

THE OCTAGON

A Journal of The American Institute of Architects

Thomas Rogers Kimball

Past President of The American Institute of Architects

1862—1934

✓ An Appreciation

THOMAS R. KIMBALL, or "Tom" as he was known to all of us, deserved well of The American Institute of Architects, for to it he devoted many of the best years of his life, and to its best interests gave freely of his most mature thought, his personal time, and, when money was needed, he spent unstintingly. The story of the Press of The A. I. A., if it ever is fully told, will be a chronicle of Tom Kimball's unselfish leadership, and his generous and loyal support of those whom he trusted and in whom he believed.

He was born in Cincinnati, but came with his parents to Omaha while still a boy. He studied in the public schools, the University of Nebraska, the Massachusetts Institute of Technology and the Cowles Art School in Boston. He then went abroad, and studied in Paris under various tutors, notably the great painter Harpignies. His active career began with a brief association with the publishing firm of Bates and Guild, Boston, for whom, among other books, he prepared and edited a special edition of Vignola. In Boston he met and married Miss Annie McPhail, herself an artist and musician of unusual ability.

An early acquaintance with C. Howard Walker ripened into friendship, and the architectural firm of Walker, Kimball and Best was organized, with Mr. Kimball in active charge of a "branch office" in Omaha. As "Walker and Kimball" the firm continued until 1899, and the architectural success of the Trans-Mississippi Exposition in 1898 was due to the ability and talent of these two men. Mr. Kimball was architect-in-chief for the project; and the facts that the buildings were built within the time allotted, that their cost was less than his estimate, and that the exposition paid out in full were practical bits of history in which he took some "pardonable pride."

In 1899 the partnership with Howard Walker was dissolved by mutual consent, and Mr. Kimball practiced alone from that time until 1928, when the firm of Kimball, Steele and Sandham was

organized. Mr. Kimball joined The American Institute of Architects in 1900, was elected a Fellow in 1901, and served as its President during the years 1918-1920. His Post-War Committee undertook a great and much needed work in preparing the membership for the great changes that were in store. Is it too much to suggest that seeds of loyalty to professional ideals were sown by the calm self-appraisals that then were made and which have been bearing fruit ever since?

Mr. Kimball's conception of the meaning of the term "professional" was lofty and idealistic. In his zeal for the preservation of the professional spirit in the face of the rising tide of materialistic commercialism he was a prime mover in the founding of the Inter-Professional Club, now the Inter-Professional Institute. He was this organization's first President.

Mr. Kimball was an able architect, and among his contemporaries, one of the comparatively few who always practiced architecture in three dimensions. He saw his buildings from their first inception, not as flat drawings but as actual structures. He was well grounded in fundamentals and abhorred sham and pretense. He made distinctions always in favor of the truly organic and functional as against the bizarre and merely experimental. His original and active mind was well disciplined, and so he produced buildings of correct architectural grammar and syntax that were always functionally adequate, interesting in form and often beautiful. He was versatile, and had a command of the artist's media of expression (pencil, charcoal, pen-and-ink, water-color) that is rarely surpassed. He loved activity and was busy with his various "hobbies" up to the time of his last illness.

Time and space are lacking for even a bare list of Mr. Kimball's accomplishments, but the picture would not be a just one were it forgotten what a true friend he was. Much as he loved to draw and paint, deeply as he revelled in outdoor life, keenly as he delighted in debate, his greatest joy was doing some friend a service. No one will ever

know, unless by a Last Judgment revelation, all the sacrifices, the kindnesses, the thoughtfulness that his friends enjoyed at his hands. He was

above all his other gifts, a wise and kindly man whose ambition was wholeheartedly bound up with those whom he loved.

✓ WILLIAM L. STEELE.

✓ A Personal Tribute

A GREAT spirit—one of the greatest in our profession—has passed on. Our loss, through his passing, is atoned for in a measure, however, by the rich heritage of rugged, honest courage which he has left to us. I loved "T. R.," as we called him and I shall cherish the memory of him always as one of the sweetest memories I can hope to have. I know that he got "mad" at me sometimes; such an individual as "T. R." could never find everything that anybody did altogether to his liking. But he was one of those rare grand men of whom it might be said that "it is an honor to have him mad at you." There are precious few of us who can say when we go on—as Tom Kimball certainly could say—"I

have never wavered one hair's breadth from the straight and honest path of fearless idealism." For he had the highest ideals, both human and professional, and he held to them through thick and thin. What a thrill it was to sit beside him at Institute Conventions and to see—and hear—him "boil" when some of his fine ideals were being trodden in the dust of materialistic propoganda by one or another of those to whose eyes our cherished professional ideals show but dimly. It was a rare experience to know "T. R."; it was an even rarer privilege, and a great inspiration too, to love him. I knew him and loved him and I shall cherish his memory always.

✓ HARRY F. CUNNINGHAM.

✓ Survey of Institute Affairs

THE following analyses have been printed in THE OCTAGON.

In July, "What is an Architect"; "The Architects and The Institute"; and "The Architects Can Take It."

In August, "The Schools and The Students"; "The Question of Fees"; and "The Rules of The Game."

In September, "A Need for Making Friends"; "Institute Documents"; and "Where to Meet."

In this number appear analyses with respect to

"THE OCTAGON as Others See It"; "What Kind of an Institute?" and "The Future of This Profession of Ours."

This completes the publication of the returns on those subjects which are suitable for publication.

If you are interested in this cross-section of Institute opinion it is suggested that you glance over the series, and consider the desirability of discussing at a chapter meeting some of the evidence which has been submitted with respect to the practice of architecture, and the architectural profession.

✓ THE OCTAGON AS OTHERS SEE IT

THIS ANALYSIS BY DIRECTOR DAVID J. WITMER

The Octagon

The synopsis read: "THE OCTAGON" is intended to be an official bulletin from the Institute to its members. It goes to all Members, Associates, Juniors, Honorary and Honorary corresponding Members, and an exchange list—a total of 4200 copies each month. In 1933 it cost the Institute \$4,520.80, of which \$3,523.47 was for printing and mailing, and \$997.33 for overhead at The Octagon. Since the discontinuance of the *Annuary*, and *Proceedings*, "THE OCTAGON" is the only direct contact between the Institute and its members—except the bills for dues.

Of the 300 questioned, the numbers responding on this subject, in whole or in part, was 226

Question: (a) What do you think of THE OCTAGON as an organization bulletin?

Returns: 75 said excellent or very good.
126 said satisfactory or good.
8 said unsatisfactory.
2 said poor, or worse.

Question: (b) Is it interesting or uninteresting?

Returns: 199 said interesting.
14 said uninteresting.

Question: (c) Does it serve the purpose for which it is intended?

Returns: 192 said it serves the purpose intended.
5 said it does not serve the purpose intended.