

OCULUS

NEW YORK CHAPTER AMERICAN INSTITUTE OF ARCHITECTS

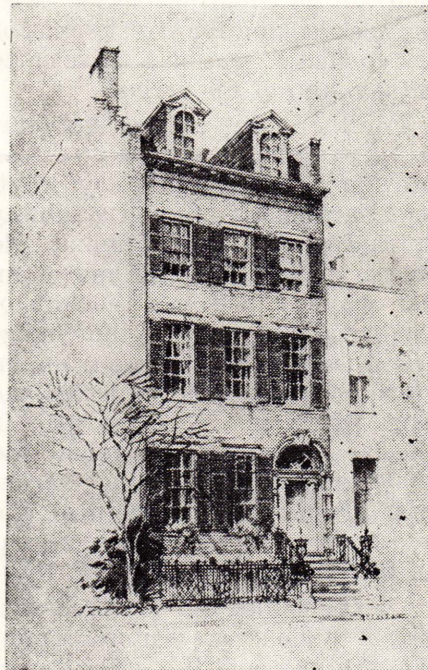


MAY 1963

NEW YORK LANDMARK NO. 3—OLD MERCHANT'S HOUSE

Built by Seabury Treadwell, an importer, in about 1836, the Old Merchant's House at 29 East 4th St. is virtually the only authentic remaining house of its period in Manhattan. It was occupied by members of the Treadwell family until 1933, when the Historical Landmarks Society acquired the house with all of the original belongings, carpets, curtains, chandeliers, and even the wardrobe of the last Miss Treadwell.

The architect of the house has never been positively identified. It may have been the work of Minard Lafever (some of the mouldings, doors, ceilings, and screens resemble other works of his), but the arched overdoor and fanlight between the hall and entrance are reminiscent of an earlier style similar to the work of John McComb. The ornamental iron work at the entrance and the iron "baskets" (one of which is now missing) flanking the front steps were typical



Sketch by Allen Congdon

of the better late 18th and early 19th century houses. The basement kitchen has a flagstone floor and

the interior detailing is entirely Greek Revival. The walls still have the original whale oil lamps and later gas jets, and there is even a trapdoor and a secret hiding place—the purpose of which can only be surmised. Henry James' novel "Washington Square"—when made into a film several years back and called "The Heiress"—was partly filmed in these fine old interiors.

The Historical Landmarks Society has managed to save the house from the bulldozer, but not from window breakers and vandals—probably because the place looks so vacant (it is open to the public at various times). A group of ladies known as "The Friends of the Old Merchant's House" hold an annual candlelight evening when limousines and taxis roll up and dressy guests are admitted by ladies in costumes of the period. The neighborhood Bowery inhabitants look on in confused awe.

James Cady

LAWFORD COMMENDS CIVIC CENTER PLAN AT HEARING

Following is the text of a statement by Geoffrey Noel Lawford, Chapter President, before the City Planning Commission:

The proposed plan for the City Hall-Foley Square area offers New York the key to creating a Civic Center unsurpassed anywhere in the world, one that will be worthy of this historic city.

The New York Chapter of the American Institute of Architects, composed of more than 1,400 members, strongly urges that the proposed plan be adopted without delay and without qualification to assure that this imaginatively con-

ceived, practically resolved center is not lost for all time.

Mayor Wagner, the Civic Center Committee and its consultants are to be highly commended for the splendid basic solution the plan offers to the many problems presented. It is a proposal which represents an important breakthrough in New York's long pattern of plot-by-plot construction and one bound to create a framework in which great civic design can occur.

As architects we recognize that there are areas where further study is inevitable before the plan is fully resolved. We also note that

there are many among us who have hoped that a competition for the design of at least some part of the Center would be possible and we urge therefore that where such a procedure is found feasible it be given full consideration.

However, we believe that first things come first and that nothing should delay the approving of the overall plan nor stand in the way of its ultimate aim—the achieving in New York of a civic center commensurable with our needs, functionally and esthetically.

It will bring together for all time

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OCULUS

VOL. 35, NO. 8

AMERICAN INSTITUTE OF ARCHITECTS
NEW YORK CHAPTER

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the great number of our governmental services into a coordinated grouping of buildings around our stately old City Hall in a way that New York and all its citizens can take proper pride in. As citizens we have a responsibility to our City's historic past, and to its present and future generations, to make the most of this rare opportunity. The New York Chapter, AIA, gives the proposed plan its fullest support.

HONORS AND APPOINTMENTS

On April 14th, Commissioner Joseph B. Klein AIA, of the Board of Standards and Appeals was sworn in by Mayor Robert F. Wagner for a six year term. His reappointment was sponsored by all local AIA chapters and architectural societies, the New York Building Congress, Investing Builders and friends.

Harry Stevenson, FAIA was recently elected an honorary vice president, and H. Page Cross AIA an honorary director representing the New York Chapter on the Fine Arts Federation of New York. The Federation, comprised of 14 organizations, represents 5,600 members, including architects, landscape architects, interior designers, sculptors, painters, other artists.

Chapter member Edgar Tafel has been sworn in as a new member of the Citizens Advisory Committee of the Rent and Rehabilitation Administration.

IMPROVING NEW YORK

Soon it will be time for New York to become a Summer Festival again. Bands will play and heroic-sized flower pots will decorate Fifth Avenue. And visitors, once again, will have the memorable experience of getting lost.

No wonder. Without a map, the route numbers on the fronts of Manhattan buses are meaningless. Once aboard, getting off is equally confusing. Our visitor must concentrate on counting blocks, twist his neck looking for street signs, or try to find a seasoned traveler to inform him of his arrival.

For the more venturesome tourist, getting lost on the subway can provide a diverting half day. First, it is hard enough to find a subway entrance, with the familiar old kiosks disappearing. He may wonder why no one has thought of having a large map at the change booth, **before** he gets on a train, instead of forcing him to get on and then figure out from the map in the car just where he is going. And why aren't green trains marked with green routes on the map, and red trains with red routes, instead of the mysterious IRT, BMT, IND?

Next summer will be worse, with fresh millions of visitors coming for the Fair and the official opening of Lincoln Center. A whole new family of signs and maps will have to be designed for these two great complexes anyway. Why not put them in charge of the best graphic designers available—and at the same time coordinate them with handsome and permanent new "World's Fair" graphics for the city itself?

* * *

Although some notable things have been done in recent years towards the development of parks on the city's periphery, the situation in Manhattan has remained much the same for the past hundred years since completion of Central Park.

It might be argued that, in light of the multitude of proposals for diverting portions of it for special uses, the fact that Central Park still exists in pretty much its original condition is no mean accomplishment. There is also the matter of the cost of acquiring park

sites. The \$5 million paid for the site of Central Park would today buy only an acre or so of some neighboring real estate. Few would desire another single park of such size, but a large number of small new parks—even what have been facetiously called "parklets"—are an urgent need.

One way to obtain new parks is through urban renewal, and the City is not neglecting this means. In at least two areas of Manhattan where there are current proposals for redevelopment, Bellevue South and Seward Park Extension, small new public parks will be created. In the West Side Urban Renewal area the clearing will be limited to actual new building sites, but in one instance at least a portion of a site has been designated as open space and the sponsor will create a plaza open to the neighborhood.

These efforts constitute some progress, but new parks are needed in the central business area, too. Granted that this is the district of highest land costs, and that a few corporate plazas already provide oases of light and air, we should not leave it at that. The Chapter's proposed midtown pedestrian mall, requiring both public and private participation, would be one very appropriate development. The Planning Commission and the Department of Parks should seriously consider this proposal as one imaginative way to bring relief and variety to the city's crowded heart.

S. Hart Moore

BOOKS

Curtain Walls Design Manual — by Rolf Schaal. 248 pp. 250 drawings and photographs. 9¾" x 10¼". Reinhold Publishing Co., New York. 1962. \$16.50.

An analysis of the design and construction of the curtain wall defined as a lightweight, prefabricated, non-load bearing exterior skin, predominantly of metal and glass, suspended in front of the structural frame of a building. The author covers a wide range of well-selected building exteriors; there are numerous photographs from both Europe and the United States supplemented by many fine drawings and isometrics.

Robert K. Posey

NEW CANAAN TOUR OF HOUSES SUN., MAY 19

The doors of six architecturally distinguished homes will be opened to the public on Sunday, May 19th, during the seventh biennial Modern House Tour sponsored by the New Canaan Community Nursery School. Proceeds from admissions to the tour will go to the support of the school, a non-profit, co-operative institution. The houses comprising the 1963 exhibit are by Eliot Noyes (own house), Philip Johnson (own house), Edward Durrell Stone (Willcox house), John Black Lee (own house), Hugh Smallen (Tatum house), and Howard Barnstone (Smithers house).

As a special complement to this year's tour, St. Mark's Episcopal Church will also be open between 1 and 5 p.m. St. Mark's, designed by Sherwood, Mills & Smith, has been described as "a remarkable expression in modern materials of the fundamentals of Gothic design."

The tour, regardless of rain, will open at 11 a.m. and close at 5 p.m.; signs and maps will be provided. Tickets will be on sale at all tour sites on Sunday, May 19th, at \$3.00 each, or may be purchased in advance at \$2.50 through Mrs. G. S. Ritchie, Fable Farm Road, New Canaan, Conn.

SURVEY OF CHAPTER DUES

Do Corporate Members of the New York Chapter pay more or less chapter dues than members of other chapters? The answers to this question were recently obtained by the Chapter's Executive Secretary, who has completed a survey of the chapters across the country.

Briefly, of the 139 questionnaires sent out, 112 chapters reported back in time to be counted. Altogether 33 different amounts were reported. Thirteen chapters reported dues at \$25; twelve at \$30; eight at \$35; and eight others at \$45. Annual dues for 61 out of 112 chapters reporting fell between \$25 and \$50. The lowest rate reported was \$5 (Monroe, Southwest Louisiana, and Brazos Chapters;) the highest \$120 (Mississippi Chapter).

What are dues for the New York Chapter? In case you don't remember, they are \$36.

LAWFORD URGES STATE ACTION ON BREEZY POINT

Governor Rockefeller was urged last month by the New York Chapter to veto a Bill (S.I. 1576) which would seriously cripple the ability of the state, and its municipalities and counties, to acquire park lands essential to the public interest, and would automatically kill plans to develop a park at Breezy Point.

Chapter President Geoffry Noel Lawford told the Governor in a telegram that New York's shorelines are being exploited and that Breezy Point is a much needed project which would benefit more than 10 million people living within 20 miles of the area.

"The need for oceanfront park land for public use grows more acute each year. In spite of this our shorelines are being developed to a frightening extent by private groups with almost total disregard of the population's needs," Lawford said. "If the opportunity to develop Breezy Point as a park is lost, it will be a tragic misuse of the land and deprive this city of recreation space it urgently requires." Veto of the bill, he added, would "earn for you and your administration the gratitude of this and future generations."

THIRD ANNUAL HOUSE COMPETITION ANNOUNCED

The third annual house competition was announced last month by the New York Chapter. The competition is designed to stimulate an appreciation of attractive and efficient house design and to arouse the general public to the importance of good architectural design in daily living, according to Harold Edelman, chairman of the Chapter's House Consulting Committee.

Awards will be made for the best design submitted in each of three categories: new houses; alterations to houses; and groups of houses, new or altered. The designs may be of buildings already standing or of those to be constructed in the near future.

The competition is open to any architect registered in the United States or its possessions who has designed a building in any of the three categories for construction in New York City. Designs for houses built anywhere in the United States or its possessions will be accepted from registered architects practicing in New York City.

All entries must be submitted by September 17, 1963. Further details and registration forms are available through the Chapter office.

COMMITTEE ACTIVITIES

Younger Architects. The committee is preparing an exhibit of "Churches and Temples" for the Pepsi-Cola building's exhibition gallery in September. Another exhibition, "Urban Design in New York — Vision and Reality," is scheduled for March, 1964 in the IBM gallery.

Office Practice. Current projects include improvement of liaison with other professional organizations; preparing check lists on drafting room practice (with emphasis on working drawing production); investigating materials samples systems; and professional liability insurance.

Fees and Contracts. The committee studied a revised fee schedule of the New York City Housing and Redevelopment Board, noting that

though it is an improvement over the schedule of the Public Housing Authority, it does not provide for proper compensation of architectural services where distinctly different designs are present within the same project— e.g., high-rise and low-rise, or fire-proof and non-fireproof. Tabulations and evaluations of the 37 responses to the circular letter requesting comments on the Statement of Services were discussed. A revision of the Statement will be drafted, including the Fee Schedule, conforming with latest AIA documents and the major impressions of the comments received.

Design. Major current project is the preparation of a program for the Second Conference on Esthetic Responsibility. Twenty or 30 organizations will be asked for their participation and/or contributions.

COMING EVENTS

- MAY 19 Modern House Day, New Canaan, Conn.
Tour of Six Homes and St. Mark's Church
11:00 A.M. to 5 P.M. Sunday (Benefit)
Tickets: Mrs. G. S. Ritchie, Fable Farm Rd.
- MAY 21 AIA—NYACE Golf Outing
Winged Foot Golf Club, Mamaroneck, N. Y.
Tuesday; noon lunch, golf, dinner
- MAY 22 Reception for Prospective and Newly Elected
Members Wednesday, 5:30 P.M., Gallery A
- MAY 25 Hospitals & Health Field Trip
N.Y.U. Teaching Hospital
Saturday, 10:00 A.M.
- JUNE 5 Nominating Luncheon
Gallery A, Wed., 12:30 P.M.
- JUNE 6 & 7 School Committee Seminar
Carnegie Endowment for International Peace
United Nations Plaza at East 46 Street,
Thursday and Friday (open session Friday 8:30 P.M.)

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OCULUS is grateful to the following contributors who helped sustain the costs of this issue.

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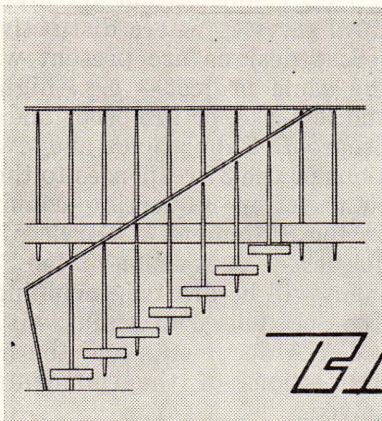
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CHAPTER BULLETIN BOARD

The Chapter Office is informed that the Village of Mount Kisco, New York, has an opening for a Building Inspector/Assessor. Applicants, who must be eligible for a New York State professional engineer's or architect's license, may contact the Village Manager for information (Tel. MO 6-5132).

* * *

Members of the New York Chapter received their 1963 Membership Directory last month. As in previous years, Mrs. Margot Henkel was responsible for the contents, and Arthur S. Douglass, Jr. for the art director's work. This year, proofreading was done by Mrs. Gunnel Gleeck. All three deserve a hearty vote of thanks.

MEMBERSHIP

WELCOME NEW MEMBERS

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

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Associate

Stuart Kampton	Angel Cano
Merike Komendant	Marvin H. Mills
Thomas O'Shaughnessy	Gerald C. Whiteford

CANDIDATES

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

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Richard A. Meiser	

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