GEORGE FRED KECK
WILLIAM KECK
ARCHITECTS
612 NORTH MICHIGAN AVENUE
CHICAGO 11, ILLINOIS
TELEPHONE SUPERIOR 7-5035

May 18, 1961

Mr. Wolf Von Eckardt
American Institute of Architects
The Octagon
1735 New York Avenue, N.W.
Washington 6, D. C.

Re: Residence at Highland Park, Illinois, M - 1955

Dear Mr. Von Eckardt:

We are enclosing herewith information requested in your letter of May 11th for use in the proposed book "Mid-Century Architecture in America -- AIA Honor Awards 1949-1961". Below is the information you have requested.

Owner of the Building: Sigmund Kunstadter.

Location of the Building: 1436 Waverly Road, Highland Park, Illinois.

Date of Completion: 1952.

Photographs: Enclosed.

Credit Line for Photographer: Hedrich-Blessing.

Floor Plan: Enclosed.

Explanation of Architectural Solution: Enclosed.

Biographical Data: George Fred Keck, b. 1895, Watertown, Wis.; ed. U. of I., 1921; began own practice 1927.

William Keck, b. 1908, Watertown, Wis., ed. U. of Ill., 1931; joined office immediately after graduation; partnership since 1946.

The office specializes in the field of housing, single family and multiple units. Significant other buildings: Chicago Housing Authority Prairie Courts Project at 26th and South Parkway - 350 units, both high rise and row houses. Office has won other local Chicago A.I.A. Awards for excellence in design. Both partners live in their own building which was one of thirty-eight designated as Chicago Landmarks, at 5551 University Avenue, Chicago, Illinois.

Signed Copy of Photographic Release: Enclosed.

I believe this completes all of the items you wish. I hope you can see your way clear to include this house in the book since we feel it is an excellent example.

Sincerely,

William Keck

William Keck
cmc

Encs.

BIOGRAPHICAL DATA

Name: GEO. FRED KECK - WILLIAM KECK ARCHITECTS

~~Pronunciation:~~ WM KECK MEMBER CHICAGO CHPTR AIA

Occupation: (correct title) PARTNERSHIP IN GENERAL ARCHITECTURAL PRACTICE

Place of Birth: G.F.K. - WATERTOWN WIS — Date of Birth: 17 MAY 1895
W.K. " " — Date of Birth: 1 DEC 1908

Names of Parents: FRED G. KECK and A. L. HENZE

Married to: G.F.K - LUCILE LIEBERMAN — Date of Marriage: 26 NOV 1921
W.K - STELLA MC LEISH — Date of Marriage: 23 OCT 1937

Names of Children NONE IN EITHER CASE

Education: (Degrees, Institutions, dates)

G.F.K - B.S. ARCH'T. ENGINEERING U OF ILL: 1920 DR. OF FINE ARTS LAWRENCE COLLEGE 1950

W.K - B.S. ARCH'T. U. OF ILL. 1931

Summary of Major Professional Experiences and Accomplishments:
(Including names of principal buildings designed; dates; and other relevant information)

G.F.K. ESTABLISHED OFFICE 1927 W.K. JOINED HIM IN 1931. PARTNERSHIP FORMED 1946. FIRM WELL KNOWN FOR WORK IN HOUSING - BOTH SINGLE FAMILY & MULTIPLE. WINNER OF AIA. CHICAGO CHPTR AWARD FOR BEST HOUSE 1953.

Firm (individual or partnership): PARTNERSHIP

Former Firm: —

Military Service: G.F.K - WORLD WAR I. 1ST LIEUT. ARTILERY
W.K. " " II LIEUT. U.S.N.R.

Memberships in Professional and Learned Societies:
(Including offices held; honors received)

Principal writings or artistic works (other than architecture):

Home address: G.F.K & W.K. 5551 UNIVERSITY AV. CHICAGO ILL.

Business address: " 612 N. MICH. AV. " "

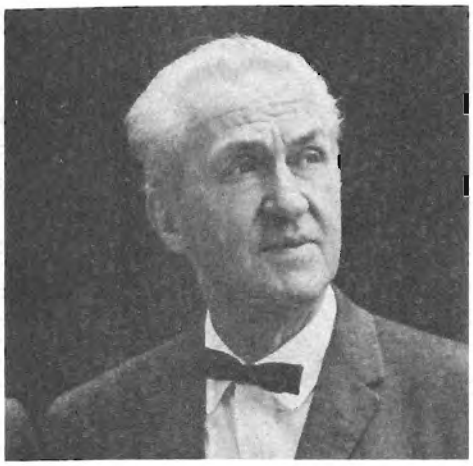
Keck, George Fred

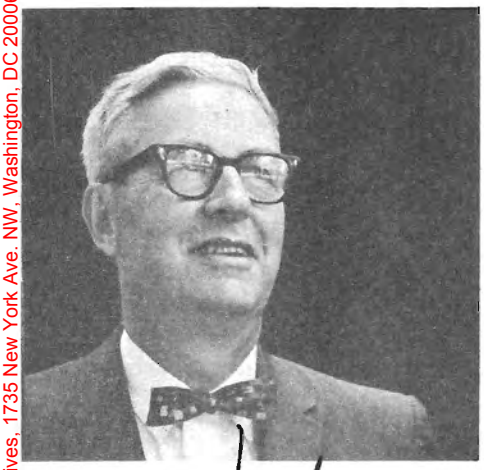
inland architect

KECK & KECK, Architects

the magazine of inland area building and planning

July 1965 *35 cents*



Inland Architect
Chicago Chapter
July, 1965

American
Institute of
Architects

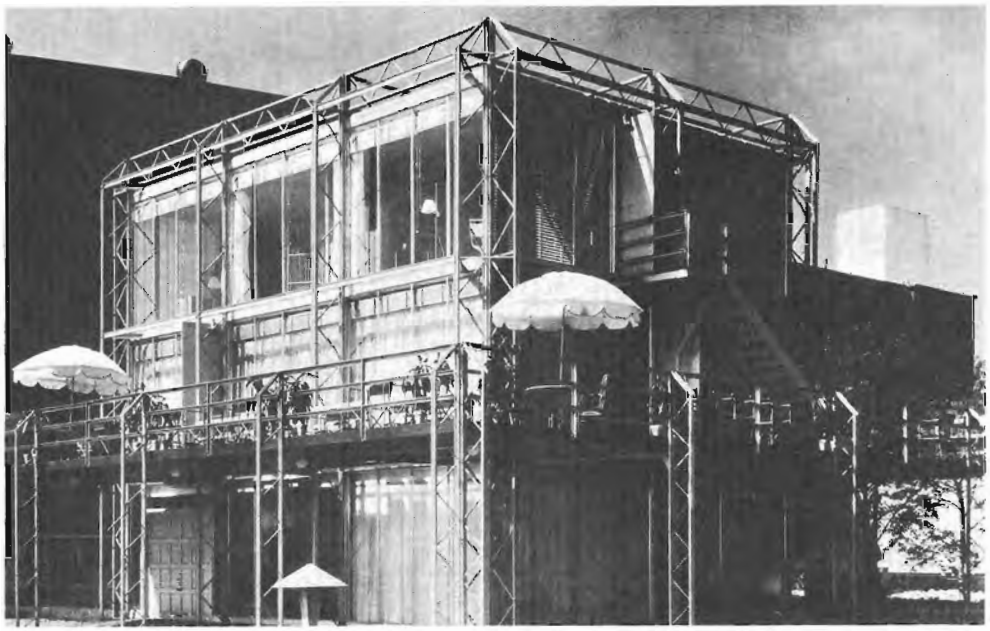
George Fred Keck
William Keck

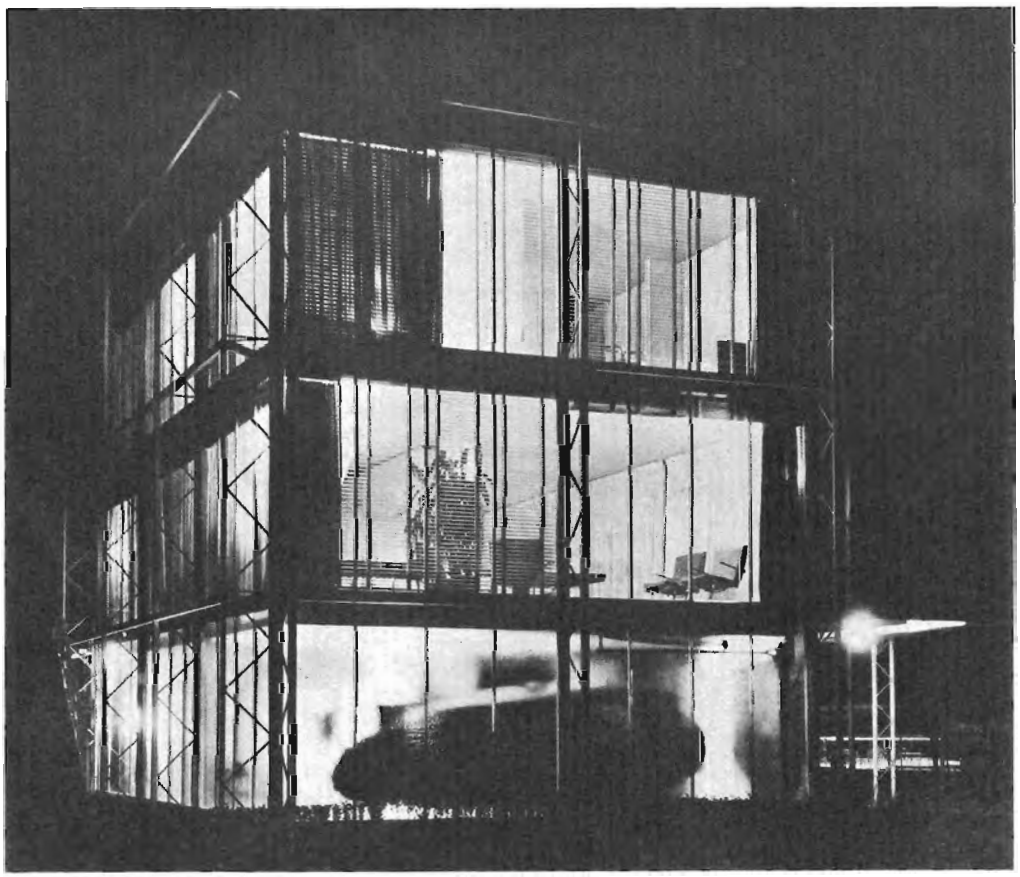
Architects

HOUSE OF TOMORROW
CHICAGO WORLD'S FAIR
1933

George Fred Keck and William Keck helped to carry forward the tradition of the Chicago School of Architecture. They carried on its threads during the period of eclecticism in architectural design; an eclecticism that had never stopped in this century. Their early architectural statements were opposed to those values advanced and taught by the academies, but to which the schools finally changed just before World War II. The Keck brothers helped provide an educational base from which young architects could learn and translate their ideas into space. One of their most important contributions to the profession is the raising of the general standards of architecture.—Editorial Staff

HEDRICH-BLESSING PHOTOGRAPHS





CRYSTAL HOUSE
CHICAGO WORLD'S FAIR
1934

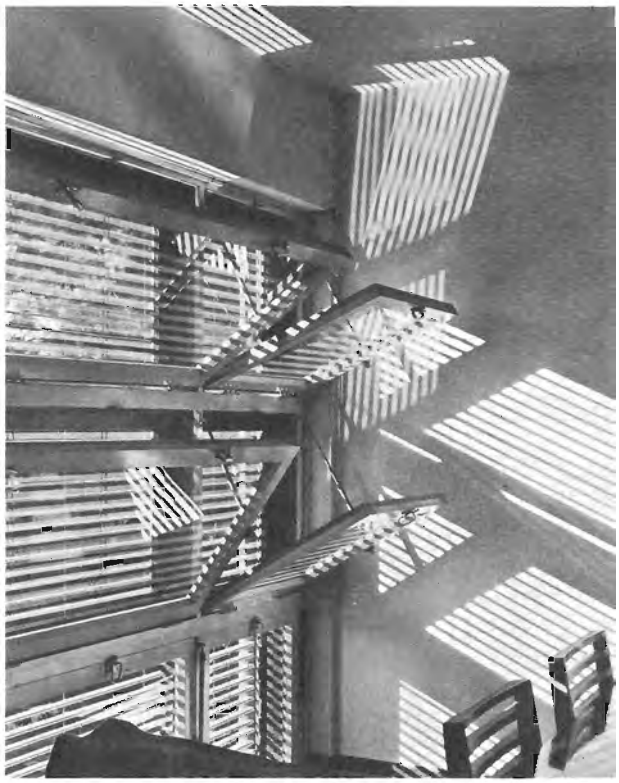
Today man relies heavily upon the written or spoken word for his information about the world around him. He cannot see, by and large, that is to say, he cannot read, the city as he walks down the street. He has eyes and sees not, or reads not.

I know intelligent men who are unaware of nature's beauties, except—and this is an important exception—as they read about such beauties and then go out to observe them. I have often walked down a street with friends totally unaware that there were at the moment in this street lovely trees in flower, some of the loveliest in the area. Had they read in a newspaper an article extolling the flowering season, they would have gone out of their respective ways to contemplate and marvel at these same trees.

Our powers of observation have been dulled to a large extent by the printed word. Stimulating as this printed word may be—and far be it for me to deny the vast importance of this printed word; its record in history and in libraries as a preservation of our accumulated knowledge, its continuing role in communication despite the newer forms of mass media, etc.—I feel strongly, however, that we have lost our power of direct observation, largely as a result of our dependence upon the printed word. We don't seem to know how to look at things—objects, landscape, paintings, buildings—nor to read in these objects what people with a language of form and color have written.

To understand Picasso today, many people find it necessary first to read a

APARTMENTS
CHICAGO, ILLINOIS, 1937
(Architectural Landmark)

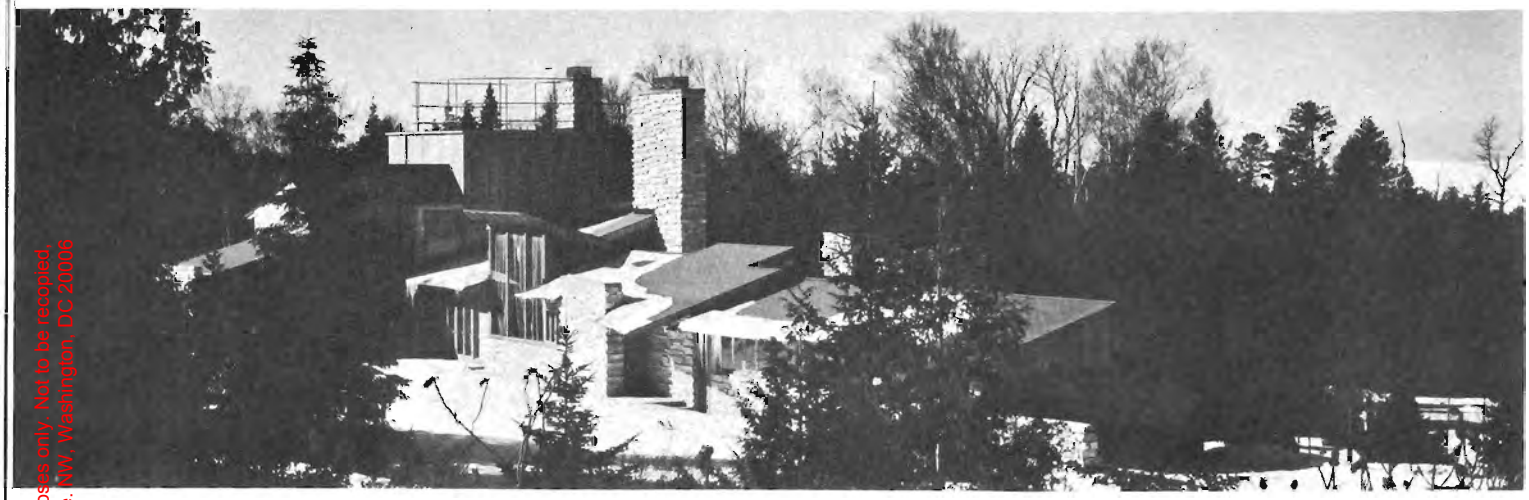


B. J. CAHN HOUSE
LAKE FOREST, ILLINOIS, 1937

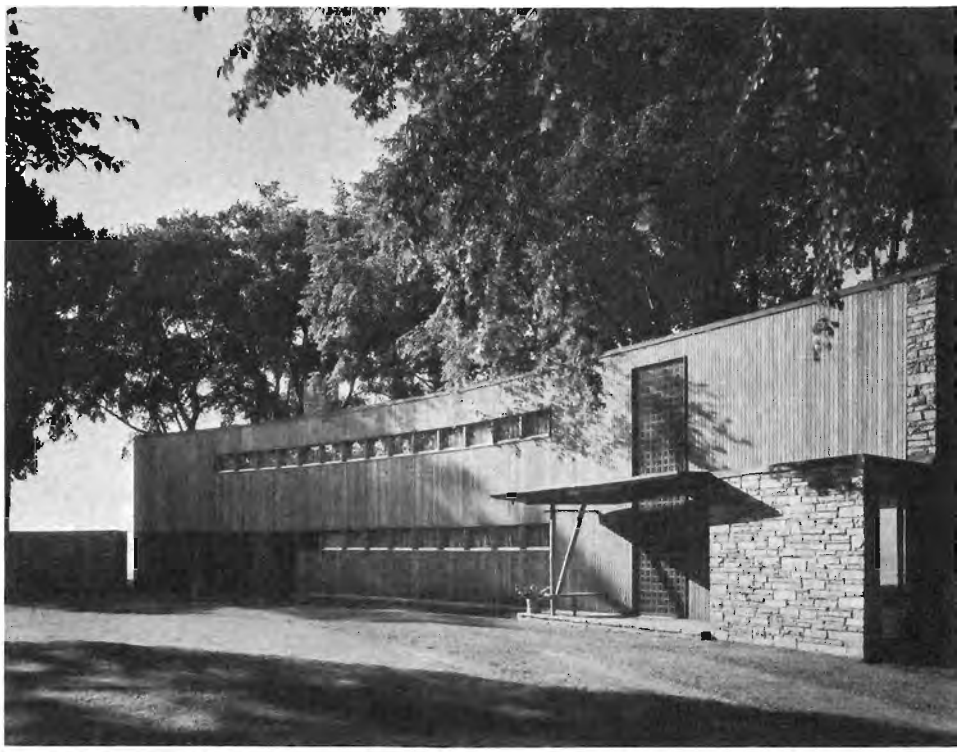
book about Picasso, and then to look at his paintings. Often the reader does not even then understand Picasso, for he has become entangled in the words until he cannot bring a direct approach to his observation. In reading about the object he has lost the ability to read the object itself. William de Kooning, in a recent symposium conducted by the Museum of Modern Art, stated: "Kadinsky understood "Form" as a form, like an object in the real world; and an object, he said, was a narrative—and so, of course, he disapproved of it. He wanted his "music without words." He wanted to be "simple as a child." He intended, with his "inner-self," to rid himself of "philosophical barricades" (he sat down and wrote something about all this). But in turn his own writing has become a philosophical barricade, even if it is a barricade full of holes."

Non-objective artists are often called upon to explain their paintings, with varying results. Calder said in the same symposium from which I quoted above, "that others grasp what I have in mind seems unessential, at least as long as they have something else in theirs." And Fritz Glarner says "A painter should never speak because words are not the means at his command. Words cannot express visually dimension at a glance—they can only establish their own relationship in time. However, it is possible for a painter, at certain moments of his development to formulate some of the problems he is facing in the growth of his work. A painting cannot be

DR. J. R. BUCHBINDER HOUSE
FISH CREEK, WISCONSIN, 1938



WILLIAM KELLETT HOUSE
MENASHA, WISCONSIN, 1939



explained. Words can only stimulate the act of looking." Just so architects, and especially when they work in the newer forms, are asked to explain their architecture. They try to do so through the usual means of communication: public lectures, informal talks, radio—and today—television broadcasts. They even write books on their architecture. As a group, however, we architects are not good writers. There are only a few of us who have mastered the poetry of words. Our Hudnuts are rare. The rest of us speak far more eloquently through our pencils on our drafting boards, and by our actual buildings. And it is through these buildings, our architectural achievements, that we should be read. Interesting as the books of Frank Lloyd Wright may be, it is his buildings themselves that are far more articulate than his words. And his architecture is more widely read than his words and it will continue to be read long after his books are out-of-print or forgotten.

Here then is a plea to learn to read architecture, to sharpen our awareness of it as we walk down the street, to learn to experience the street and learn from it its history, its sociology, its purpose. We must observe how people use and feel the street itself, the houses, the structure, and the spaces surrounding these man-made devices that serve man. As man-made devices they are works of art. As works of art they achieve significant form and please or displease the senses and the intellect, depending upon how well they serve their purposes.

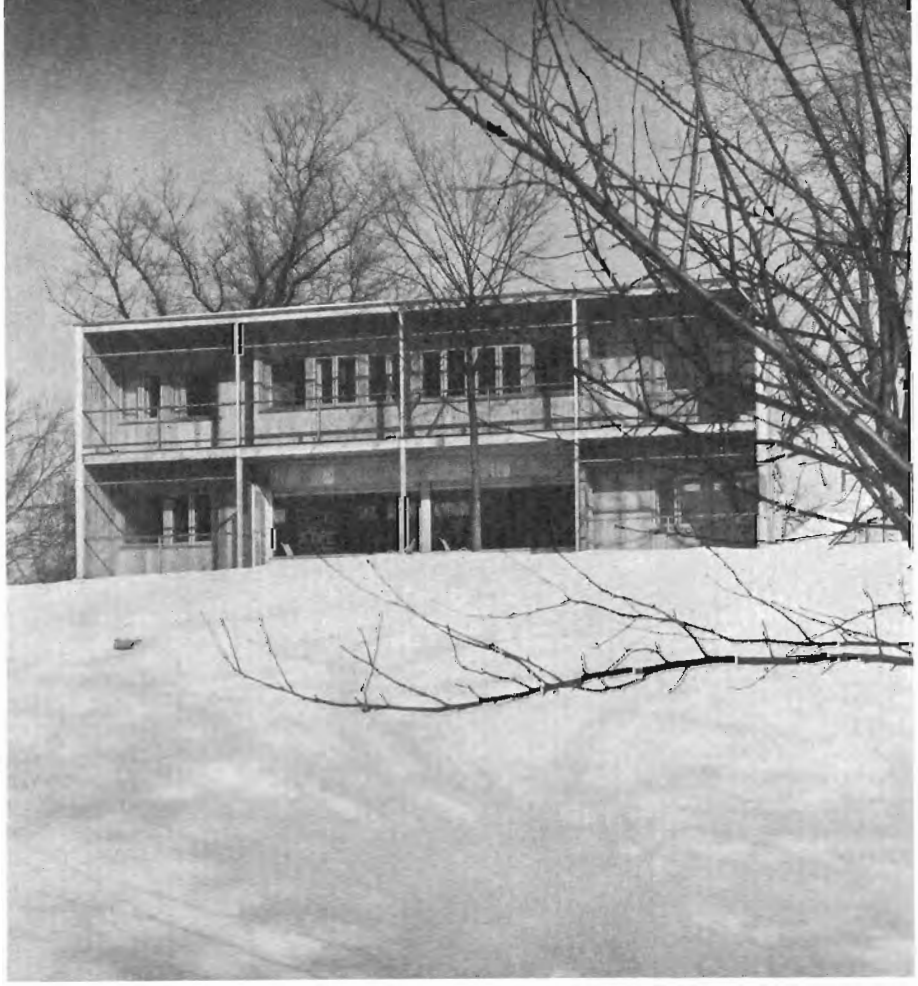
DR. MAURICE RICE HOUSE
STEVENS POINT, WISCONSIN, 1940

And of these forms architecture is made. If they perform their functions well and if they please the senses they may be read as good works of art. As works of art they can be whatever a good book can be: intelligent, readable, serious, biographical, gay, witty, tragic—what you will. They can be what a human being can be and can enter into his moods. The practicing architect when he produces his works contributes to them the artistic substances of which he is capable.

What then shall the observer look for when he attempts a reading of the architecture around him? What elements must the architect have written into his work? After intelligent analysis, he must have displayed an awareness of his surroundings and of their interrelationship to the region, to the street, to the sight, to the landscaping. He must have imparted the purpose and the function to which the structure is dedicated, through the language of the spaces and the shapes that determine its use. Here obviously the plan and the form of the building are displayed and bring with them the importance of proportion, balance and scale, adding up to a harmonious and aesthetic whole. Form has not necessarily followed function; it has rather flowed and flowered out of function.

The architect moreover must have chosen his materials well with regard to their availability, to the essential nature of the materials themselves used singly or in combination, and to their adaptability. The materials should have

PETE KECK HOUSE
OCONOMOWOC, WISCONSIN, 1941



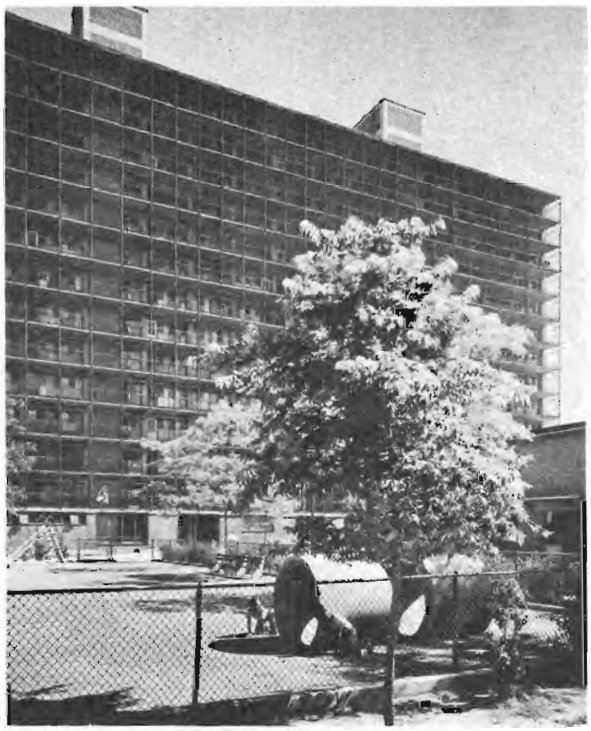
GREEN PRE-FABRICATED HOUSE
ROCKFORD, ILLINOIS, 1945

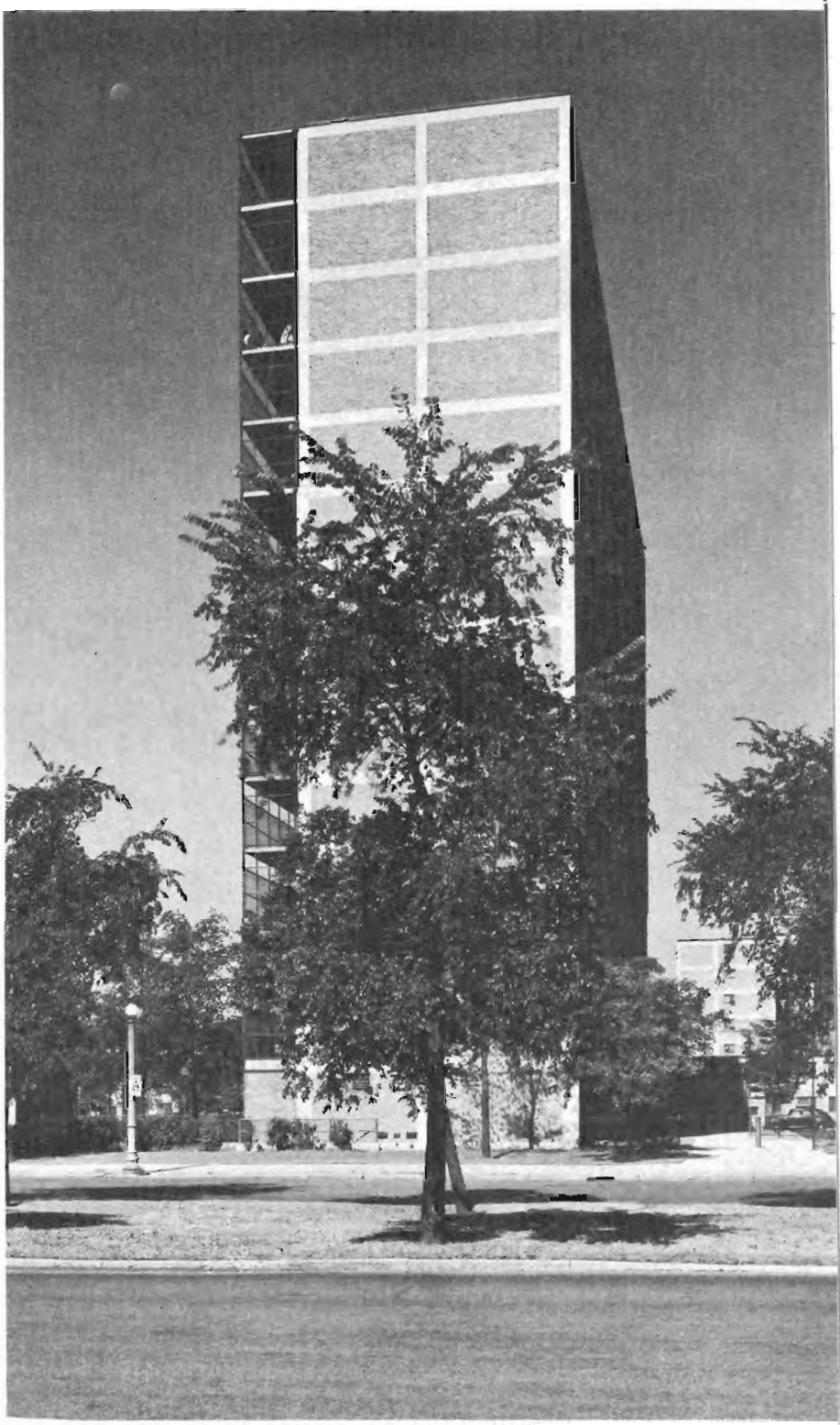
been selected on the basis of their indigenous nature and should have been used with logic and understanding. The architect through his building must have made a forthright direct statement, translating the fluidity of the plan through the form into a readable end result.

And he must have written into his achievement his grasp of historical and sociological perspective, an exposition of the relation of the building to its social and cultural intent, and the social and cultural intent of the community, an object of art which is a part of a larger community, the entire community, which serves its function in serving the people. In this sense, every family contributes to the community and every family must understand the implications of its impact in the community. Only in this way can an interest and improvement of a community come about, and a readable whole develop.

The printed word itself is an art form and can be many art forms, from poetry to the written drama through all the forms of written literature. In terms of numbers of people interested in one art form or another I suppose that printing easily obtains the lions share of interested people. That it has grown so sizeable is good, for it is educational and, of course, is helpful as such to other expressions in art forms—they cannot do without architectural forms—down to the lowest shelter elements. So all people must take part, since they are a part, of architecture. We architects cannot do without people, and their needs and

PRAIRIE COURTS
CHICAGO HOUSING AUTHORITY
1951





opinions help in every way to formulate our architecture, which is the great art form of all time because it is inclusive and embraces all of the other arts. It may also be true that, like the total mass of literature, so much is trash and so little worth reading, so too, the architecture of our cities is mostly trash and largely not worth reading. Continual observation of it, as we walk down our streets in our daily routine also dulls the sensation, and the imagination and sets up within us a reaction of acceptance of our surroundings and dulls our senses.

These points are easy to argue and we can conjure many reasons for lack of interest on our surroundings. It is also true that our surroundings are dull, unimaginative, thoroughly bad, meaningless, and, certainly for those of us who are sensitive to form, not worth looking at. I think instinctively, this is the general reaction to the most of our man made environments. Our long straight streets, on the grid plan are dull —there is no relief. Paris has its long, straight streets, but there is relief, visually. I do not mean to imply that we cannot make straight streets interesting; we can, but only with great regard to building forms, interspersed with relief in varying forms, color, lights, shadow and height and scale. All these points are forgotten in the American street.

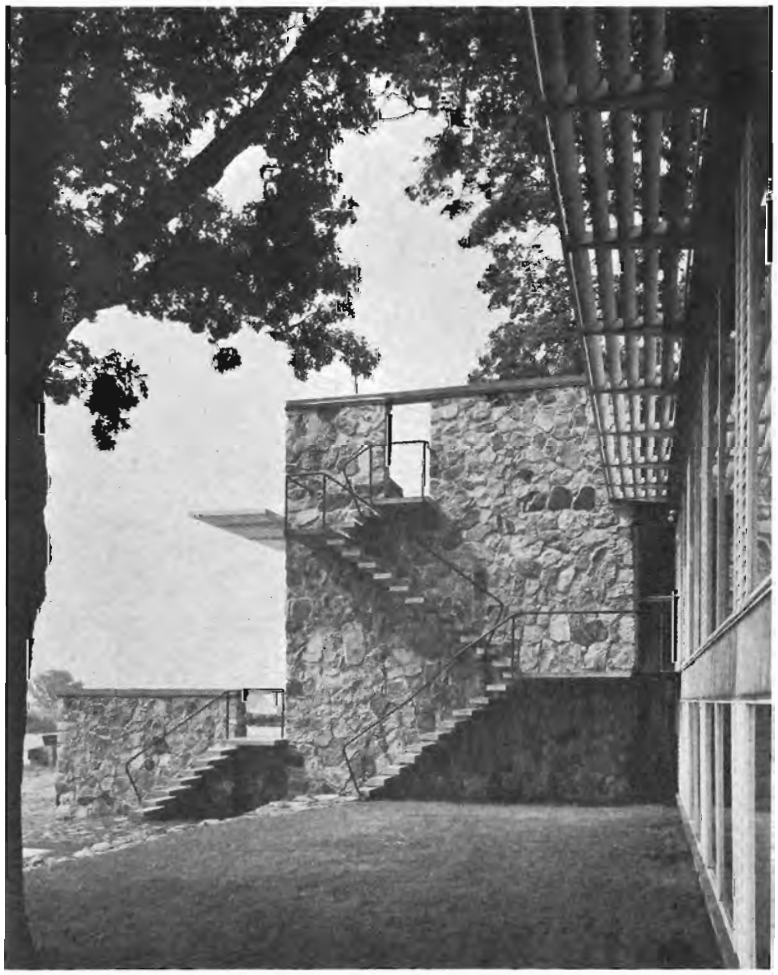
The fault, I believe, is largely ours— we architects, for we are responsible— and irresponsible. The better we are as architects the bigger the commissions we seek; we neglect horribly the little

commission, and the street, and the city is made up of little commissions. When the city does not flourish, in part because of our neglect, we sing sad songs about the death of cities.

The building form itself is an abstraction, just as music is an abstraction and even language is an abstraction. The spoken word is ephemeral and dies with the speaking; music is the same, and dies with the playing. In each of these cases, however, the content and form can be written and can be spoken or played again and again. Of all the art forms language is the most exact. The slightest deviation or inflection in voice carries precise meaning in language, and is generally, universally understood. Next comes music—its flow of sound is not so precise as language, and lends itself therefore to broader interpretation by the intellect. Painting too follows, somewhat similar to music with the flow and interpretation of form and color not too precise, but stimulating and reaching generally responsive moods in the intelligence. Finally, architecture and building, motivated by a greater width of interpretation—materials—use—form, even so has its accepted general form and interpretation inviting certain uniform responses in us. But these responses are so broad that they provoke opposing viewpoints as in other arts, including literature, but in literature, because of the precise meaning of words, we can quarrel not with the sounds but with the broader concepts of idea. So we must quarrel and have great discussions about

JACK TELANDER HOUSE
HINSDALE, ILLINOIS, 1950

H. GROSSMAN HOUSE
NORTH MUSKEGON, MICHIGAN, 1951

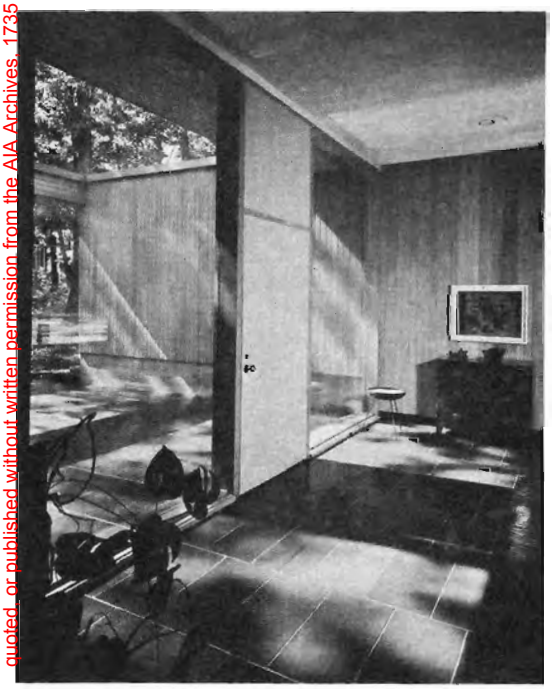


architecture not only among ourselves but with all people, for only in this way can we again bring to all people an understanding of Architecture.

"Architecture, therefore, by reason of its twofold nature, half art, half science, is peculiarly dependent on the tastes and demands of the layman, and whereas in the other arts a neglected genius working in his garret may just conceivably produce a masterpiece, no architect has ever produced anything of lasting significance in the absence of a receptive public.

(1) Osbert Lancaster's Pillar to Post.

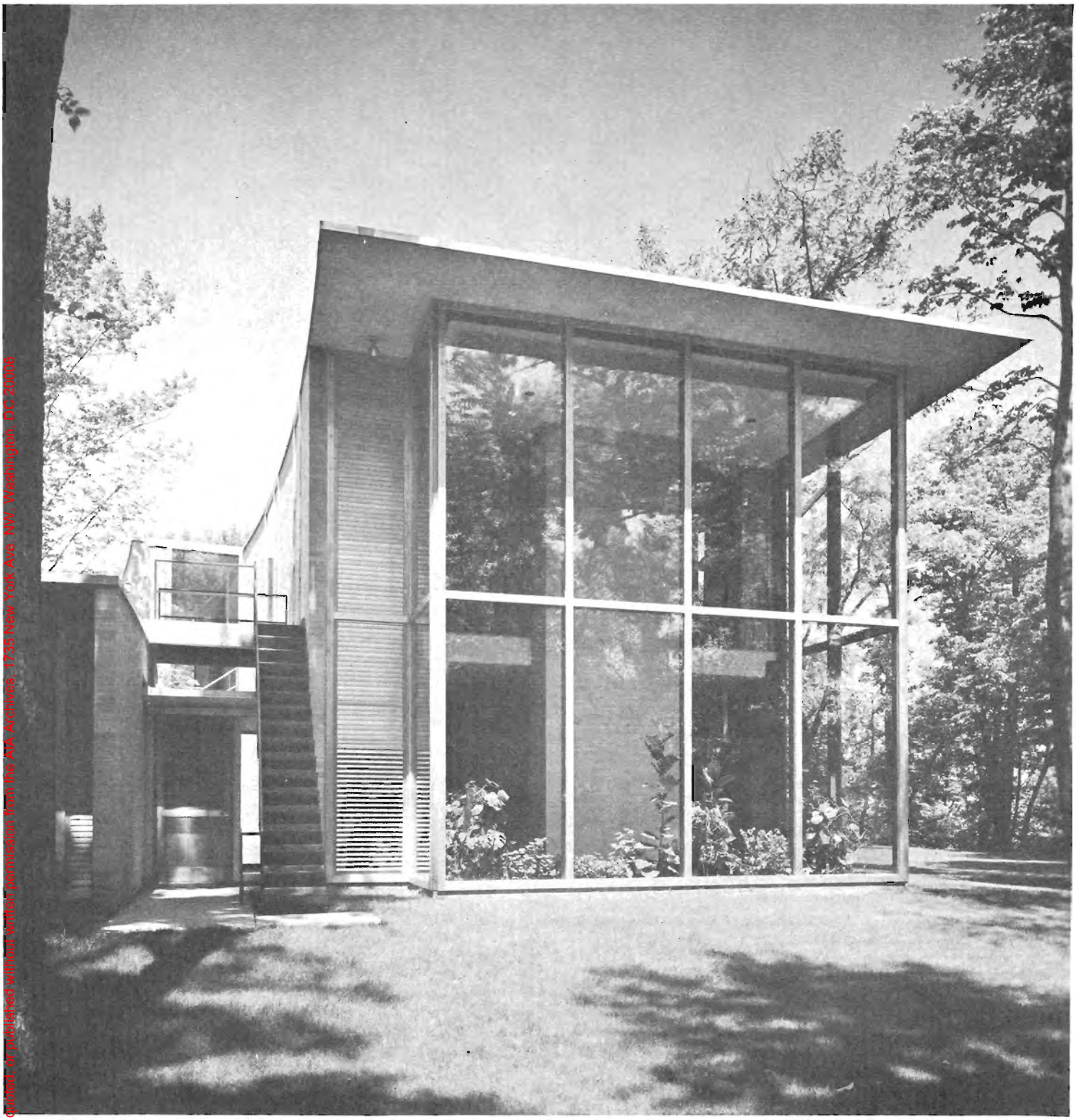
Today architecture is an activity about which the average man cares little and knows less and such views as he may hold are founded not on any personal bias, which might be regrettable but would certainly be excusable, but on a variety of acquired misconceptions. This was not always the case; in the eighteenth century every well-educated man considered himself entitled to express his opinion about the moulding of a cornice or the disposition of a pilaster, and in nine cases out of ten was possessed of sufficient knowledge to lend it weight. But early in the nineteenth century this happy state of affairs came to an end and architecture was removed from the sphere of everyday life and placed under the jealous guardianship of experts and aesthetes. Faith became a substitute for knowledge and very soon



S. KUNSTADTER HOUSE
HIGHLAND PARK, ILLINOIS, 1951

the ordinary person came to consider architecture in the same light as higher mathematics or Hegelian philosophy; as something which he could never hope properly to understand and possessed of a scale of values that he must take on trust. With the advent of Mr. Ruskin, whose distinction it was to express in prose of incomparable grandeur thought of an unparalleled confusion, this divorce from reality became complete, and in less than no time the whole theory of architecture had become hopelessly confounded with morals, religion and a great many other things with which it had not the least connection; while its practice went rapidly to pot."(1)

Form not only follows function, but in our architecture it also follows desire and ambition too. How many of you know the little hill town of San Gimingnano, near Siena, in Italy? A medieval walled town, it was originally a town of towers about 57 in all; today about 13 survive. No ambitious nobleman could build his tower higher than the village hall tower however. These towers are somewhat similar to the towers often seen in other Italian towns such as Bologna or Rappallo. Our cities today follow much the same pattern for the same reasons with no city hall to hold them down. Today it's Chrysler, or Foshay or what not that dominates the centrum of the town. Downtown Minneapolis, seen at sundown from the Campus, is the same city built by men whose interests haven't changed much from the middle ages. And we can



read these thoughts and ambitions in the architecture and see and know.

If much of our architecture and building is trash, well, a lot of people like to read trash. If its design has virtues, such virtues will become apparent to the intelligent observer. Any architectural design has value aesthetically and practically in direct proportion to the effort and talent expended upon it. In this respect again it does not differ from the other art form we know and enjoy. If we describe a poem as having rhythm, cadences, musical sounds, body and inspiration, these same words can be and are used to describe buildings.

I wish that we had architectural critics who would write columns in the papers about our buildings. We have them in the other art forms—plays, concerts, art shows, books, all are discussed by people and writers competent to analyze and revolve them. We do have a few architectural critics and some few historians. I, myself, am always anxious to read what Lewis Mumford has to say about architecture, either in his books or his critical articles in the New Yorker and elsewhere, and I am sure that well organized criticism will have a wide audience and stimulate among people an interest in an art they do not as a rule think of as such.

It is reasonable to suppose at this stage of our building industry, our young aggressive instincts are too intent upon the dissatisfaction with existing forms (perhaps also, because many such forms are trash and of no permanent value)

E. McC. BLAIR HOUSE
LAKE BLUFF, ILLINOIS, 1955

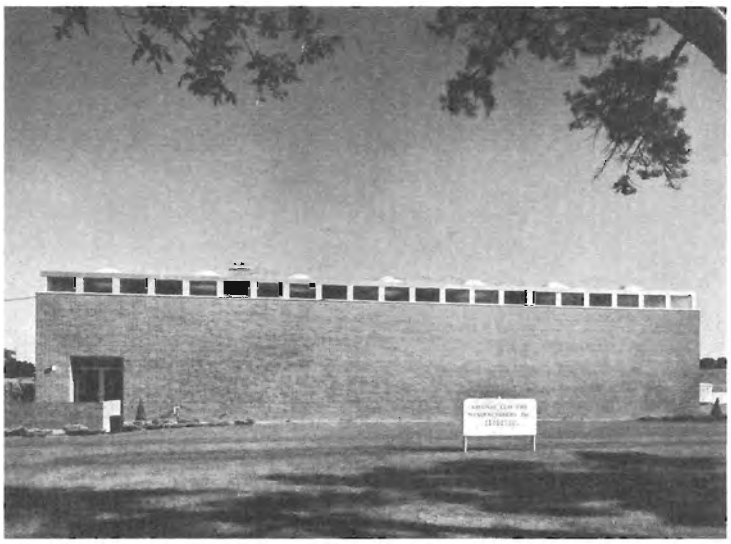
that the periodic tearing down and the rebuilding of our cities is desirable. And it is also necessary, for we are in a rising curve of modern life, whose needs are constantly expanding. So the stories of our cities change with us and with our needs and desires. If our city streets today read differently than they did in the past, it is only that we too read differently than we have in the past.

There is a tremendous vitality and interest in architecture today. It is receiving much more attention than it ever has in the past, and, although much is bad, the general trend is upward. We must remember that the changing cycle in architecture is a slow one and we must all be patient. Many of us have seen the slow painful death of an architecture that should never have been born; I think we can look with confidence to a new youthful architecture that, to be sure, makes many mistakes, but is headed in a direction that will bring fantastic results.

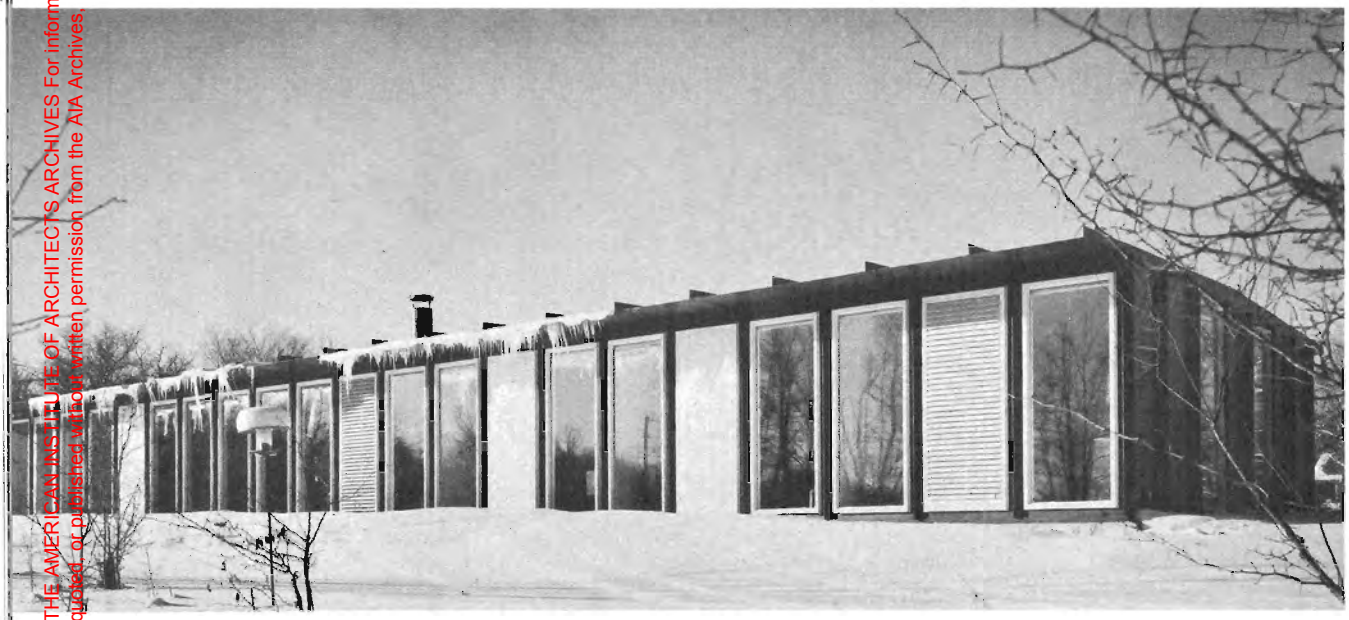
It is interesting to note that architects have often invited scholars in disciplines other than their own to give us their viewpoints. It gives us a chance to glance over their shoulders and observe how they are meeting the complicated problems of our generation, and gives us some of their findings. If we learn that their problems are ours, as we probably will, it is only that we are all a part of the human tradition, and are grappling with different aspects of what is essentially the same problem—our common heritage and destiny.

PIONEER CO-OP
1952

NATIONAL CLAY PIPE MANUFACTURERS, INC.
1957



DR. EDWARD ISAACSON HOUSE, HIGHLAND PARK, ILLINOIS, 1961



For purposes of simplification, let me state that we are living today on a curve of geometrical progression, and we are now at a point on that curve where the numbers are large. Every time they are doubled or squared we are startled. We have given this condition a name—we call it an explosion. I heard Professor Burnham Kelly quoted the other day by Carl Koch as saying that in the next 30 years we will build as much as we ever had; and Dr. Oppenheimer says that we are now doubling scientific knowledge every ten years, and he quotes Professor Purcell of Harvard that 90% of all scientists are alive. And Professor Phil Hauser of Chicago also startles us periodically with his population forecasts. But it's in Dr. Oppenheimer's field where the imagination truly takes hold—the squaring of the speed of light! But under such conditions Nature produces Univacs to deal with the problems.

And since we have been given to understand that complete change can come within the scope of one lifetime, we are confronted seriously then with planned obsolescence. It is here, except in one category as we architects know it, and that is that we must change to the planning of it as something that is good. The 'one hoss shay' can collapse when its life span is up, say when the final mortgage payment is made. But while it is with us it must be not a half-hearted design and plan, but a staggeringly beautiful 'one hoss shay,' one which we can truly be proud to have and to use, just as nature's ephemera, immensely

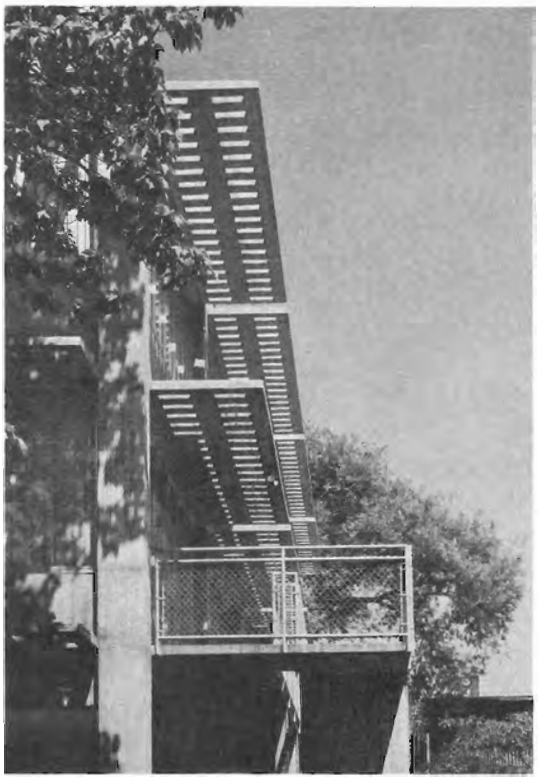
MILTON HIRSCH HOUSE, HIGHLAND PARK, ILLINOIS, 1962

complicated little organisms, are built to exist just for one day!

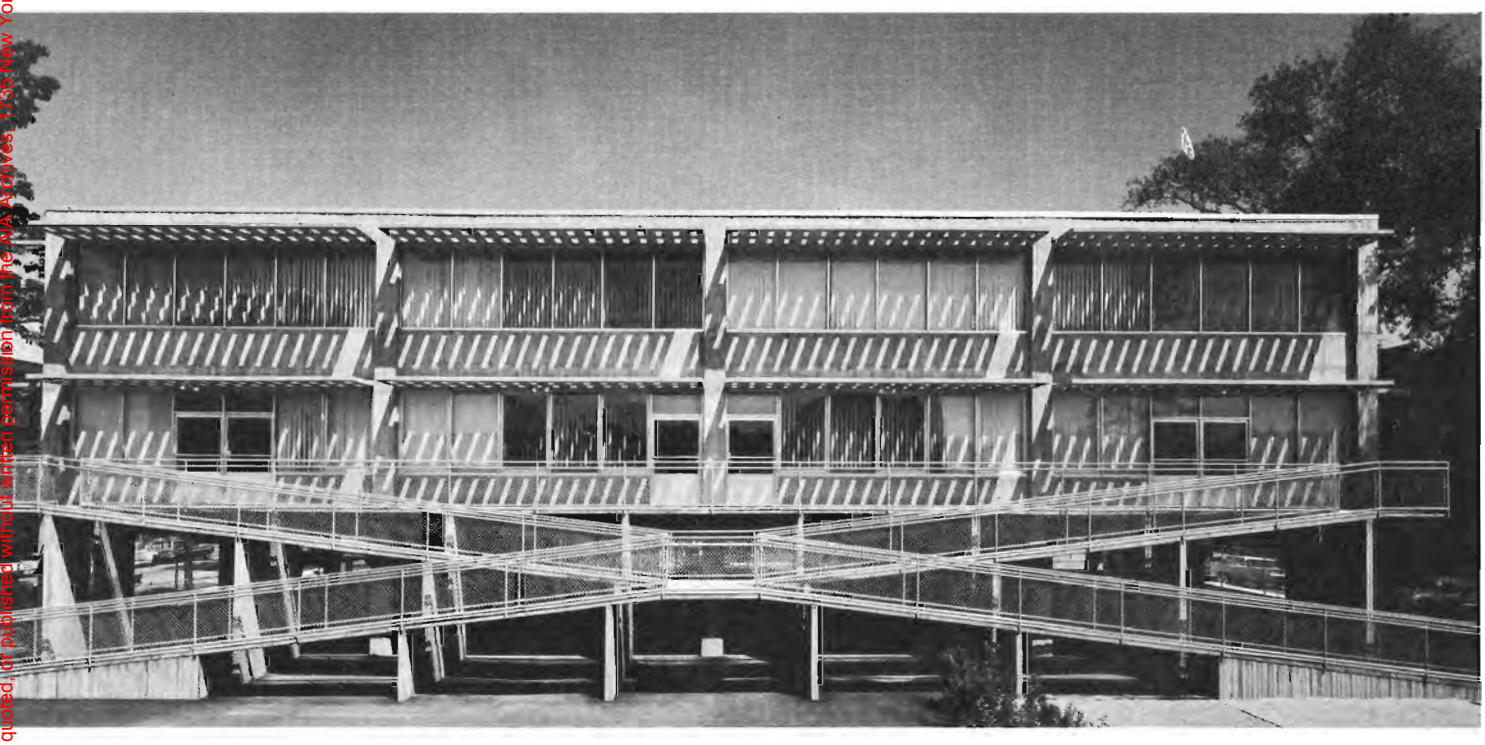
One point talked about in science—"are the things that are discovered there, or are they improvised or invented?"—would be of interest to us. The same question might be asked of new architectural forms. And the answer is, of course, that they are there or they would not be discovered in science obtains equally with architectural design. And it is reasonable to make the assumption that there are as many variations in the one as the other. And that you do not necessarily have to know, for one approach, much of what another is doing for another and that the two need not be related at all. It is conceivable that scientific analysis here is approaching and analyzing what architects call creative spirit; which once being analyzed can be dealt with accurately as a phenomenon, rather than the vague terms we have been accustomed to use.

The implications of great changes in our culture have, of course, expressed themselves in our achitectural forms. Many have been emperical and instinctive. As we have seen, this might become non-positive. And in our architectural schools the end products have changed, if the curriculum has not—that is, not too much. There is, of course, much discussion about these points among educators and scholars, even as in the other disciplines. And there is much fumbling. Such changes may overwhelm a mature man, but the younger man, born into such a structure, can meet them with more confidence.

Architecture, then, part science, part



CHILD CARE SOCIETY
CHICAGO, ILLINOIS, 1963



art, is torn in many directions. These two matters alone make it a complicated business. The end result of architecture should have practical meaning and use, and should at the same time be beautiful. And it often requires, as Dean Hudnut has pointed out when he calls architecture a democratic art, opinions and decisions of many people.

Perhaps architecture can become the catalyst that will bend the seeming irreconcilable elements and the imbalance and help precipitate a homogeneous new balance that society so sorely needs.

I propose then, that we bend our common efforts to deal with the task of bringing architecture to the level science has achieved. To bring it to a plane that will stagger the imagination, fill us with awe and wonderment, to reach a level of beauty for men to live by and to strive for, to occupy our leisure and time, to round out our lives, and to fill our hearts and our intellects.

The arts and the sciences in the 15th and 16th Century of the Renaissance were able to achieve this goal. It was the welding of these that formed the great tradition which inspired the world for hundreds of years. To achieve this balance today is the task of the artist. This then is our heavy, difficult and noble responsibility.

From the News Bureau
University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign
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URBANA, Ill. -- William and George Fred Keck, partners in the Chicago architectural firm of Keck and Keck, have been named to receive the first Illinois Medal in Architecture given by the University of Illinois architecture department.

The award was established to honor senior alumni of the department who have achieved unusual distinction in the field. The bronze medal, designed by sculptor Robert Youngman of the art and design faculty, will be presented to the Keck brothers in formal ceremonies next fall.

Announcement of the honor was made April 23 at the department's annual awards dinner, at which William Keck was a guest.

George Fred Keck graduated from Illinois in 1920, established his own firm in 1926, and was joined by William, class of 1931, the year after his graduation from Illinois.

The brothers pioneered the use of passive solar technology, building their first solar home in 1940.

(MORE--Illinois Medal)

Their firm has received many national, state and local awards for such designs as the Kunstadter and Hirsch houses, Highland Park; Blair house, Lake Bluff, and the Chicago Housing Authority's Prairie Courts.

The Edward Morehouse residence, Madison, Wis., designed in 1936-37, was designated a City Landmark in 1974, and the Kecks' own home, a cooperative apartment building at 5551 University Ave., Chicago, was named a Chicago Landmark in 1960.

The brothers' earliest designs, the House of Tomorrow and the Crystal House, were show-stoppers at the 1933-34 Chicago World's Fair.

Their work has been exhibited at Cooper Union, New York City; Museum of Contemporary Art and Time-Life Building, Chicago, and elsewhere.

In addition, George Fred is a well-known artist whose watercolors are in the permanent collections of the Art Institute of Chicago and the Elvehjem Art Center of the University of Wisconsin.

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