

Abstract of proceedings of the sixth annual convention. The sixth annual convention of the American institute of architects was held at Mozart Hall, Cincinnati, Ohio, November 12th and 13th, 1872.

American Institute of Architects.

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FIRST DAY.

TUESDAY, NOVEMBER 12TH, 1872.

ANNUAL ADDRESS.

The convention was called to order by the Secretary, Carl Pfeiffer, of New York, who stated that the President, Mr. Richard Upjohn, was absent on account of illness.

Mr. R. G. Hatfield, first Vice-President, took the Chair, and made the opening address. He said that while there had been a decided improvement in architecture in this country within the past ten years, a glance at the architecture of the ancients showed that the best of our modern architects are far from perfect. The object of every true architect—feeling his inability to reach the unattainable in art—was to make the greatest progress possible. He supposed that the question of how architecture could be improved was one deserving attention. The first thing to be done was to improve the architect. The stream can not rise higher than its source. The architect who is perfect can not be improved, and if there were any such present he did not hope to affect them. They had reached the point of having ascertained a perfect model, and they only had to go on, reproducing the original ad infinitum. But there were some who did not feel perfect; they were willing to admit that much could be done to improve them. Many felt that in the necessary haste with which the greater portion of their work has to be done, is found a sufficient reason to account for much of the superficial work in architecture. In answer to the question what can be done to remedy this defect, he thought the principle of division of labor provided the way. He did not hold that it should be carried to the extreme extent of the German linguist, who on his death had lamented that he had not devoted himself exclusively to the dative case. He thought, however, that the example of the physicians and of the lawyers in selecting specialities in the practice of their profession, suggested a lesson to architects. He did not think one should devote himself to town halls, another to hospitals, and a third

to churches. But he thought that much could be done by a division of labor, in the way of special study and research, and the establishment of the specialty of consulting architects. He thought that it was unwise to expect the same man to give the most intelligent attention to decoration, proportion, economy of space, and ventilation. Let one make decoration a special study, another proportion, a third ventilation, and then let a system of union and interchange be established, by which consultations will give to the result of the combined work the thoroughness of each architect in his special department.

The speaker held that the adoption of the system of specialties would tend to social intercourse and professional interchange of opinion that would be of great benefit to all. It would also serve to give great encouragement to younger members, and to fix a reasonable rate of compensation, while it would discourage unseemly competition, and tend to the general interests of architecture in the country and to the best interests of the profession.

The speaker was unusually severe upon the unprofessional competition which marked the conduct of too many architects—a competition that led them to cultivate with great assiduity the chairman of every building committee who had contracts to let; to sometimes resort to the subterfuge of preserving the fixed rate of compensation nominally, but in fact making a private agreement to “donate” a sum larger than all the other competitors, thus making it an auction in which the lowest bidder carried off the fruits of his sharp bargain.

REPORT OF THE BOARD OF TRUSTEES.

The Secretary read the annual report of the Board of Trustee. The report stated that much had been done by way of correspondence with foreign architects. Many of them had evinced a lively interest in the working of this institution. Many valuable favors in the way of copies of complete designs had been received from architects in Berlin, London, and other foreign cities. The Trustees stated that a full copy of all the records and proceedings of the institute, together with a new engrossed charter, had been forwarded to the Chicago Chapter, to restore its loss by the fire of 1871.

TREASURER'S REPORT.

The report of the Treasurer was then read, showing a balance in the treasury of \$874. The report was deferred to an auditing committee, consisting of Messrs. J. C. Cochrane, of Chicago; Walter Blythe, of Cleveland, and E. Anderson, of Cincinnati.

EDUCATION.

Mr. Wm. R. Ware, of Boston, from the Committee on Education, read a highly interesting report, in which he strongly recommended the establishment of architectural schools, and gave an exhaustive account of the schools now in existence.

LIBRARY AND PUBLICATION.

The Secretary read the report of the Committee on Library and Publications, stating that favorable arrangements had been made with Van Nostrand, of New York, for the publication and sale of the institute's proceedings. The London Building News had also offered to publish whatever of interest the institute might forward to it. The report also acknowledged the receipt of various reports and documents from home and foreign sources.

THE CHICAGO AND BOSTON FIRES.

The reports of chapters then followed. New York reported through Mr. Alfred J. Bloor. The report closed as follows:

"But while he is writing these words, undetailed, but only too sure information is received that one of the oldest and in all respects, both moral and physical, most substantial cities in the country is being devoured by the same terrible agency," which created such disaster in Chicago and in all its business relations thirteen months ago. The imperfect accounts as yet received convey the general impression that though no expense, however great, had been spared in creating the massive granite structures just levelled by fire in Boston, yet that all was rendered of no account by the dominancy of the Mansard type in the roof construction of the burned district. Now, if this be so, the blame should be shared by employers, for imposing the caprices of building fashion on their architectural advisers.

Reports were also read from chapters in Philadelphia, Baltimore, Cincinnati and Boston, relating mostly to local matters.

FOREIGN CORRESPONDENCE.

Mr. Henry A. Sims, of Philadelphia, Secretary of Foreign Correspondence read a report of his official proceedings during the past year. He dwelt principally on his general correspondence and gave special accounts of the Society for the propagation of architecture in the Low Countries—the Society of Arts of Geneva, the Society of Engineers and Architects of Switzerland, and the general practice of architecture in Russia.

In regard to the latter, Mr. Sims extracted from a letter received from Messrs. Swan & Co., an English firm of architects in Moscow, Russia, some account of architectural practice in Russia. The writer says: "The Imperial Society of Architects, is a body of men chosen by the Imperial Commission to represent the government in the matter of architecture and all its applications. Persons desiring to become architects must first become members of the society by examination, and should they pass, they are allowed to act as architects in the country, but by the laws of Russia, no architect can, upon his own responsibility, erect any building without first having his drawings for it examined and revised by a committee of the society. When such plans are approved the work can be commenced. In Russia the laws are very severe; in fact, too much so, and a great many of the buildings erected in Great Britain, and on the continent would not be allowed in Russia, owing to a non-conformity with the imperial rules. Of works executed in America I am not in a condition to speak; but I am sure that here an American architect would die of atrophy. I have now become accustomed to see my best designs completely spoiled, so as to make them conform to imperial and local requirements. The architects in Russia, have no society or institution, where, in they meet in friendly converse, and indeed are far from being friendly one with the other. The fact of the architect here having received the diploma with the Imperial Commissioners' seal, is deemed sufficient, and it would be folly, almost to make a proposition that the interests of the profession would be enhanced by the combination of its members. In all former attempts to associate the Russian architects, any hints as to the proposed society laying down fixed rates of charges have been very carefully kept in the back ground, I do not for a moment suspect that dishonesty has any place in the Russian architect's heart, but still there are many minor transactions which here are acknowledged as professional, but which, I am sure, would meet with certain discountenance from any member of the American Institute of Architects, or of the Royal Institute of British Architects."

INVITATIONS, ETC.

Invitations from the Cincinnati Hospital, Public Library of Cincinnati, and the Chamber of Commerce, were presented and accepted, and a vote of thanks tendered for the same.

Mr. Pfeiffer, the Secretary, said that as the Vice-President had spoken of the general superficial character of the work of architects, he thought it just to say that the prolific cause of this was the inexorable demand of employers for rapid work. Designs of buildings worth half a million dollars, were expected to be done in two weeks, and the specifications and estimates, were to come the following week. He thought it could not be charged that the architects, generally were superficial, in their work.

NOMINATING COMMITTEE.

As a nominating committee, to nominate candidates for the election of officers, for the ensuing year, the Chair named the following J. W. McLaughlin, of Cincinnati; Joseph Ireland, of Cleveland; J.C. Cochrane, of Chicago; A. J. Bloor, of New York; H. A. Sims, of Philadelphia; Wm. Ware, of Boston; Wm. Hutton, of Baltimore.

ELECTION.

At the evening session the Nominating Committee, made the following report:

President—Richard Upjohn.

Board of Trustees—Henry Dudley, A. J. Bloor, R. M. Hunt, C. C. Haight.

Treasurer—R. G. Hatfield.

Secretary—Carl Pfeiffer.

Secretary for Foreign Correspondence—H. A. Sims.

Committee on Education—Mr. Ware, Boston; Dr. Walter, Philadelphia; Mr. Hutton, Baltimore; Mr. Nash, Cincinnati; Mr. Wight, Chicago.

Committee on Lib. and Pub.—Mr. Litteil, Mr. Bloor, Mr. Holly, Mr. Pfeiffer, Mr. Gambrill.

The ticket presented was unanimously elected.

SECOND DAY.

WEDNESDAY, NOVEMBER 13TH, 1872.

MORNING SESSION.

The Secretary moved that the members of the Indiana Society of Architects, and other visiting architects, be invited to participate in the discussions of the convention. The motion was carried.

The Institute then took up and discussed various amendments to the constitution, one of which was adopted, allowing engineers to become corresponding members. At 12.30, the members visited the Chamber of Commerce on invitation, where they spent some time. Returning to the hall, they partook of a lunch, and proceeded to the business of the

AFTERNOON SESSION.

Mr. Sims, from a committee previously appointed, submitted the following resolutions:

Resolved, That it is expedient that a periodical be issued, by the institute, or under its entire control, which shall exhibit the more meritorious architectural works executed or projected by the members of the institute and chapters, setting forth the same by photo-lithography, or other manner, as may be most expedient, showing not only the exterior of each, but the interior, and mode of construction.

“That said publication be so conducted, by or under the entire control, of a national committee of five, to be appointed by the Board of Trustees; and it is suggested to the board, that the said committee be so composed that no personal end be allowed to influence the selection of subjects for illustration, but that only the best architectural art of the continent be allowed in the pages of the said publication.

“That the said publication be issued by or under the care, and general supervision of the Committee on Library and Publication, and at as low a rate of subscription, as may be found practicable; but it is understood that the funds of the institute are not to be intrenched upon for the said publication, but that when the same is issued, it must be upon a self-supporting basis.”

Upon the question of the liability of the institute for the expense, Mr. Pfeiffer said that a responsible publishing firm, in New York was willing to undertake the publication and assume the liability.

The resolutions were adopted, after amending so as to confine the contributions to be published to the members of the institute, including those of the junior chapters.

Mr. Pfeiffer offered a resolution, which was adopted, that the Committee on Practice, be requested to obtain as much information as possible, as to the practice of the government, in obtaining plans, and putting up its public buildings, and report at the next convention.

Mr. N. H. Hutton, of Baltimore, read an interesting paper on the subject of “Cements,” In the course of his observations, he referred to some of the tests of the strength of cement. One of them, he said, is its weight, the increase of strength being in a rapidly increasing proportion to its increase of weight. For instance, some of the American cements, weigh 67 pounds to the struck bushel, and their tensile strength, is 70 pounds to the square inch, while an English cement, weighing 110 pounds to the bushel, has a tensile strength of 178 pounds to the square inch.

This subject naturally suggested the question of a fire proof cement for roofing. Mr. Hutton stated that he had used in roofing a cement, or concrete, containing six volumes of lime with one volume of imported asphalt—not the prepared article. The asphalt must first be reduced to a liquid state, by the addition of three times its quantity of ordinary coal tar. With this he had made severe fire tests, and found it proof against the destroying element. He had found many concretes, but few of them were of any value.

DEFENCE OF THE MANSARD.

Discussion being in order, Mr. A. C. Nash, of this city, said he had given the subject some attention, and by leave, would read a short paper on the subject, which he had prepared rather hastily. He read as follows:

“ Mr. President: In this age, when jumping at conclusions without reflection seems to be the ruling principle of mankind. I wish to offer a few words of inquiry, and perhaps defence, regarding an architectural feature which has for ages, almost from time immemorial, until recently, withstood the test of criticism, whether viewed æsthetically or practically. I allude to the curb or Mansard roofs.

“Within the past year, or nearly within this time, we have been obliged to chronicle the destruction of the main business portion of two noted cities—one the city that was the cradle in which a nation was born and nursed, and the other the most perfect type of the *spirit* of that nation. In each city there were quite a number of what have hitherto been regarded fire-proof buildings. In one city there were many wooden buildings, which, owing to the unparalleled growth of the city, were not replaced with modern and more substantial structures; these again were interlarded with lumber yards, cooper shops, etc.—it is true, fast disappearing by the rapid march of improvement—but yet sufficient in number and bulk of combustible material to render any intervening vacant lots that there may be, very unsafe as storage for gunpowder or naphtha. In the other city, as I understand it from a very limited sojourn there, and from hearsay, the burnt district embraces within its limits substantial blocks of *granite*, many of them fireproof, and no wooden structures, no lumber yards, no cooper shops, no turpentine factories—all solid, substantial buildings of granite. Granite? But there were Mansard roofs; ‘aye there’s the rub;’ Mansard roofs. There were too many of these Mansard roofs. The thinking public, who have become posted in the science of building in a day, have so decided, and Mansard roofs must be discarded hereafter—should have been before. A law as unalterable as the laws of the Medes and Persians should have been made by the municipal authorities, making it a criminal offence for one to put on a Mansard roof; for Mansard roofs have all the qualities and are entirely governed and controlled by the laws (all the laws) of spontaneous combustion. Wooden buildings may be mowed down like chaff before the fire. Granite may be

shattered to atoms when subjected to the combined ordeal of the elements of fire and water. Yet, if there are no Mansard roofs, and this result happens, it is all accounted for by the natural course of things—the fire started at the bottom and burnt upwards, but in a reverse ease, nature, with a peculiar freak of hers, reverses her laws, commences at the top and burns downward. In the language of the immortal Artemus Ward, “Why is this thus?” Can nature change her laws, hitherto regarded as fixed, immutable? I believe not. Before abandoning a feature which has contributed so much to the scope of design in beautifying street architecture, a never ending source of distinctive ideas, which break up monotony, mark a building, and attract the attention to a minor individuality expressed in necessarily tamer and less prominent features, below the cornice, thus making the whole structure more distinctive. I have often thought that the term ‘block’ for a pile of buildings, originated in their general expressionless resemblance of a ‘block’ to a cube; made distinctive only by a more or less sized opening, or form of window cap, or projecting balcony—as we recognize a man by his contracted or capacious mouth, or his favor with nature in the way of a proboscis, his features not being particularly distinguishable across the street—a feature that has contributed more to picturesque effect in isolated structures, and in domestic architecture generally, than any one idea that has been advanced since their invention. I say, before we abandon a roof which has done so much for architectural æsthetics; which has, withal, been in use these three hundred years, which demonstrably has caused no fires, has assisted no fires, has been the means of extending no fires in the city of their birth and of their general adoption, and, as I believe, nowhere else when properly constructed—and which has only recently been unreasonably attacked, seemingly because it could not prevent fire—because it burnt where wood burnt and granite crumbled—before discarding this roof, would it not be well to inquire whether there is any other cause for combustions than the mere fact of the existence of a Mansard roof. Do buildings without ever burn? Have thickly interspersed wooden structures anything to do with extending a fire—has not this long line, and tier upon tier of immense wooden signs, awnings, and wooden window-frames, wooden dormer windows, wooden copings, wooden cornices—the absence of proper (if any) party walls, the spaces between furring not stopped off on each floor by a belt of mortar, or otherwise to prevent an upward current of air, open hatchways, wooden shafts for air, light or transportation of goods, wooden columns, wooden trusses, in fact, wood in any exposed form; or flues with four-inch walls, no pargeing, and wood to the front of them, wood to the right of them, wood to the left of them, wood in, around and through them. In short, has not the indiscriminate and exceedingly careless use of wood, and the criminally careless construction of flues, more to do with the general condemnation of Mansard roofs, than has the mere form or inclination of the roof? And this brings me to the consideration of the proper construction of flues, the greatest ally and abettor of destructive fires next after Mansard roofs, and which is altogether too vast a field to wade through at this time, and I beg pardon that, in the hope of making a suggestion or two, I have trespassed so far upon your valuable time,”

I reply to him, Mr. Ware of Boston, said it was not true that the Mansard roof would burn any more than other roofs; it was only more combustible in the proportion that it contained more combustible material. And, as commonly constructed in this country, there was no doubt it had more wood in it. The numerous dormers increase the quantity of wood. The chief reason for the Mansard roof is its opportunity for putting out decorations, and these being generally of wood, increase the danger. He did not believe the danger from fire to these roofs arose from its material more than from its form. In regard to the immunity of the Paris. Mansards mentioned by Mr. Nash, he believed that it was true, that even in the great fires in that city, during the late war, the fires did not spread. But the Paris Mansard was different from the American type. It was like a greenhouse, a converse curve in the roof. The frame work was of wrought iron, the larger ribs being wrought iron with smaller pieces connecting like ordinary sash, being interspaces about 10 by 12 inches. These are not fitted with glass, but with plaster of Paris. This expands slightly in setting, and remains firm; then the outside is covered with zinc or copper, or some other metal, and forms a fire-proof roof The dormers are also constructed with iron, and the same material as the roof. He was of opinion that If something practicable could be done in this country toward supplying the place of plaster of Paris, with some concrete or artificial stone, of which we are continually hearing, then the great objection to the Mansard would disappear. He thought much might be done by the use of iron of lighter patterns than is usually employed.

The Boston fire was not a surprise to those who had given it attention. Those buildings were compactly located, with narrow streets intervening; their walls scarcely more than pillars filling the space between the windows; very high and surmounted with the wooden structure common to the Mansard roof. The conditions were most favorable for a great fire, and in West Boston the same difficulty is to be found.

Mr. A. J. Bloor, of New York, offered the following resolution, which was unanimously adopted:

“Whereas, the type of roof called Mansard, is justly held in great estimation by architects, on account of the great opportunities it offers for available space above the cornice line, and for exterior effect.

“*Resolved*, That a committee of three be appointed to prepare a paper showing the best modes for preparing Mansard roofs which shall be as fire-proof as their substructures”

The Chair appointed Mr. Bloor, of New York; Mr. Nash, of Cincinnati, and Mr. Hutton, of Baltimore.

Mr. Carl Pfeiffer offered the following, which was adopted:

Resolved, That the experience of Boston and Chicago serves to show that it is of the greatest moment to the community that some mode of constructing fire-proof roofs, not too expensive for universal use, should be devised, and that the attention of architects and engineers is invited to this important subject.

MISCELLANEOUS.

Mr. Cochrane, of Chicago, moved that the Board of Trustees prepare a form for the use of parties advertising for designs and competitive plans. Carried.

On motion of Mr. Bloor, the thanks of the Institute were tendered to the Erie, A. & G. W., and the Pennsylvania Central Railroads for courtesies. On motion of Mr. Ware, thanks were tendered to the Cincinnati Chapter for the pleasant manner in which it had provided for the comfort of the members from abroad.

CLOSING ADDRESS.

Hon. Rufus King was then introduced, and made the closing address. He made a survey of the ancient history of architecture, and spoke of its relations to the present. In the close he referred to the prevailing style of cheapness, and of carelessness in relation to fire, and said that he felt strongly in favor of some government restriction upon builders, for the sake of insuring immunity from fire, and he thought it quite proper that this body take some action upon the subject.

His address was listened to with interest, and the suggestion at the close was warmly applauded. A vote of thanks was tendered him for his address.

NEXT MEETING.

Mr. Cochran moved that the Board of Trustees be requested to hold the next meeting at Chicago. The motion was adopted.

The convention then adjourned *sine die*.

BANQUET.

At 6 o'clock last evening, the members of the Institute, with a few invited guests, in all numbering about forty, sat down to one of Kepler's inimitable tables, in the north hall in the Mozart Hall

building. The walls were appropriately decorated with architectural drawings and photographs of prominent buildings.

Mr. William Ware was called on for a speech, and responded by saying he would be greatly obliged if his hearers would consider that he had said all the fine things that are usually said about the pleasure people from Massachusetts feel in coming to Ohio. He had been imprisoned since he had been here, except half an hour in which he escaped and visited the Suspension Bridge. This great work, he said, produced on him an impression like that felt on looking at some of the renowned buildings in the East. It was a combination of strength and grace. He thought it afforded good reason for believing that the action taken to-day admitting engineers to the Institute was wise.

He was followed by M. H. Hutton, of Baltimore, A. T. Goshorn, S. F. Hunt, and Ozro J. Dodds. After the speeches, the company enjoyed itself in social conversation until the time came for separation.

E. T. LITTLE,

R. V. BLOOR,

H. H. HOLLY,

R. M. UPJOHN,

C. PFEIFFER, Committee on Library and Publications.

Wm. Q. Force Present= Compliments of H. R. Searle F. A. ? . A.

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