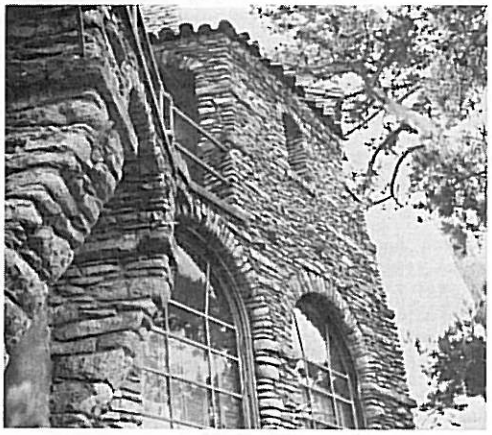
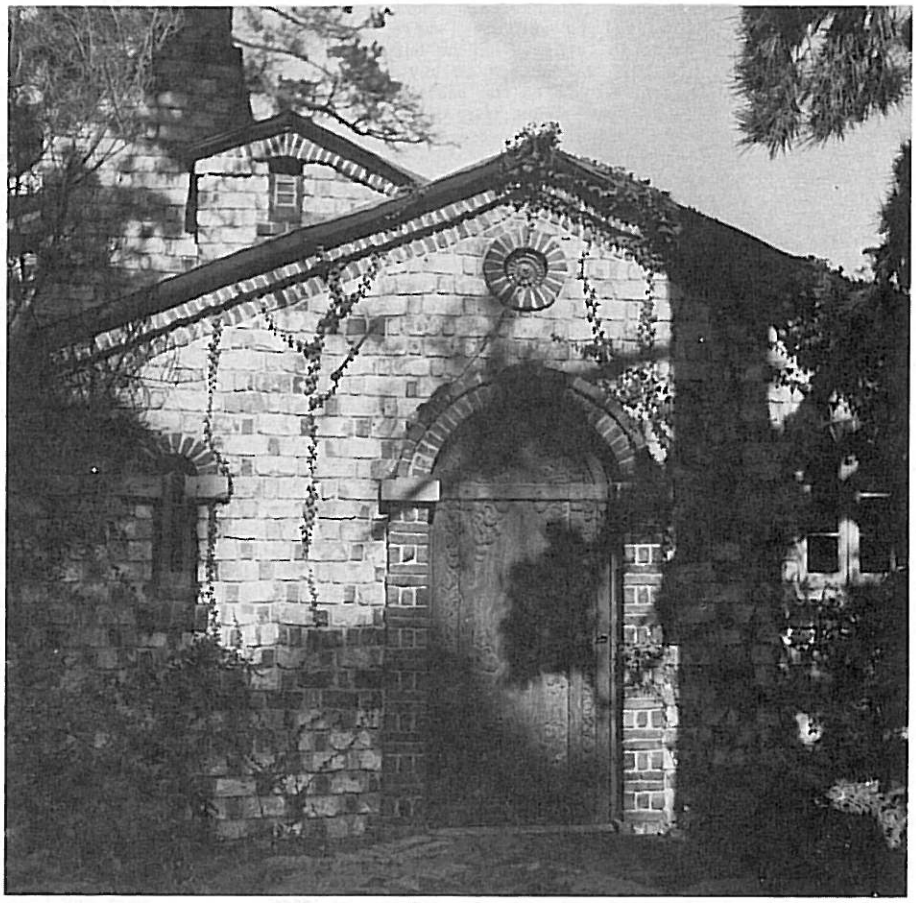
Society of Architectural Historians
Southern California Chapter

Review





Top: D.L. James House, 1918, Carmel, Greene & Greene; Bottom: James House Library addition, 1941–50, Charles Greene; Right: Charles Greene's Studio, 1923, Carmel [Esther McCoy photos]

CHARLES GREENE'S PRESENCE

by Esther McCoy

I went to see Charles Greene's studio in Carmel in 1958, a year after his death. I took full notes, transcribed them and put them in the file; I was working on Maybeck at the time so the notes were forgotten until I came across them last year. Now I have pieced them together.

The studio was a brick building close to the street, and at the back was a redwood board and batten house Greene had built for the family in 1920. The house was a U-plan with rooms lined up, one deep, each with its own door to a gallery running around the three sides of the front, and a door to a terrace on the back. The main entrance was at the bar of the U, with bedroom wings on both sides.

The morning was chilly and the house, of single wall construction, was cold. The proportions of the long living room were gracious, and despite the low cost there was an elegant fireplace with marble hearth and mantel. Around the fireplace were framed watercolors, one of Florence, Italy by Greene, one of the door of the Carmel Mission signed by L.C. Mulgardt to Greene.

Mrs. Greene opened the door to me. She wore a woolen dress and scarf, and I noticed the flour on her hands as she brushed back her unruly hair. She said she would unlock the studio for me as soon as she finished making bread. When I continued to look at the living room she said, "Oh, it was never finished. The walls and the open ceiling were supposed to be paneled in wood. We moved in before it was done, then my husband did the James house, and then it was his studio." She had kept some of her soft Derbyshire accent, and her eyes were gentle no matter how sharp her comments. When we went to the kitchen four cats and one dachshund followed us.

Neo-Classical styles prevented the easy acceptance of concrete on its own merits. In an age of conspicuous architectural display, academicism, and love of ornament, Victorians frowned upon unfinished, unveneered, unplastered, untiled, concrete surfaces. Andre Lucat observed: "Every discovery of a new building method, or a new medium of construction, implies the abandonment of pre-existing values." (21)

At the beginning of the twentieth century, movements such as Art Nouveau made a clearly-defined and conscious attempt to evolve new styles in the arts entirely independent of tradition. At a later date, the Bauhaus synthesized technology and art, encouraging the use of machine-made products and cooperation between architects, designers, and engineers. Concrete was often heralded as a new building material for the emerging technological age. Unfortunately, practitioners of movements such as the International Style of Architecture, with its emphasis on volume, regularity of plain surfaces, and new materials, often failed to utilize concrete in new ways. They rationally expressed the material by ignoring its plasticity. (22) Cement and concrete were treated like stucco, as a covering to express a sense of purism, austerity, and machine-like functionalism. Concrete did not serve to convey anything new learned from technology, as much as it was used to define its limitations; i.e., those boundaries to which its plasticity should be confined. (23) Many of the developments in concrete construction were, in reality, aimed at the very negation of all those scientific advances which were creating the modern world.

Concrete has taken a circuitously long and frustrating road to achieve architectural acceptance. With no other building material have the limits imposed by technical means been so demanding, nor has creative expression been so dependent upon physical laws. Concrete's future is still unknown. ■

NOTES

(1) Genesis 11:3 (New American Standard Bible, 1973).

(2) Oxford English Dictionary, eds. James A. H. Murray et al., Vol. II, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1970), p. 216.

(3) Lime was formed by burning chalk or limestone at 900°c. (1652°) to convert it into quicklime.

(4) F.M. Lea, The Chemistry of Cement and Concrete (London: Edward Arnold, 1970), p. 2.

(5) Marion E. Blake, Ancient Roman Construction in Italy (Washington: Carnegie Institute of Washington, 1947), p. 311.

(6) Heinrich Nissen, Pompeianisch Studies Zur Stadtekunde des Altertums, (Leipsiz: Breitkopf unt Hortel, 1877), pp. 44-48.

(7) Blake, Ancient Construction, p. 331.

(8) See William MacDonald, The Pantheon, Design, Meaning and Progeny (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1976), pp. 33-34.

(9) Henry J. Cowan, The Master Builders (New York: John Wiley & Sons, 1977).

(10) J. B. Ward-Perkins, "The Architecture of Rome and Constantinople," The Listener, Vol. LVI, No. 1551 (November 8, 1956), p. 748.

(11) Rowland Mainstone, "The Structure of the Church of St. Sophia Istanbul," Newcomen Society Transactions, Vol. V, 38, 1965-1966, pp. 48-9.

(12) Dr. Ing. Riepert, Die Deutsche Zement Industria, (Charlottenburg, 1927).

(13) Friedrich Quietmeyer, Zur Geschichte Der Erfindung des Portland-zementes (Berlin: Tonindustrie-Zeitung, 1915).

(14) John Fitchen, The Construction of Gothic Cathedrals: A Study of Medieval Vault Erection (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1961), p. 65.

(15) W. B. Parsons, Engineers and Engineering in the Renaissance (Cambridge: M.I.T. Press, 1967), p. 592.

(16) J. Bernouille, "Vertable hypothese de la Resistance des Solids avec La Demonstration de la Courbure des corps qui font ressoit," Memoires de L'academie Royale des Sciences (1705), pp. 176-186.

(17) Rowland Mainstone, Developments in Structural Form (London: Hazell, Watson & Viney, Ltd., 1975), p. 47.

(18) John Smeaton, Edystone Lighthouse, A Narrative of the Building and a Description of the Construction of the Edystone Lighthouse with Stone, (London: H. Hughes, 1791).

(19) L. E. Copeland, "The Chemistry of Concrete," Scientific America, Vol. 210, No. 4 (April 1964), 81.

(20) Hans Straub, A History of Civil Engineering. Trans. by Erwin Rockwell. (Cambridge: M.I.T. Press, 1964).

(21) Andre Lurcat, Architecture (Paris: Au Sans Pareil, 1929), p. 41.

(22) Peter Collins, Concrete: Vision of a New Architecture. (London: Faber & Faber, 1959).

(23) William H. Jordy, "The Symbolic Essence of Modern European Architecture of the Twenties and its Continuing Influence," The Journal of Architectural Historians, Vol. XXII, No. 3 (October 1963), 177-187.

BOOK REVIEW

● THE ARCHITECTURE OF LOS ANGELES

By Paul Gleye
In Collaboration with The Los Angeles Conservancy, Julius Shulman, and Bruce Boehner

THE ARCHITECTURE OF LOS ANGELES is neither a definitive, scholarly history of our architecture, nor the ultimate "coffee-table" book illustrative of that history, but is, rather, a work which seeks to move in the direction of each goal to a modest degree, and succeeds all the better because of that modesty. We can applaud it not only for its own achievement as a pioneering work, but also for the inspiration it offers to further efforts along both lines.

The division of the subject matter into chapters and the number of pages allotted to each is instructive: Spanish and Mexican periods, 18 pages; early American period, 18 pages; Queen Anne and Craftsman periods, 26 pages; Mission, Spanish and other Mediterranean revivals, 20 pages; Beaux-Arts and Neoclassical and exotic revivals, 20 pages; Moderne (including "Art Deco" or Zig-Zag, and Streamline) and Programmatic styles, 22 pages; "Modern" and International styles, 20 pages; and recent trends. It will at once be apparent that unusual success has been achieved in balancing the coverage of the major stylistic developments in our architecture over the last two hundred years.

In one respect, however, THE ARCHITECTURE OF LOS ANGELES is a period piece of the early Eighties. Chapter 7, on the International style and its precursors, devotes 13 pages to its residential applications and only 7 to the nonresidential applications. Not long ago, we might have expected to find an entire chapter in a survey like this devoted to Gill, Frank Lloyd Wright, Schindler, Neutra, the Case Study homes, and the like. In future such works, the relative emphasis given to International-style residences will probably be even less, since, whatever their interest as academic exercises in architecture may be, their impact on the cityscape has been negligible, as Mr. Gleye comes close to admitting. Meanwhile, the impact, good or bad, of the

evidence of a more tenacious mortar borrowed from the Romans, and in some areas molten lead is used. There is also evidence of bonding timbers in the brickwork of the upper walls of Hagia Sophia, and several iron ties are found across the vaults of the aisles and galleries. This suggests that the ancients knew something about the problems of stress under tension as well as compression, and they used metal to solve these problems. Some historians even assert that the iron and bronze clamps were used in the same way as those of modern reinforcement. The difference between the Roman Pantheon and the Hagia Sophia is that the enormous thickness required at the base of the former has been replaced by the almost uniform thickness of that of Hagia Sophia's. Once Roman concrete dried, it was inert. With brick and mortar construction, the antithesis of monolithic concrete was reached. Bricks and mortar incorporated a more complex system which depended on an equilibrium of forces with their strengths and resistances to each other. In spite of the fact that as yet the laws of static equilibrium for forces were not known until the seventeenth century, these sixth-century architect-engineers were putting practical geometric proportioning to work.

We know that the Romans carried their knowledge of the preparation of hydraulic mortars with them to the more remote parts of their empire. In order for these traditions to have persisted throughout the Medieval period (in spite of a general waning in the use of concrete), certain important essentials would have had to be present: The geographic presence of clayish limestone; the knowledge of Roman practices in mixing proper proportions of the required elements; skilled workmen; the desire to construct and design architecture utilizing concrete; and the necessity of overcoming established building traditions in wood employed in colder climates. Because there were few written records during this time, it is difficult to follow accurately the route of concrete. Subsequent accounts by architects in Europe and England as late as the eighteenth century reveal their reliance on ancient building traditions. There is evidence that along the Danube and Rhine rivers an extensive trade was established in the production of hydraulic cement learned by the Germans after the Romans had left. (12) After the ninth and tenth century, Viking raids in Europe subsided. The Hansa League was organized by Germanic merchants who may have transported building materials for use in harbors and waterworks in Northern Europe. In Holland, trass was mined, a material resembling Roman puzzolana. (13) Throughout Europe generally, chalk, limestone, shells, and corals were burned, slacked and mixed with sand and water. This combination was carried up the scaffolds of Medieval buildings and poured bubbling hot into the wall cavities. The mixture was water-soluble, and little wonder that centuries later, the lime-mortar poured out like sawdust when exterior stones were removed. From the twelfth century onward, the quality of the mortar improved in Europe, and by the fourteenth century, its properties were remarkably elevated. While the precise knowledge of ancient Roman mortars and the methods for mixing them had waned, men were constantly reinventing, rediscovering, and relearning old traditions anew.

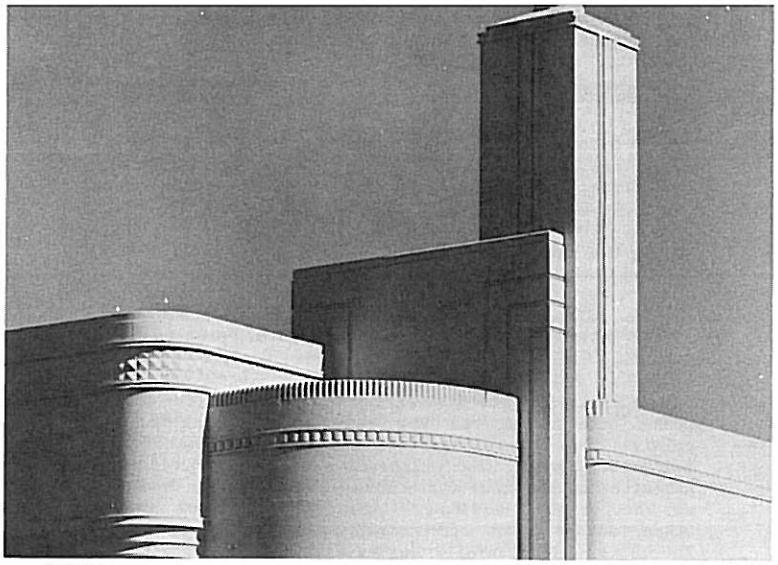
Developments in building which would influence the later history of concrete took place in Northern Europe. Gothic cathedrals provided the inspiration for iron skeleton and reinforced concrete of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Pier Nervi's corrugated shells, and Felix Candela's parabolic vaults stem from the same evolutionary line which began with Hagia Sophia. Like modern thin shells whose curvature is the source of their stiffness, these vaults acted like a stiff crust in which the curvature of the surface accounts for the rigidity and stability of its shape. It is the cohesion of the mortar, after its final set, which makes the shell act as a whole. (14) In spite of the fact that Medieval mortar was generally weaker than Roman mortar, so long as the arc of the structure was maintained, the shell was stiff enough to span a considerable distance and strong enough to support a large load. More than minimum thickness was a detriment rather than an assurance of any additional margin of safety. From Hagia Sophia's dome in the sixth century to the Gothic vaults dating from the twelfth century, shells prove to be a particularly stable form of structure. This progressive development of Medieval vaulting was working toward a structural system which focused forces instead of dispersing them. Before concrete and Gothic vaulting techniques would merge in the nineteenth century, the application of a scientific knowledge of statical theory and the strength of materials would be implicit.

During the Renaissance, Roman building methods were revived. There is evidence that Filippo Brunelleschi may have used a Roman type of mortar in the Dome of the Florence Cathedral in the fifteenth century. (15) More important than the mortar used, however, was the technical problem of constructing a dome spanning a large surface without the attendant knowledge of a building framework based on the laws of statics and the strength of materials. The early Renaissance marks the beginning of an architecture in crisis, from the standpoint of a coherent structural and aesthetic theory. The principal edifice which concentrated attention on the need for a more scientifically derived data was St. Peter's in Rome. A large number of architects attempted to plan and complete the double shell dome, including Michelangelo Buronarotti. Unfortunately, the tension reinforcement proved inadequate, and in 1742-1745, an analysis was made to ascertain the causes of cracks that had appeared in the structure. (16) This investigation resulted in the first application of structural mechanics applied to an architectural problem. Prior to 1742, architectural theory was almost entirely geometrical. 1742 marked a turning point in architectural design in that it was the date of the first recorded and substantially correct analysis of an existing structure in terms of its static equilibrium. (17)

The scientific revolution of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries produced a vigorous interest in more practical building problems. New institutions and academies for the advancement of scientific research were begun. These inquiries resulted in a growing body of published work exchanged by scientists all over Europe. Gradually, men began exploring the chemical properties of Roman cement. When John Smeaton was asked to design and build a lighthouse at Edystone, England, in 1756, almost 2,000 years of darkness regarding concrete's composition was finally illuminated. (18) Ironically, for concrete, the battle for recognition had only begun.

At the time Edystone Lighthouse was completed, cut stone was considered the only respectable building material for better-class homes. Today, it's difficult to realize that in the 1800's concrete was rough, with variegated hues which even the most advanced architect had difficulty accepting. While architects scoffed at the ugly gray material, engineers began utilizing concrete in bridges, dams, foundations, warehouses, docks, and factories. Portland cement was first manufactured in England in 1824, and reinforced concrete developed somewhat later. Chemists in Germany produced a high-strength cement, and tests and specifications clarified many problems formerly associated with the material's early use. All over the world, laboratories and universities published important new facts relevant to cement and concrete. Development of better kilns, new patents, upgraded building codes, correct water ratios, and even publicity explained and encouraged the safe use of concrete. There was still much uncertainty, however, as to the magnitude of the stresses in reinforcing steel and concrete. (19) Questions regarding elasticity, stress, and bending strengths were ascertained. Unfortunately, architects were often not trained in the new scientific fields which required more technical knowledge associated with the utilization of concrete. This was an era that produced a division between architecture and engineering. Applied science moved into the realm of technology and industry, and out of the realm of art. Architects tended to use traditional materials, while engineers were limited only by what structural analysis demanded. (20)

By the end of the nineteenth century, concrete architecture waned, while the many engineering applications increased. Encouraged by the demands of a growing industrial society, concrete became the domain of civil and structural engineers. If architects were ever to regain the use of concrete, the overriding issue would consist of defining concrete's aesthetic role. Few men sensed the freedom that the material's plasticity promised, in contrast to the fashionable historicism of the period. The problems of cost and design of formwork required to translate concrete into



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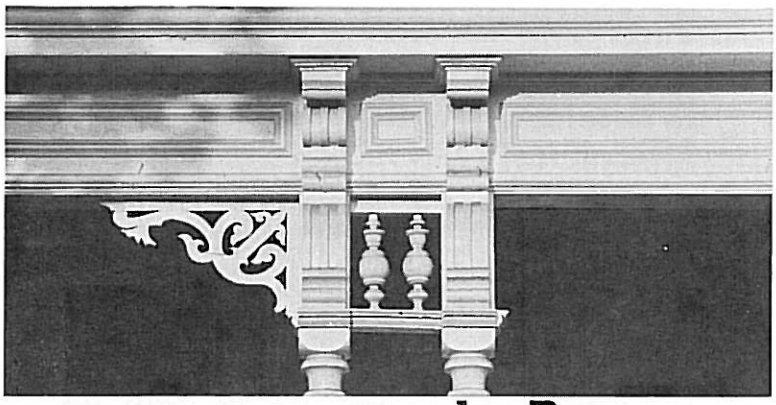

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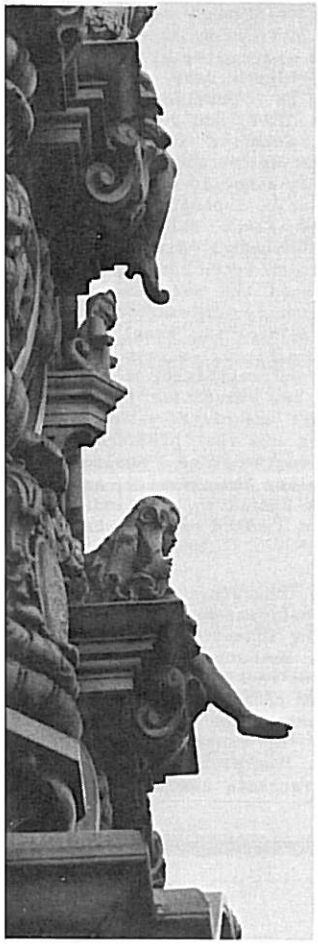
in Detail

by Bruce Boehner



1— Pellissier Bldg./Wiltern Theatre, 3790 Wilshire, LA, Morgan, Walls & Clements Architects, G.A. Lansburgh, Theatre Architect, 1931; 2— I.N. Van Nuys Bldg. Annex, 717 S Spring, LA, Morgan, Walls & Clements, 1930; 3— Central Library, Bertram Goodhue, Architect, Lee Laurie, Sculptor, 1926; 4— Oviatt Building, 617 S Olive, LA, Walker & Eisen, 1928; 5— Paradis House, 1411 Pleasant Ave., LA, c.

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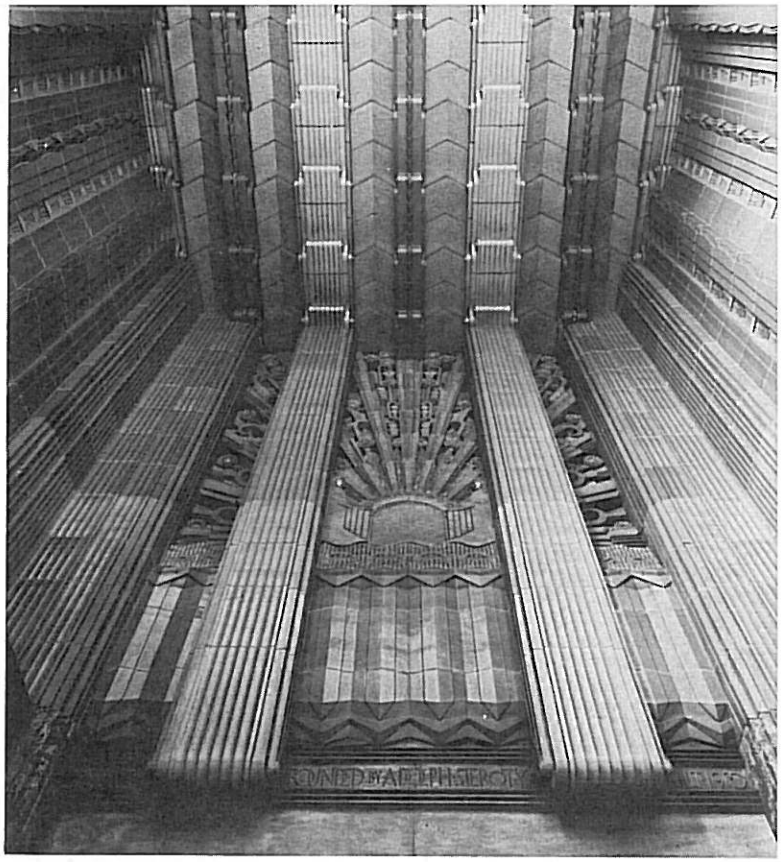

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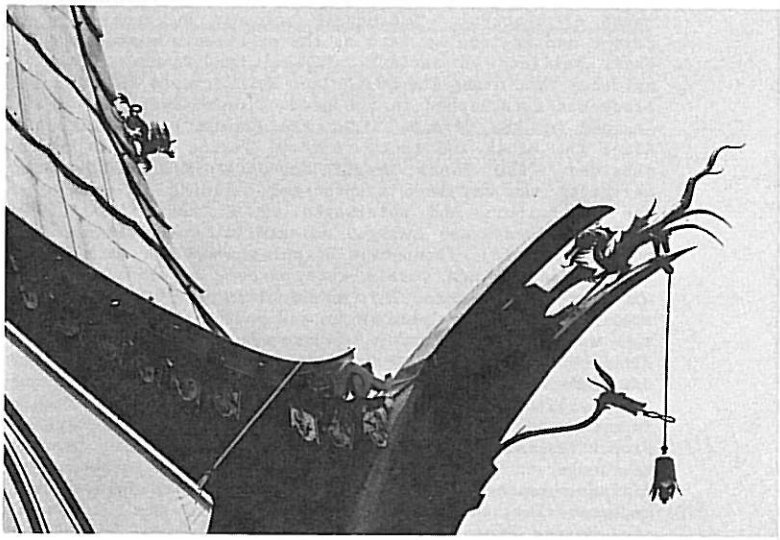

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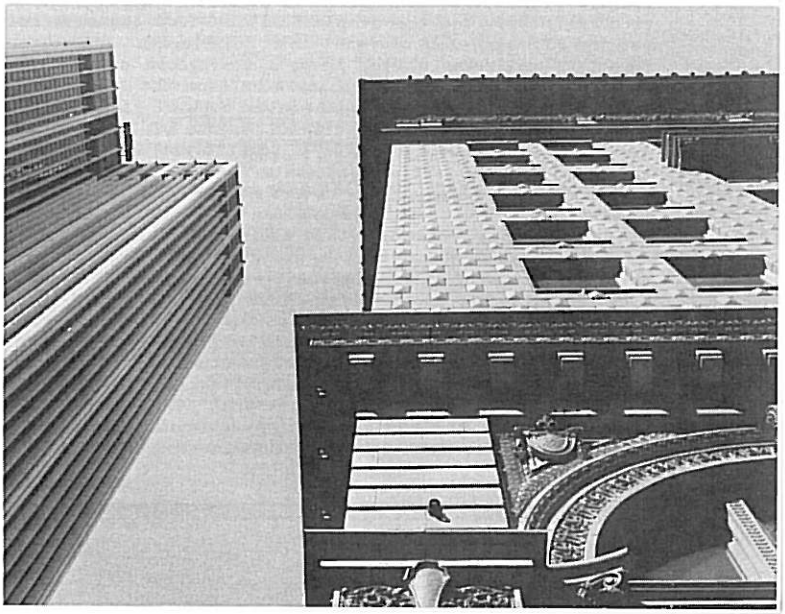

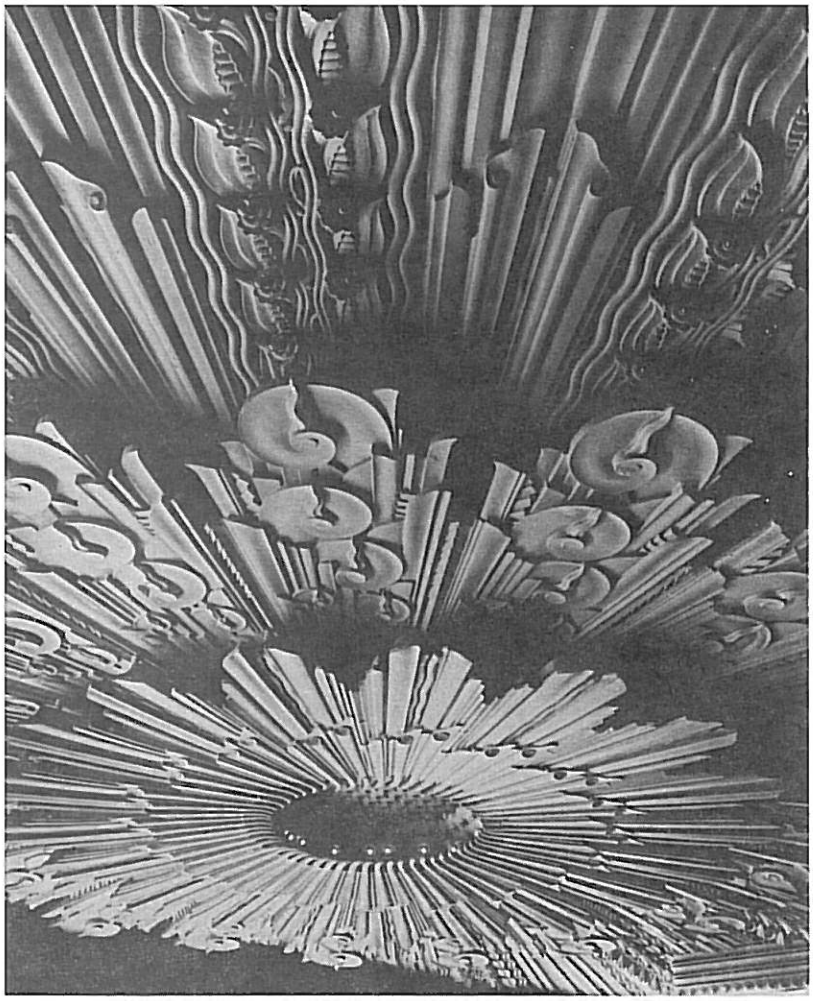

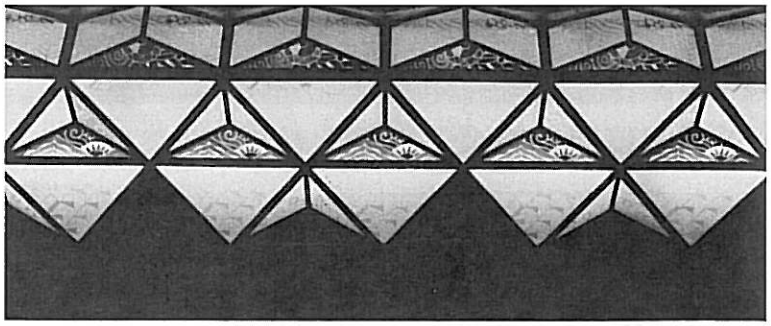

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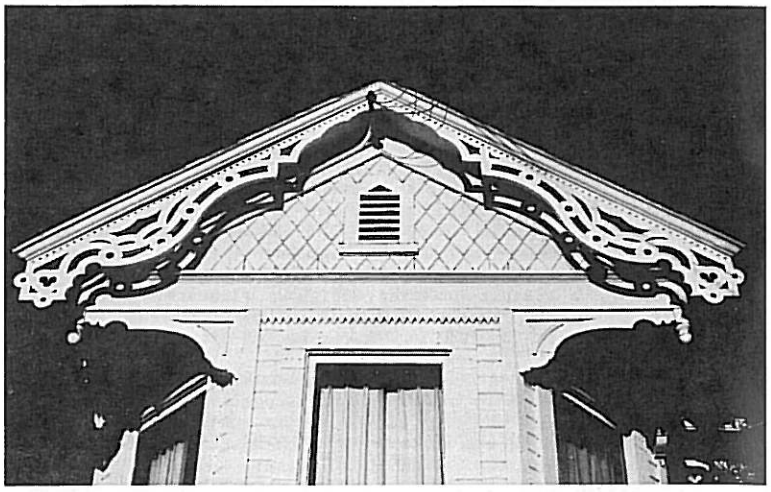

Los Angeles

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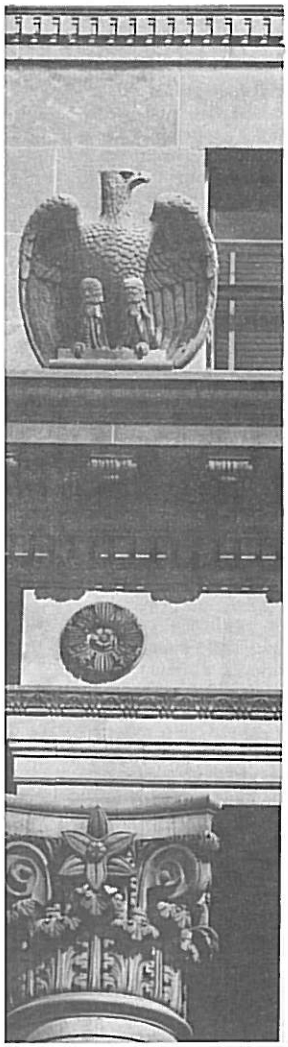

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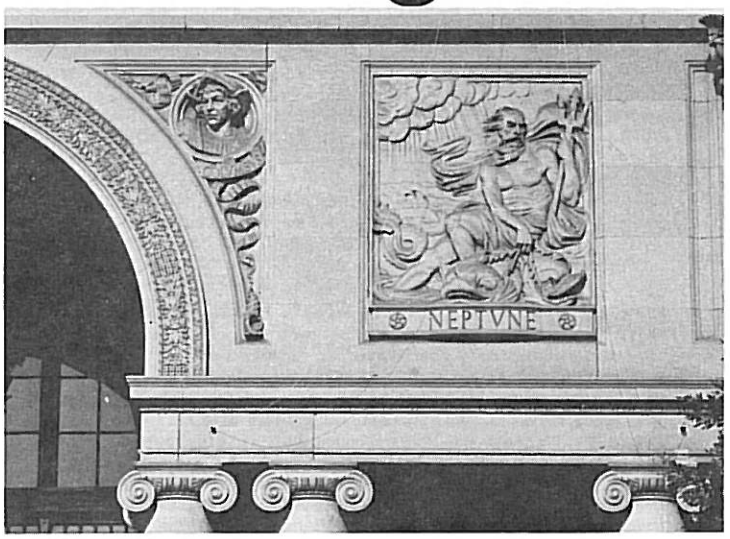

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1890; 6— Biltmore Hotel, 515 S Olive, LA, Schultze & Weaver, 1923; 7— Alexandria Hotel, 501 S Spring, LA, John Parkinson, 1905; 8— Chandler's Shoe Store, 5401 Wilshire, LA, Marcus Miller, 1938; 9— House, 271 Ave. 18, Lincoln Heights, LA, c. 1888; 10— Sid Grauman's Million Dollar Theatre Bldg., 307 S Broadway, LA, A.C. Martin, Sr., Architect, William L. Woollett, Theatre Architect, 1918; 11— Pantages Theatre, 534 S Broadway, LA, Morgan & Walls, 1911; 12— Eastern Columbia Bldg., 849 S Broadway, LA, Claud Beelman, 1930; 13— Sid Grauman's Chinese Theatre, 6925 Hollywood Blvd., Hollywood, Meyer & Holler, 1927; and 14— Pacific Mutual Bldg., 523 W 6th., LA, W. J. Dood, 1922.■

THE HISTORY OF CONCRETE

by Jan Irene Atkinson

Concrete is one of the oldest building materials known. Concrete-like compositions were referred to in Genesis, yet the chemical properties of concrete have only been defined in relatively recent times. (1) Today, we know that concrete is composed of cement, sand, aggregate, and water. However, the word cement did not appear in written documents until Medieval times, and bore no resemblance to the cement of modern times. (2) During this time, it may have consisted of calcinated limestone in addition to eggs, molasses, wax, pitch, resin, and whatever else the local stonemason deemed proper. The word concrete appears centuries later, and did not include cement as a separate ingredient. Often these materials were referred to as rubble, a mixture denoting ambiguous elements. Not until the invention of Portland cement in the nineteenth century did the terms concrete and cement become distinct.

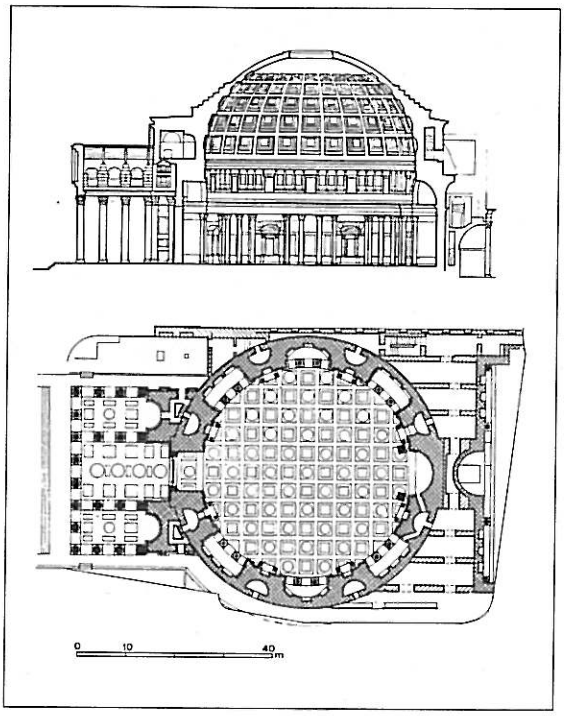
From the dawn of history men have used mud, clay, gypsum, and common soil to bind brick and stone together. They did not understand why clay made a better mortar, or why soils containing lime was better yet. Not until chemistry became a science in the seventeenth century were men able to ascertain that it was the presence of silica and alumina combined with lime which imparted a cementitious value to the mixture.

No one knows for certain when ancient people began burning limestone to produce quicklime. (3) The quicklime was slaked with water to produce hydrated lime, and sand was added to produce a mortar. The ancients did not understand that limestone differed from one geographic area to another, resulting in variable qualities of lime. They did realize, however, that crushed potsherds added to the mortar produced a preferable mixture. In other words, non-hydraulic limes were converted to more hydraulic ones, due to the presence of clay in the pottery. As early as the Minoan civilization (circa 1500 B.C.), there is evidence that crushed potsherds were added to lime mortar to give the material hydraulicity. (4) In the eighteenth century, John Smeaton's research revealed what the ancients knew by experience but did not clearly understand; i.e., the amount of clay in the lime determines the quality of mortar.

The Greeks were aware that certain sands yielded a mortar which was able to resist the action of water. Greece, however, preferred cut-stone or sun-dried brick for construction, and since neither required a mortar for a binder, their knowledge lay dormant. (5) Dormant, that is, until they passed their information on to the Romans. Italy was a country with poor building stone, but it did have a volcanic ash known as puzzolana lying in unlimited quantities throughout the country. (6) The discovery was fortunate, because this ash, like dehydrated slag used in cements today, had incredible binding properties. The mortar made from this sand led to nothing less than a revolution in construction, and resulted in one of Rome's greatest contributions to the Western world--concrete architecture. It did not happen overnight.

The Romans did not entirely trust their new material, proven by the fact that throughout the Roman republic, stone was employed for the parts of the structure which had to bear the greatest weight. Few builders believed that concrete might be anything more than a cheap, efficient substitute for wood or stone. (7) By Imperial times, however, concrete became a key that unlocked the door to an entirely new architectural world, and, once opened, progress was rapid.

The first unmistakable monuments of the new concrete architecture began around Nero's time, 60 A.D. Curvilinear and multilinear plans were made possible by the use of concrete. New possibilities in the shape of a room outweighed questions of constructional convenience and functional logic. Perhaps no other building signifies this revolution as much



Pantheon, 126-28 A.D., Rome, Plan and Section

as the Pantheon. Built around 126-128 A.D., its five-thousand-odd tons of concrete stand as a witness to the engineering and aesthetic brilliance of its builders. (8) The Pantheon anticipated to a certain degree the modern practice of obtaining stiffness and stability in thin vaults by giving them surfaces of double curvature. The Pantheon's dome spanned 142 feet, not equaled in concrete until the twentieth century. Sixteen hundred years passed before a mortar was discovered that matched that of Rome.

Historians have a tendency to ignore the period between the demise of Rome's Western Empire and the rediscovery of concrete in the eighteenth century. What happened to concrete? Pax Romana, and the orderly system on which it was based, had ceased to exist by the third century. In spite of the fact that some of the most outstanding concrete structures were built in Late Roman times, concrete vaulted and domed structures declined in the West after the fourth century. Barbarian invasions in the fifth and sixth centuries left little time or capital for repairs or rebuilding. Roman fire-fighting, water-supply, and sewage-disposal systems decayed, and due to a lack of raw materials, Roman structures were pillaged for their metal, stone, and brick. (9) Concrete was labor-intensive and required skilled workmen which were increasingly difficult to find. The Roman desire for luxury was replaced by Christian austerity.

In Rome's Eastern Empire, brick and stone supplanted concrete. Without puzzolana, the mortar lacked the strength needed for the creation of vaulting in the Roman manner. (10) The vaults stood, not only by the inherent strength of the mortar, but by the disposition of the material. Whereas in Roman architecture the structural stability of the vaulted building depended on the rigid monolithic quality of the concrete; in Byzantine buildings the entire inner surface of the vault was brick. It was supported by virtue of the dynamic properties of the brick framework alone. As a result, less concrete was seen, while the utilization of brick increased. Hagia Sophia, the sixth-century masterpiece in Constantinople, represented the transposition of Roman building techniques, which included large-scale vaulting in concrete with less massive brick and mortar construction. (11) Whereas Roman architects had sculptured solid concrete monoliths immensely thick at the base, thinner and lighter toward the top, Hagia Sophia's architects grappled with the problem of outward thrust and distribution of forces. In this structure, there is

She began kneading the dough on the floured board. "I had to cook all my life for my husband's stomach. As an infant he could eat only chewed-up crackers. I always ground the wheat and made his bread. He couldn't drink milk so I churned fresh butter for him. Then late in life he ate everything."

Her daughter Bettie came in from the horse corral. She was a heavy woman in contrast to her mother's spareness. When I asked her something about her father she said, "You'll have to ask someone else. I didn't know anything about his work."

Mrs. Greene said, "He wanted to get away where he could write, so we rented a house in Carmel. But he burned almost everything he wrote. In 1919 we decided to buy a piece of property and build. We sent Bettie to the real estate agent with a check to buy this property. But they didn't take her seriously."

Bettie added, "I was so young they didn't believe me. They thought I wanted to rent a place to stake my horses."

Mrs. Greene said she was born in England and that she and her husband had gone there on their honeymoon. She could not remember what he liked, except "something old." Of his interest in Japanese things she recalled "Mr. Khasayen, who bought rugs and things in China and Japan before the first war," and the Bentz brothers who imported from Japan. "Philip Bentz lived in San Francisco, John in Pasadena, and Nathan in Santa Barbara. My husband did a house for John on Prospect Place. The one he did for Nathan is a boarding house now."

I told her I had seen the James house in Carmel Highlands. "I'm sure they wouldn't ask you in. They're midwesterners," she said. I told her I had not expected to go in. I parked my car at the entrance and walked up the hill to get a view of the house rising out of the granite cliff, and when I returned to the car Mrs. James was driving up. I asked if I could see the grounds, and she said yes, for a few minutes. When we got through the gate she said it was too early to take me inside the house--"But you can take one peak."

The peak showed stone and arched doors. Alone, I walked down stone steps circling a stone wall, the stone wonderfully laid in thin courses, the edges jagged, I walked for five minutes, turning to take a photograph at every other step.

Mrs. Greene unlocked the heavy carved teak door to the studio, and when it creaked open there was a musty smell from rainsoaked papers and books. The floor was covered with files and their contents. "We took out all the important papers," she said, "these are carbons of his letters." I picked up a few. 'Take what you want--they'll be swept out." I glanced at the sampling in my hand as she opened a window. Carbons of letters to Greene's broker, to a bookseller, to the Architectural Forum--all apologetic in tone, asking pardon for bothering them about so small a transaction, so trivial an order, for being late in renewing his subscription. How quickly a persona springs out of discarded business files! I thought of the lines in W.H. Auden's tribute to Yeats: "The words of a dead man/ Are modified in the guts of the living."

The letters modified the studio. For an hour I went about the business of modifying.

A sensual room. When it was built Greene was deeply involved in Buddhism. His Emancipation from Sensuality was hardly complete when he carved every surface of wood, from the round-headed doors to their frames, the beams, the three-panel screens. The carvings made a tapestry of low relief, the light from the large skylight picking up details then returning them to a smooth polished surface without valleys or peaks. The rough plastered walls, as crude as in the Missions, asked for the hand to touch them; the images in the plaster, made by molds carved by Greene and pressed into the wet plaster, asked to be caressed by the eye.

A second modifier arrived--a young student from Berkeley, Robert Clark. He had a notebook, which was reassuring. We talked and modified. After a little while I had arrived at a discreet and respectful distance from Greene.

I spent the afternoon, what was left of it, in Maybeck's little library, and late in the day talked to Greene's son, Nathaniel.

It was too soon after the death of his father for all the wounds caused by family quarrels to have healed. When he stopped being angry he told me these things:

"When we were children father packed us into the five-passenger Hudson of Sumner's and we drove to the Missions. We took sleeping bags and slept out. But I don't think he had the Missions in mind when we started using arches and building with concrete and brick and stone. He said we had come to the end of an era, that wood was finished, that there were very few good woodworkers left.

"His studio was brick because when the Pacific Grove Hotel was razed he bought the brick for $5 a thousand. In our house and the studio the foundations were concrete; most of the houses then were on mud sills. The contractors from all over same to see the foundations. The wood for the house and in the studio was a gift from Cozzens lumber people in San Francisco. I think to a large degree father originated the use of hardwood on the West Coast.

"He built the studio with the help of one man. When it was finished, with a grand piano in it, there were musicals and lectures every week. All the important people in town came--Ben Lindsay, Lincoln Steffens, Martin Flavin, and people from San Francisco. There were lectures an religions. Father never had a formal religion but he was interested in many kinds. At the last it was Buddhism."

I asked about the molds to make impressions on the studio walls.

"He carved the molds himself and used the impressions for decoration. In the James house he made bands of decoration in the paster around the fireplaces and colored them in several blues. He did something of the sort for decoration for flower pots--low ones, about 18-inches in diameter. They were on the porch of the house and around the studio. Gladding McBean* made them for father, some in blues and greens, some glazed."

He said of the James house: "Father built it with four masons. There was no engineer. The work began in 1918, but 1923 was the first year the James's lived in it. Because of the steep site the work didn't go fast. In some places the bed rock went down 80 feet. Father used chalk rock for the edging--now they call it Carmel rock. It's a limestone that hardens when it's oxidized. Father had people going around collecting chalk rock with moss on it--he knew that if there was moss it was oxidized. I remember now that father didn't want any trees around the house, just stone."

He said that sometimes he ran into one of his father's masons, and they showed a respect close to reverence. "It was more than a job to them, it became a religion--as it was to father."

He walked me to my car. It was dark and the air was chilly. He talked slowly about his father's death. "For several years before he died he got more and more confused. He would wander away. They [his mother and sister] would never look for him when he was missing. They would call the police. Once the police found him in the mud in the chicken yard. It was not far from the house. He had fallen in the mud and couldn't get up. He was filthy. He was always filthy at the last. They wouldn't help him keep clean."

We had reached the car, and I got in. He leaned into the car and said, "Near the end he had some strange illusions. He saw faces in rocks and wood. His studio was built over the old road to the Missions, and he liked that, but when his mind was gone he could hear the vibrations of the wagons and the feet of the people as they traveled to the Mission. He could hear them talking. Then he answered them..." ■

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*Note: Although a few pots at Charles Greene's studio were made by Gladding-McBean Company of Lincoln, California, those with colored glazes were made by Garden City Pottery of San Jose, California.

She began kneading the dough on the floured board. "I had to cook all my life for my husband's stomach. As an infant he could eat only chewed-up crackers. I always ground the wheat and made his bread. He couldn't drink milk so I churned fresh butter for him. Then late in life he ate everything."

Her daughter Bettie came in from the horse corral. She was a heavy woman in contrast to her mother's spareness. When I asked her something about her father she said, "You'll have to ask someone else. I didn't know anything about his work."

Mrs. Greene said, "He wanted to get away where he could write, so we rented a house in Carmel. But he burned almost everything he wrote. In 1919 we decided to buy a piece of property and build. We sent Bettie to the real estate agent with a check to buy this property. But they didn't take her seriously."

Bettie added, "I was so young they didn't believe me. They thought I wanted to rent a place to stake my horses."

Mrs. Greene said she was born in England and that she and her husband had gone there on their honeymoon. She could not remember what he liked, except "something old." Of his interest in Japanese things she recalled "Mr. Khasayen, who bought rugs and things in China and Japan before the first war," and the Bentz brothers who imported from Japan. "Philip Bentz lived in San Francisco, John in Pasadena, and Nathan in Santa Barbara. My husband did a house for John on Prospect Place. The one he did for Nathan is a boarding house now."

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"Hillmont," 1375 East Mountain St., Pasadena, 1887, Harry Ridgeway (Bruce Boehner photo)

corporate International style (to which Mr. Gleye gives only half the space he gives to the residences) is unquestioned, having been predominant in office-building construction from the Forties into the Sixties and even beyond. Revisionists are asserting this dominance is no blessing, and this new evaluation has now been popularized by Tom Wolfe in his FROM BAUHAUS TO OUR HOUSE, which Robert W. Winter is assigning as required reading. One can hardly wait to see how future toilers in Mr. Gleye's vineyard will cope with these intellectual currents.

Mr. Gleye was faced with the formidable task of digesting vast quantities of previously published (and, in some cases, unpublished) material in preparing to write the text for this book, and rather than emphasize the minor inaccuracies which are bound to creep into the result of such an undertaking, we must congratulate him for doing as well as he has. In particular, he may have been the first to demonstrate that Los Angeles' building height limit, in effect from 1905 to 1957, was adopted for aesthetic reasons, not earthquake safety, as was implied when repeal was advocated. The wisdom of the limit, and the folly of its repeal, have become apparent since, as downtown has been progressively overwhelmed by structures of increasingly inhuman scale, attracting workday populations with which the circulation system cannot cope.

The photographs are generally well-selected, and a deliberate emphasis has been placed on buildings still standing, by way of inspiring the reader to see them in person. Photo reproduction is good for the black-and-whites, on good, unglossy paper (a plus), and excellent for the color shots, including some spectacular interiors. Mr. Shulman's work is well-known, but the addition of Mr. Boehner (who is himself an architect) as a contributor recognizes a rising star in the firmament of architectural photography.

The book's design is generally competent, but the selection of a sans-serif type face for the body of the text is an inexcusable error, and on page 73, the positioning of exterior and interior photographs of "Hillmont," one of Pasadena's gems, between a picture and text describing house-court slums, and remote from any relevant text, is simply grotesque.

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The local chapter is affiliated with the National SAH but requires separate membership. The chapter provides educational programs, tours, speakers and publishes the SAH/SCC REVIEW and SAH/SCC NEWSLETTER.

LOCAL MEMBERSHIP: INDIVIDUAL, $12 per year; COUPLE, (one mailing) $18 per year; LIFE, one time contribution of $150. Membership is obtained through the SAH/SCC Secretary, c/o The Gamble House, 4 Westmoreland Place, Pasadena, CA 91103 (213) 681-6427.■

Overall, however, SAH/SCC REVIEW readers are likely to find THE ARCHITECTURE OF LOS ANGELES well worth their purchase, especially if they are members of The Los Angeles Conservancy and entitled to the special discount price.

The hardcover book is available from many bookstores or directly from The Los Angeles Conservancy, 849 South Broadway, Suite 1225; price is $35.00 (The Conservancy offers a substantial discount to its members). The book is 10½ x 11¼, 240 pages (ISBN 0-6558-004-9).■

Reviewed by David Cameron

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