

# JOURNAL OF THE AMERICAN INSTITUTE OF ARCHITECTS

Vol. III

FEBRUARY, 1915

No. 2

## The American Academy in Rome

By C. GRANT LA FARGE (F)

AMERICA owns a great possession lying in the Eternal City; great for its material value, greater for the influence it is destined to exert upon the arts and learning of our country. The nature of this possession, what it is, how it came to be, why it should be, this account will attempt to show.

The statement that it is the property of America and not of certain individuals, may be explained by comparison. The chief exemplar, as well as the oldest of all post-graduate academies of art, is that of France, which was founded under Louis XIV, and has occupied its present beautiful quarters in the famous Villa Medici for well over a century. All the world knows what the *Grand Prix de Rome* means to a French artist—the supreme reward of student excellence, to be gained in strenuous competition. The French nation maintains its Academy, as a governmental institution, under the Ministry of Fine Arts; its Director is a government official; those returning from residence there may expect, in greater or less degree, some official support.

We in America do not do things in this way; we have no Ministry of Fine Arts, nor any equivalent. When we want an Academy, we must ask our citizens to put their hands into their pockets and give the funds for its establishment and maintenance;

for though our government gives us a charter, it does not, and may not be expected to, give financial support. Such funds are committed to the keeping of a Board of Trustees, existing under authority of an Act of Congress, and therefore, to that extent, a national body. Accordingly they must so use those funds, however and by whomsoever given, that the advantages to be derived from them shall be available to all such citizens of the United States as may be qualified, under the rules which the trustees are empowered to make, to profit therefrom. Hence the property held in Rome by the trustees, and the educational opportunities there offered, truly belong to America, and those who have given to the Academy have given to our country.

The building of the World's Fair at Chicago made a turning-point in our artistic progress, so marked that it may well be termed an epoch. Its effect was profound and far-reaching, strongly influencing our subsequent work and point of view. It was the first occasion upon which there were brought together, to work for a common result, not only a number of architects, but also the practitioners of the allied arts. The lessons learned were important: the inestimable value of coherence and classic orderliness; the individual freedom given to those who accept a com-

## JOURNAL OF THE AMERICAN INSTITUTE OF ARCHITECTS

"are frequently inadequate." Mr. I. K. Pond once said to me, in the presence of other architects in the Illinois Chapter, that he thought they were because one of his draughtsmen, whom he thought to be incompetent, had passed. But he could not have seen the examination papers, for they have been invariably taken up after each exercise was completed, and no copies were even allowed to go out of the possession of the Board as long as I was a member, except to the other State Boards, and once to the Examination Committee of the A.I.A.; in this case it was returned before Mr. Pond became a member of its Board of Directors. I can add that in conversations with Mr. Pond I learned that he was, from the beginning, opposed to the licensing of architects by statute law, and he is entitled to his opinion. I know of only one other member of the Illinois Chapter who agreed with him.

I believe that all of the examinations, as long as

I was a member of the Board, were adequate to give the people of the state the protection to which they are entitled, and yet there may possibly have been some mistakes by the examination committees in the markings of thousands of examinations. I believe also, as far as I know from the results, that the present Illinois Board has kept up the high standard of the examinations, and is enforcing the law with vigor.

I might add that none of the amendments to the Illinois law have been made in a spirit of compromise with its enemies, and none have been passed without the initiative and full approval of the State Board. My views, *in extenso*, on these matters were given more fully in a paper which I read before the Convention of the Illinois State Society of Architects, in October, and which was published in the "Construction News."—PETER B. WIGHT, (F.).

### In Memoriam

CHARLES HERCULES RUTAN (F.)  
DIED AT BROOKLINE, MASSACHUSETTS,  
DECEMBER 17, 1941  
ADMITTED TO THE INSTITUTE IN 1889

Mr. Rutan was a member of the architectural firm of Shepley, Rutan & Coolidge, with offices in Boston and Chicago. He had been ill for some time, and had not given much attention to business for two years.

Mr. Rutan was born at Newark, New Jersey, March 28, 1851, and was the son of Nicholas Warren and Sarah Elizabeth (Marsh) Rutan. He was educated in the public schools of his native city, and, deciding to become an architect, became associated with the New York firm of Gambrell & Richardson, the latter being the famous H. H. Richardson, in 1870 starting at the very bottom of the ladder. He continued his relation until 1878, and

when Mr. Richardson moved to Brookline, Mr. Rutan went with him. He remained with Mr. Richardson until the latter's death in 1886, when he, George F. Shepley and Charles A. Coolidge, formed a partnership and completed the work which Mr. Richardson had left unfinished.

Mr. Rutan was a member of the Boston Society of Architects, and was a trustee of the Constantinople College, until lately better remembered as the American College for Girls, for which his firm had made plans for new buildings, some of these having just been occupied. Mr. Rutan at one time was Treasurer of the Board of Trustees, and in 1910 he went to Constantinople for the purpose of studying the situation and becoming familiar with the work of the school. He was a member of the Congregational Club, and before his illness had close relations with many organizations, notably Fisk University, of which he had been a trustee.