

SOUTH AFRICAN ARCHITECTURAL RECORD

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OF SOUTH AFRICAN ARCHITECTS AND THE CHAPTER OF SOUTH AFRICAN QUANTITY SURVEYORS

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EDITORIAL



At this stage members of the profession of Architecture, in particular, who are genuinely interested in the development of a vital, living architecture in South Africa, will have had an opportunity to form a critical estimate of the published proceedings of the Durban Congress. The range of the contributions was extremely wide and the quality of the individual papers impressive. The Congress will provide much food for thought and much to direct the actions of the responsible committees of the Institute.

Two aspects of the Congress proceedings which emerge as of overwhelming importance are those of the rôle of the architect in society and the responsibility of the profession in regard to the visual and aesthetic qualities of our towns and cities.

Much has been said and is being done in relation to the education of the architect in South Africa. The circumstances of his training are closely defined by statute and are carefully watched over by the Institute. As an earnest of the responsibilities vested in the profession, the recent tour of the centres of training is positive evidence. The standard of training is generally high and it may fairly be said that South Africa is producing architects to-day of ability comparable with any in the British Commonwealth, if not the world.

But there is another, possibly more important side to this question of architectural education. A body like the Institute, enjoying statutory protection and status, has a responsibility to the community at large — its architectural education. There is an appalling lack of appreciation and understanding, even in the highest governmental circles, of the work of the architect and his function of "master mason" of our environment. It is time that the Institute as a whole emerged from its shell of professional reticence and presented the real story to the people. A man who has undertaken a professional training of at least five years' duration must have something positive to give to the community and it is that which the public as a whole ought to know. By word and deed this story must be told. Of what avail is the architects' intensive and costly training if his rôle in society is to be determined by misconception — indeed, complete ignorance — on the part of the very persons he seeks to serve?

Building is not merely the co-ordination of structural operations — town planning is not merely the sub-division of land, the paving of streets and the provision of services. Pervading our whole environment is the art of the architect — the Art of Architecture. This is the story we, each one of us, have to tell. The "Public Relations" committees of the Institute have a major task and should carry the full and active support of all responsible, far-seeing members of our great profession. The action of Central Council and the Transvaal Provincial Institute in giving whole-hearted support to the Students' Architectural Society in the organisation of a comprehensive exhibition and lecture series merits the approbation of the profession. This is one of the ways in which the public may be taught to appreciate the meaning of architecture. The exhibition is appropriately named the "Art of Architecture" and is designed to disseminate an understanding of the principles and fundamentals of Architecture.

But the overall responsibility of public education in Architecture — necessary in a young country like ours — rests with the profession. The motivating spirit should emanate from the Institute and not from the praiseworthy efforts of the student body, which we in no way wish to deny. In whatever manner it may be done, however, we must see to it that the demand for good architecture on the part of the community may enhance the lives of the people of South Africa.

NEVADA COURT

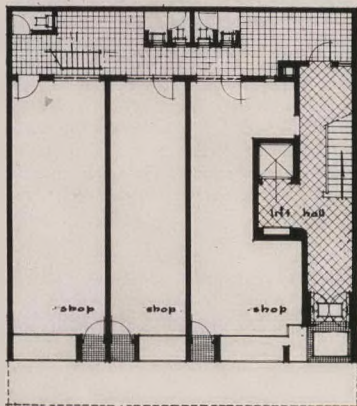
JOHANNESBURG

COWIN AND ELLIS, ARCHITECTS

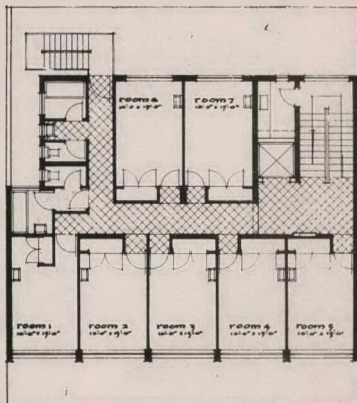
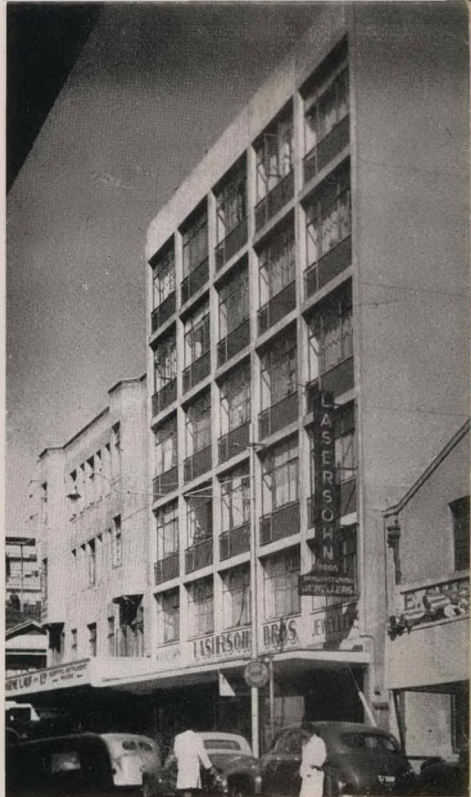
This is a straightforward but well written essay on the approach to the functional expression of the structure in modern architecture. The building consists of a reinforced concrete frame positively expressed on the façade, with infilling of brick panel walls and steel windows, and was completed in 1939.

The building is situated on a small city site in the eastern commercial district of central Johannesburg, facing east, in surroundings not at all sympathetic to a residential structure — a fact which has had an important bearing on the architect's approach to this problem.

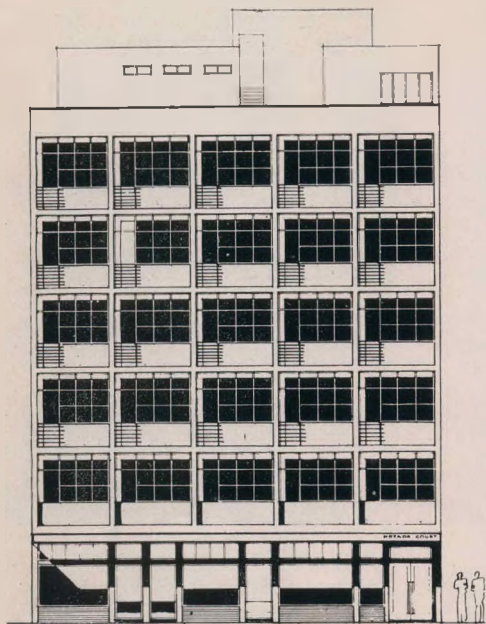
The site is enclosed on three sides, resolving the expression of the building into that of a façade, which must epitomise the character and purpose of the architecture. The accommodation comprises a basement, three shops, and thirty-five single rooms, each with a wash-hand basin and large built-in cupboard. The five floors of rooms are each provided with bathroom facilities for each sex.



GROUND FLOOR PLAN



TYPICAL FLOOR PLAN



STREET FRONTAGE

These uncomplicated accommodational requirements called for a simple architectural statement — the sort of statement which stands or falls by the manner in which the limited range of elevational elements are handled, and the inter-related proportions of the parts of the façade.

The fact that the architects have been fully aware of these factors is apparent in the delightful proportions displayed in and the dignified charm of the simple façade.

The repetitive motif of a well proportioned room front unit with window and shallow balcony projection together with the use of colour, imparts an interesting pattern within the confines of the dominating reinforced concrete frame surround. The structural members within the frame of the façade are

painted white, the panels below the windows are coloured a deep Indian red relieved by the apple green pipe balustrading in front of the glazed doors to each room. The columns on the ground floor have been painted Indian red, and the wall panels below the show windows are in dark blue brick with recessed horizontal joints. The shop entrances are paved with small terra cotta coloured tiles, and the cobalt blue surround to the entrance door emphasizes the approach to the lift hall.

The work of the architect in this building has done much to brighten and improve the street scene in a rather drab locality — it is regretted that the same cannot be said of the unsympathetic character of the insistent advertising matter.

UNIVERSITY OF THE WITWATERSRAND SCHOOL OF ARCHITECTURE

TWENTY-THIRD ANNUAL EXHIBITION AND PRIZE-GIVING

Professor G. E. Pearce, in addressing those present, said:

On behalf of the Staff and Students of the School of Architecture, I am very pleased to welcome you here this afternoon to our 23rd Annual Exhibition and Prize-giving. I am all the more pleased as this will be the last time that I shall preside at one of these gatherings.

We are particularly pleased to welcome the President of the Transvaal Provincial Institute of Architects, Colonel Eric Todd, an ex-student of ours, who, as you know, distinguished himself in the war, and also the President of the Chapter of South African Quantity Surveyors, Mr. L. C. Austin, who kindly agreed to present the prizes and address you.

Before calling upon them to do so I should like to say a few words about the progress of the school during the past year.

During 1946 we were very overcrowded owing to the large number of ex-service men, and this imposed a very heavy task on the full-time members of the staff.

I should like to thank them very sincerely for the fine co-operative spirit with which they undertook this task.

Mr. G. Herbert has been appointed a full-time lecturer in Architecture this year and we extend to him a hearty welcome.

The staff has been actively interested in the affairs of the Institute during the year. As you know, Mr. Fassler and Mr. Howie are both members of the Provincial Committee, and Mr. Fassler is a member of the Central Council. Mr. Howie, as editor of the S.A. Architectural Record, is to be congratulated on the high standard which is still maintained, and Messrs. Stewart, Pilcher, and Tomaselli are now assisting him.

Mr. Castleton, our senior lecturer in Quantity Surveying, resigned this year to take up a partnership. He is on the way to England at the moment but has agreed to continue in a part-time capacity on his return.

We are grateful to Mr. McKechnie and Mr. H. R. Law for stepping into the breach and acting for him while he is away.

Mrs. Martienssen has been awarded a post graduate scholarship and is leaving us at the end of this term for two years to continue her studies and do research at London University. We wish her the best of luck and we know that the University will benefit by this work on her return.

Mrs. M. K. Long will act as head of the department of Fine Arts in her absence and Mrs. M. Kruger has been appointed temporary full-time lecturer.

I should like to thank Mr. R. L. Niebuhr, who has acted as a part-time lecturer in architecture for the past four years. He, too, is leaving for Europe to do post-graduate work and our good wishes go with him.

We are also very grateful to Messrs. Angus Stewart, Ugo Tomaselli and Donald Pilcher for assisting us in a temporary full-time capacity.

An official visit of inspection to our school was made by a Committee of the Institute's Board of Education during the year and we are glad to state that in their interim report the Committee was satisfied that our training complies with the terms of the Act.

Our accommodation is still overflowing into the grounds and our temporary staff and many students have to put up with the discomfort of wooden huts.

The number of students this year is less than last, due to a smaller number of ex-service students. Nevertheless we are still very cramped.

In Architecture there are 71 first year students, 101 second year, 58 third year, 10 fourth year, 24 fifth year, making a total of 264.

In Quantity Surveying we have 16 first year students, 44 second year, 27 third year, 13 fourth year, and one fifth year, making a total of 101.

In Fine Arts there are 140 first year, 12 second year, 5 third year, 2 fourth year, making a total of 159.

In the post graduate course in Town Planning we have 29 in the first year and 12 in the second, making a total of 41. This makes a grand total of 565 students in the Faculty.

During the year the first degree of Doctor of Architecture, *honoris causa*, was conferred in South Africa by the University on Mr. Gordon Leith. As one of the first lecturers in Architecture at the school we offer him our hearty congratulations.

I should like to pay a tribute to the Architectural Society for the excellent work they have done during the past year in arranging a fine series of public lectures and inaugurating weekly lunch hour talks. These lectures are not only of value to the students but are of still greater value to the profession and the public and should do much to stimulate an appreciation of architecture outside the walls of the University. The Society is also to be congratulated on its efforts to found a Memorial Bursary to the memory of those of our students who



W. A. BLOM, First Year (Fine Arts)

STILL LIFE (Oil)

lost their lives in the war. I feel that this scheme will receive the wholehearted support of the profession.

During the year a very excellent exhibition on Architecture in South Africa was arranged by the Society. This created considerable public interest and this year the exhibition on Rebuilding South Africa was once more displayed and was as fresh and stimulating as before.

I am glad to announce that the Society is preparing another exhibition on The Art of Architecture, and this should be of still greater interest to the public, the majority of whom, not having travelled, haven't the vaguest idea of what architecture means and of what great value it is to a nation.

In addition to the lectures, the Society has been responsible for two or three excellent social functions. The work exhibited this year is of a particularly high standard, and I would like to congratulate the staff and students. I would particularly draw your attention to the very fine exhibit of the Fine Art students.

The class prizes in architecture this year have been generously contributed by the Transvaal Provincial Institute of Architects to whom we are very grateful.

The special prizes are endowed prizes, although I should like to mention that Mr. D. M. Burton continues to give us an annual cheque so that the capital amount of the fund for his prize is steadily increasing.

This year the award of the Farrow, Laing and McKechnie prizes has been resumed after remaining in abeyance during the war years. These prizes are our most valuable, but, I am

sorry to say, the architectural prize has rarely been competed for.

This year it has been agreed to change the conditions, which, I hope, will make it more attractive to students.

The Chapter of South African Quantity Surveyors has also renewed its prizes which were in abeyance during the war years. This is the first time they have been presented at our prize-givings as, prior to the war, they were dealt with by the University of Pretoria whose courses in Quantity Surveying were taken by our students.

We are all the more grateful, therefore, that the Chapter is now contributing book prizes to be awarded to students at this University.

I shall now call upon Mr. Todd to present the architectural prizes and to address you.

SPECIAL PRIZES:

D. M. Burton Prize: W. A. Swaan.

Frank Gordon McIntosh Prize: J. Morgenstern and W. H. Cheesman.

L. R. F. Bustin Prize: D. E. Connell, M. B. Hartley, S. E. Werner, O. J. G. Wills.

Farrow, Laing and McKechnie Prize in Quantity Surveying: H. A. Livingstone.

D.S.D.C. Ex-Servicemen's Prize: M. D. Lennard.

T.P.I.A. PRIZES:

Fifth Year: 1, G. Herbert; 2, N. J. Duncan.

Third Year: 1, J. Morgenstern; 2, E. T. Wellbeloved.

Second Year: 1, W. A. Swaan; 2, R. K. Walker.

First Year: 1, C. W. van Niekerk; 2, V. N. E. Borthwick.

ADDRESS OF THE PRESIDENT OF THE T.P.I.A., MR. ERIK TODD

Professor Pearse, Ladies and Gentlemen:

My first duty is to thank the University, and in particular the School of Architecture for the privilege extended once again to the Transvaal Provincial Institute of Architects, in allowing their President to speak at your Annual Prize-Giving and Exhibition. I am deeply conscious of the honour.

I would like to thank Professor Pearse for the kind reference he has made to me, and, at the same time to congratulate the University, Professor Pearse, his Staff and the students on the excellence of the work displayed this year. It is without fear of contradiction that I say the standard set is very high indeed. I would also like to say, how much the special efforts made by the University, on behalf of the ex-Servicemen are appreciated. Your efforts in this field have been unsurpassed and have proved a great factor in the rehabilitation of the soldier.

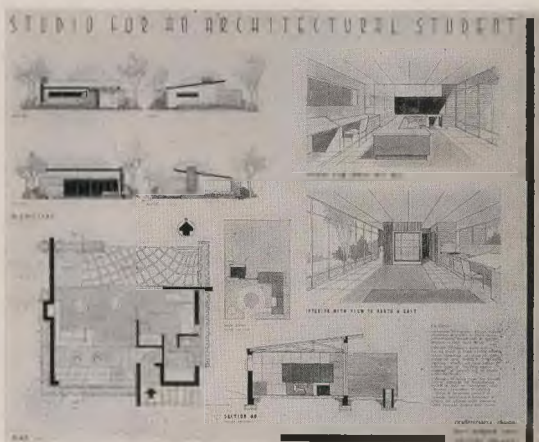
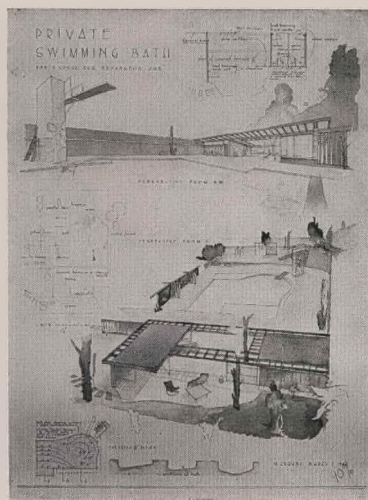
Just over two years ago the Allied Nations, of which South Africa was one, secured total victory on the battlefields of World War II, and, since my return from Italy, some 21 months ago, I have been operating a post war practice. I think it would be appropriate if some brief observations were made by me on the apparent effect the war has had on the profession of architecture in this country.

It is my opinion that business morality in South Africa, and throughout the world, has deteriorated greatly as a result of war conditions, which fostered black marketing encouraged and assisted by controls, and produced an accumulation of surplus money amongst sections of the population which have indulged in a post-war spending orgy.

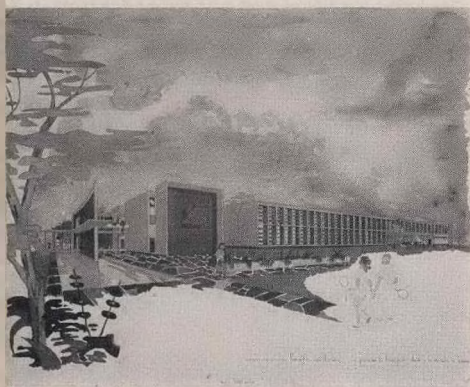
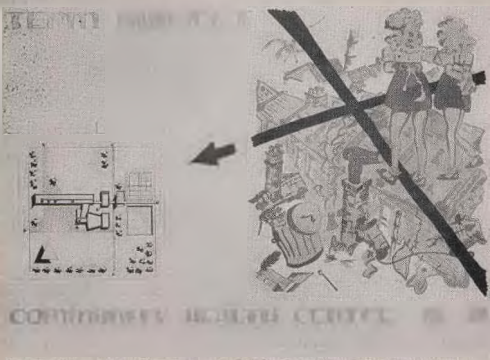
The architectural profession has not remained unscathed by this fall off in business morality. There are, to my mind, now many more difficulties and disputes with clients, many more evasions of regulations in the building world, and many more breaches of the code of professional ethics than occurred before the war. It is, I feel, my duty to draw the attention of the student to this state of affairs, and to counsel you, above all, to hold your ethics high, and not allow the present temporary deteriorated codes to affect your outlook.

Architecture itself has, I think, gained greatly by war conditions: The shortages, the need for economy, and a temporary hiatus in many offices, has broken the rut of pre-war development, and advances have been made in several directions.

These advances are particularly noticable in the domestic field of architecture, where the high cost of building and an inflated property market produced by shortage of accommodation and controls, has made it almost impossible for the



FIRST YEAR ARCHITECTURAL DESIGN STUDIES
LEFT: A PRIVATE SWIMMING BATH, by W. CROSBY, B.Arch. I.
ABOVE: ARCHITECTURAL STUDENT'S STUDIO, by D. H. RODD, Dip.Arch. I.



SECOND YEAR ARCHITECTURAL DESIGN

A COMMUNITY HEALTH CENTRE
By J. S. B. TAYLOR B.Arch. II.

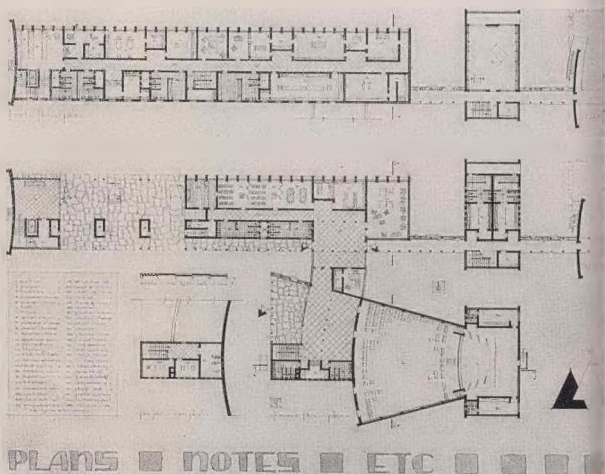
average citizen to build, buy or even rent a house. Without a doubt it is far more economic to build than buy or rent, even with today's high building costs

The result of the unfavourable position in which the average citizen finds himself, in respect of housing, has been a close study by the profession of domestic planning, with a view to bringing cost to the lowest possible level.

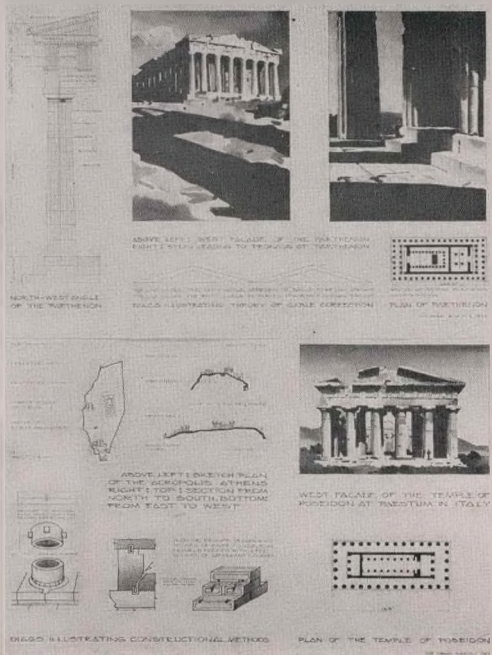
It is an indisputable fact that the post-war house in general, area for area, provides much more living space than its pre-war prototype, and I think the architect has progressed almost as far as possible in the field of planning for utility and economy in domestic work under present conditions. The next step appears to be research into standards of construction and health requirements with a view to effecting further planning and other economies. This field offers great opportunities to the architect with a bent for research.

The practice of architecture in the present post-war conditions is by no means an easy matter. Shortages of materials, controls and the tendency amongst artisans and builders to carry out only the works of their choice, have all made the architect's position in society a difficult one. It is my opinion that a post-war commission requires nearly twice as much of the architect's time as did a pre-war commission, and, that the costs of operating a small post-war practice are from two to two and a half times the pre-war costs.

It is quite apparent that, the architect of today must have a complete understanding of these post-war difficulties, if he is going to establish himself successfully.



GREEK ARCHITECTURE:



To you students who are about to qualify, I commend strongly the idea of obtaining a complete knowledge of the conditions in which your practice must be carried on, by securing salaried employment, or close association with an established firm, for a brief period of from two to five years, before you attempt to practice on your own account. A false start is a serious matter and the mistakes that you may make will stand against you for years.

It is, I think, quite essential that the architectural profession should be closely knit together, all working for the great cause of good architecture—the aces of the profession with the queens and knaves, and the practitioner with the student.

To this end the Transvaal Provincial Institute, this year, decided that it would be beneficial to the profession for students from each of the Transvaal Schools of Architecture to attend the 4th Architectural Congress in Durban. Accordingly subsidies for this purpose were granted, and I feel sure that the student representatives found the Congress interesting and useful—from this association of the practitioner with the student it is clear that the profession is alive and developing in this country.

In conclusion, I should like to wish you all good fortune, and, once again congratulate you all, and in particular, each of the prize-winners who have produced such outstanding work this year. I also wish particularly to congratulate Professor Pearse on the very able guidance he has given to this school through many difficult years.

I believe this is your last year of office. I should like to wish you very good fortune for the future.

THE HISTORY OF ARCHITECTURE

Study by WIM SWAAN, B. Arch. II.

FIRST YEAR ARCHITECTURAL DESIGN

A SMALL CAFETERIA FOR FACTORY WORKERS

By M. D. LENNARD

B. Arch. I.



In introducing Mr. L. C. Austin, Professor Pearce said:

The Chapter prizes in Quantity Surveying are awarded to students in the first and second years who have the highest marks in Quantities. We sincerely hope that these prizes will be extended to the third, fourth, and fifth years in the future.

I now have very great pleasure in calling upon Mr. L. C. Austin, President of the Chapter, to present the Chapter's Prizes and to say a few words.

1st Year—P. G. B. Borchards

2nd Year—B. E. Basson.

SECOND YEAR ARCHITECTURAL DESIGN STUDY

A COMMUNITY HALL. Perspective by WIM SWAAN, B.Arch. II.



ADDRESS BY THE PRESIDENT OF THE CHAPTER, MR. L. C. AUSTIN

Being a quantity surveyor, I am probably rather inclined to take things at their face value, and therefore, when I am asked to say a few words, you may rest assured that there will only be a few.

Firstly, I must thank Professor Pearce for asking me to present these prizes. The honour is sincerely appreciated.

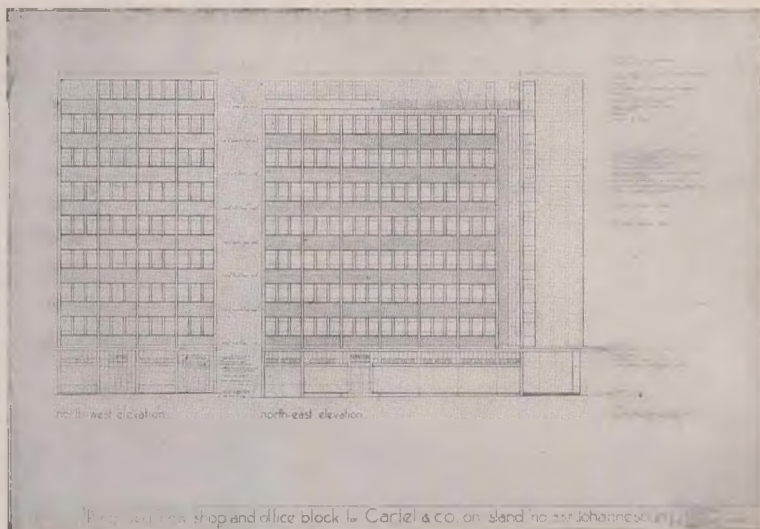
He mentioned in his address that he hoped the Quantity Surveyors would participate in these functions to a greater extent in future. I am happy to say that this will almost certainly come about as, owing to recent steps taken by the Board of the Chapter, many more prizes are being made available to all the Universities as from the end of the year. Some of these will be Chapter prizes and the others privately donated. In addition the award of the gold medal will be resumed.

With regard to the exhibition we have seen this afternoon, and which has already been commented on by Mr. Todd, I must say that in my humble opinion it is excellent. Professor Pearce took me round and explained it all—a necessary precaution in my case, no doubt. He, most considerably, apologised for the absence of a quantity surveying exhibit. While I have

seen some attractive examples of abstracting in my time—before checking, of course—I well appreciate that they would be somewhat out of place in a display such as we have seen. Nevertheless, Professor Pearce's concern in the matter is appreciated.

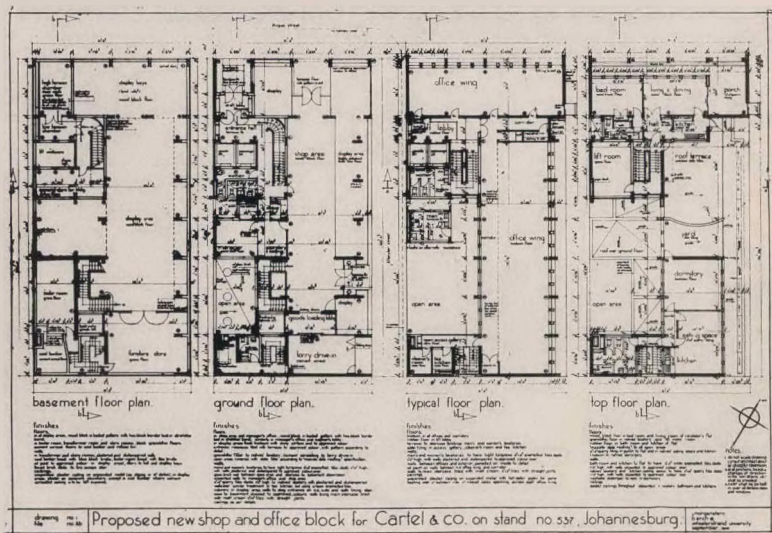
Recently the Board of the Chapter has had many inquiries from overseas—Great Britain, Australia and New Zealand—for full information on the educational aspect of Quantity Surveying in this country. It seems that our methods are highly regarded elsewhere, and rightly so, for there can be little doubt that the training of quantity surveyors in South Africa is equal to, if not better than, that obtainable anywhere else in the world. For the attainment of this standard Professor Pearce has been in no small measure responsible and I am sure that all students who have passed through this University realise that they have profited by his labours.

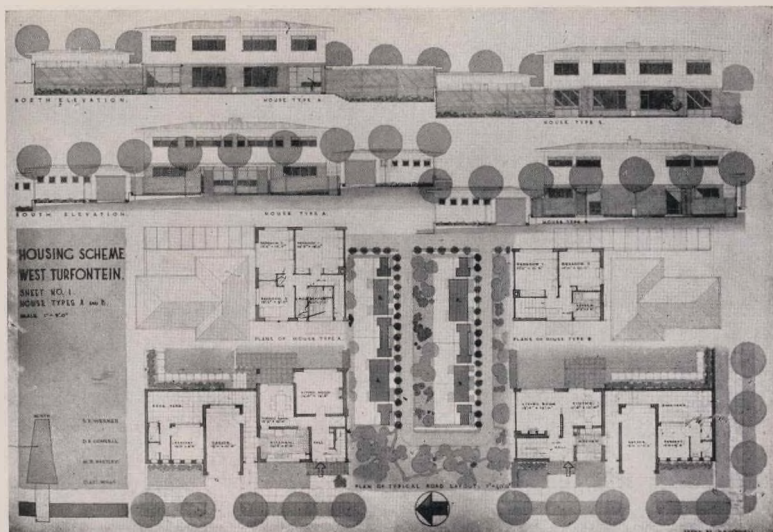
We naturally regret that this is the last occasion on which he will be present, officially, at one of these gatherings and I would like to make use of the opportunity by thanking him personally and on behalf of the Chapter for all he has done for our profession.



THIRD YEAR ARCHITECTURAL DESIGN

WORKING DRAWING STUDY FOR A SHOP AND OFFICE BUILDING, By J. MORGENSTERN, B.Arch. III.

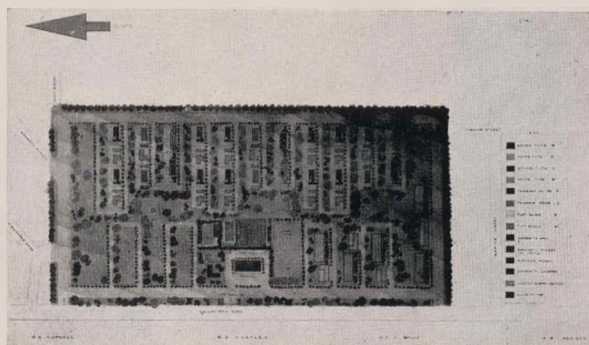




HOUSE TYPES

THIRD YEAR ARCHITECTURAL DESIGN

A GROUP STUDY FOR A SMALL HOUSING SCHEME, by
D. E. CONNELL, M. B. HARTLEY, S. E. WERNER, O. J. G. WILLS



SITE PLAN

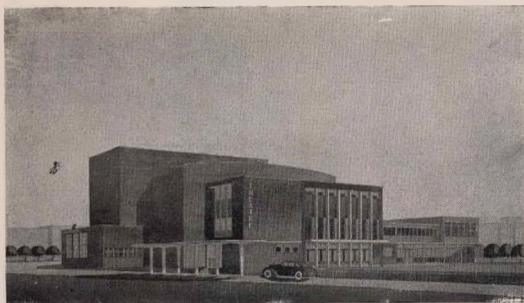
FIFTH YEAR ARCHITECTURAL DESIGN, RENDERED PERSPECTIVES FOR A REPORTORY THEATRE



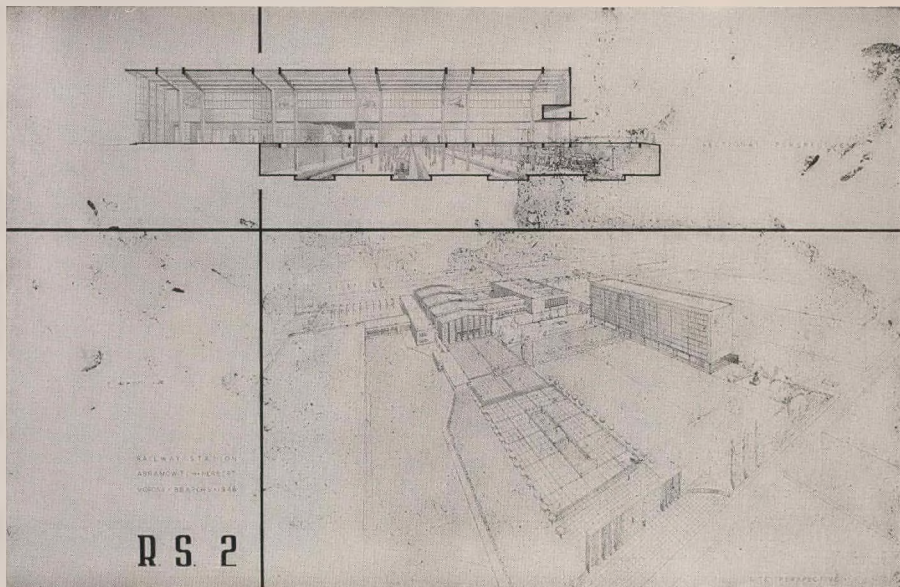
S. A. ABRAMOWITCH



MISS D. E. HILARIUS



T. WESSELS



GROUP STUDY FOR THE DESIGN AND LAYOUT OF A LARGE RAILWAY STATION, by S. A. ABRAMOWITCH, G. HERBERT, W. MOROSS, BB.Arch. V.



STILL LIFE (OIL): O. KNIGHT, First Year (Fine Arts)

THE WORLD OF ARCHITECTURE

By DONALD PILCHER

ROME WAS NEVER LIKE THIS

Eight pages of the May issue of the "Architectural Review" give a very brief summary of "Reconstruction in the U.S.S.R." Articles by David Arkin, A. Bunin and N. Bylinkin are introduced by an editorial which preserves a carefully objective view of the subject, postulating principally that absolute standards should not be applied in criticising an architecture which differs so fundamentally in its premises from those to which we are accustomed. While still avoiding the morass of political controversy, it is perhaps possible to probe a little deeper than the editors of the "Review" have done into the enormous anomalies of Soviet architecture. There is one contentious point, however, which it does seem important to mention, and that is the commonly held view that an architecture similar to that of the U.S.S.R. will necessarily arise in those countries which adopt Socialist forms of government. The very retrogressive forms of Soviet architecture appear to be largely a popular choice and partly a matter of policy, namely that of impressing the Capitalist world by an air of architectural opulence, and eminently successful that policy has proved to be; for, whatever his opinions of Soviet government, there has hardly been a visiting journalist who has failed to praise the luxury-hotel decoration of the Moscow underground. But will architectural advertising of this sort be the rule in all Socialist countries? In the Balkan countries, with their agricultural economies and peasant outlook, the answer is, probably, yes. But what, for instance, of Czecho-Slovakia, with her well-developed industrial economy and her numerous middle-class supporters of Socialism, some of them holding advanced views on contemporary architecture? Will a contemporary outlook prevail in such a country, or shall we see that revival of a Nationalist Baroque combined with neo-Renaissance planning which would be the equivalent to the present architecture of the U.S.S.R.? The next five or ten years will show, and the result may well be of great significance for European architecture in general.

But to return to the present state of Soviet architecture. In arriving at a fair assessment of its significance an important point to bear in mind is that in most of the Capitalist countries architecture is still in that revolutionary phase which, for want of a better name, we call Contemporary Architecture. Of this movement architects may be either adherents or opponents. They cannot remain indifferent to it and, to some extent, their designs must be influenced by the mere existence of such a revolutionary movement. Nothing in the nature of

an aesthetic revolution is, on the other hand, at present to be seen in the Soviet Union. Architects there in fact play exactly the opposite role, acting essentially as interpreters of the existing order. No comparison is, therefore, possible between the architectures of the two. A more valid standard of comparison would be with the architecture of early nineteenth century England, when architects were playing the essentially similar role of lending cultural kudos to a new social order. Perhaps the similarity of the proposed Stalingrad Defence Memorial to Fonthill "Abbey" and the rendering of the drawing in a manner remarkably reminiscent of John Martin's engravings of Fonthill is more than mere coincidence. So too may be the family likeness between Bylinkin's semi-detached houses and the picturesque designs of, say, J. B. Papworth. A balustrade detail of one of these houses, with its air of restrained Chinoiserie, might indeed have come straight from one of the pattern books of the early nineteenth century architects. The comparison may be of purely superficial interest, but it does suggest points of deeper significance which will appear when we come to consider Soviet town-planning projects.

The great care given to the design of picturesque elevations, in the most literary sense of the word, is characteristic of Soviet architecture which, ever since the Revolution, seems to have concentrated on the purely aesthetic aspect of design. During the nineteen-twenties several groups, such as S.A.S.S. and W.O.P.R.A. did subscribe to a contemporary view of architecture, but of the work of such groups the best that can be said is that it did reflect something of the imaginative Constructivist qualities which necessity had forced on Russian theatre designers. There was little of that probing into the human aspect of architecture which, for instance, the architects of Weimar Germany turned to such significant account. So that there were solid reasons why the whole structure of Contemporary architecture should collapse in the Soviet Union and be succeeded by the present phase of aesthetic reaction. How much has been lost by this is suggested by the published plans of new flats which, with their confused and unnecessary areas of circulation fail, by any standards, to make good use of a necessarily restricted floor area. From this point of view can any Soviet flat to-day compare with the standard set by the Berlin plans of the émigré Russian architect, Alexander Klein?

But it is the field of town-planning that probably holds the greatest interest for architects outside the Soviet Union. Many



From "The Architectural Review," May, 1947.

of them, looking to Socialism as providing the ideal conditions under which the town planner can operate, are nonplussed by the turn which town-planning has taken in the Soviet Union, with its architects' apparent failure to make use of their golden opportunities. Here we have, perhaps, been led a little astray by the nature of Soviet propaganda and the emphasis it lays on the monumental aspect of planning, because it considers this to be the one most likely to impress the Capitalist world. Axiality and highly-monumental design certainly play an important part in these town plans, but by no means an overwhelming one. The plans prepared "for export" generally show the centres of cities and hardly anything of the residential areas, with their apparently reasonable standards of open planting and well-considered accessibility to schools, community restaurants and other social services. Here we are often confused in reading the plans by the absence of a familiar symbolism in the shapes of buildings. What have become for us the characteristic outlines of schools, hospitals or theatres are seldom seen in these pseudo-classical plans, and a rectangular block which appears to be a unit in a group of apartments perhaps turns out to be a strategically-placed elementary school. What is particularly surprising is to find a tendency to abandon four-storey flat buildings with open planting round them for settlements of detached or semi-detached houses. In the words of M. Bylinkin . . . "The practice of building large blocks of flats, with the object of securing extensive garden space within them, has had to be abandoned, because a vast unbroken area of free space loses the attraction of its residential appearance as long as its use in no way differs from that of a common public park. Under the old scheme too many people were using the open garden space for them to feel personally responsible for its maintenance and improvement. And so to-day, under the new system, groups of houses are built on sites of a size calculated to be adequate for the individual group." This apparent failure of the walk-up flat is, of course, bound up with the rejection by Soviet architects of the taller block with lift access as a possible alternative. There is, in fact, little of the Machine Age apparent in Soviet planning, and this gives an air of unreality to the whole of their planning in its broader aspects. The enormous intersecting avenues, such as those of the new Stalin-grad, with their almost deliberate multiplication of collision points, seem to disregard modern traffic problems completely—until it is realised that these Russian cities are not planned for a motor-car civilization. The problems created by the family car, which are as typical of present day Capitalist cities as they may be of Russia's future Communist ones hardly exist in the present phase of Soviet Socialism and are not apparently envisaged by town-planners as affecting their immediate future. These cities are in fact comparably neither in scale nor in tempo with modern cities of the West. They

NOVGOROD, a project by Alexis Shtshuser. The Kremlin with the Cathedral of Sancta Sophia constitutes the centre of the town.

represent an intermediate scale and an intermediate tempo between the nineteenth-century town, planned for horse-drawn traffic, and the modern "Western" city given over to (but hardly planned for) streams of family cars. According to this intermediate scale, represented as it is by the tram and the municipal omnibus, it is assumed that people can travel considerable distances to the official centre of the city because comparative lack of traffic congestion at the centre gives a relatively more rapid movement. The scale is a mechanised one only in so far as a breakdown in the municipal tram service would be as fatal to its functioning as would a severe rationing of petrol to the inhabitants of the Ville Verte.

Corollaries to the establishment of this tram-cum-staff-car scale are the multiplication of secondary streets and the cold-shouldering of the idea of the super-block, the relative quiet of secondary roads making such a planning device unnecessary.

The sketchy nature of the plans published in the "Architectural Review" make it difficult to make more than generalisations on some aspects of Soviet planning, but the deductions I have drawn do make it possible to appreciate what architectural value there is in the projects illustrated. Take for instance the plan of the new Novgorod and compare it with town-planning of the epoch which I have put forward as being comparable in its views of the function and forms of architecture with present Soviet standards. Compare the centre of Novgorod with Nash's Regent Street; for the problems faced are essentially similar ones, merely those of providing a visual link between existing monumental buildings, of relating these to parks or other existing open spaces and of maintaining a monumental progression through the whole. The subtlety and originality with which Nash solved these problems represented a revolutionary advance on the planning standards of his time and were followed by a century of oblivion for almost all town planning standards. In the planning of Novgorod many of Nash's principles re-emerge and some are developed with considerable imagination and originality. One particular in which they improve considerably on them is in breaking down the limitations of Nash's picturesque viewpoints. Highly picturesque compositions are still aimed at but they are not moulded round a focal viewpoint, but can be appreciated from all round the spaces in which they are set. These groups of buildings in Novgorod represent a considerable advance on the unedifying "backs" of Nash's Regent Park terraces. As an approach to the grand squares designed for framing public assemblies this Novgorod plan should be theatrically effective and should at the same time preserve considerable regional character in its spatial arrangement. Its openness also gives reasonable scope for the future. If and when the traffic problem assumes more monumental proportions it should not prove impossible to adapt such a plan, by the introduction of fly-over crossings and the like, to serve the new needs of its time. Meanwhile the strictly geometrical patterns of the "Ville

Verte" remain to prove themselves in actual fact and even the most fanatical opponents of the Picturesque may yet be forced to acknowledge something to this type of layout.

JELLETTS, LAFAYETTE, CALIFORNIA

Almost as characteristic of architecture in the United States as is the axial plan of Soviet architecture, are the well-designed stores and shops which have recently been illustrated in such profusion in American periodicals. But, impressive as many of these designs are individually, we can still assume that they remain exceptions amid the reigning architectural Babbitty of Main Street. There is little evidence that harmonious streets or shopping centres are resulting from the growing public appreciation of good shop design or from the imaginative presentation of goods. A remarkable group of shops, referred to collectively as "Jellets," in Lafayette, California, is, however, illustrated in the May issue of "Progressive Architecture." The architect is Frederick L. R. Confer, with Raymond G. Willis as associate, I. Thompson as structural engineer, and Ned Rucker as landscape architect. The first impression of this little group of buildings is the imaginative use they have made of a simple rectangular stand, the buildings being laid out so that traffic can circulate right round the block, with small parking areas incorporated in a free layout. The particular form of plan used, with the shops grouped round an irregular courtyard with a tree as its nodal point, gives a group of buildings very happily related to the street frontage, the irregular recession of the blocks making an inviting approach to the courtyard. One imaginative piece of design gives the building considerable architectural quality. This is the placing of a sales display area, with entirely glass walls, as a more or less detached volume in front of the main block of shops. The passers-by therefore look through this feature to the main block beyond, the furniture on display in it being at the same time detached in space and silhouetted against the back wall of the courtyard. This whole composition combines well with the central tree, the area round which is scheduled for "Open-Air Display." The photographs however do not show it being used as such, and this may be just as well in actual fact, as the open-air display might confuse the silhouette of the glassed-in display and also be masked by it from the road viewpoint.

The complete group of buildings consists of a furniture shop and showrooms, which occupy part of the ground floor of the main block and the whole of its first floor; also the sales display windows attached to the furniture store, a group of three small shops on the ground floor of the main block and two irregularly shaped shops standing alone and completing the enclosure on the far side of the stand. Pavements give access and circulation all round the group of shops. Planning of the furniture store is very effective, with a double-volume entrance foyer, used for set pieces of furniture display and with a staircase inviting up to a gallery and display area on the first floor. This foyer also gives access to the glass display areas already mentioned.



JELLETT'S, LAFAYETTE, CALIFORNIA. A group of decentralised shops on a highway.
From "Progressive Architecture," May, 1947.

The whole group of buildings is admirably placed against a background of rising hills, one particularly happy element from this point of view being the external stairway which leads up to the first floor gallery and which gives the effect of continuing the sloping plane of the background right into the centre of the composition. The irregular polygonal forms of the introductory blocks are most harmoniously related to this background, as well as to each other. The central block, with its columnar structure supporting a plain surface on the upper floor, is effective in anchoring the whole composition and a subtle piece of design is worth noticing by which a trellis decorating this surface is formed of sprockets of irregular length. These cast a diagonal shadow across it which echoes the parallel diagonal of the cantilevered roof in the foreground. Out of such elements a fine piece of architectural design has been built up.



TIERRA CALIENTE, a house in the desert at Palm Springs.
Above: General view. Below: The Foyer and Living Room.
From "The Architectural Forum," May, 1947.

TIERRA CALIENTE, PALM SPRINGS

It is not always that good design for display leads to good architecture. In fact from looking at the numerous examples of excellent shop design in American periodicals one is sometimes tempted to conclude that design for display is turning the Americans into a Nation of Shopfitters. More than an imaginative treatment of surfaces and handling of materials is necessary to produce fine architecture and a certain spatial spinelessness seems to result from many of these designs. Tierra Caliente, a house illustrated in the May "Forum," is a borderline case which, in its photographs at least, appears to be eminently satisfying as a form of introverted architecture, but which raises doubts about its effectiveness as a building in a landscape. As such the design appears to be hardly conscious of itself as architecture, but concentrates on the limited problem of enclosing a small area of desert landscape with a



distant view and of forming within this framework a satisfying setting for holiday relaxation. As such the design is a superb one, with every significant natural feature visually "built in" to an imaginatively arranged interior. A natural pool is landscaped and brought inside the living room, with sliding glass doors cutting across one corner of it, the interior pool being sealed from the exterior by an underwater plastic screen if this separation is found desirable. Openings are framed to show individual exotic plants in silhouette and natural rocks are brought into the interior and built into selected spots on the walls, an idea which owes much of its effectiveness to the philosophy of the Surrealist "Objet Trouvé." An egg-crate trellis, thrown across the foreground, delineates the far prospect and combines with existing trees to maintain that interpenetration of architecture and nature which characterises the whole design. The house was built for and, as "Forum" says, "Designed" by the industrial designer Raymond Loewy: with

Clark and Frey as architects. Loewy's "design" one assumes, has taken the form of selecting and directing the setting of the different natural objects and the furniture which completes the scheme. As a mere matter of "taste" the blending of these objects with the furniture is instructive; naturalistic forms, wrought iron lamps and a chest, table and tripod vase, all of vaguely oriental quality, all appearing to fall harmoniously into place. In fact as a setting for the relaxation of a man of consistently selective tastes this house performs superbly the function which it sets out to perform. But after examining the small views of the exterior, delightful as it appears to be as an arrangement of inter-penetrating planes and vaguely delineated spaces, the nagging doubt remains: is something more solid than this required, something more definitely asserting man's place in the natural scene, if imaginative design is to be dignified by the title of architecture? This, unfortunately, is a claim which cannot be settled by photographs alone.

THE STUDENTS' FORUM

THE HISTORIC BUILDINGS OF JOHANNESBURG - II

THE GENERAL POST OFFICE AND FIRST TELEPHONE EXCHANGE

By Cyril A. Stoloff, Dip. Arch. IV



FIRST GENERAL POST OFFICE, 1887.

Photo: Africana Museum

A note of colour is added to these records of early Johannesburg, with the consideration of the history of the Old Post Office, for it is here that old coaching days are recalled. The famous "Kimberley Mail Coach" was a welcome and familiar sight in Johannesburg of the "eighties." The passenger terminus was at Bussey Buildings, corner Loveday and Commissioner Streets, on the site of the present Stanley House.

The first Post Office was housed in the Government Buildings in Rissik Street, fronting onto the Market Square. This was one of the first buildings to be erected in Johannesburg on a "permanent" basis. The building was of brick and plaster, and only the roof was of corrugated iron. It was Johannesburg's first attempt at a structure representative of the "civic" architecture of larger towns at that period, 1887-1889, and the resulting building was a somewhat crude affair. It may perhaps be termed the first "classic revival" in Johannesburg, for it was not devoid of certain classic motifs, such as the central pediment and adjacent balustrading. After eight years, it was demolished in 1896, to make way for the second Post Office building, erected during that year. The building was not completed until 1906, when the top floor and clock tower were

added. During the period of construction part of the Post Office was housed in Goldreich Buildings in Joubert Street. The words "Paketten Kantoor" were adjacent to "His Majesty's Theatre — Gallery Entrance" in Joubert Street.

The second Post Office is a four-storey building, fronting on to Rissik, Market and President Streets, and adjoining the Standard Theatre. Planning and elevational treatment is on a symmetrical basis, the structure being steel-framed with brick panels and stone dressings, the decorative features including Corinthian pilasters. A covered entrance portico with Classical balustrading is on the Rissik Street frontage. The ground floor underwent various structural changes in 1920, when the Public Hall was enlarged. The building originally faced onto the Market Square, now the site of the City Hall.

* * * * *

The first Telephone Exchange was an octagonal brick structure situated in what is now Plein Square, and was constructed in 1891. Where the Technical College now stands was the Government Museum, while the first Municipal Offices were housed in a single-storey wood and iron building—"The Tin Temple", in the centre of Plein Square.

GENERAL POST OFFICE, 1900.

This photograph shows the addition of the central tower, which gave way to the clock tower in 1906.

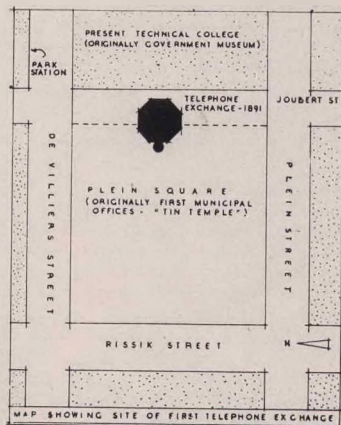
Photo: Africana Museum



GENERAL POST OFFICE, 1906



THE FIRST TELEPHONE EXCHANGE 1891



NOTES AND NEWS

NATAL PROVINCIAL INSTITUTE

The Editor has asked for a report on Professional activities in Natal and we welcome the opportunity of seeing something about the "piesang vreters" in the Record.

We can report that our Institute continues with good solid work and progress in many directions. The highlight of the past year was of course the Congress held in Durban during May, when we welcomed and were educated by members from the lesser provinces, who in turn were educated by the Mayor of Durban in a speech that should long be remembered for spontaneous expression of "as others see us" at the banquet where "National Houses" were consumed with gusto by all including the Director.

Having recovered from Congress we can now report on other features of our work. The long festering canker of elevational hotch-potch which spoils so many of our streets is being successfully tackled in Durban by the "Elevational Control" Committee set up by the Municipality with Architects as two of its three members. These chaps are doing splendid work and the idea can be recommended to municipalities and the profession everywhere.

Another feature of the Institute's endeavours has been the taking of Architecture to the man in the street by means of exhibitions, film shows and lectures. This has brought to light the fact that the layman (and woman) is avidly eager to understand the contemporary (or modern) approach to the design of buildings and towns and that the profession has a definite responsibility in this regard.

In conclusion the Natal Institute appeals to its members to give practical support to the editor of the Record by complying with his request for articles and photographs. We have only ourselves to blame if our national professional journal has to rely on contributions from immediately around its centre of publication.

J. Corrigan, M.I.A.

TRANSVAAL PROVINCIAL INSTITUTE JOHANNESBURG TOWN PLANNING SCHEME

The attention of members is drawn to the fact that the Town Planning Scheme No. 1 was approved by the Administrator on 2nd October, 1946, and approval of Scheme No. 2 is expected. Copies of these schemes are available at Room 310, City Hall, at 4/- each.

Members' attention is drawn particularly to the provisions regarding "Bulk" and "Coverage," as no relaxation whatever is provided for; and, contrary to a prevailing impression, Lift Motor Rooms, etc., are counted as coverage.

As considerable work is involved in the checking of "Bulk" and "Coverage" and the time taken by examiners accounts, to some extent, for the delays architects are experiencing in

obtaining approval of plans, the City Engineers' Departments' work could be accelerated if members would submit "Bulk" and "Coverage" schedules together with applications for approval.

Further, the Department is prepared to consider building proposals in their early stages in order to advise Architects whether their proposals comply with the Town Planning Schemes in advance of their being submitted for formal approval, so that architects may satisfy themselves that buildings are in order before work is actually commenced on the final drawings. Numerous cases have occurred in which plans have been submitted for approval concurrently with the commencement of building operations. When any breaches of the regulations are discovered, the Council is faced with a "fait accompli" and the only remedy is to take legal proceedings to enforce compliance, a course which may prove costly to the building owner.

CURTAILMENT OF OFFICE HOURS

In order that routine work due to constant interruption during the day, the office hours of the LAND SURVEY and TOWN PLANNING OFFICE of the City Engineers' Department are to be revised with effect from 1st August, 1947, as follows:

Mondays to Fridays: 10 a.m. to 1 p.m.; 3 p.m. to 4 p.m.

Saturdays: 10 a.m. to 12 noon.

CHAPTER OF S.A. QUANTITY SURVEYORS VISIT OF MR. A. W. DAYSON

A member of the Board referred to the visit to the Union of Mr. A. W. Davson, which was the first occasion the Chapter had of welcoming from overseas a member of the Council of the Royal Institution of Chartered Surveyors. Mr. Davson was informed of the Chapter's progress, and gave his impressions of the difficulties with which the profession was confronted overseas, which were most interesting.

Two luncheons were arranged for Mr. Davson, one in Johannesburg and the other in Pretoria, in order to give members the opportunity of meeting him.

UNEMPLOYMENT INSURANCE ACT

The Secretary reported that he had now received a reply to the Chapter's registered letter to the Unemployment Insurance Commissioner, which read as follows:

"I have to acknowledge the receipt of your letter of the 22nd April, 1947, and to inform you that full-time University Students who are employed on a part-time basis and during University vacations in connection with their training are not regarded as contributors.

Employees who are part-time University students are regarded as contributors."

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

The Brief Summary of the British Town and Country Planning Bill published under Notes and News in the April issue was reprinted from "The Municipal Review," January, 1947.

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