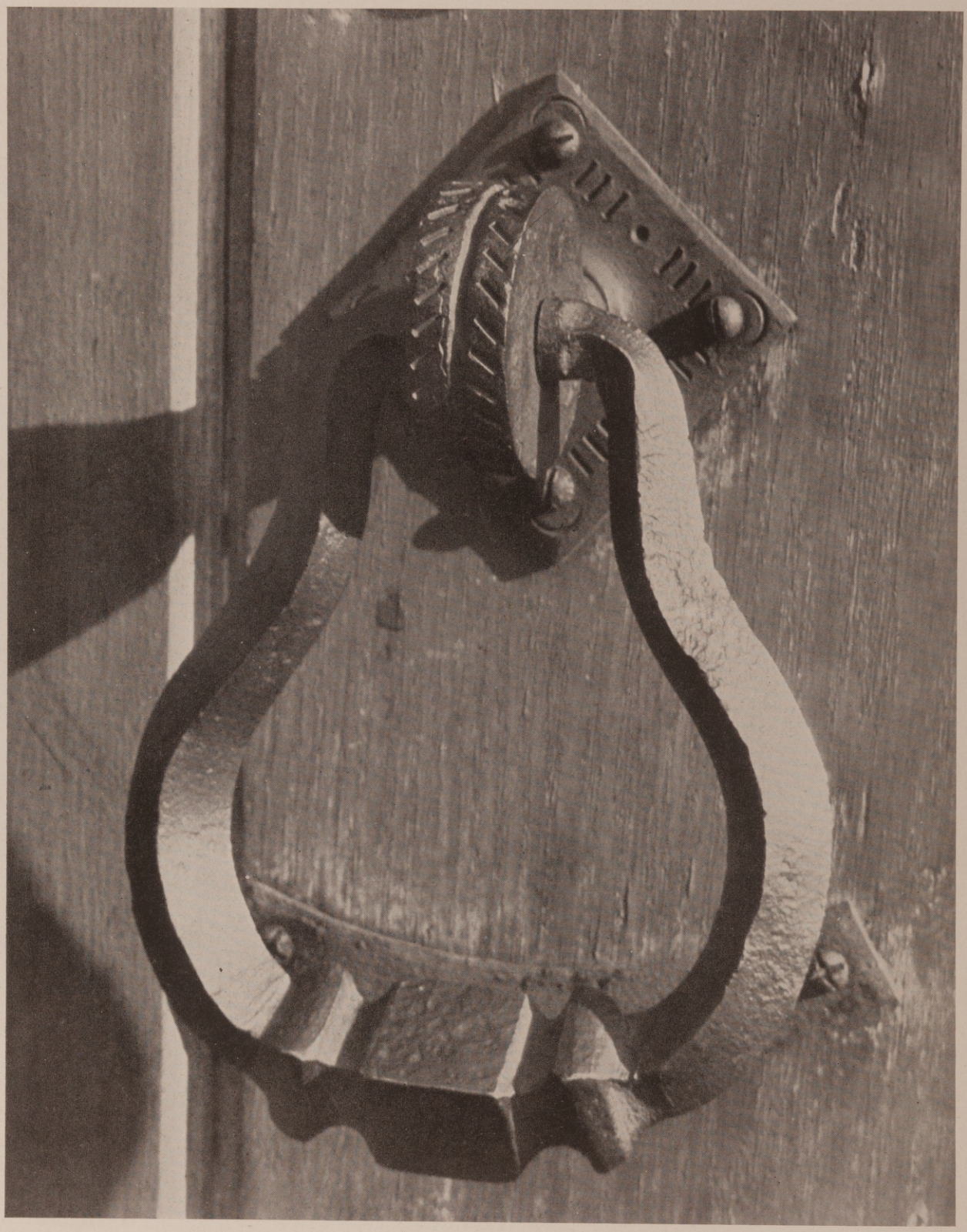
BREVARD WILLIAMS, INTERIORS, DECORATOR

DINING ROOM, HOUSE OF S. C. DOBBS, JR., ATLANTA, GA.

COOPER & COOPER, ARCHITECTS

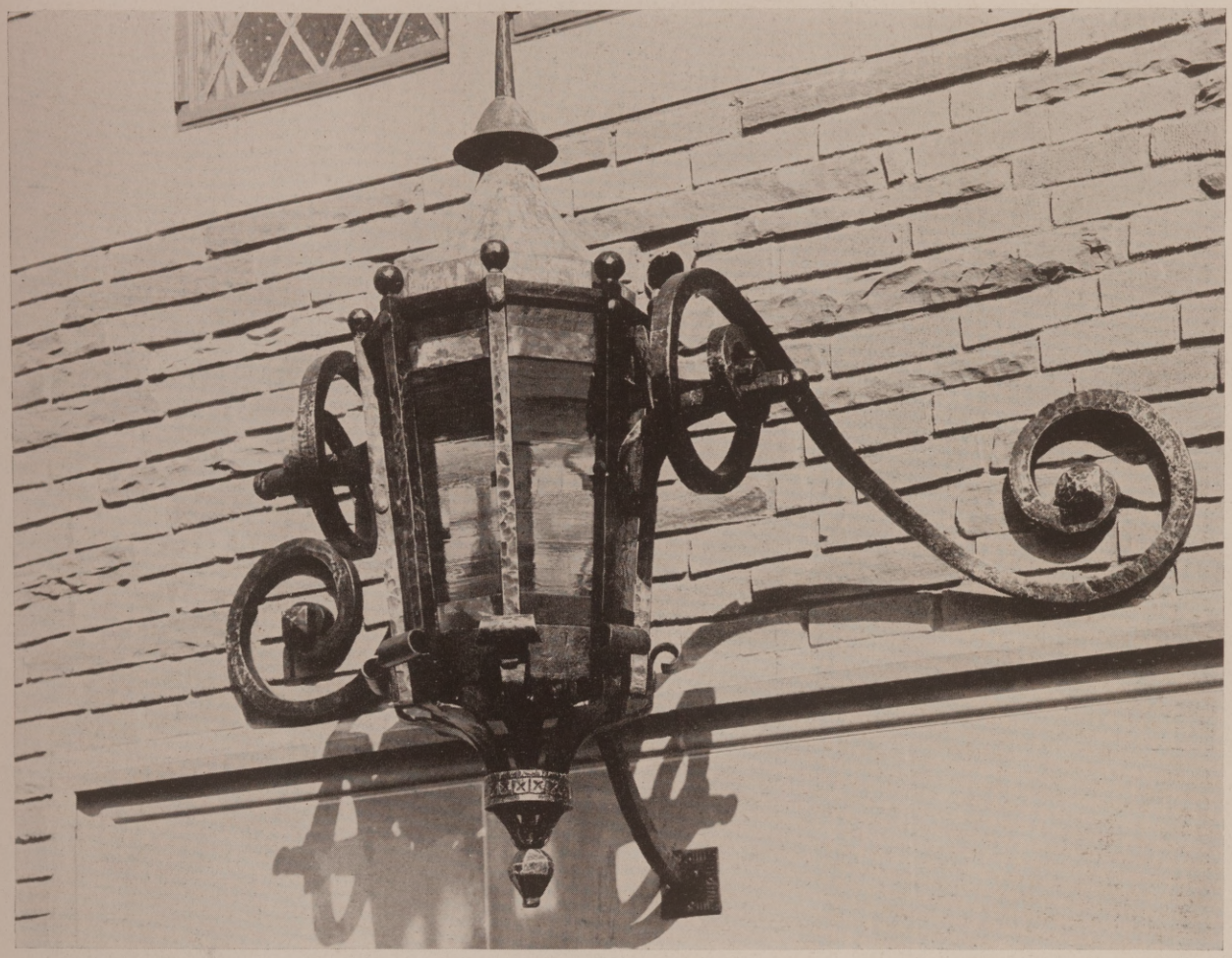
BREVARD WILLIAMS, INTERIORS, DECORATOR

Hand Wrought Iron by Anthony Lord, A. I. A.



This drop ring door handle shows clearly the character and individuality of the hand wrought iron being designed and executed by ANTHONY LORD, A. I. A. AT ASHEVILLE, N. C.

« « Some Essential Facts About The Metal » »



By F. Cremer, Ph. D.

Faced with the desire for distinctive hand wrought iron hardware for some of their buildings and with no local forge able to give them what they wanted Anthony Lord of Lord & Lord, Architects, Asheville, N. C., decided to attempt the job himself. The results turned out so well that other members of the profession were attracted and now The Flint Architectural Forges under the supervision of Mr. Lord is doing a considerable amount of work for architects in many sections of the country.

IN recent years the subject of how to prevent corrosion of ferrous metal has become of ever increasing practical interest. Similar lively attention has never been displayed in the more distant past, although it is reasonable to assume that our forefathers were keenly imbued with a true spirit for conversation and durability. Yet, even the mere word corrosion is barely ever mentioned in the wilted records of the past. What is the most obvious answer to this seeming puzzle?

It is the overwhelming number and great variety of many a choice and useful piece of metal craftsmanship, created generations ago, yet in perfect condition today, bearing silent, yet eloquent evidence to the skill that produced metals of unsurpassed merit, that "builded for posterity."

Wrought Iron was the only metal of the ferrous group of that time. As we know today, wrought iron carries a natural immunity against progressive corrosion, a phenomenon not at all recognized in its full significance by the casual observer of that earlier period, but gaining recognition every day, while the test of time goes on in mother nature's laboratory, as the most important specific wrought iron virtue.

Wrought Iron like all ferrous metal will form at first a coat of rust upon exposure to weather. But

Exterior Lantern on the House of R. J. Ramer, Anderson, S. C., executed by the Flint Architectural Forgings for Henry Irven Gaines, Architect, Asheville, N. C.

this rust formation is stopped from further progress into the metal underneath. It is this resistance to progressive corrosion that makes Wrought Iron so practical in its new application, materially reducing maintenance costs where atmospheric conditions cut short the lives of other metals. What is the barrier to this progressive corrosion?

There is something in wrought iron, which is most evident to the man who "wroughts" it, but not so obvious to the man who sees only the finished article made from wrought iron and has never visited a wrought iron mill.

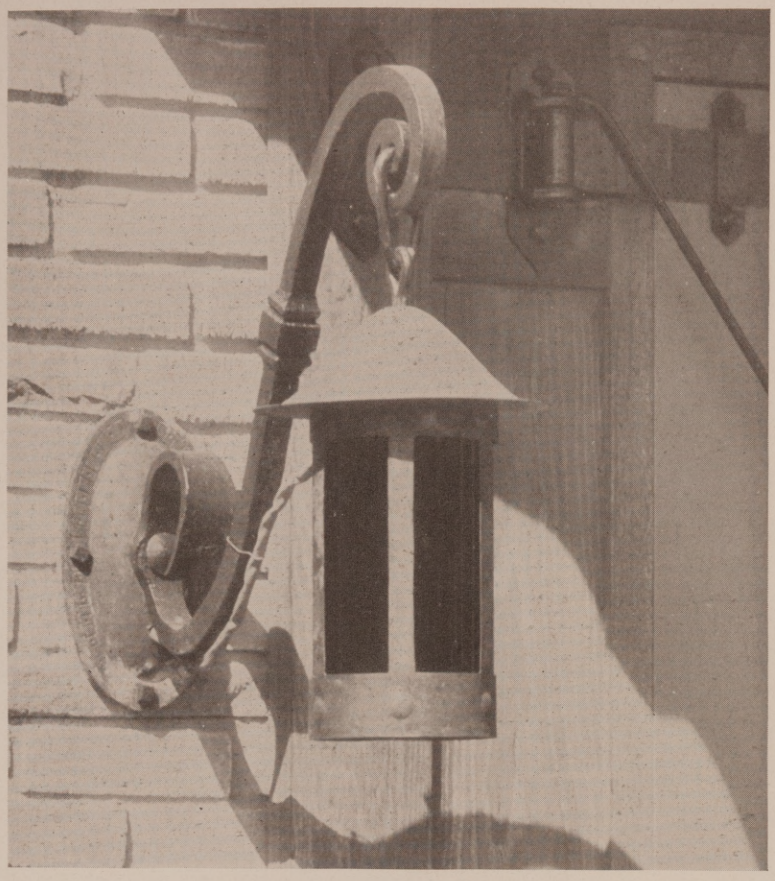
Wrought Iron contains a large amount (about 6% by volume) of a noncorrodible substance called "muck" by the old timer, which modern chemists have determined to be an iron silicate welding flux similar in its characteristics to glass.

This iron silicate welding flux is worked into a most perfect mechanical mixture with the metallic structure of the metal proper. It is so well dispersed, so minutely broken up into small parallel filaments, that only the microscope can reveal exactly how uniformly these noncorrodible filaments are distributed throughout the mass and how closely they are spaced apart. In such minute subdivision the welding cinder produces a protective action upon its associate, the metallic iron. These corrosion resisting glasslike filaments become in the course of time a part of the very outer weather-beaten surface.

Set up like a grid, they hold the rust film, which forms first, anchored and lodged in place, prevented the corrosion from further progression.

Good wrought iron contains from 300 to 800 iron silicate filaments to the inch. The spacing between the filaments can be likened to a 300-wire mesh sieve, which will carry water owing to the high surface tension of the latter. Therefore these filaments act as a water shed, and owing to the narrow spacing will keep the water from penetrating into the crevices of the surface with resulting progressive rust formation.

The peculiar surface of wrought iron and its fibrous fracture—both the result of the welding flux in the iron—are such familiar marks to men accustomed to handling scrap that they can readily and



Another Lantern on the R. J. Ramer House, executed by Flint Architectural Forgings for Henry Irven Gaines, Architect, Asheville

instantly identify wrought iron, without calling into consultation the painstaking chemist with his microscope.

Modern Wrought Iron manufacturers, fully aware of the demonstrated virtue of wrought iron, have improved production methods of wrought iron of the old days and have succeeded.

As in the past, the wrought iron manufacturer of today produces as an original and most essential step of manufacture the wrought iron ball, with its typical spongy or porous structure, with the pores filled with molten iron silicate welding flux, with the metal particles clotting together like individual snow flake crystals. This ball is carefully compressed at a welding heat into a solid bloom. This is done not only to "wrought" with means to work or distribute the fluid welding flux uniformly throughout the mass, thereby eliminating the labor started in the welding furnace, but also to eject any harmful excess of flux by the squeezing process and to obtain a shape, which is adapted to further elongating and rolling into bars, thereby developing in the direction of rolling the distinctly fibrous wrought iron structure, containing myriads of microscopically small slag filaments, indeed a unique combination of characteristics.

Wrought Iron is therefore a ferrous metal product, which is obtained from a porous, spongy metal ball saturated with a molten iron silicate welding flux and developed into a metal with a distinct fiber structure in the direction of rolling. The chemical analysis and physical tests of wrought iron closely resemble very mild steel.

Uniformity of welding flux distribution and freedom from segregation are special qualities distinguishing different grades of wrought iron and are depending on the skill employed in the manufacturing process.

Nowhere do these astonishing virtues of Wrought Iron reveal themselves so clearly as where slim bars are difficult to paint and protect from the atmosphere. With Wrought Iron the salicious slag wrought into the metal itself serves as the protective barrier to progressive corrosion and in itself is an economy long sought after by maintenance engineers.

«« Everywhere We Hear What's The Matter »»

By G. SZMAK

Construction Economist

THE failure of architects to provide the prospective buyer of construction with a reasonably accurate estimate of cost has caused sufficient dissatisfaction amongst the public to have aroused the attention of the architectural profession and press. That architects are hardly to blame for their failure in this respect is certain. But, with the rapidly increasing new materials and methods of construction an accurate knowledge of cost has become more vital and the demand for this knowledge greater than ever. However, the construction industry is not scientifically organized and therefore the public does not know where to secure assurance concerning the price of construction. Architects being in most direct contact with the buyer have naturally been expected to provide this information. For the indirect benefit of the industry, the public is entitled to know where to secure assurance and also to an explanation of why architects have failed to provide accurate preliminary cost data and appraisals. The integrity and efficiency of the architectural profession in the field of designing, where it belongs, is not questioned.

It's news to construction engineers and contractors that architects prepare estimates and if there is anything the matter with their estimtaes it must be that they try to make them. If you were to build a house, would you ask the grocer to build it for you? Or would you ask an architect for medical advice? It's doubtful! Then why should anyone expect an architect to furnish efficient construction estimates when surveying and valuating are not a part of the architect's profession? True, the request is made for estimates of cost by the client, but it does not necessarily follow that the architect shall furnish this information whether he is qualified to do so or not. Architects do not favor the idea of builders providing plans and specifications; yet, there was a time not so very long ago when builders had to provide all the plans and specifications needed to erect a structure. Of course, since then there have developed many good reasons why architects should be employed, besides merely providing them with a job. To eliminate the architect's services is poor economy because builders are not efficient designers, and likewise neither are architects efficient surveyors and estimators.

Why Architects are not Qualified to Prepare Scientific Surveys and Appraisals

1. They are not professionally trained to specialize in such work.

2. The average architect lacks either the initiative, the time, or the organization required to do the work of several specialists.

3. The scientific measurement and tabulation of construction has only recently been developed by the construction surveyor. Architects and builders lack this scientific method in the preparation of surveys and valuation appraisals.

4. There is a positive reason why some members of construction should be measured linear and others in square or units. This reason, however, is unknown to anyone without training in construction analysis.

5. No uniform terminology has been established or used by architects and builders in specifying or erecting work and, therefore, they lack the uniformity of records essential for accurate cost data.

6. The material and labor cost records of the construction industry are in a chaos due to the unscientific methods employed by architects and builders in the past.

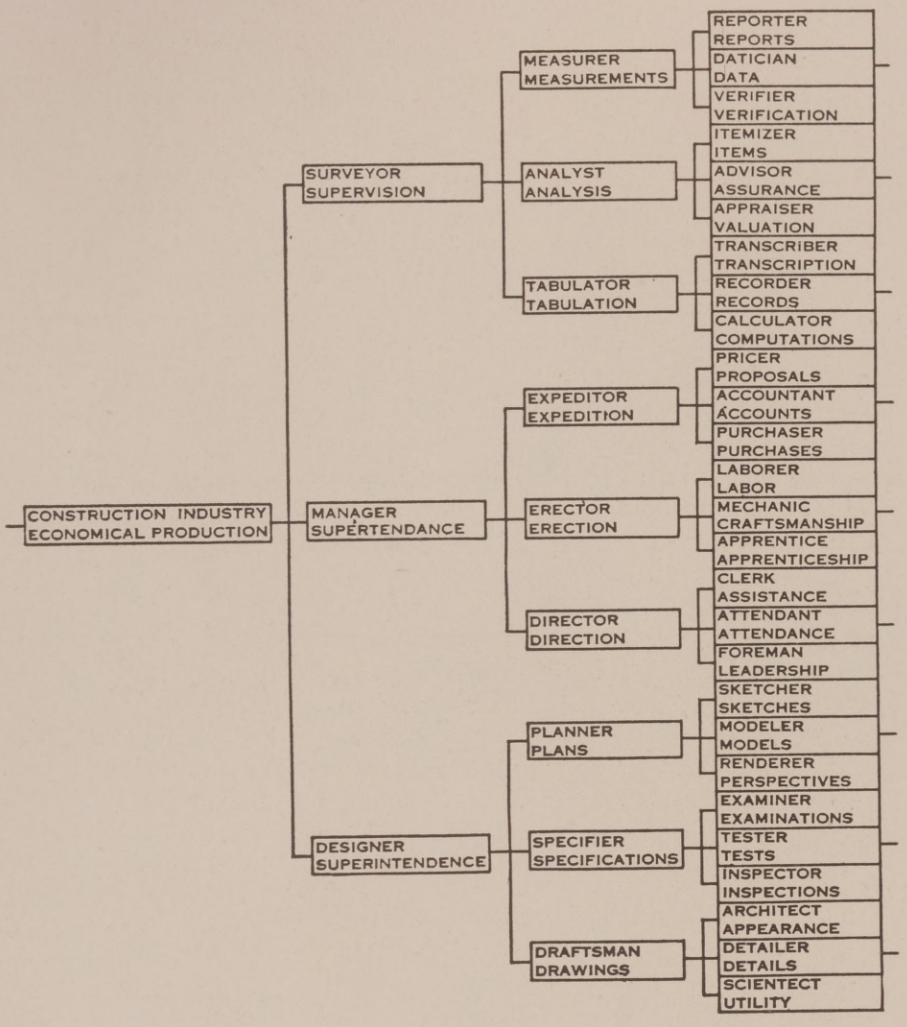
7. If architects did have accurate cost data, it would be useless without an accurate construction survey of the project.

8. Under the lump sum method of bidding even builders find it necessary to use proficient construction surveys to assure themselves of accurate basic information for estimating.

9. How can any architect be so self-sufficient as to believe that he can accurately estimate the cost of construction, when starting with the buyer of construction down to the least sub-contractor the entire industry is robbing Peter to pay Paul to exist, under lump price contracting?

10. Is it ethical for architects to secure preliminary estimates from contractors free, or to have six to fifty contractors prepare surveys of the construction for estimating purposes without advising the client of this burdensome waste for which the ultimate buyer of a building must pay, when a professional survey would serve the buyer and seller of construction with economy.

«« With Architect's Estimates ? ? ? ? ? ? ? ? ? ? ? »»

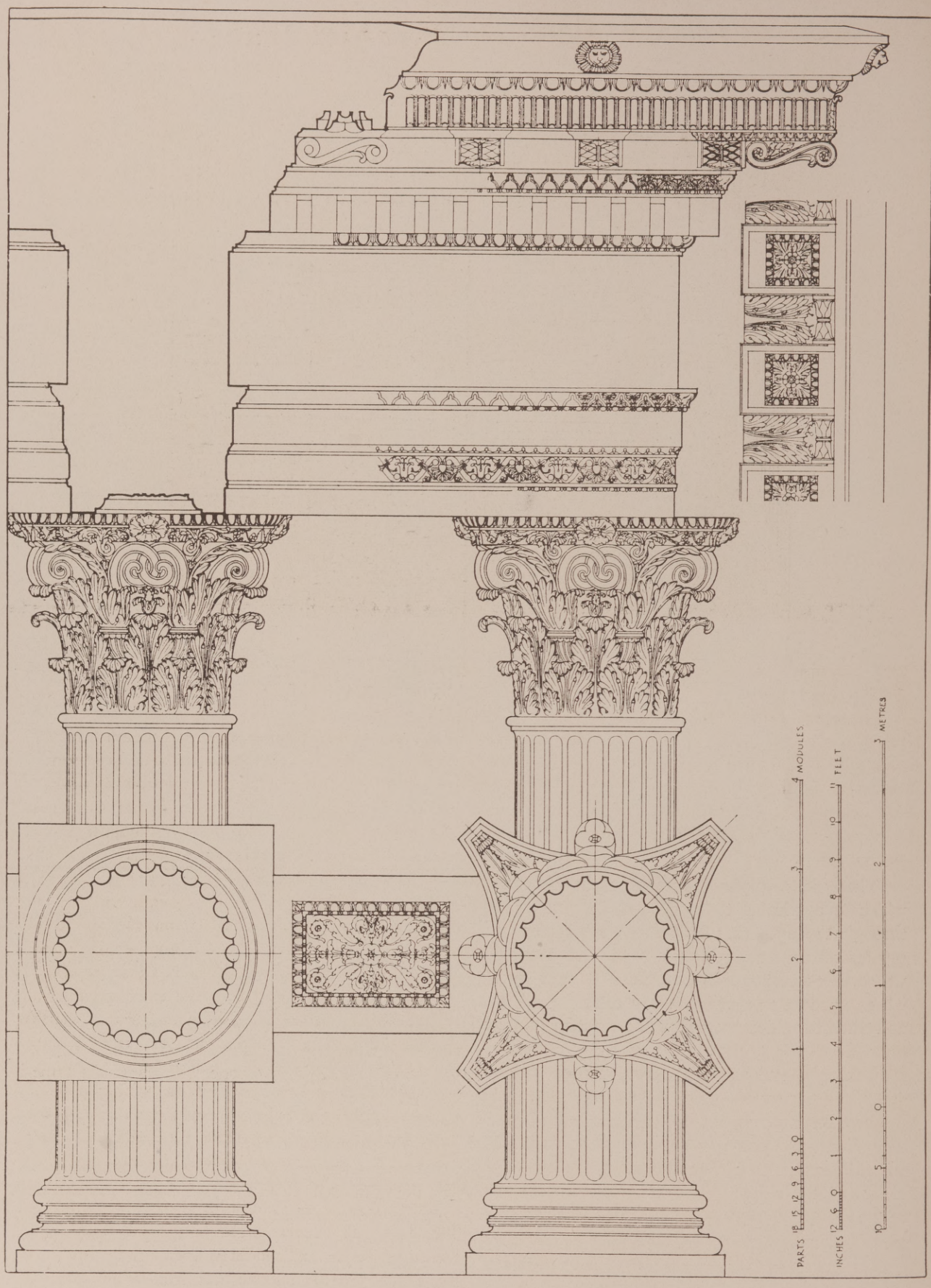


UNIVERSAL ORGANIZATION CHART

There is a saying concerning the shoemaker which is applicable to us all. It has been found through the ages that it is more satisfactory and economical for both society and the individual that we serve at occupations best suited to our talents. There is room to spare in every calling, profession and trade for efficent workers and therefore no need of anyone trying to do the other man's job. The three principal professions of the construction industry are the surveyor, designer, and manager. To secure the best results, it is wisdom to utilize each division of the industry according to the illustrated analytical chart. When the construction industry is scientifically organized the public will regain its lost confidence in the industry and the business shall become stabilized. Competition in similar branches of any industry is good, reasonable and sound; but co-ordination of the dissimilar branches is essential if we are to avoid degeneration.

How to Make Quick and Accurate Estimates

Back to the subject of estimates, the following illustration is the quickest and most accurate form of estimate known. Quick because it is concise, and accurate because it is positive. To acquire proficiency in designing and managing construction requires years of training and practice. Likewise the same is true of preparing a scientific construction survey and appraisal. In buying a diamond we secure the greatest assurance of value from an expert on diamond valuation and not from the person who sells us the diamond. In matters of design and erection, consult the architect and builder respectively, but for assurance of the economic value, it is wisest to consult a professional construction surveyor.



DETAIL FROM TEMPLE OF CASTOR AND POLLUX, ROME

One of the many detail drawings in "The Orders of Architecture"

The Orders of Architecture

A Book Review

TO architect and student alike it might seem that another book on the Classic Orders of Architecture could only be but a repetition of what has already gone before and made familiar through existing numerous volumes on the subject. The author of this work, Arthur Stratton, F. R. I. B. A., acknowledges this likelihood of thought among the profession at the same time assures us that we need not fear for the interest of this volume in the following words, "Long experience of teaching the Orders to students of architecture has convinced me that a most interesting subject tends to become irksome because of its dull presentation in most of the existing books. That a large number have been issued over a long period of time, and in many countries, does not rule out the advisability of yet another, for nearly all the specialized books of plates show the Orders as archæological fragments, faultlessly delineated in pure line, but to the student both meaningless and lifeless in their isolations."

All through Classic and Renaissance times, the Orders formed an integral part of structures great and small, and this work endeavors with unusual success to present them as vital elements in the design and composition of buildings, rather than as stereotyped dispositions of columns and their entablatures.

Of course to deal with every aspect of such a many-sided and vital subject within the confines of a single handy volume is impossible, at the same time this work is such that it should rekindle an intelligent interest in a subject which is indispensable to the practicing architect and the student today.

Such a collection of plates as is here presented gains additional value by the inclusion of Italian, French, English, and American-Colonial examples. The book is strengthened by the thoughtful and scholarly Introduction contributed by Mr. A. Trystan Edwards, A. R. I. B. A.

The purpose which is so strongly marked in every structural and decorative member of their (Orders) studied relation to one another, if rightly interpreted, promotes freedom rather than restraint. We should not consider the Orders as stereotyped records of past ages: fashions in design change perpetually, and there is a tendency to dispense with the Orders in present-day building, but they are never likely to be discarded for any length of time by any enlightened building people. There is nothing more beautiful in architectural form than the right handling of the Classic Orders and nothing more horrible than the illegitimate use of these forms. What we need to do is to study them more carefully that their full beauty might be gained. The many measured details and rendered drawings in this work make it a valuable asset to both student and practicing architect. The price is $8.00 and is published by the J. B. Lippincott Co., Philadelphia.

Is The "Or Equal" Clause A Joker In Your

By

HENRY HUMPHREY

IT has been common practice for many years to confuse the identity of materials mentioned in architectural specifications by adding, after the trade name of a product, the phrase "or equal." For instance, an architect and an owner agree on Blank & Sons' pipe for a certain house. The architect specifies "Blank & Sons' pipe, or equal," or he may use a variant phrase: "or equal and approved by the architect;" "or approved equal." By doing so he permits the contractor to substitute some other make of pipe if the contractor can prove that it is just as good.

Why does the architect permit the contractor to alter specifications which have already been approved by the owner? According to a number of competent architects some of the reasons for this unwise practice are these:

1. "It would be quite impractical to give a complete list of acceptable substitutes for building materials."

2. "The architect might otherwise be thought to be in league with the manufacturer."

3. "The location of the house may make it more difficult or costly for the contractor to obtain the specified material."

4. "It brings into the field good products that would ordinarily be unknown."

5. "It does not eliminate competition and thus cause the owner to pay more than he would ordinarily."

The first two reasons we do not think are of great importance. If the architect wishes to give the contractor a choice of products he may list three which he knows to be up to standard. If the contractor cannot secure service from one of these three manufacturers there is something so wrong with the contractor or the manufacturer that the matter should at once be brought to the attention of the architect. An architect whose reputation is such that he may be thought to be in league with any manufacturer should not be retained to build a house.

The third reason is closely allied to the first. The architect and owner have a right to expect thorough co-operation from the contractor. If he is not equipped to supply the desired materials he should not be allowed to bid on the work. Of course, in this case as in every other one mentioned in this article there are exceptions. It is possible to imagine a small house being built in au out-of-the-way place by a backward contractor who needs every sort of assistance. We are discussing in this article general conditions, particularly those which obtain in the suburban areas of our larger cities. Generally speaking, we do not favor concessions to contractors. Too many fly-by-night builders have cost too many prospective home owners large sums of money. Reputable contractors who have big investments in their businesses are as solicitous of the owner's interests as are architects themselves.

The fourth reason, that "or equal" may reveal some good "unknowns," is somewhat allied to the third. Again the architect stresses the importance of the contractor. The fact of the matter is that the architect is supposed to be in constant touch with developments in the building materials field. The owner consults with him, not with the contractor. If the architect passes the decision on specifications to the contractor he yields some of his power and importance and he is certain to suffer by the transfer. The architect is safe in waiting for "unknowns" to make their own reputations.

As for the fifth reason, opening up competition, this we feel is the nub of the whole matter. It is a difficult one to erase from the architect's mind. Through the years the law has recognized the architect as a sort of referee in building operations. He has the authority to act as judge between owner and contractor. It is with some feeling of this power that he regulates the distribution of building materials. He seeks to assure fair play to his clients, fair play both from the contractor and the manufacturer. We question whether his attempts at regulation of building materials merchandising is either well advised or successful.

The architect will tell you that if he gives the contractor the right—by the use of the phrase "or equal"—to offer an acceptable substitute he is protecting his client's pocketbook. In the first place, he says, if only one product is specified the manufacturer will take advantage of this fact and charge a higher price for his material than if the competition were open. Furthermore, the architect says, building materials firms are not above bargaining. If one product is specified and an acceptable, but cheaper,

Specifications? What Do You Think?

Why does the architect permit the contractor to alter specifications which have already been approved by the owner? According to a number of competent architects some of the reasons for this unwise practice are these:

1. **"It would be quite impractical to give a complete list of acceptable substitutes for building materials."**
2. **"The architect might otherwise be thought to be in league with the manufacturer."**
3. **"The location of the house may make it more difficult or costly for the contractor to obtain the specified material."**
4. **"It brings into the field good products that would ordinarily be unknown."**
5. **"It does not eliminate competition and thus cause the owner to pay more than he would ordinarily."**

substitute is presented, the contractor can go to the representative of the specified product and ask him if he will reduce his price to the level of his competitor's. According to architects and contractors building materials firms will often cut prices if approached in this way.

However common this practice may or may not be, we believe it is furthered rather than checked by the continual use of "or equal." Like every other business firm, materials manufacturers are seeking daily to improve their merchandising methods, their distribution, and their products. They are competing in the open market for public favor. The fact that their public is divided into three parts, consumer, architect, and contractor, and the fact that their products are bricks, wall-board, cement, or pipe does not destroy a possible analogy with soap, peas, shoes, or candy sold to consumers by retailers who buy from wholesalers. Retailers, of course, cannot be compared to architects, but the fact is that when it comes to a matter of purchase the consumer may accept the advice of the architect as he does that of the retailer. Retailers who offer a purchaser something "just as good" do so, we know, either because they make an increased profit on the article or because they wish to make a sale and profit by the transaction. It is the duty of the manufacturer to preclude the possibility of substitution either by insuring the retailer a good profit or by increasing his own distributional efficiency. It is the duty of the buyer to beware.

The architect, however, when he recommends the substitution of an alternate material does so from an altruistic motive. He is not looking for profit, he may in fact be reducing his profit. His idea is to get the desired material at a lower cost or get another material which is "just as good," but cheaper. At the same time, by being altruistic he is going against the stream of mercantile progress.

For instance, three pipe manufacturers are competing in the open market, competing with legitimate weapons: low price, good quality, and wide distribution. When they come to a particular house in which one pipe is specified and "or equal" added they are forced to cast aside these weapons. They now compete with the bludgeon of bargaining. The lowest priced product does not get the order because the others are asked to meet that price. The one of best quality probably does not get it because best quality is not always synonymous with lowest price. The one with the best distribution probably does not get it because a nearby mill may be able to undersell it.

The pipe for this particular house is bought at

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LIBRARY, HOUSE OF MARCUS M. EMMERT, ATLANTA, GA.

O. J. SOUTHWELL, ARCHITECT PORTER & PORTER, DECORATORS

LIBRARY, HOUSE OF MARCUS M. EMMERT, ATLANTA, GA.

O. J. SOUTHWELL, ARCHITECT — PORTER & PORTER, DECORATORS

HOUSE OF P. L. MANNEN, SAN ANTONIO, TEXAS

HOUSE OF CARL NEWTON, SAN ANTONIO, TEXAS

ATLEE B. AND ROBT. M. AYRES, ARCHITECTS

What of Architecture?

By

Louis La Beaume, F. A. I. A.

SO much has been written during the past few years, and so much will undoubtedly be written during the next few, concerning the dire plight of civilization, so-called, that anyone, with even a modicum of humility, must apologize for contributing to the torrent of words in which we are being smothered.

It is, perhaps, only human to consider any interruption of our placid way of life, or any change in the existing order, as something in the nature of a crisis. Life, however, is only a series of crises, birth being the first and death being the last, and perhaps the mildest. Always we are in tension, and always we move from change to change. Some of these changes are almost imperceptible; others seem uncomfortably violent. With reasonable health and strength, however, we manage to survive most of them, up to the last great moment of dissolution.

But baffled by the inscrutability of events, we are often apt to lose our courage and question the high purpose of the struggle. Just now the morale of millions seems to be at a pretty low ebb. Dazed and flabbergasted by the tumble we have taken since the summer of 1929, we wail and wonder if the world, or at least our world, is coming to an end.

Architects are a peculiarly sensitive group, else they would not be worthy of the name. Are they more or less courageous than their fellow men? I wonder. They have been wont to flatter themselves a little, but they are a class apart, seeing more clearly than most, the vision of an ordered world of beauty. In a sense, I think they are a class apart; in a sense they are prophets. But the prime requisite of a true prophet is never to lose faith. Architects have not always, I regret to say, been worthy of that test.

Just after the end of the war (if it has ended) there was a good deal of shuddering throughout the architectural profession, more in fact, than during the fighting years. A good many people were haunted by the phantasm that architecture, as a profession, was doomed to be engulfed by other professions, or by groups composed of engineers, contractors, realtors, bankers or even jerry-builders. Were these fears well founded? Some of us never thought so, for despite the blatant and gaudy coloring of certain lusty blooms, the violet was found to possess an integrity all its own. It can scarcely be denied that in spite of the dire predictons of 1919, as to the fate of the violet (the architect), the intervening years have seen him grow in power, prestige and accomplishment. The ten years following the war witnessed an era of building on a scale never perhaps equalled in the history of the world, and the architect has his fair share in this orgy. Either because of his real or suspected ability, he was called upon to play a leading part in the drama of expansion. So, from the material point of view, at least, he prospered. Whether or not his moral growth kept pace is perhaps a moot question.

Now, however, the shock of his sudden fall from power unnerves him, and he begins quite humanly to philosophise and to toss off moral platitudes. "When the devil is sick, the devil a saint would be; when the devil is well, the devil a saint is he."

In all of our technical journals, much space is being given over to discussions as to what the architect may do, or ought to do, to lead Israel out of the wilderness. He is being urged to make some important contribution to the solution of our economic dilemma, and he is being tempted to grapple with problems which baffle our most expert statesmanship. As a citizen, of course, the architect is under a distinct obligation to contribute all he can toward the evolution of a better, fairer state; as an architect, his obligation is now, as always, to contribute all he can to a better and fairer architecture.

All this talk of surveys and tabulations of our building needs, city planning, munincipal improvements and housing is well enough, and some of these surveys are certainly within the purview of the profession of architecture, and should, no doubt, be undertaken largely under architectural leadership, but God knows, there is scarcely a community of any size in the country which has not surfeited itself with surveys these past thirty years. That our American cities need making over almost from stem to stern is undeniable, and that we, as architects, are competent to do the making is undeniable also. There is scarcely a Chapter in the A. I. A. which, if it set its composite mind to the task, could not develop the most Utopian, and ultimately practical, plans for the architectural regeneration of our cities. The nub of the difficulty in the realization of these plans lies, however, in the very structure of our government, and in the perfectly understandable inertia of our citizenship.

In European cities, huge, municipal projects—recreational, residential and official—have been consummated since the war. Vast housing projects in Germany, Austria, Holland and Belgium excite our admiration. How do these less prosperous countries do these things, and why? Many of them are municipally financed, though some undoubtedly by private syndicates or co-operative groups of workers. The social vision, whatever the economic soundness of these enterprises may be, can only excite our admiration. Our failure to do equally well must only contribute to our chagrin. What then can be done at the moment, to make America a happier place for architects, no less than for all the elements of the building industry, and for our citizenship at large?

On every hand we hear the statement that the country is overbuilt. No more factories, no more office buildings, no more apartment houses are needed, or will be needed in the near future. If this is so, it would seem that any revival of the building industry, entailing the necessary services of the architectural profession, must come from a program of building of a non-revenue producing nature. Under this heading we naturally think of all sorts of institutional buildings—colleges, schools, hospitals, sanitariums, municipal, state and federal structures. The present Federal Building Program is insignificant in volume, and the present state of the Federal Treasury might seem to discourage further large expenditures, but many sound economists hold that great, public building programs by the federal, state and municipal governments, as well as increased institutional programs, will more than repay for themselves in the relief of unemployment and the stimulation of business activity.

The profounder question as to what may be done to avert the recurrence of the debacle which is distressing us, still remains to be answered. It is not primarily an architectural question, although architects who have lent themselves to unsound schemes of financing, who have been seduced by the national mania for bigness, who have sold themselves as mercenaries to unscrupulous or unwise promoters, have their share of blame to answer for in the present depression.

We hear much today of a closer co-ordination between all of the elements in the building industry—realtors, bankers, contractors, etc. Surely, as architects, we must work in close co-operation with these elements, but we should never lose sight of the fact that our main function is that of architect. If we are to survive, we must hold this function pure. An architect is a man who, above all others, is equipped by training, to plan and design buildings for the use and enjoyment of his fellow men. He must remain an artist and cannot become a promoter, a realtor or a financier without tarnishing the only qualities which he uniquely possesses as separating him from other men. Need we despair? I think not. The dreams we have been dreaming will gradually come true, if they are dreams worth the realization. Right now, we are wallowing in the trough, but presently we shall roll up to the crest, even though the crest be not quite mountain high, as it seemed to be some years ago.

In the "Life of Charles Bulfinch," there is an anecdote from which I have always taken some comfort. A friend asked Mr. Bulfinch one day if he expected his son to follow in his footsteps and become an architect. "No, indeed," said Mr. Bulfinch. "Why not?" asked the friend, "Well," replied Mr. Bulfinch, "I have built most of the important buildings that seemed to be necessary, and I don't think that there will be anything much for him to do."

The "Or Equal" Clause In Specifications

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auction. Prestige, investment, guarantees are nothing. The whole machinery of building materials merchandising is disrupted. Unless the manufacturer meets the architect's price requirements (as dictated by the contractor) he loses the sale. His business which has been marching along a highway turns off into a dead end street.

If this practice is as common as architects say those building materials firms which truckle to the contractor's desire to bargain must allow for it. If they can expect to be asked to cut prices to sell their product they must price these products slightly higher than is necessary. Or, if they are working at a rock-bottom low price they must charge other prospective builders the extra amount they lose on discounted sales. In either case home builders lose in the long run.

Of what service, then, is "or equal?" One owner may get a discounted price on pipe and yet pay more for window glass because another owner got a discount on his glass. There is no economic progress in such a run-around. On the other hand, if you omit "or equal" you permit logical economic factors to operate. Low price and good quality will then determine popularity—not a willingness to bargain with contractors who need work.

(From the American Home)