

TEXAS ARCHITECT

OFFICIAL PUBLICATION OF THE TEXAS SOCIETY OF ARCHITECTS


THE GROPIUS CONTROVERSY

SPECIAL CONVENTION ISSUE PLANNED

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**SEPTEMBER
1952**



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T H E T E X A S A R C H I T E C T

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CALENDAR OF EVENTS

September 15-18—54th Annual Convention of the American Hospital Association, Philadelphia, Pa.

October 29-31—13th Annual Convention of the Texas Society of Architects, El Paso.



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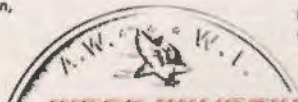
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THE GROPIUS CONTROVERSY

Almost six months ago, Walter Gropius, chairman of the Department of Architecture at Harvard University and a nationally-known member of his profession, spoke before the Chicago Chapter of the AIA.

Mr. Gropius titled his address "The Architect Within An Industrial Society", and made a plea for re-establishing the architect as a true "master builder". His position can be summarized in his own words, taken directly from the widely reprinted text of the Chicago address:

"We all know that in the great periods of the past, the architect was the "Master of the Crafts" or "Master Builder" who played a very prominent role within the whole production process of his time. But with the shift from crafts to industry, the architect is no longer in the governing position he once occupied . . . Deserted by the best of the craftsmen . . . we have remained sitting all alone on our anachronistic brick-pile, pathetically unaware of the colossal impact of industrialization. I believe that we are in a very real danger of losing our grip in the competition with the engineer, the scientist, and the builder unless we adjust our attitude and our aims to meet the new situation."

Mr. Gropius then went on to reveal his specific target, Paragraph 7 of the AIA's 1949 mandatory rules of practice, "An architect may not engage directly or indirectly in building contracting."

This rule, he avers, "represents merely a negative veto and does not try to solve our dilemma constructively." In Mr. Gropius' own words: "I have very great doubt about the wisdom of this new rule which would perpetuate the separation of design and construction; instead we should try and find an organic reunification which would return to us the mastery of the know-how in building. Of course, I know that the intention of this mandatory paragraph has been a good one, namely, to block unfair competition. But I am afraid that it casts away the baby with the wash, that it represents merely a negative veto and does not try to solve our dilemma constructively."

Thus the gist of Mr. Gropius' argument. Beginning slowly, it has built up a most considerable, although healthy, head of steam in architectural circles over the U. S.

Mr. Gropius has the right to his opinions, and there are those who would defend the Gropius position. Furthermore, we see no wrong in healthy controversy. But it is, we believe, our editorial duty to point out where in our opinion Mr. Gropius errs.

The fundamental error, we believe, is in emphasizing "competition" between architects and "engineers, scientists, and builders." Actually, each of these fields is clearly defined, and there is plenty of specialized work in each without infringement or unethical competition. Much of the progress of the past thirty years, incidentally, has been made through a new understanding among architects, engineers, and contractors, concerning their specific relation to building.

(Continued on Page 10)



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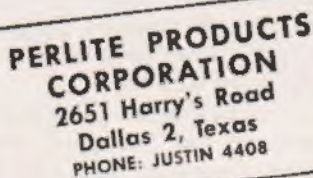


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Nestling against the towering Franklin Mountains, El Paso is one of the most beautifully situated cities in the U. S. From the vantage point shown above, the tourist can see the peaks of nearby New Mexico; all of prosperous, growing El Paso itself; Juarez, Mexico, with its nearby Guadalupe Mountains; and a glimpse of the Rio Grande, although the boundary river is almost hidden from sight by El Paso's buildings.

El Paso, site of the TSA convention October 29-31, has built more than 7000 new homes since 1946, and 47 new subdivisions have been opened. The city itself, with income based upon cotton, copper smelting, livestock, and many smaller industries, also has three major military establishments, oil refineries, a cement plant, and concentrated railway, bus, and airline installations.

October Issue Of TA To Feature Convention At El Paso

A special convention issue of the TEXAS ARCHITECT will be mailed October 15 to all TSA members and to the 7900 other readers currently receiving the magazine.

Carrying full details of the El Paso convention October 29-31, the October issue will also have an up-to-date directory of all TSA members by chapter and other features.

All Rosters Needed

Chapter secretaries are urged to send their up-to-date rosters to David C. Baer, TEXAS ARCHITECT, 1200 Bissonnet, Houston 5, at once. Most rosters have been received, but there were missing lists as the September issue went to press.

Additional copies of the October issue, expected to be the largest TA ever printed, will be distributed to special mailing lists.

Richard Neutra To Head Seminar Speakers At El Paso

Richard Neutra, well-known Los Angeles architect who is recognized as one of the foremost exponents of modern architecture, will be the principal speaker at seminar sessions at the El Paso convention October 29-31.

Announcement that Mr. Neutra has accepted the invitation to speak at the convention seminar, was made by Charles Granger of Austin, seminar chairman.

Karl Kamrath And Son Win National Net Crown

Karl Kamrath, TSA-AIA, formerly a nationally-ranked tennis star, teamed with his son Karl, Jr. to win the father-son title at the national doubles championships in Brookline, Massachusetts recently.

The Kamraths, who play together frequently in Texas tournaments, won a comparatively easy 6-4, 6-3 victory in the final round at Brookline. They dethroned J. Diehl Mateer, Sr. and Jr. of Devon, Pennsylvania, the defending champions.

Expanded Shale Producers Form Institute For Information, Research

Producers in America and Canada have organized the Expanded Shale Institute to provide through one authentic source information on their product. Alex R. McVoy, Dallas, is second vice president.

Each member company will name a member of the board of directors. The Featherlite Corporation, Dallas, has designated Harvey Hicks Allen.

Headquarters In Chicago

The Institute will employ a full time engineer who is an authority on lightweight concrete to direct the work. A number of applicants are under consideration. Headquarters will be in Chicago.

Mr. Granger said that his committee would complete all details early in October, working in conjunction with E. W. Carroll of the El Paso Chapter, who is local seminar chairman in the convention city.

Other seminar speakers named by Mr. Granger include Buford Pickens of Tulane University at New Orleans, and Don Barthelme, TSA-AIA, of Houston.

Houston Chapter Entertains With Buffet, Swimming Party; Five Apply For Membership

The Houston Chapter entertained with a summer party at the Pine Forest Country Club which featured swimming, dancing, and a buffet supper. Paul Jones, TSA-AIA, was program chairman for the affair, attended by more than 100 members and guests.

The following new applications for membership have been approved by the executive committee of the Houston Chapter: corporate, Leon Blum Wooters; associate, Walter S. Symonds, Jr.; junior associate, Robert Wesley Bowles, Robert Warren Lancer, and Mary Lynn Thompson.

New corporate members recently admitted are Robert W. Maurice and George H. Smart.

26-Day South American Tour Planned By Braniff For Architects, Engineers

Braniff International Airways, at the request of Wilder Kenan, a consulting engineer from San Antonio, is reportedly scheduling a 26-day tour of South America for architects and engineers.

The all-expense air tour departs Houston on October 5.

Inquiries may be made through the Braniff district traffic office, 513 City National Building, Houston.



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\$75 "Stock Plans" Versus Architectural Services

Los Angeles Radio Broadcast Tells The Story;
California Architect Explains Difference
Between Stock Plans And Architecture

In Los Angeles, Herbert J. Mann, AIA, has made a series of broadcasts explaining just what an architect does and the value of those services. In one broadcast, the announcer reads a letter from a prospective home builder who "doesn't know where it is best to get plans and how much to pay for them." For a \$10,000 home, the would-be owner had been offered the following plans: by a designer, not a licensed architect, \$100; by another such designer, \$400; by a contractor, no charge; from a licensed architect, \$500.

\$75 "Plans" Purchased

After emphasizing the importance of proper plans — and specifications — Mr. Mann explains over the air the difference between so-called stock plans and the services of an architect:

"Several months ago a young couple called on me for advice. They told me that they had called on a designer and showed him a floor plan and a drawing of a house that they had cut out of a magazine. They told him what changes they wanted him to make and asked him what he would charge to make the blueprints so that they could get a bid from a contractor to build the house. He said that he charged 5 cents a square foot of floor space, and since there were 1500 square feet in the plan that they liked, he agreed to give them 3 sets of blueprints and 3 sets of specifications for \$75. They paid him \$25 in advance and \$50 when he gave them the blueprints and the specifications. They showed me a set that they brought along.

Plans Finally Discarded

Mr. Mann then tells how he found the \$75 plans to be worthless. Among other faults, they showed an estimated cost of \$15,000, but the contractor who looked them over said that the house described would "cost at least \$20,000 and that he didn't think much of the plans." The plans had been drawn without an inspection of the lot, which proved to have a 4-foot difference in grade that would not allow the use of the cement slab or type floor called for. The living room, facing north, would never have had any sunshine. Finally, there was no other course but to discard the plans.

Employ Competent Architect

When this was done, Mr. Mann advised his friends to employ a competent architect. He then details in the broadcast what the architect did for a fee of \$750 and how he saved everyone concerned money:

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"Then he had a three-hour interview with the clients during which he took notes of their requirements. Next he made a preliminary sketch and discussed it with them and made changes, during another 2 hour interview. Following that he made another sketch and he kept on making sketches and discussing them with his clients until 8 preliminary sketches had been made, and both the architect and his clients were satisfied that they had the best plan to fit the lot and the owners requirements. Then the architect put a draftsman to work on the working drawings while he wrote the specifications. When the plans and specifications were completed the contractor figured the job and a contract was signed for \$14,000. The architect's fee for his

services—not for plans—was \$750, making a total cost of \$14,750—which was \$250 less than the owner's budget of \$15,000.

"The architect explained to the owners the advantages and disadvantages of various materials and appliances and their comparative costs, and fully described them in the specifications, and the cost was entered in the cost estimate. As a result, these people will get a beautiful, well designed house, with a good resale value, built at a minimum cost.

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New Construction High

A joint report of the U. S. Departments of Labor and Commerce shows dollar volume for new construction at a new high, with outlays for private building and public building combined above \$8,900,000,000 for the year through April 30, 1952.

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THE GROPIUS CONTROVERSY (Continued From Page 3)

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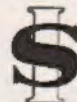
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What Others Are Doing


Alabama and Mississippi have a unique method for judging their respective entries for Gulf States Regional Awards, to be made in mid-September at Jackson, Mississippi. Final mounts to represent the Alabama Society of Architects will be judged by a jury of five men from the Mississippi Chapter, AIA. The Alabamans will then return the favor by supplying jurymen to decide on Mississippi entries. Finally, the entries go forward to compete against one another.

MEMO, analyzing the Democratic and Republican platforms in a late summer issue, follows the nationwide pattern of greatly-increased interest in politics which will climax in the November 4 general elections.

The BAY STATE ARCHITECT reports the resignation of Walter Gropius as chairman of the Department of Architecture at Harvard. Mr. Gropius, due to reach retirement age in 1953, reportedly resigned because of budget cuts which forced a sharp reduction in his teaching staff.

SKYLINES, publication of the Kansas City Chapter, AIA, features the coming Central States Conference, AIA, at Kansas City October 9-11.

The Southern California Chapter BULLETIN reports the appointment of four members to a new Earthquake Safety Advisory Board, just as California records new and disastrous quakes.



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
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