A SKETCH HISTORY
OF THE
CENTRAL NEW YORK CHAPTER
OF THE
AIA
AMERICAN INSTITUTE OF ARCHITECTS

on the occasion of the
120th Anniversary
of its founding on October 29th, 1887

by Dean A. Biancavilla, AIA, LEED AP
Chapter Archivist
"We wish to acknowledge the debt owed to Harley J. McKee, FAIA, the first Chapter "Historian." Many of the first stories written of the early Chapter meetings were done by Harley and these lead to clues for further research in preparation for this brief outline history. In addition AIA Archivist Tony Wren, now retired, assisted many times in copying records at AIA’s Library and Archives in Washington, D.C. This history is by no means a monograph nor does it claim to be a scholarly history of the Chapter which should be left to historians with proper credentials. This is a condensed history that hits the highlights of events the Chapter has experienced over 120 years and so the reader will hopefully forgive us if something was left out which that member feels should be a part of this history. A future edition of this outline history can certainly be expanded to include more information, photos, and With that said, I hope you enjoy this historical sketch which is still evolving . . .”

- Chapter Archivist Dean Biancavilla, AIA
Our sketch history of the AIA Central New York Chapter will begin by examining the historical background to its formation and why architects in this state and this region considered it important to gather together in a professional organization. Therefore, we will undertake to give a short account of that background for this history.

Some of the earliest professional associations in New York State were mentioned in an AIA publication “The Architect at Mid-Century, Vol. I., Evolution and Achievement.” This impressive work was edited by Turpin C. Bannister, a professor at Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute along with a special AIA Commission (1949-1954) which included a prominent Central New York Chapter member George Bain Cummings (Cummings would become President of the Institute in 1955):

“The first professional organization in the United States may have been a group called “The Brethren of the Workshop of Vitruvius” which existed in New York in 1803. John McComb, a prominent New York architect, is said to have been a member. The increasing number of practicing architects led to the formation in New York in 1836 of the American Institution of Architects. The first strictly professional group in the United States. William Strickland served as president and Thomas Ustick Walter as secretary. In spite of an auspicious beginning, the society languished. Nineteen years later, in 1857, a permanent organization, The American Institute of Architects, was finally achieved by thirteen New York practitioners led by Richard Upjohn. Meetings with technical programs were held, first in Upjohn’s office, and later in quarters at New York University. Since Richard Morris Hunt was a member, and since he was the first American graduate of the École-des-Beaux-Arts, and since he was then conducting an atelier in his own office, it is not surprising that professional education attracted early discussion.” [pg. 72 - The Architect at Mid-Century.]

“From 1862 to 1864 the Civil War forced suspension, but with the return of peace, The AIA promptly renewed its activities. The necessity for accommodating local groups was gradually recognized and at the first convention in New York in March 1867, a system of chapters was adopted, with the New York group becoming the first unit.” [pg. 73 -- The Architect at Mid-Century.]

Between 1860 and 1880 the number of U.S. architects tripled. But during the 1880's alone, the number of architects multiplied 2.4 times. It was not surprising, therefore, that, in his presidential address to the 1886 AIA Convention, Thomas U. Walter could cite the formation of twelve new western architectural societies and envision a national confederation of architects. Three more chapters were admitted in 1887, Washington, D.C., Central New York, and Michigan, but the potentialities of true national scope were embraced more vigorously by amalgamation in 1889 with the largest non-AIA society, the Western Association of Architects. In the 1890's the addition of twelve more chapters brought the total to twenty-three.” [pg. 73 -- The Architect at Mid-Century.]
In the 1880's, New York State west of the Albany line became a hotly contested area for recruitment of architects between the two organizational giants of the architectural profession. The American Institute of Architects based in Washington, D.C. and the Western Association of Architects based in Chicago. The AIA, founded in 1857, was dominated by Richard Morris Hunt at this period and considered an enclave of the “eastern school,” competed strongly with the WAA, dominated by Dankmar Adler and the “western school.”

The Founding and the Early Years

On Friday, October 29, 1887, architects from central and western New York State founded at Rochester, the Western New York State Association of Architects (WNYSAA) for the purpose of providing for greater fellowship of the various architects within the region and to represent the profession of the State. The group of “businesslike looking men” met at the Powers Hotel in Rochester which still stands today and is listed on the National Register of Historic Places. The association was an “auxiliary” of the Western Association of Architects according to published accounts which was based out of Chicago and influenced by well-known architects like Louis Sullivan and Dankmar Adler. The WNYSAA was the earliest precursor of what was to become the AIA Central New York Chapter today. The first president was James G. Cutler of Rochester; James H. Kirby of Syracuse was first vice-president; J. P. Johnson of Ogdensburg was second vice-president and George W. Baxter, Jr. was treasurer.

The First President of the WNYSAA

James G. Cutler was President of the organization for three terms from 1887 to 1889. He was elected to membership in the AIA in 1884 and was the noted inventor and manufacturer of the mail chute. Cutler went on to become Mayor of the City of Rochester from 1904-06 (according to the Rochester Historical Society.) Carl Schmidt writes in his book on Architecture and Architects of Rochester that “... James G. Cutler was born in Albany, NY, in 1848, and settled in Rochester in 1872 and soon after opened his office. He was the architect for the Kimball house and the Kimball Tobacco Company factory, the Hiram Sibley house [at the] corner [of] East Avenue and Alexander Street, the Elwood Builder, Park Avenue Baptist Church, and the Bank of Monroe. While the Elwood Building was under construction, Frank Elwood asked him to devise some contraption
whereby it would be possible to mail letters without the necessity of going down and up stairs. Accordingly, Cutler had a chute constructed to a box in the entrance hall and the postman was persuaded to collect the mail. Its success led to the establishment of the Cutler Mail Chute Company. Although he continued to maintain the architectural office in partnership with his brother J. Warren Cutler, who was also an architect, until 1904, most of his time was given to the Mail Chute business . . . ” [“Architecture and Architects of Rochester, NY” by Carl & Ann Schmidt, published by the Rochester Society of Architects, 1959]

Among the important founding members of the Western NY State Association of Architects were Charles Erastus Colton and Asa Merrick of Syracuse, Jacob Agne of Utica, Louise Bethune of Buffalo, J.H. Pierce and H.H. Bickford of Elmira, Professor C. Babcock of Ithaca, and also Green & Wicks of Buffalo. With a total membership of thirty-four, meetings of the association were held only once or twice a year with an executive committee meeting on the last Thursday of each month at 3:00 P.M.

The second meeting of the Western New York State Association of Architects was held in Syracuse at the Vanderbilt House on February 7-8, 1888. The Vanderbilt House designed by Horatio N. White once stood on the southeast corner of Washington and Warren Streets on the site now occupied by the historic First Trust & Deposit Co. Bank building owned by Key Bank. The railroad tracks ran along Washington Street when the trains traveled regularly through downtown. The train station was two blocks further west and Architects arriving from Buffalo, Rochester or Utica only had a short distance to walk to the Hotel. On the second day of the meeting, members posed for the photograph shown with this history***. According to the Syracuse Journal of Feb. 8th, “. . . at 10:30 o’clock the association entered carriages and went on a tour of inspection of the city. Photographer Rider took the pictures in one big group. Every man wore an emblem of the association in the shape of an orange ribbon to which was attached a small ball of white cotton, and all of them had in their inside pocket a very fine picture of Mrs. Cleveland, a hair brush and a paper weight in the shape of a barrel made of nickel . . . ” There was quite a fan club apparently of the young First Lady, especially since President Grover Cleveland (1885-1889) was from the state of New York and Mrs. Cleveland (Frances Folsom) had her summer home called “Oak Lawn” in Wheatland just north of Rochester.” The Syracuse Courier of Feb. 8th reported that the architects were given an “elaborate banquet” in the evening within “Parlor 95” in the Vanderbilt House with “exhibits of
building materials in room 87. The banquet was an extended affair of a fourteen-course feast which included green turtle soup and also something called “Architectural Punch.”

[***A print of this group photograph reprinted below was found among the effects of James A. Randall (Randall Vedder & Curtin Architects) by the late James D. Curtin, who brought it to Harley J. McKee to be identified, if possible, and placed in an archive. After some research Harley was able to identify the occasion and some AIA/CNY Chapter members were able to point out two or three men in the picture. Not until a copy of “The Architectural Era” of May 1888, came into his possession, was Harley able to identify all of the men. The photograph is reproduced here.] We find that the officers for 1888 were reported for this meeting of February 7th in the Syracuse Journal as “...James G. Cutler of Rochester, president; Cyrus K. Porter, Buffalo, first vice-president; E.A. Curtis, Fredonia, second vice-president; W.W. Carlin, Buffalo, secretary; Charles E. Colton, Syracuse, treasurer...”
**The First Architects’ Association of Syracuse**

At the second WNYSAA meeting in Syracuse, February 7th, 1888, treasurer Charles E. Colton made the formal announcement that a new association had been formed of the city’s architects and was named the **Syracuse Association of Architects**. The meeting minutes reproduced in the May 1888, issue of the magazine “Architectural Era” which was locally published in Syracuse, recorded Colton’s announcement and listed that the WNYSAA convention was “hosted” by the Syracuse Association of Architects. “Architectural Era” also boasted a local architect as an editor, J. H. Kirby of the firm of Kirby & Randall. Local news accounts confirm that the architects at the Convention of the WNYSAA “... were banqueted at the Vanderbilt House ... by the Syracuse Association.”[Syr. Standard Feb. 8, 1888]. The second day of the convention “... the out-of-town members allowed themselves to be bundled into big sleighs by members of the Syracuse Association of Architects, who showed their guests the architectural sights of the city” [Syr. Herald, Feb, 8, 1888]. Although no other documentation has as yet been discovered on the Syracuse Association of Architects, it may be inferred that the following Syracuse architects who were active in the Western New York State Association of Architects were key members if not leaders of the local association: Charles E. Colton, James H. Kirby, James A. Randall, Edgar M. Buell, Asa L. Merrick and Ellis G. Hall. Part of Colton’s welcoming speech to the delegates indicated that the new Syracuse Association of Architects included all the practicing architects in the city save one. The other architects in practice at the time in Syracuse were John Bates, Buell Baxter, Noah Dillenbeck, J.M. Elliot, J.C. Gallivan, Archimedes Russell, Peter Sheridan, and Horatio Nelson White. Given the strong personality and professional independence of Archimedes Russell it might not be a far leap to assume he was the only architect who did not join the association since Horatio Nelson White sent a letter to Colton expressing regrets at not being able to attend this meeting due to affairs of business.

The **Western New York State Association of Architects** (WNYSAA) had coordinated their next meeting to be held just a few days before the national convention of the AIA at Buffalo since many of the members of the association were also members of the AIA they would stand to save disruption time from their practice to attend these two meetings together. The Association convened at 2:00 P.M. in the lecture room of the Library Building [the headquarters being at the Genesee] in Buffalo on Tuesday, October 16th, and held lengthy discussions about the issue of mergers and whether to affiliate with the AIA. A full and detailed report of the meeting was transcribed in the magazine “Building” in its October 27, 1888-edition, pages 135 through 138. Perhaps the most controversial issue of the meeting was whether to adopt the new rules promulgated by the Western Association of Architects, the parent organization, on architectural competitions. A special committee headed by Mr. Kent reviewed the rules at length and reported to the convention. The debate was heated and no conclusion reached other than the issue needed more study and the questions from the members at the meeting were referred back to committee for a response.

Buffalo was the site for the twenty-second annual convention of the American Institute of Architects held October 17-18-19, 1888. It was at this convention that a proposed resolution to merge the two giants, ie. the WAA and the AIA, was debated at length. William Worth Carlin, who was
secretary of the newly formed WNYSAA as well as an AIA member himself, helped carry the resolution. Dankmar Adler, from Chicago, was present to represent the interests of the WAA. Thomas U. Walter, who was president of the AIA, was ill and unable to attend and so Richard Morris Hunt stood in for him. The merger was not completed until certain details were worked out in committee and then at the AIA convention the following year in November of 1889, in Cincinnati, the deed was done. The Western New York State Association of Architects then began to reconsider its status and in light of the unification movement of the various independent architectural organizations and the merger of the WAA and the AIA.

Application for AIA affiliation

In the fall of 1890, our Association, the WNYSAA, applied for Chapter status in the American Institute of Architects. One may wonder why a new organization would wish to become subordinate to yet another national organization. It may be inferred that the success of the AIA in coordinating efforts of the profession at that time was an inspiration to the new Western New York State Association; and the New York City Chapter of the AIA founded in 1867 may also have influenced the WNYSAA. Chapter status was granted in December of 1891 and the WNYSAA changed its name to the Western New York Chapter of the AIA. The chapter area covered 26 counties in 1891.

The Buffalo area had already formed a Chapter in 1890 but had members in both the Buffalo Chapter and our Western New York Chapter. There was considerable agitation within our chapter to merge with the Buffalo Chapter for this reason. The proposed merger with the Buffalo Chapter was not adopted and the Western New York Chapter continued on its own. However, a territory overlap continued to exist for several years between the two organizations. Well into the year 1894 the Central New York Chapter still had ten members from Buffalo including Green & Wicks Architects !!!!

The early society of the WNYSAA consisted of fifty-four (54) regular members and six honorary members. Of the fifty-four, forty-six (46) were Fellows of the Institute. Compare that in 1996 with about 150 members and two Fellows; or in 2006 with 187 members and one Fellow although the meaning of fellow status was much different in the nineteenth century than it is today.

Seven chapter members attended the 25th annual convention of the American Institute of Architects in Boston, which began on October 28, 1891. Those chapter members were W.W. Carlin, F.H. Gouge, T.I. Lacey, Joseph Blaby Otis Dockstader, Henry C. Meyer and James G. Cutler. In Bates Hall of the newly built Boston Public Library, they heard addresses by Richard M. Hunt, Dankmar Adler, W. L. B. Jenny, Henry Van Brunt, Charles H. Moore and others; members inspected some 450 drawings on exhibit, including several designs for the forthcoming World’s Columbia Exposition in Chicago set for 1893.

Cornell University and the AIA

Cornell University is closely linked with the early beginnings of the AIA and of our Chapter. When architect Richard Upjohn first sent out invitations to a dozen leaders in the profession back in
February of 1857 with the idea of forming an association, Professor Charles Babcock [1828-1913], who was the first professor of Architecture at Cornell [1871], was part of that small list of twelve. Sage Hall and Sage Chapel still stand as examples of his design work for the University. Babcock was listed with the Central New York Chapter as a “Charter Member” for a number of years after its establishment in 1891. In 1897, Babcock read a paper titled “Some Italian Architecture” to the Chapter. At his passing in 1913 after a long career as Dean of the School of Architecture at Cornell, the Institute honored him with a distinguished resolution and memorial at its annual convention.

Kandalyn Hahn, Cornell research assistant to Professor Michael A. Tomlan [of the University’s Historic Preservation Program] was able to glean the following paragraphs on Babcock from Ethel Sara Goodstein's 1979 thesis, *Charles Babcock, Architect, Educator and Churchman.*

Charles Babcock (1829-1913)

“His associates described him as a "true friend and genial companion, the finest type of Christian gentleman and scholar--a type which is fast disappearing and making way for the more narrowly cultivated specialist." Charles Babcock, Cornell University's first Professor of Architecture, was indeed a rare professional--a dedicated student of Gothic architecture; an articulate designer in the Ruskinian tradition; a vocal figure in architectural education in America and England; and a minister of the Protestant Episcopal Church, deeply involved in its ecclesiological phase. Babcock's early architectural works, his buildings on the Cornell campus, and his philosophy of architectural education all give substance to his principles. Charles Babcock's experience as an architect and as a clergyman provides a rich background for displaying his philosophy of architectural education. His youth in Ballston Spa, his apprenticeship and later, partnership in the [Richard] Upjohn office and the years he devoted to the ministry are pertinent to the understanding of Babcock's sense of morality and ethics which were as important as his sense of esthetic propriety to his development as an architect . . .

Together with Richard Upjohn, Babcock was one of the chief American representatives of the ethical and ecclesiological attitude toward architecture dictated by the high church movement. His development from an apprentice in the Upjohn office to a mature designer with a refined, personal taste is reflected in the architecture he produced. Discussion of the architect's work must be undertaken in light of the development of the architecture of the Gothic Revival. In addition to analyzing the esthetic merits and architectural significance of Babcock's buildings, consideration must be given to the influences of literature and personalities, especially the impact of Upjohn's teachings, John Ruskin's writings, and the Pre-Raphaelite movement in American architecture.”

And, the following paragraphs are taken from Ethel Sara Goodstein's 1977 catalogue on the Sibley Dome Gallery exhibition "Charles Babcock: Architect, Churchman, and Educator."
The first two paragraphs list works by Babcock. The last two paragraphs discuss Cornell's early architectural program:

While it is always difficult to ascertain with absolute surety who is actually responsible for the design of a particular building in a large architectural office, Richard Upjohn's biographer, Everard Upjohn, has attributed several buildings to Babcock: St. Paul's Rectory in Troy, New York; Christ Church, Ballston Spa, New York; and St. John's Church, Greenwood Iron Works, now Arden, New York. Examination of the Upjohn office papers suggests [sic] that Babcock was also the designer of Christ Church, Owego, New York; Grace Church, Monroe, New York; the Hamilton Hoppin House, Middletown, Rhode Island; and St. Stephen's Chapel, Annandale, New York . . .

[On the Cornell campus] Babcock designed and supervised the construction of Lincoln Hall; Franklin Hall; the Armory; several faculty houses including his own home on Sage Avenue and the completion of the A.D. White House; Sage College and Sage Chapel . . .

The pursuit of an architectural education in the first half of the nineteenth century was a discouraging enterprise. The few who were able to secure positions with architects as talented as Richard Upjohn were considered fortunate although this essentially English system of apprenticeship had never been considered entirely appropriate within the structure of American society. Cornell University President A.D. White recognized the need for more trained architects and builders to design the growing American landscape. The late nineteenth-century architect was to be a gentleman as well as a craftsman, an artist with a scientific background as well as creative abilities. The university seemed the appropriate arena to train such an individual.

A most successful and renowned system of architectural education had been developed at the École-des-Beaux-Arts of Paris. The first course of study in architecture established in an American university, William R. Ware's curriculum for M.I.T., first offered in 1866, was self-conscious in its emulation of the Beaux Arts system. However, A.D. White rejected the French paradigm when he created Cornell's Department of Architecture in 1871. White, who was well versed in art and architecture, decidedly preferred the Gothic modes. His selection of Babcock to fill the new chair of Professor of Architecture and Babcock's tenure at Cornell suggest that there was an alternative to the traditions of the École des Beaux Arts. Charles Babcock's philosophy of architectural education was derived from English tradition, the pupillage system. The Cornell curriculum was based on the Ruskinian notion of true art which dictated that before an architect can become a true artist, he must be a master of the art of building and a man of science. Babcock sought to "lay that foundation of knowledge without which there can be no true art" in lieu of concentrating on the development of the students' artistic abilities . . .”


**Architectural Practice in the 1880's**

A speech by Chapter President James A. Randall in 1936 gives us some interesting insights “going back over 50 years” of the practice of architecture in the 1880's:
“GOING BACK OVER 50 YEARS: No doubt the younger men in the profession will be interested in the methods of long ago compared with the present. Imagine after you had completed your tracings, if you wanted copies you simply had to re-trace. **Blueprinting** was just coming in at that time and looked on as a novelty. **Specifications** were written long-hand and for extra copies you had to re-write it all over - compare this with our modern typewriting and duplicating machines. **Telephone** - not generally used and if you wanted anybody you had to write him a letter or go after him. **India Ink** - in those days we had to grind it and in the summer the flies would eat it completely unless drawings were covered quickly. The present liquid ink overcoming the fly nuisance. **Erasers** - in the old days if you had to make extensive alterations to tracings, it might take days, now with a little machine with an electric motor this work is done in no time. **Tracing Cloth** - while formerly ink had to be used, now the same result can be had with pencil. **Architectural Publications** - In the old days we had *American Architect*, *Inland Architect* and *Carpenter & Builder*, all very drab until Gregg came along to make the fine drawings for the *Architect*. Compare this with the beautiful publications of present day, especially note *Architectural Record* - Williamsburg number. All in all I think the old timers had the same amount of grey matter, but they had to work like hell to get results.”

**The First Annual Meeting as an AIA Chapter**

The first annual meeting of the **Western New York Chapter of the AIA**, after becoming a part of the Institute, was held on December 1st, 1891 at the Chamber of Commerce in Rochester. The meeting demonstrated the lavish hospitality for which the architects of that city were noted at the time. There were twenty-five members present when the session opened in the morning. Attendance was recorded as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>City</th>
<th>Members</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>UTICA</td>
<td>Jacob Agne, Jr., F.H. Gouge</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ROCHESTER</td>
<td>W. Foster Kelly, Otto Block, C. F. Crandall, Jay Fay, W.C. Walker, J.G. Cutler, Thomas Nolan, O.K. Foote, O.W. Dryer (the last name seems rather ironic in view of the nature of the evening proceedings; read further...)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PALMYRA</td>
<td>J. Blaby</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ELMIRA</td>
<td>J.H. Pierce, H.H. Bickford</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CORNING</td>
<td>H.G. Tuthill</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FREDONIA</td>
<td>E.A. Curtis</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

[Note the members coming from Buffalo and Fredonia, even though there is at this time an established Buffalo Chapter. Also take notice that the President of the Western New York Chapter is **W.W. Carlin from Buffalo**! And Charles E. Colton is just wrapping up his new project of the Syracuse City Hall in the Richardsonian Romanesque style. Baxter was a professor at the fledgling school of Fine Arts at Syracuse University where a student could get a degree in architecture.]
President Carlin opened the first session of this first meeting with an address in which he spoke of the difficulty of increasing membership in such an extensive area where there was already a duplication of architectural associations. He commented on the progress of architectural education, the advantages of travel, and the desirability of having a registration law passed by the NYS Legislature. In order to achieve the last goal, it would be necessary for architects to devote more energy to lobbying in Albany [sound familiar?]. His address was followed by a discussion and then reports of officers and committees. In the afternoon, Cyrus K. Porter read a paper on “The Transition of the American Dwelling House”, and the subject of merging the Buffalo Association [ie. chapter] with the Western New York Chapter was discussed. An exhibition of drawings was enjoyed by the members with particular appreciation being shown for those submitted by the “Rochester Architectural Sketch Club”.

In the evening there was a banquet, followed by the numerous toasts to architectural associations, the Mechanics’ Institute (not of automobiles mind you, but of the building trades), architecture, the Press (there must have been a reporter present), architecture and poetry, architecture and the Ladies (I would have liked to have heard those toasts...), and other “of an informal nature and minor importance” (do you wonder what the writer meant by that??...). An excerpt from the toast to the architecture and poetry shows how little the profession has changed in its’ essentials:

“Of the various vocations that absorb the human mind, the architect’s profession is the most peculiar kind.”

The First Chapter Officers

It will be of interest to include some background notes on the Officers of the AIA WNY Chapter [Central New York] in 1891.

President - William Worth Carlin, of Buffalo, was born at Stockton, Chautauqua Co., NY, in November 1850. He studied for the practice of his profession with Hiram Smith of Jamestown. He spent several years at Chautauqua Lake, doing work for the Chautauqua Assembly, and sometime in 1893 came to Buffalo. During the last two years of his life he suffered from a painful illness. He was a director of the Western Association of Architects (based in Syracuse City Hall
Chicago) for several years, and was its president at the time of consolidation with the American Institute of Architects (in 1888). He served as vice-president of the AIA in 1891, and was on its board of directors for a number of years. He was president of the Western New York Chapter of the AIA for two terms and was serving in that capacity at the time of his death, which occurred at Buffalo, March 23, 1894. He left a widow and five children. [AIA proceedings 1894, Oct. 15, p. 227 - courtesy of the American Institute of Architects Archives].

First Vice Pres. - Cyrus K. Porter [1836-1910], of Buffalo; rebuilt St. Pauls’ Episcopal Cathedral by Richard Upjohn in 1888 along with Robert W. Gibson after the church suffered a disastrous fire. In 1886, Porter worked on the Trinity Episcopal Church completing the work begun years earlier but in a redesign of the plans. A new spire Porter designed was never built. Trinity Church also possesses some of the finest stained glass in America. The five magnificent scenes in the apse and the rose window are by John LaFarge, who also did several others, along with Tiffany, in the nave and transept. Porter also designed the famous Eberhardt House [1893-1894], now gone, which was at the corner of Kenmore and Delaware Ave. in the Town of Kenmore a suburb of Buffalo. [ “Buffalo Architecture: A Guide” - Buffalo Architectural Guidebook Corp., 1985]

Second Vice Pres. - J. R. Church, of Rochester; was a practicing architect in the city from 1883 to 1898. He was the architect of the Hayward Hotel on Clinton Avenue South, Rochester, and a number of fine residences. [ “Architecture and Architects of Rochester, N.Y.” by Carl and Ann Schmidt, 1959]

Secretary - J. H. Pierce, of Elmira; became Editor of “The Architectural ERA” in 1891 and was rather modest about publishing his own works in the magazine. Pierce was one of the founding members of the organization and eventually served four terms as president, in 1895-1896 and in 1900-1901. His name appears quite regularly in attendance records at the early meetings. Roger Reed’s book Pierce & Bickford, Elmira, N.Y., 1890-1932 tells of the early beginnings ...“Pierce managed the office from 1881 to 1883, when he purchased [Warren] Haye’s Elmira practice and went into partnership with Otis Dockstader [another early founder of the WNYSA]. Dockstader had worked as a draftsman in Haye’s office between 1877 and 1881. Also a native of the region, he was born in Tioga County, Pennsylvania, in 1851, and had trained as a civil engineer at Cook Academy in nearby Montour Falls, NY. After Haye’s departure for Minneapolis, Dockstader practiced as an engineer, building bridges for the Delaware, Lackawanna and Western Railroad until joining Pierce as a partner. The architectural firm of Pierce & Dockstader produced designs for many types of buildings, but specialized in domestic and church architecture.” A young H.H. Bickford worked in
Pierce’s office and became his partner in 1891 to form Pierce & Bickford which created a very large body of work, many buildings of which still stand today.

Treasurer - **George W. Baxter, Jr.** [1851-1917]; Born in Brooklyn and educated there at the Polytechnic Institute, Baxter came to Syracuse in 1872 to study architecture at the newly established School of Fine Arts at Syracuse University. He opened an office in Syracuse in 1883 and was associated with J. H. Kirby and E. M. Buell. Among his best works were the Everson Building (on South Salina St.) and the Florence Flats in Syracuse (both demolished).

**First Woman AIA member**

**Louise Blanchard Bethune** (1856-1913) of Bethune & Bethune Architects was from **Buffalo, NY** and became a member along with her husband Robert Armour Bethune, in 1887, of the **Western New York State Association of Architects** [later to be the AIA CNY]. After completing her apprenticeship of five years in the office of Buffalo architect Richard A. Waite she joined her husband in opening their own office in 1881. Bethune & Bethune received commissions as diverse as a hotel, a prison, an armory, a baseball grandstand, police stations, public schools, residences, and industrial and commercial buildings. Years later, as a member of Bethune, Bethune and Fuchs, Mrs. Bethune was recognized for taking entire charge of the office work and completing superintendence of one-third of the outside work. [AIA publication “That Exceptional One - Women in American Architecture, 1888-1988”; pub. American Architectural Foundation; Wash. D.C., 1988]

**Syracuse University School of Architecture and the AIA**

A New York City architect, trained overseas in the **École-des-Beaux-Arts** at Paris, named **Albert “Bert” Brockway** arrives in Syracuse about 1893 and assumes an assistant professorship for architecture at the College of Fine Arts at Syracuse University. The program, established in 1872, previously was dominated by teachers with non-academic experience. Such architects as **Archimedes Russell**, and **Joseph Lyman Silsbee** who learned the profession from the “school” of experience once taught at the school. By 1894, Brockway rises to the head of the department and initiates a series of curriculum changes that would transform the architecture program to follow along the education principles as espoused in the **École-des-Beaux-Arts**. A pamphlet published by the College of Fine Arts in August of 1894 states that “...in order that the Department of Architecture may offer the greatest advantages in its curriculum and direction to intending students, the course has been modified sufficiently for the ensuing year to bring it into the spirit of the instruction given at that greatest of schools of Architecture --The École-des-Beaux-
Arts at Paris. A former student of the Paris school, an architect in active practice, is in charge of the Department.” Brockway’s attendance in Paris was from 1884 to 1886.

An important change to SU’s school of architecture was the introduction of the “atelier” or studio. Within this new format the concept of Architectural Design was taught to the students. A course pamphlet for SU for 1894 states “the work of the year includes six problems, two in each term.” This would total twenty-four design problems during the course of the year. The student is taught theory, the practice and the art of planning. He is taught composition of plan and elevation, and also design. At the same time he is shown how to draw, or to express his compositions or designs. He is supposed to understand elementary drawing on entering the course, but from the time of entering to graduation he is trained in drafting and rendering. He becomes familiar with the accurate casting of shadows, with the use of color and the brush. The training is intended to make of each student an architect and a draftsman, but the greatest stress is laid upon his being an architect.” [SU pamphlet for 1894 - SU Collection, Arents Research Library, Syracuse University]

It is worthy to note that the Chapter bestowed honorary member status on Professor George F. Comfort, Dean of the School of Architecture as well as Chancellor C. N. Sims of Syracuse University.

Edwin H. Gaggin, also école-trained, joined the school in 1894 when only three of the eight schools of architecture in the United States had any école-trained teachers; Letang at MIT in 1892 and Seeler about the same time of 1893 at the University of Pennsylvania, and of-course Brockway and Edwin H. Gaggin at Syracuse. The four year architecture program at the College in 1893 consisted of course work in linear perspectives, freehand drawing, architectural drafting, watercolor painting, strength of materials, trusses and roofs, masonry construction as well as ancient and modern history. The students also received instruction in the languages of Italian, German, French. Arthur B. Clark, with a masters in Arch., was the instructor in architecture and Edwin H. Gaggin was the instructor in perspective drawing and was a senior in the architecture program. His brother Thomas Walker Gaggin was a freshman in the program and both were from Erie, Pennsylvania. Both brothers became professors at the school under Brockway after they graduated and also established their own practice of Gaggin & Gaggin in Syracuse.

The Smith Typewriter Factory owner, L. C. Smith, developed a relationship with Syracuse University and sponsored the creation of a Mechanics program to be housed in a new building L.C. Smith Hall designed by the professors Gaggin and Gaggin which was built in 1902. Through working with the architects on this project Smith hired them to design a new west coast building for his expanding business which was doing incredible sales in the orient. The project was sited in Seattle and became the tallest structure west of the Mississippi when it was built in 1913 and still known today as the LC Smith Building.
In 1904, F.W. Revels, Professor of Architecture became head of the Architecture Program at the College of Fine Arts at Syracuse University. There was a full four year course leading to a degree and a two year course leading to a certificate of proficiency. Tuition was $120 per year. [from “the Architect’s And Builder’s Pocket-Book”, by Frank Kidder, C.E., Ph.D.,1904 edition]

Revels was joined by another professor, Earl Hallenbeck, and both ushered in a new era of building at the University Campus. Starting with the 1906 Master Plan which Chancellor Day supported the team of Revels and Hallenbeck designed a series of buildings between 1904 and 1921: Carnegie Library (1907), Bowne Hall (1907), Sims Hall (1907), Lyman Hall (1907), Archbold Stadium (1908), and Archbold Gymnasium (1909) and Slocum Hall (1918). [from Syracuse University - An Architectural Guide, Jeffery Gorney 2006]

Albert Brockway later became a prominent practitioner in his own right, served as Chapter President from 1911-1913, was appointed by Mayor Lewis in 1914 as the Chairman of the first City Planning Commission, served as Syracuse Society President from 1933-1934 and was appointed a construction architect with Office of State Architect in 1913.

In 1912, we find Gordon Wright, AIA, one of the professors at the Architecture Program.

**Victorian Era Expositions**

During the 1890's it became popular in America to stage elaborate fairs and expositions starting the famous Chicago World’s Fair of 1893 also known as the World Columbian Exposition. Many historians have traced this movement to the highly successful Exposition Universelle in Paris in 1889 the first major exposition since London’s Crystal Palace of 1851. In quick succession there followed the Trans-Mississippi and International Exposition of 1898 in Omaha, the Pan-American Exposition of 1901 in Buffalo, the Louisiana Purchase Exposition of 1904 in St. Louis, the Hudson-Fulton Centennial of 1909 in Albany, the Panama-Pacific International Exposition of 1915 in San Francisco and the Panama-California International Exposition of 1915 in San Diego. That’s right, California had two great expositions in 1915. However the Columbian Exposition of 1893 also known as “White City”, set the architectural style of the subsequent fairs through its heavy influence of the Beaux-Arts designs.

Richard Morris Hunt [1827-1895], designer of the Administration Building at the Columbian Exposition, was president of the American Institute of Architects at the time and had studied many years at the Ecole des Beaux-Arts in Paris. The firm of McKim Mead and White also designed several of the buildings including the Agricultural Building and McKim studied architecture at the Beaux-Arts school. Additionally, George B. Post [1837-1913], who designed the Manufactures Building, was a pupil of R. M. Hunt (whom he succeeded as President of the American Institute of Architects) thereby receiving his background in the Beaux-arts. So you can see that the major architectural theme of Beaux-arts for Expositions arose out the Worlds Fair of 1893 but also that it was dominated by New York architects.
At the Pan American Exposition of 1901 in Buffalo, several AIA Central New York members were involved. Both the Electricity Building and the Machinery & Transportation Building were designed by Green & Wicks, Architects of Buffalo. Both E.B. Green and W.S. Wicks were founding members of the AIA Central New York Chapter. The theme of the Exposition was a celebration of electricity. [Wicks was AIA Buffalo / Western New York Chapter president in 1897].

Buffalo Chapter President George Cary traveled to the Central New York Chapters’ Annual meeting held in Ithaca, December 7th, 1899 to give a presentation, along with fellow member E. B. Green of Green & Wicks, on the construction work going on in Buffalo.

George Cary, AIA, was the architect of the New York State Pavilion at the upcoming exposition [the only extant building left as of the year 2000]. This building was the only one designed to be a permanent structure as future home of the Buffalo and Erie County Historical Society Museum. Cary had been selected in design competition held for the pavilion in 1899. Three firms had submitted designs but the NYS Commission couldn’t decide on a winner. The Commission eventually hired Robert William Gibson, AIA, of New York City to evaluate the entries [the designers names would be anonymous for his review]. Gibson was also president of the Architectural League of New York in 1898-99 and a Director and member of the Executive Committee of the American Institute of Architects in 1900. Gibson had a building of his own under construction in Syracuse at the time - the eleven story Onondaga County Savings Bank, the city’s first steel framed building in 1897. This is still extant today [2007] and a part of the National Register Historic District of Hanover Square.

A quote from the “Buffalo Architecture: A Guide”, 1985 edition, on page 209, describes the New York State Pavilion, “...built of Vermont marble, the building was the only permanent exposition structure [the others were constructed of plaster]. In 1925 the building was enlarged by the addition of identical wings on the east and west sides, work that was also entrusted to Cary.” George Cary was Buffalo Chapter president from 1898 until 1900.

The popularity of these fairs spurred the development of many state fairgrounds. The New York State Fair was laid out by the firm of Green & Wicks of Buffalo in 1906 and the plan was published in “The Brickbuilder” in 1910. The plans for the New York State Fair were modified by State Architect Albert Brockway in the early 1930's. Brockway died in 1933 before the construction work on the fairgrounds was completed in 1937.

State Fair plan in 1906
A New Century

In 1897, the Western New York Chapter again changed its’ name through a by-law procedure to “Central New York Society of Architects.” The Chapter underwent yet another name change two years later to “The Central New York Chapter, AIA.” This name lasted almost ninety-five years until the Institute decreed that the initials AIA should be more prominent; so Chapters across the nation all changed their names to reflect the new arrangement and ours became “The AIA/Central New York Chapter” as of 1994.

At the turn of the century, according to chapter records, the 15 member strong organization helped sponsor legislation for the establishment of NYS examinations and licensure for architects. The NYS licensing requirements of architects passed in 1897. An earlier version was passed by the State Legislature in 1893 largely championed by W.W. Carlin before his death, but it was vetoed by then Governor Flowers. Remember that with the division of the Buffalo area from the Syracuse-Rochester area, the number of eligible members drops significantly from the number of fifty-three [1887] to 15 members [1897].

Fires and Fireproof Construction

The late nineteenth century saw major fires in most cities because the buildings were generally of wooden stock or vulnerable to fire. Many villages and cities built water systems to combat fires by allowing for easy hook-ups for the fire engines. The village of Baldwinsville was an example of the new civic responsibility which built such a system in 1889. Architects also started to investigate new methods to prevent fire within the buildings they designed and began to promote “fireproof” construction. Charles E. Colton’s design for the Kirk Block in Syracuse became known as the “fireproof Kirk office building.” Pierce & Bickford’s Elmira City Hall (1895) and Russell & King’s Onondaga County Courthouse (1906) all pioneered this new approach to lessen the danger of fire. Buildings became steel framed as opposed to timber framed. For most major buildings, floor construction switched over to the new technology of poured concrete instead of wood joist systems. With well-known AIA members of the CNY/AIA leading the way, the profession took on new importance in saving lives.

Even one of our members assisted the Syracuse fire department. Wellington W. Taber, AIA served as deputy fire marshal of Syracuse in 1900 and 1901.
Pre and Post World War

The Central New York Chapter embarked on a “..paid newspaper advertising campaign..” to give the public a clear presentation of what the professional service of an architect really was. The results of this unique and compelling undertaking produced satisfying editorial and news commentary in the local media. The Chapter was assisted in this effort by AIA member, Albert Brockway, and the effects of this campaign in the community were presented to the annual convention of the Institute held in Washington in 1916. Some of this report was supposedly published in the November 1916 issue of the *Architectural Review*.

Wellington W. Taber, AIA, left his firm of Taber & Baxter and enlisted in the United States Army in 1918 for the World War activities. He was placed in charge of the construction work at Fort Ontario, and later at the Madison Barracks at Sackets Harbor. He did much excellent work at San Antonio, Texas, as construction quartermaster, serving with the rank of captain, and was honorably discharged from the service in May 1919, but still kept to the reserve list. [Biographical Vol III, Syracuse and Its Environs].

Armand J. La Vaute, AIA, served in the United States Army, 1917-1918, in the 23rd Engineers’ Corps, went overseas with the American Expeditionary Forces, saw duty in the active sectors, and served until honorably discharged. Armand La Vaute was associated with his brother Napoleon H. La Vaute, in the firm of La Vaute architects before and after the war. [Biographical Vol III, Syracuse and Its Environs].

The Rochester Society of Architects

From the April, 1963 edition of the *Straight Edge* a funny history article appeared authored by G. Carroll Madden of Rochester a member of the Society as follows:

“...on October 16, 1919, forty-one of the sixty-three architects of Rochester gathered for dinner at the Powers Hotel, Rochester, adopted a constitution and elected the first officers of the Rochester Society of Architects. The purpose of the Society, as first stated, was “to maintain a united local body of architects to foster an interest in the common problems and to make itself felt as a civic force.” In line with this policy, in February 1921, the Society held a competition for a public comfort station. There was only one drawing submitted and it won first prize. Foote, Headley and Carpenter, the lucky winners, generously returned the prize money for use in future competitions.

*The Rochester Times-Union of October 1st, 1919, in telling of the new organization being formed said, “The object of the society as announced by its members is primarily to make clear to the public just what the scope is of an architect’s work......Local architects feel that the public has never been clear as to the exact part their profession plays in construction work and a campaign of publicity will be launched with a view to clearing up many widespread and mistaken ideas.”*
“At a meeting on November 20, 1919, the Committee on Public Information suggested the employment of a publicity man to see that articles properly prepared reach the newspapers concerning the Society’s activities.”

“In January of 1961, forty-one years later, a letter was sent to all members of the Society from the chairman of the Public Relations Committee announcing the retaining of the firm of Darcy, Bush and Osborne, Inc. to act as our counsel in the field of press relations. So, from 1919 to 1961 things didn’t change so much -- same old problems -- same solutions. Just the terminology changed. Public Relations Counsel sounds much more impressive than Publicity Man. And we’ve gotten away from that nasty word - Advertising. When we advertised we paid the newspapers. Now we pay the public relations firm to get our stuff in the newspapers for free. Well, that’s progress.”

“The Society has had its ups and downs through the years. At the beginning the Rochester Democrat and Chronicle reported, “…it is the hope of the organizers that the association will have a building of its own in which to hold its meetings.” [That dream has materialized to the extent that the Society, now a Chapter in its own right, has achieved a headquarters with offices and an executive director.]

“On April 22, 1920, a young fellow named Waasdorp was elected to junior membership but on January 3, 1921 a letter to the Board of Directors from L.A. Waasdorp said, “Kindly accept my resignation as a Junior Member of the Society, same to take effect immediately.” There is no record as to what Leo was mad at nor as to whether or not the resignation was accepted. Things must have been patched up, however, because within a few years Leo Waasdorp was president of the organization. Speaking of presidents, do you know that 17 of our 25 presidents are still living? That’s 68%. We have 72% of the treasurers, 76% of the 1st V.P.’s, 78% of the secretaries and 91-2/5% of the 2nd V.P.’s. For a long life, be a 2nd V.P.”

“Through the 20’s the Society alternated between fits of activity and of being on the verge of collapsing. In 1922 there was practically no activity and the annual meeting was not held until late January 1923. At that time the Society was formally invited to affiliate with the Rochester Engineering Society, which proposition was turned down by ballot of the members in late March. Gosh, now that I think of it, that was kind of lucky ---- Think of all the affiliate members we might have had now!”

“In 1924, three meetings of the Society were held. In 1925 much consideration was given to enforcement of the Education law. This apparently so exhausted the membership that at the Annual Meting in November there was not a quorum and no election could be held. At the meeting in December an easy way out was found by having the secretary cast a single ballot re-electing all officers and directors. 1926 and 1927 were pretty dull. In 1926 no officers were elected for lack of a quorum at any time. This explains why we had one president in our history who held office for a third term -- the members just never got around to changing the officers.”

“In 1928 things started humming again. Storrs Barrows had been elected president for the year -- and you all know Storrs is a man who gets things done. During the year they picked
up new members in the number of 12 activities and 18 associates, ending up the year with 78 members. By October of 1930 the Society had 98 members. Then the depression started pinching and by November of 1934 the Society had 36 registered members, of whom 18 had paid their dues. Things were pretty rugged.”

“It is interesting to note that Society luncheon meetings in the fall of 1932 were held at the Pine Tree Tea Room where the charge for luncheon was $.35. Either the members of the Engineering Society had more cash or they were stuck with their headquarters, but their luncheons at the Sagamore Hotel cost $.75.”

“Rochester, of course, is noted for the cultural interests of its citizens so it seems only fitting that in 1933 a suggestion was made at the Board of Directors meeting that the Society conduct a concert or musicale for the benefit of unemployed draftsmen. I’m not sure whether this was to raise money for the draftsmen or to lull them for a few sweet hours into forgetting that they were unemployed. Sad to say, this project fell through.”

“Then in 1935 someone had a bright idea, Conway Todd, I think; at any rate he headed a committee which rewrote the Constitution and By-Laws providing for a more diversified membership. Up to now the members consisted of registered architects and draftsmen, now they took in engineers and people having an interest in architecture. By the end of the year the membership swelled to 65 and stayed at that number until the end of the 30’s.”

“In 1937 occurred an event which I, for one, should like to have attended. The Rochester Gas and Electric Company invited the Architects Society to a demonstration of gas cookery. The invitation states, “The Company will have four kitchens set up, one turkey, and will demonstrate how to cook the wrong way while showing that it is more efficient to cook with gas than any other way in November.”

“The year 1939 was notable for the 20th Anniversary Dinner at which was presented the fine “Chronicle of Architecture and Architects in Rochester” written by Wilfred Campbell. The year also marked the first of the memorable picnics held at H.H. Sullivan’s cottage on Canandaigua Lake. Let me tell you, for a number of years Sully’s picnic was one of the chief inducements offered in getting the younger fellows to join the Rochester Society of Architects. These picnics continued even after the war until the one [chaired] by our distinguished Director, Marvin Meyer, when the caterer was directed to the wrong side of the lake and we almost didn’t eat at all.”

“As the war years came along the Society continued to be active despite the departure of many of its members into the Armed Forces and the closing down of many architects offices when the principals went into industry or into government agencies for the duration. At the end of the war a committee of the Society was set up to promote post-war building. The committee got pretty busy with its plans but soon found they weren’t needed -- post-war building just started steaming ahead anyways.”

“About this time the Directors of the Society became quite money conscious. They remembered all too well the lean years of the depression and had started putting money into defense bonds during the war. Now they set up a system by which any surplus was socked away each year in a savings account. This laudable spirit of economy persisted, somewhat
at the expense of the program of activities of the Society, until ‘53 when Don Hershey assumed the reins of the presidency. From then on the boys spent every cent that came in. To help celebrate the 40th anniversary of the founding of the Society the savings account was somewhat depleted to finance Carl and Ann Schmidt’s “Architecture and Architects of Rochester, N.Y.” In the past year necessary expenses in connection with the affiliation of the Society with the American Institute of Architects and expenses of the exhibit at Midtown Plaza which you saw this afternoon [March 16, 1963] have pretty much taken care of the rest of the treasury. So here we are -- broke, A.I.A., and happy.”

== End of section on Rochester Society of Architects. ==

The Arts and Crafts Movement

A new revival of the arts found a supporter in Gustav Stickley and took root in Syracuse, New York, spreading in ever widening circles across the country. His impact is still felt today with many craftsman homes being restored and the line of “Stickley Furniture” a classic tradition. Several local AIA members took this appreciation of the arts and exalted it in their design work. Architect Ward Wellington Ward created a style that is a magnificent example of highlighting the arts and crafts in the homes he designed in Syracuse.

Figure 10- House in Strathmore neighborhood of Syracuse by Ward Wellington Ward.

The Technology Club

A new club was formed in the Syracuse area in the 1920's to help spur interest in the inventions that were proliferating. From Smith typewriters to the new Franklin Automobiles. Architect James Randall, AIA, who was to become our Chapter President in 1934-35, help found this new Technology Club along with Alexander T. Brown, inventor of the Smith-Premier typewriter for L. C. Smith. Brown, working as engineer-consultant for L. C. Smith, also invented the L.C. Smith breech-loading shotgun.
Roaring Twenties

The earliest treasury records of the chapter begin in 1926 and show the chapter member dues were an annual $5.00 in the 1920’s. The Chapters’ operating budget was $771.30 for 1926. George Bains Cummings, AIA, from Binghamton was Chapter President in 1926. (Much later he became the Institutes’ President in 1955.) The Chapter prospered and grew in activity and membership. Syracuse was an economic dynamo and many chapter members were practicing in the Salt City.

The three volume set named “Syracuse and its Environs” notes the following “...in 1924, there....was held at the State Armory, from May 5 to 10, the first Home Beautiful Exposition, held in cooperation with the Associated Architects of Syracuse. There were more than half a hundred exhibitors, and model house types were featured. That era of monotonous duplication of four walls and jig saw ornamentation has gone forever. This first exposition had James A. Randall as chairman, Dwight R. Collin, vice-chairman, and Edwin Bonta secretary and treasurer. Listed among the members to push along the educational features of the exposition were Taylor & Bonta, Frank W. Broderick, A. L. Brockway, Walter D. Cross, Merton E. Granger, Melville [sic] [they meant Melvin] L. King, N.J. LaVaute, Fred R. Lear, W. Marsovitch, Joseph Mulranen, Webster C. Moulton, Charles F. Park, Harry D. Phoenix, Frederick W. Revels, Charles H. Umbrecht, I.V. Van Duzer, James R. Vedder, Gilbert R.. Van Auken, Gordon Wright and Gustavus Young. [p.346, Chapter XXX [30], ‘Architecture - Various’; “Syracuse and its Enviroms.”]

Syracuse Society of Architects

Professor Fred Revels of Syracuse University, founded and organized a new architectural society in 1926 called “The Syracuse Society of Architects.” Professor Revels had been a AIA member since 1905. The society was soon affiliated with the AIA but did not become a component of the Chapter until the 1960’s when it received “Section” status. Two other AIA sections for the Chapter were established in the 1960's as well, one for Rochester and one for Binghamton. The Syracuse Society operated independently for many years and was more of an academic enclave during the pre-WWII years. Following the war, activity for the Syracuse Society increased to such an extent that even after it became a section of the Chapter in 1962 it was still growing. A comparison of the membership in 1969 showed that the Chapter had 103 corporate members and the Society had 77 corp. members. Most of these were AIA members holding membership status in both organizations.

The Depression Era

The Chapter came up against some “difficult” (chuckle) policies being developed in Washington, namely a proposed Small House Bureau, as the following excerpt from the chapter minutes reveals:

“The Chapter activities for this year opened with the annual meeting held at Rochester, January 11, 1930. [A] luncheon [was held] at the Rochester Chamber of Commerce. A good part of the meeting time was taken up by squabbling between [Albert] “Bert” Brockway and Geo[rge] Young, somewhat after the following manner, or as much as we could hear of it:

Young: “Say! Bert, what do you know about this Small House Bureau proposition if anything?”
Brockway: “Well, relatively speaking, and approaching the subject from all angles, and looking at it from all points of the compass, as it were, especially from the N.E., it would be my candid opinion that it is a lot of applesauce.”

Young: “Oh!, you are all wet! What I want is information. Some of the big boys over in our town -- bankers and such have asked me if this is honest to goodness architect’s stuff or just a lot of hooey, and -- and I don’t know what to tell them.”

Brockway: “You should have competent advice.”

Young: (Under his breath) “Go to h--! I still insist you are all wet. Haven’t you read what the N.J. architects think about it? Do you want to go on record as endorsing it? I tell you it is a big prob--.”

Brockway: “Oh, Hush up George, of course, for a cliff dweller you are pretty bright, but I was over in Ithaca once, myself, and I know pretty much what is to be expected to come out of a town like that.”

Cassebeer: “Gentlemen! Gentlemen!” --And so far, far into the afternoon.

“Also a good deal of conversation by other members which resulted in the endorsement of the Small House Bureau (with reservations) and to tell the New Jersey architects to shut up.”

**City of Syracuse Building Code**

The late 1920’s saw a surge in building activity and also an interest in revising the city building code which had been adopted in 1912 to establish standards of construction. A Commission on the Revision of the Building Code was created by Mayor Rolland B. Marvin in 1928. The Building Code Committee under the Commission had several subcommittees and several AIA architects assisting and serving on these committees. The preface of the final revised and printed code in 1930 listed those architects and their various positions - “Executive Committee” had four architects, W.W. Taber, M.L. King, A. L. Brockway, W. P. Beardsley; “Strength and Stability” had one architect on the committee, J.R. Vedder; “Masonry” had one architect on the committee, Joseph Mulranen; and “Carpentry” had two architects on the committee, A. L. Brockway and W.P. Beardsley [who was listed as ‘architectural engineer.’ The revised building code was adopted by City Common Council in 1930.

**Depression Era for the CNY AIA**

The Chapter was active by trying to coordinate and settle disputes that arose through the newly created federal Works Progress Administration (WPA). Disputes frequently arose between contractors and architects over wages to be paid, etc. Commissions for architects were few during these years and when received, were worth celebrating as another excerpt from the Chapter Board minutes shows:

“MINUTES OF SPECIAL MEETING, Oct. 18, 1930
AT CHAMBER OF COMMERCE, AUBURN, NEW YORK”
A meeting of the Central New York Chapter of the American Institute of Architects was held October 18, 1930, 12:30 o’clock at the Chamber of Commerce, Auburn, New York. Luncheon was served in the Chamber of Commerce dining room to about thirty members and guests. It was regretted that more of the members were not present at this very interesting meeting. Members of the office of Gordon and Kaelber of Rochester were conspicuous by their absence. Some three days after this meeting the Secretary received a letter (which seems to have been mislaid) from Mr. Eldridge of that office expressing the regrets of Messrs. Gordon and Kaelber at their inability to be present. It seems that the celebration of the opening of the new buildings of the University of Rochester, for which this firm were architects, had been going on for the past week and as a result most of the firm were only in a semi-conscious state by Saturday. However, Mr. Eldridge had made an effort to attend and had gotten as far as Palmyra or some way point when his car developed engine trouble. In getting under to look for the difficulty, he fell fast asleep, and remained in that condition until picked up by a State Trooper on Monday morning.”

House Shabby - House Beautiful

“In 1934, the Syracuse Society of Architects embarked on a campaign to create business for its members by producing a booklet that showed how the modest house at left could be transformed into the modern and luxurious one at right. The society’s design included features considered opulent in those days: electric switches, phone outlets, washable wallpaper, rubber kitchen floors, and - sit down for this one - clothes closets.” [This Old House, Jan/Feb 1997] You’ll note the house shown as shabby would be considered a perfect candidate today for a simple paint job and window rehab and become a model of historic preservation and a treasure to the community. Wow! how our values have changed!

The New York State Association of Architects

In 1930, there was a consensus among the AIA membership that a “...need for an all inclusive state-wide organization, which would speak in a unified voice before the Legislature, ...”

The ‘Association’ was incorporated on January 14, 1931 under the Membership Laws of New York State, as “The Council of Registered Architects.” By court order on November 22, 1937, the name was officially changed to “The New York State Association of Architects, Inc.” A number of Central New York Chapter members have served as President of the State organization since its founding: Charles Ellis, AIA served as its President from 1942-1944; C. Storrs Barrows, FAIA from 1947-49 (before Rochester became a separate Chapter); John Briggs, AIA from 1959-61; S. Elmer...
Chambers, FAIA, from 1962-63; Darrel D. Rippeteau, FAIA, from 1968-69; John Goodman, FAIA, for 1982; Richard T. Lafferty, AIA for 1987, Richard M. Roberts, AIA for 2000, Peter J. Arsenault, AIA for 2003. The NYSAA was composed of representatives of the AIA components in the state. This was structured to also include the various societies - so the Syracuse Society of Architects and the Rochester Society of Architects from our Central New York Chapter territory were represented in the NYSAA by their own delegates.

At the beginning of the War in Europe one of our prominent members and former Chapter President received a unique commission from the U.S. Government. Melvin L. King was selected to design the first federal housing project called “Pioneer Homes” in 1939.

A regular edition of the Syracuse Society Newsletter started in the 1930’s called the Vanishing Point was well received.

1940’s

The Syracuse Post-Standard in conjunction with the Syracuse Society of Architects co-sponsored the publication of a booklet in 1940 titled “Syracuse Homes of Today” which was sold for 25 cents. Sketches and plans of 24 small homes for Central New York designed by Syracuse Architects were published along with informative articles on planning, financing, building etc. The lead article by Charles Rockwell Ellis President of the Syracuse Society of Architects promoted the services of the architect. A table at the back of the booklet lists computations for FHA financed mortgage payments on houses at appraised values from $5,555 to $10,000. This was calculated at the going rate of 4 ½ %. Compare that with todays’ median home prices of $150,000 in Syracuse!!

The War in Europe was beginning to have its effect on the United States in spite of its professed neutrality and isolationism. Leaders in the government and the military were concerned for the preparedness of the US to protect its shores from attack by an aggressor nation, whether Germany or Japan. This topic comes to the forefront of the Chapter’s attention as the following demonstrates.

“In January of 1941 the annual meeting of the Chapter was held at the “Hotel Syracuse” with the following special guests: Colonel H. B. Brewster and AIA Regional Director Clement Newkirk. Mr. Newkirk ‘...pointed out that the services of architects will be in great demand for the defense plants, dwellings for workers who are employed in them and likely, for air raid shelters... He related the information that the Institute has been working with the American Society of Civil Engineers and the American Society of Landscape Architects on the project of plants for national defense. Architects have been given the jobs of laying out airplane bases in Newfoundland and Trinidad and are to be needed in [the] construction of shipyards. Boston architects, he declared, have already been working on schemes of bomb-proofing that area and he recommended the Chapter to study ideas for making populations in their cities safe in the event it becomes necessary.’”
New York State Convention of the NYSAA held in Syracuse, 1941. The local convention committee was made up of Charles Ellis, Lemuel C. Dillenback, Chairman, Melvin L. King, William P. Crane, Merton E. Granger and Paul Hueber. It is believed the event was held at the Hotel Syracuse.

The War Years of the 1940's

Many architects served in the military during WWII. Some members were active even before the US was drawn into the war. Carl R. Stephany, AIA, from Rochester, was listed in February of 1941 as “Major, War Dept., Port of Embarkation, Army Base, Boston, Mass.”

In May 1942, the Chapter passed a resolution to follow the same policy as the Institute on dues; ie. that Chapter members serving in the Armed Forces below the rank of commissioned officers would have dues remitted for the duration of the war, but that all commissioned officers would be expected to keep dues current.

The Institute also passed along information to the Chapters in the form of bulletins. In May 1942, Bulletin #12, from the “Octagon” [so named because of the historic Octagon house [the Tayloe Mansion] which the AIA owned at its headquarters in DC], was regarding the War Production Board’s limiting order #L-41. Also Bulletin #13 - “...having principally to do with a list of metallic items not now manufactured and which directly effect the Architect, making it most necessary that he use his ingenuity now as never before in design and construction of buildings. (Facetious note in the Board minutes: the architects are willing to have their ingenuity tested to the utmost but do need a job to try it on)…”

The minutes of the Chapter record that no meeting was held in July of 1942 “..due to the war emergency.” We are not sure what particular local event would impact the architects in the Syracuse area during this time frame.

In October 1942, the Chapter had to consider a replacement for Mr. Storrs Barrows of Rochester since “..The question of the possible need of someone to take the place of Mr. Storrs Barrows on the [Chapter] Board of Directors...(Mr. Barrows being in the Army Air Corps for the duration.)”

Also at the chapter meeting in October of 1942 “..A letter was read from Mr. Fisher and Major Harrison stating the possibility of the utilization of the services of architects as commissioned personnel in the Air Service and Marine Corps. ..[the] letter...fully described the status of the architect and the profession in the emergency.”

The Chapter minutes of January 1943 record the following “...Mr. Melvin King, reporting for the Committee on Civilian Defense, summarized some of the present opinions regarding the efficacy of camouflage [sic].” Also a letter from Mr. Sheve, President of the Institute, “…reported in part the resignation of Clement R. Newkirk as General Director for the New York District…made necessary by his present work as an engineer for the U.S. Government in Adrian, Michigan.” Mr. Newkirk was a chapter member from Rochester of long standing and the reference to the U.S. Government is certainly a thinly veiled indication of war related construction.

In January of 1944 the Chapter lost a highly respected, long-time member and Fellow of the Institute - Professor Clarence Augustine Martin, who died at Sarasota, Florida, being 81 years old. In a Chapter memorial drafted by Arthur Gibb and George Young another war casualty was revealed:
“In 1942, at the age of 80, and in the emergency of a new war, he again put on the harness and assumed full time responsibilities in cantonment construction.” Cantonment is a term the US Army uses to describe a camp where personnel are trained for military service - this would necessitate the construction of barracks, mess halls and other facilities for that purpose.

In early 1944, the City of Syracuse started organizing the Syracuse Post-War Planning Council and asked for participation from the Chapter.

A rare list is contained within the chapter minutes of 1944 titled, “Registered and Un-registered Architects within the Precincts of The Central New York Chapter Including Central New York Chapter Membership.” Of the three hundred and sixteen (316) architects listed, one hundred and five (105) were chapter members.

**War Time Effects**

One of the little known effects on the architectural profession at the end of the war revealed the impact the Government was having on the construction industry from its dominance through war time controls and the encouragement of unions in government projects. This was especially true of the influence of the War labor Relations Board. In January, 1945 a special report of the Committee on Practice for the Chapter expressed concerns about this issue of unions within architectural offices since “…It has gained rather a sound and substantial foothold in the drafting rooms of the west, so I have been told, and gradually working its way east has now made its presence felt in the Rochester area, where it is meeting with some resistance as far as the labor affiliates are concerned. Just how strong this resistance will be, remains to be seen. If unionization is allowed to survive, it will mean that sooner or later every architect’s and engineer’s office in the country will have to display the union stamp of approval upon its plans or be left waiting when the day for estimates comes around; for only union contractors will figure union drawings, made by union draftsman.”

The main response of the day seemed to be the feeling that unionization of drafting room workers was remote since “…the average draftsman is looking forward to hanging out his own shingle and eventually become an employer himself.”

A January 1945 report included in the minutes of the Chapter at its annual meeting at the Hotel Syracuse was the “…Committee on Civic Design and Housing, Melvin L. King Chairman reported that due to the ever changing conditions on the war front, the public was not interested in the building of homes.”

**The Manhattan Project and AIA/CNY**

In today’s society where we view nuclear weapons as the evil of modern man and which holds the potential for global destruction of the human race it was viewed quite differently back in 1945. Then it was a race to develop a “atomic fission device” before the Nazi’s could finish their “heavy water” experiments and create their own atomic bomb first. With the Nazi’s in control of such a destructive weapon the Allies would have been brought to its’ knees and the world would be a very different place today. However the Allies were able to sabotage Germany’s efforts and delay them until the momentous drive of the American Army through the Ruhr Valley to Berlin which forced their surrender.
The start of the secret project to construct facilities for the creation of the atom bomb was in the Army Corps of Engineer District in Syracuse and Col. James C. Marshall. A dispatch summoned Marshall to Washington, D.C. in June 1942 to the office of Gen. Wilhelm D. Styer. “You are going to form a new engineer district,” Styer said, handing over a file on the work of a secret group of scientists. When he opened the file, Marshall found a four-page letter to President Franklin D. Roosevelt explaining that the group had identified practical methods of accomplishing atomic fission, and requesting $90 million to build facilities needed to produce nuclear weapons. Scrawled on the corner was the formal approval: “OK, FDR.” And with that, a little-known chapter of the Manhattan Project unfolded in Syracuse. Marshall immediately began building the organization that would turn theory into hardware using personnel from Central New York. The need for secrecy led them to New York City, where they figured their activity would be least noticeable. There also was need for a nondescript name, so the Manhattan Engineer District was formed to oversee what became known as the Manhattan Project. The District was made up of several sites. Among the largest were those at Oak Ridge, Tenn.; Hanford, Washington and Los Alamos, N.M. The Tennessee and Washington sites were selected largely for their proximity to power supplies. The Los Alamos location afforded seclusion for weapons construction and testing.

One Central NY AIA architect who was part of the ‘Syracuse Engineer District’ transferred down to New York City was Thomas T. Crenshaw who served as Deputy District Engineer and Executive Office at Oak Ridge. More than 200 electricians, carpenters and mechanics from Central New York moved to Oak Ridge and Hanford to work on the project. D.W. Winkleman Co. of Syracuse sent a crew of 25 men to help move the top of a small mountain - about 3 million cubic yards - to accommodate a half mile long building at Oak Ridge. “I believe this was the largest earth-moving job excepting the Panama and Suez canals.” [The Post-Standard, Aug. 7, 1989, pg A-4] For the younger members of the Chapter who are unfamiliar with the name of Crenshaw - he was a founding partner of an architectural and engineering firm called “Sargent Webster Crenshaw & Folley” after the war and located in Syracuse. The firm is no longer in existence having closed its doors in 1993.

**Chapter Honor Awards in 1949**

![AIA Central New York Chapter History • November 2007 Edition](image-url)
Landscape Architects seek our help

Our Chapter adopted resolutions in June of 1945, in support of the New York Chapter of American Society of Landscape Architects in seeking legislation in New York State for the licensing and registration of landscape architects. Apparently the Central New York Chapter AIA was one of the first to come on board with its support.

Design Competition for Syracuse War Memorial

Many Cities across the United States saw the need to commemorate the losses suffered during the war of young men never to return home to families and loved ones; young men who were sacrificed in places with strange sounding names like

The Central New York Chapter organized a design competition in for a “War Memorial” that would serve as a public auditorium facility with a special room reserved for mementoes, plaques, murals and lists of veterans.

The winning design was by Gaggin & Gaggin Architects of Syracuse. There was much controversy about this building and the ‘competition’. When the building came up for consideration decades later in the 1980’s for listing on the National Register of Historic Places many members confused the engineering significance of the concrete spans for which the building was considered unique with architectural significance of which it can be said to be questionable.

1950's

The 1950's saw the Chapter increase in membership from 114 in 1946 to 217 in 1960. Some of the Chapter’s remarkable achievements during these years:

- Regular newsletter called the “Straight Edge”[has been in continuous publication ever since]
- Annual directory of membership/meetings/committees and bylaws.
- The donation of the first color slide collection to the Institute Archives.
- Regular meetings across the Chapter Territory to reach out to members
Chapter Meetings in 1955

AIA CNY booklet

1957 - 1958

AIA CNY booklet
The most noteworthy 1950's event for the Chapter of course was the election of the Chapter member George Bain Cummings as the Institute’s President in 1955; the only CNY Chapter member ever to hold that office. Mr. Cummings was born February 11, 1890 at New Ipswich, New Hampshire. Attended High School in Brooklyn and went on to Cornell University and graduated in 1912 with a B. of Arch. Cummings worked as a Draughtsman at Carrere & Hastings [1912-1917].

George served as a 1st Lieutenant in the U.S. Army Air Service in WWI from 1917 to 1919.

He worked at several firms after the war and then moved to Binghamton, NY, Cummings forms a partnership with Lacey, Schenck & Cummings in 1920. He joined the Central New York Chapter in 1921, served as Secretary in 1922, Treasurer in 1923, Vice President in 1924 and President of the Chapter in 1925.
Regular meetings and luncheons were held at the Yates Hotel in Syracuse from the early 1950's until it was torn down about 1971.

1960's

The decade of the sixties was a very active time for the Chapter and the two societies in Rochester and Syracuse. In 1961 or 62 both the Syracuse Society and the Rochester Society became chartered sections of the Chapter where before they operated independently though still AIA affiliated.

Publication of the Chapter Membership directory continued in the 1960’s as one can see of the sample covers to the left and right.
President Lyndon B. Johnson was present for the 1964 dedication ceremonies for the “Newhouse” school of communications building at Syracuse University designed by I.M. Pei and King & King Architects. (King and King Architects was then led by Russell A. King who would become a President of the Syracuse Society of Architects from 1969-70; Russ represented the third generation of Kings in a long tradition of AIA involvement.) President Johnson gave his now famous “Gulf of Tonkin Speech” at the dedication.
I. M. Pei would return to Syracuse to design the now famous Everson Museum of Art which was completed in 1968. I.M. Pei would receive the AIA Gold Medal for lifetime achievement in 2007. The local associate Architect was the firm Pedersen, Hueber, Hares & Glavin.

In the 1960's the now legendary Harley McKee was chairman of a Chapter committee on Buildings and Historic Preservation. One of the issues they pursued was saving the Syracuse Weighlock Building [now know as the Erie Canal Museum]. At that time the State owned the building having been an active part of the canal system was now considered a historic landmark, in danger of demolition. And in danger of being misused by the Department of Transportation for storage or worse not being properly maintained. Harley McKee, deciding that this building should rightfully be protected as an historic landmark (there being no state agency or apparatus for the overseeing of state landmarks or historic sites at that time) supported legislation in the state legislature for handing over of the building and property to the County of Onondaga for the establishment of a Canal Museum. One of the first such museums in the nation and the only one that deals strictly with the canal history of the United States. The bill was passed, the governor signed it into law, and the building changed hands. Harley also participated in the process of getting the building on The National Register of Historic Places. The Canal Museum was finally listed in 1971 on the Register.
Harley McKee, FAIA, a professor of Architectural History at Syracuse University, helped found the Association for Preservation Technology (APT) in 1969 which is today based in Montreal, Canada with affiliate organizations around the world.

The Syracuse Society attained AIA affiliation in 1962 and become a component of the Central New York Chapter. From that point on it was also entitled to representation on the NYS Association’s Board of Directors. The immediate effect of the Society and the Chapter being linked was a competition for member involvement at one or the other and for nearly ten years a duplication of efforts and expenses was an important debate.

The Chapter became more aware of a need for part time staff assistance and about 1965 the Board hired Charles E. Rhinehardt, Public Relations Consultant who resided at 324 Dickerson Drive in Camillus, NY and until 1974 assisted the Chapter in various activities as its Executive Director.
Man-Build, Inc.

An innovative chapter program in the 1960's called Man-Build was started by members as a way to serve the community in Syracuse and poorer neighborhoods in need of architectural services. This was initially underwritten with grants.

In 1969, the Rochester Society broke from the Chapter as a component section and reorganized as the new Rochester Chapter.

1970's

The energy and vitality of the Syracuse Society had reached such proportions as to compete with the Chapter for members’ time and dues. The Society, after a very long soul-searching effort lasting two years, decided [although this was not without dissent] to disband and inject its energies into the Chapter organization in 1971. The late and widely respected Tony Cappuccilli, AIA, was the last President of the Syracuse Society and had the sad duty to convene the last meeting. The vision of empowering the Chapter was never fully achieved and many former society members lament the loss of what was a vital and useful forum for working out important issues concerning Syracuse.

The City of Syracuse began to recognize the need to preserve it’s historic resources including those buildings still extant that had been designed by the more prominent architects of an earlier era. The Syracuse Common Council passed new legislation in March, 1975 to set up a Landmarks Preservation Board along with a system to identify historic buildings and sites and to have them designated “Protected Sites.”

The 1970's also saw the final issue of the *Straight Edge*. With the recession, the chapter was hard-pressed to continue several of its activities. The membership being greatly occupied with their practices were not able to participate in the structure of the chapter, to that end the Board of Directors abolished all standing committees. The Board set up provisions for a special task force to be created upon each occasion a great need was established and then only for a stated length of time. One such Task Force worked on “Roofing Standards” and issued publications on the subject.

Another group of architects in the Binghamton area submitted petitions to the AIA for their own chapter in 1978 and in 1979 the Southern Tier Chapter was charted with the territory encompassing the counties of Broome, Chemung, Chenango, Delaware, Otsego, Schuyler, Steuben, Tioga, Tompkins, and the southern 1/3 of Cortland. This last odd division of Cortland county separated the City of Ithaca and Cornell University’s’ school of architecture along with it from the Central New York Chapter. This left the Central New York Chapter with the counties of Cayuga, northern 2/3 of Cortland, Franklin, Herkimer, Jefferson, Lewis, Madison, Oneida, Onondaga, Oswego, St. Lawrence, and Seneca.
1980's

The Recession ended and there was a resurgence of activity in the construction industry and in the CNY Chapter as well. Several new programs were created and continue today. The newsletter was reestablished as a monthly publication about 1981, and the membership directory began to again be published separately in booklet form starting in 1985. The Continuing Education Series which became regular monthly lectures in the evenings was established and became very popular and successful until it was discontinued about 1994, only to be revived again about 2002.
Chapter Logo Evolution

Figure 14 - Logo circa 1930

Figure 15 - Logo c. 1960

Figure 16 - Logo circa 1990

Figure 17 - Institutes’ Logo
used by the Chapter (Today)

Early in the beginnings of the Chapter, it was allowed to use the Institute’s logo with the name of the Chapter prominently displayed (not shown). Then a ruling rescinded that permission and Chapters were allowed to design their own as shown in figure 14. The Chapter changed and modernized this look in the early 1960's as shown in figure 15. In the 1980's the Chapter used the Institute’s logo with a “CNY” overprint shown in figure 16. Today we use the red eagle and column of the Institute with the Chapter name prominent again as shown in figure 17.

The recession of 1973 - 74 created the necessity of cutting back expenses but by the mid-1980's it was decided to revisit the idea of a staff person. Johanna G. Luce of Wholistics, Inc. was retained as Executive Secretary with offices at 503 East Washington Street. These were also the offices of Reimann & Buechner Partnership, Landscape Architects. This arrangement lasted from Oct. 1984 until Dec 1986.

A change of contract and of Chapter Offices in January 1987 created an affiliation with PACNY at the Parke Avery House at 1509 Park Street on the North Side. Our new Executive Secretary became Nancy Newman. That year Barbara Giambastiani became PACNY’s executive director and was assisted by Norma Shannon. The arrangement for AIA CNY was elevated and from about March 1987 the Chapter had Barbara as Executive Director with Norma acting as Executive Secretary. Meetings and seminars were held at the Parke Avery House. Also a room was set aside for the beginnings of a Chapter Archive named the Melvin King Memorial Room.

In 1989, the arrangement was dissolved when new leadership at PACNY decided to curtail their activities to strictly a House Museum. The Chapter moved out of the Parke Avery House.
Finally the Chapter found new offices in the State Tower Building and had a grand opening September 13, 1995.

**Architectural Heritage Year - 1986**

The Preservation League of New York State lobbied the state legislature to proclaim 1986 as “Architectural Heritage Year” and thereby serve as a vehicle to educate the public about their historic buildings in their communities. The Chapters’ Historic Resources Committee joined the celebration by soliciting funds and arranging for the publication of a large poster showing a local building type for each month. Many copies of this beautifully drawn poster are available still at the AIA Resource Center.

Starting in 1985, the Chapter began publishing its membership directory with the covers seen below.

100th Anniversary and Hosting the 1987 State Convention

The Chapter observed its 100 year anniversary in 1987 by hosting the NYSAA State Convention in Syracuse at the Sheraton University Inn Conference Center. Also the membership directory was expanded to more of a magazine format to celebrate this special year titled “CNY Architecture-a Desk Reference”. Unfortunately publication of the desk

Left to right - Joel Pillsbury, AIA/ CNY president, John H. Mulroy, Onondaga Co. Exec., Tom Young - Mayor of Syracuse, Richard T. Lafferty, AIA/NYS president, and Dean Biancavilla, 1987 Directory Editor, gathered at the ceremony of the first edition of the AIA magazine “CNY Architecture - A Desk Reference” which all hold in their hand at the Everson Museum in October of 1987.
reference lasted only three more years when the term agreement was not renewed. The Chapter also endorsed an Intern Development Program that year to work with the Institute’s IDP. Another standing committee was added to the list named the Harley McKee Memorial Committee on Historic Resources. The Chapters’ Historic Resources Committee produced as its’ first project a special stand-alone display of the Chapters History consisting of two door sized panels which was displayed for the first time at the State Convention in 1987 at the Hotel Sheraton.

The Chapter also established a home for its archives and its headquarter’s operations at the Preservation Association of Central New York in 1987. This arrangement lasted for about two years when the energetic PACNY executive director resigned and the goals of that organization no longer matched those of the Chapter.

**AIA Tour Guide of Syracuse**

The Chapters’ Historic Resources Committee applied to the New York State Council on the Arts and received two successive grants totaling more than $15,000 to begin producing a Tour Guide on architecture of the City of Syracuse. The Chapter hired local author and architectural historian Evamaria Hardin to produce the text for some eighteen walking tours of Syracuse. Syracuse University Press undertook publication of the first ever book. To round out the sponsorship of the book the Onondaga Historical Association came on board and the project was completed under the title “Syracuse Landmarks - An AIA Guide to Downtown and Historic Neighborhoods” released in 1992. The book has been in continuous print since it came out and one can find it in most book stores.
1990's

The Chapter archives were moved to a permanent location at the George Arents Research Center on the sixth floor of Bird Library at Syracuse University in 1991 and the archives became the “Central New York/AIA Collection.” A major component of this collection is a large portfolio of original working drawings of Merton Granger and also from the firm of Granger & Gillespie donated by member David Chase.

Also the 1990s’ saw another recession where several architectural firms underwent the infamous corporate “downsizing” or closed their doors altogether. Finnegan Lyons & Houseworth, Architects dissolved in 1989. And the architectural giant of Sargent Webster Crenshaw & Folley closed down in 1992. SWC&F founded by Dr. Kenneth Sargent in the 1940's had over 121 employees at its peak. The firm of David Chase was absorbed by the architectural giant of Kimball Associates of New Jersey in 1993. And most recently the old firm of Hueber Hares and Glavin was dissolved in 1998 which was located in the old Alexander R. Brown mansion on Onondaga Blvd.

The Chapter’s most significant event to date for this decade was the establishment of a special center of operations in 1995 and named “The Architects Resource Center” at the Historic State Tower Building in downtown Syracuse where programs and events have been held on a regular basis. Storefront displays help educate the public about architects and architecture. It has had three different locations in the building.

A gradual shift in the production of construction drawings by architectural firms in Central New York has been occurring since the 1980's. From the traditional hand drafting techniques to the current technology of computer-aided drafting and design or CADD the office of the architect has been gradually changing. Other technological changes of the 1990's were the increasing use of, blackberry’s, pagers, cell phones, sophisticated fax machines and the Internet. Their impact on the practice of architecture has changed the way architects communicate with clients, consultants, contractors, suppliers and each other forever.

Perhaps the most significant event in decades for the profession was the recent passage of a new State law limiting liability for practicing architects. Signed into law by Governor Pataki in September of 1996 the new law seeks to limit an architects’ professional liability on projects completed for more than 10 years. The Chapter had been sending members religiously for years to Albany during Lobby Day to press for a yes-vote and certainly can take some of the credit for its passage.
The Urban Design Center of Syracuse, Inc.

The Urban Design Center started with a group of AIA members and others under the Chapter’s Urban Design Task Force in 1996.

The Urban Design Center under a start-up grant in 1999 from the Syracuse Economic Development Corp. (SEDCO) provided for two pilot projects to demonstrate how the new center would operate and how it might bring to bear the design resources of the various organizations under its umbrella on the planning issues within the City of Syracuse and the County of Onondaga. These two pilot projects would essentially have community charrettes at the core of the process to arrive at collaborative solutions but with the input of the design profession and the multi-talented and energetic contributions of the students at the school of architecture and the school of landscape architecture.

The Urban Design Center is currently staffed with approximately 20 volunteer architects and landscape architects from 12 different design firms in the Syracuse metropolitan area. These are design professionals who are willing to donate their limited and valuable time in the interest of their community by demonstrating urban design principles of how to revitalize existing neighborhoods by using traditional neighborhood development techniques. These techniques have been lacking in city planning efforts for many years and these professionals wish to bring this knowledge back into regular use by the city by the proposed neighborhood demonstration projects of creating conceptual architectural sketches. It will be our intent to allow for students from the design schools to participate under the supervision of the professionals that are volunteering and lending their names to this enterprise.

AIA CNY hosts the State Convention again in 2005

Hosting the AIA New York State Convention of 2005 at Syracuse was a major undertaking for the Chapter with planning starting in early 2003. However with John Goodman, FAIA as chair and Dean Biancavilla, AIA as assistant chairman of the local convention Committee the chapter was mobilized to carry out a very successful event that brought high praise from all attendees. The Convention set records for attendance which has of the 2007 New York City convention yet to be surpassed. One of the significant events during the convention was the joint proclamation of the City of Syracuse and the County of Onondaga regarding Green Technologies and Sustainability.
At the Convention presenting the Proclamation - left to right - Ed Kochian, dep. County Exec.; Chapter Pres. Ed Olley, Barbara Rodriguez Hon. AIA, Mayor Driscoll, AIA NYS pres.; Elect Terry O’Neal, AIA NYS past pres. Peter Arsenault

WHEREAS, Founded in 1931, the New York State Association of Architects (AIA) has a statewide membership of over 6,800 members in twelve chapters and speaks for the interests of all registered architects in New York State; and

WHEREAS, The primary functions of AIA New York State are public awareness to increase the public’s general knowledge and awareness of architecture and the role architects play in the built and planned environment; and the government affairs to monitor state legislative and regulatory activities to promote and enhance the profession of architecture, those who practice, and to ensure the health, safety and welfare of the public it serves; and

WHEREAS, This year 400-500 architects will gather for the annual AIA New York State Convention, which has adopted the theme of “Eco-Design: Design for the Living Environment”, to address issues of public concern related to architectural design and construction; and

WHEREAS, This year’s convention will also address the latest in successful “Green Design”, from exemplary products to integrated systems, codes and regulations, traditional construction issues and more contemporary issues such as challenges with moisture, mold and indoor air quality, and there will be sessions for emerging professionals, associates and students; and

WHEREAS, Today we recognize the many contributions of the American Institute of Architects, New York State to the quality of life for all residents of the City of Syracuse and Onondaga County.

NOW, THEREFORE, I, NICHOLAS J. PIRRO, County Executive of the County of Onondaga and I, MATTHEW J. DRISCOLL, Mayor of the City of Syracuse, do hereby proclaim the fifteenth through the seventeenth of September, two thousand and five as

Convention of the American Institute of Architects, New York State Community Recognition Day
In the County of Onondaga and the City of Syracuse

IN WITNESS WHEREOF, we have hereunto set our hands and caused the Seals of the County of Onondaga and the City of Syracuse to be imprinted this fifteenth day of September, two thousand and five.
2007

The Chapter also saw the election of one its members, Peter Arsenault, AIA, to the national office of Vice President at the American Institute of Architects. Granted Peter had already transferred his membership to the Rochester Chapter upon his assuming principal status at Stantec but I think we can still take pride in his election as one of Central New York’s own.

The 21st Century

Changes are rapidly overtaking the profession and the new century may see a very different kind of architect. Whether for good or bad, the responsibility rests with each of us to help make those changes for the betterment of the profession.

I wish the Chapter well on its 120th Anniversary with this Sketch History as a token tribute in its honor.

Sincerely,
Dean A. Biancavilla, AIA, Chapter Archivist

And as a tribute to our current Chapter President John P. Goodman, FAIA, a past president of the Chapter from 1977-79 and the AIA NYS president in 1982

John P. Goodman, AIA in 1981

Peter J. Arsenault, AIA in 2004