

Oct. 29, 1953

Mr. Pettengill:

The attached tribute to Walter T. Karcher, F.A.I.A., should go into the file of biographical material on architects.

It might be well to put into the file also a note that biographical material on Moise Goldstein, F.A.I.A., appeared in the New Orleans Chapter Bulletin, Vol. 1, No. 1, October 1953.

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4th, 1953

*Architect  
Karcher*

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Returning from his sojourns abroad, he "free-lanced" in competition work and gained valuable experience in the best Philadelphia offices of the day. He often spoke with apparent pride of the offices of Wilson Eyre Jr., of Frank Miles Day, of Walter Cope and John Stewardson and especially of William Price of Price and McLenon whose independence and individuality so strongly felt in the Marlborough Blenheim Hotel at Atlantic City struck a sympathetic cord in his own makeup. In 1910 he informed his friend and classmate, casually passing in oppposite directions on Chestnut Street, that they had a job and were in partnership - the informal beginning of the firm of Walter T. Karcher and Livingston Smith. When jobs were few during World War I, he became a Project Manager for the Housing and Transportation Division of the United States Shipping Board; during World War II he was one of a group of architects to be engaged by the United States Treasury Department, Washington, for the design of public buildings.

After the First World War, important work was entrusted to his firm, the quality of which is attested by the Honors received for individual buildings. In 1929 Karcher and Smith were awarded the Medal of the Philadelphia Chapter for the most meritorious work submitted in the Annual Exhibition: the Women's Dormitories and Fraternity Houses of Swarthmore College. In the same year the Pan American Union gave them Honorable Mention for the Merion War Tribute House. In 1933, they were awarded second prize for the Bryn Mawr Presbyterian Church in the Christian Herald Competition. The next year 1934, Royal Institute of British Architects requested photographs and plans of the Clothier Memorial Auditorium at Swarthmore College and exhibition and permanent lodgment in their architectural files. Two years later, in 1936, they received one of the

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Walter Thompson Karcher, the son of James Daniel and Marion Anna Karcher, was born in Philadelphia on August 23rd, 1881. At the age of twenty he had completed with honors his formal academic education, receiving the degree of Bachelor of Science in Architecture from the University of Pennsylvania, and was elected to the scientific honor society of Sigma Xi. He entered the office of one of New York's most distinguished Architectural firms, Carrerre and Hastings but his extraordinary flare for Design quickly brought other choice opportunities of employment. He was recommended by Wells Bosworth and accepted the invitation of Emmanuel L. Masqueray to join the Design Staff of the Louisiana Purchase Exposition within the year of his graduation in 1901. Between the years 1902 and 1905 he found ample demand for his skill as a designer on architectural competitions in various offices. He was then awarded the Alumni Traveling Fellowship of his Alma Mater.

His travels led him to Paris and then to Rome. In Paris he joined the Atelier Duquesne of the Ecole des Beaux Arts; in Rome he enjoyed the association of other holders of scholarships in residence at the American Academy there. Undoubtedly these experiences, the first under the patronage of one of the great French architects of the period, and the second in an incomparable environment of master works of the Architecture, Painting and Sculpture had their effect upon him as it has had upon generations who have found clarity of vision and the stirring of ambitions in the Eternal City.

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second prizes in the Oregon State Capital Competition in which 130 architects competed. In 1938, the American Institute of Architects in collaboration with the American Federation of Fine Arts included the North Dormitory Group and Clothier Memorial of Swarthmore College and the U.S. Naval Hospital, Philadelphia, in an exhibition of one hundred buildings in the United States for an International Exhibition. In 1938 also they were awarded second place in the Philadelphia Housing Competition as well as being awarded a Silver Medal in Paris Exposition for the Field House, Swarthmore College. In 1940 they were honored by a Gold Medal at the Pan American Congress of Architects in Montevideo, Uruguay.

Beyond these evidences of distinguished architectural work, the firm was employed by the U.S. Government for a Naval Hospital in Annapolis and an Army Hospital in Puerto Rico, the Cooper Library and R.C.A. Victor Office Building in Camden and the Trinity Episcopal Group of Moorestown, New Jersey. The Lavino Field House at the Lawrenceville School and Penn Valley Elementary School are buildings of quality recently completed. The last exquisitely delineated drawings in pencil of Walter Karcher were for an elementary school which promises to surpass that of Penn Valley for charm and quality of design. All this work of the firm was a collaboration between the partners. Such was the spirit of cooperation between them.

Walter Karcher was a Presbyterian. He was a Trustee and Secretary of the Methodist Orphanage in Philadelphia and served on the Board of Directors of the Merion Community Association. He was an idealist, a perfectionist, and a "good pal." Always gracious, his quiet serious manner brightened by a disarming smile successfully screened the under-currents of family worry and care which, in the last years of his life, were his to bear. He lost his eldest son and namesake in action in France during World War II. A tragic automobile accident deprived his wife Mary Clark of her full measure of health and vigor throughout the last years of her life. He met these crises with a degree of stoicism matched in disciplined control only by depth of devotion to her whose death preceded his own by scarcely a month. Throughout, he maintained his interest in the affairs of the Philadelphia Chapter and the Institute by which in 1936 he was raised to Fellowship.

Two married children survive him. His daughter Elizabeth (Mrs. William Howard Nostron) and his son, Commander Daniel Martin Karcher of the United States Navy, are resident in Washington, D.C. To them and to his five grandchildren, the Philadelphia Chapter of the American Institute of Architects extends its deepest sympathy and in this Memorial pays sincere and affectionate tribute to one of its Past-Presidents and most distinguished Members.

*George S. Koyl*  
Oct. 16, 1955.

George S. Koyl, F.A.I.A.