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Kansas City Chapter

Historical Sketch

~~HISTORY OF THE KANSAS CITY CHAPTER, A.I.A.~~

The need for organization among the architects in Kansas City was first felt in 1882 and at that time was first formed the Kansas City Society of Architects with the late A. B. Gross as president and F. B. Hamilton as secretary. This primary organization, however, showed little activity and was gradually lost sight of until April, 11, 1885, when a meeting of several architects was held at the Centropolis Hotel and the society was revived and reorganized with F. B. Hamilton as president, and E. F. Fassett as secretary and about twenty members. Its principal work in this first year of its active existence was the fathering of a building ordinance for the city and the agitation for the appointment of a public inspector of plumbing.

It is very interesting to note that at this time the Kansas City Society of Architects had its own meeting rooms, maintained a library of current professional periodicals, a permanent exhibition of building materials and held weekly meetings.

The Society became a Chapter of the Missouri State Association of Architects in 1887 and continued as such until 1891, when the State Association was dissolved.

In 1888 was held, under the auspices of the Society, the first exhibition of architectural drawings at the Kansas City Exposition.

Among the activities of the Society in its early years were also an attempt to bring about a standardization of measurements of building materials and the very laudable one of going into the merits of controversies between its members and their clients before taking such controversies to court.

In October, 1890, the Kansas City Society of Architects was reorganized as the Kansas City Chapter of the American Institute of Architects, with the late W. F. Hackney as president and James Oliver Hogg as secretary. The Chapter, though active for a time, began to lose life and partly owing to the very hard times coming on and partly to the difficulties in procuring a charter from the American Institute, it practically suspended activities in 1895.

In the first week of 1898 the Chapter was again called together and for a few years showed considerable life, being particularly active in promoting architects' license legislation. The Chapter now had no regular meeting place, but in 1901, after the organization of the Kansas City Architectural Club, the Chapter became a sub-tenant of the club rooms. The Kansas City Architectural Club was composed of the younger architects and draftsmen and the Chapter at one time instituted competitions for the members of the club, but little interest developed in these.

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Upon the disorganization of the Kansas City Architectural Club in 1905 the Chapter was again without a home and met at the homes of its various members. During these years two very successful exhibitions were held. The Chapter was again becoming inactive and very indifferent as an organization. Its membership had been between fifteen and twenty-five for more than twenty years and in 1911 the organization was almost dead.

About this time, a year or so ago, the younger men in the Chapter took hold, a vigorous campaign for members was begun, the membership nearly doubled and the chapter has become a potent factor in local happenings as well as an effective representative of the profession. It was the leading instigator in the fight for decency in the State Capitol competition and the successful outcome of this fight was a great triumph.

The season has just been closed with a banquet and most entertaining meeting, when nearly all the members were present, and later with an exhibition which was by far the best of its kind ever held in Kansas City and perhaps in the West.

The Chapter now has forty-three members and shares the rooms of the Fine Arts Institute as its home.

Ben J. Lubschez.