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Frederic Ellis Jackson, F.A.I.A.

1879—1950

MY FRIENDSHIP with Ellis Jackson—better known as "Pete" to his intimates—had its beginning in 1895 when we were pupils in a boys' school in Providence. Only recently his family had moved from Tarrytown, N. Y., the town of his birth in 1879, to Rhode Island where his father subsequently was elected lieutenant governor. After leaving school Pete entered Cornell, and was awarded a degree in architecture in 1900. Two years later he entered into partnership with Howard K. Hilton and joined the Rhode Island Chapter as an associate; he was admitted to The Institute in 1905.

During his association with Mr. Hilton he spent several years at the Beaux-Arts in Paris, graduating in 1909. It was there, in Atelier Duquesne, where I worked a few months in 1908, that our old friendship was renewed. I have a vivid recollection of Pete at the Quatz-Arts Ball, costumed in the manner of an Egyptian column, towering in dignity above the heads of the scantily robed dancers.

Following Mr. Hilton's death he formed a partnership with Wayland T. Robertson, in 1911, to which J. Howard Adams was admitted in the year following. The firm title of Jackson, Robertson & Adams was maintained by Mr. Jackson, despite the untimely deaths of his junior partners, with Raymond J. Henthorne, George Fraser and Clifford Williams as later associates.

The Colonial revival at the turn of the century provided a background for Mr. Jackson's technique, and its influence was manifest throughout his career. The architectural monuments of Providence, preserved from the Colonial and Early Republican periods, provided inspiration. He was no copyist, however; certainly his designs could not be classed as academic. He was gifted with the adroit faculty of adapting traditional forms to meet modern require-

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ments, as exemplified by the Providence County Court House, a project for which his firm was awarded a silver medal by the Congress of Pan American Architects in 1940.

The extensive practice of the firm of Jackson, Robertson & Adams has included Federal, State and municipal projects; ecclesiastical, educational and charitable buildings; hospitals, libraries and museums; office buildings, banks and clubs; town and country dwellings and housing developments. While the sphere of activities has been confined principally to the State of Rhode Island and Providence Plantations, the territory covered extends from Ithaca, N. Y. to Eleuthera Island in the Bahamas.

A salient quality of Mr. Jackson's designs, too often minimized by others, was appropriateness to site and environment. As a result of his passion for harmony and order in neighborhood design, he became a pioneer in the field of city planning. When Providence adopted a zoning plan in 1923 he was appointed vice chairman of the Board of Review. Starting in 1931 he served thirteen years as chairman of the advisory committee of the Providence City Plan Commis-

sion. During World War II he was active in the organization of public backing for postwar planning, and was appointed by the Governor a member of the State Bi-partisan Commission on Coordination and Execution of Post-war Projects. He was one of twelve citizens cited for outstanding community service in 1944 and, "for opening our eyes to the possibilities of things before unrealized"; was a recipient of the "Roger" award at a ceremony held at Roger Williams Park.

Mr. Jackson was advanced to Fellowship in The Institute in 1936. He served as Regional Director 1925-1928, and as a member of the Jury of Fellows 1937-1941. He was president of the Rhode Island Chapter 1921-1923 and again 1935-1937. In recognition of his seventieth birthday in April, 1949, he was presented an illuminated scroll by the Chapter, reciting that "in your long and distinguished career as an architect and civic leader you have received the honors and accolades which come to but few; and yet, unwilling to rest upon your laurels at the significant age of three score years and ten, you are on the road to even greater accomplishments."

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Inscribed on the Chapter records, friendship and his camaraderie. ten months later, was the final We shall cherish his memory." tribute: "We are grateful for his JOHN HUTCHINS CADY, F.A.I.A.

The Architect As a Student

IN TWO PARTS—PART II

By *Ralph Walker*, F.A.I.A.

With slight abridgement, an address before the School of Architecture Conference, Washington University, St. Louis, Nov. 17, 1949

AS I SAID BEFORE, your heroes and mine might not be the same, and I will explain what I mean in this regard. Two years ago I traveled about Latin America and I came away with no great respect for certain famous men from Brazil. I have seen too many of their buildings starting to decay—the front of a day nursery, for example; but especially a small chapel which I am sure is imitated again and again by students, and, unfortunately, will be by practitioners as well; *all of whom, probably, have never seen it.*

I say, *after seeing it*, that it is a bad design; its physical form is an echo-creating megaphone; its construction is so bad that its insides are rotting away. I may be an old fogey but to me functionally and esthetically it is bad architecture—for I earnestly believe that deep emotion is never gained in response to mere draftsman's cleverness.

On the other hand, I have some heroes in Chile—heroes whose names I do not know but I greatly respect the housing they have accomplished. But, because this is simple and homely, the Museum of Modern Art has not thought it dramatic enough to publish.

And this leads me to say: "The world may be smaller but fewer people actually see the things they copy."

Douglas Haskell told me, as he became Editor of the *Forum*, that he hoped to show a building by fresh photographs five years after the first *new and so beautiful photos taken from such unusual angles* and which are generally so quickly published; and therefore prove that good design lasts or doesn't.

Recently, a janitor of a much publicized modern building said to a group of young architects, "Do

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