

HISTORY OF THE WOMAN'S ARCHITECTURAL CLUB
CHICAGO CHAPTER



In 1921 a news item bearing the following headlines was published in a Chicago newspaper:-
"Only Girl Architect Lonely: Wanted- To meet all of the women architects in Chicago to form a club."
Inspired by this a small group of women draftsmen met with Elizabeth Martini, only woman architect in Illinois at that time, and formed a club known as the Chicago Womens Drafting Club. Included in this group were women doing or studying architectural and engineering drafting, architectural rendering and patent drawing. This organization continued interruptedly for two years, meeting at the office of Miss Martini, until it fell to pieces due to the lack of mutual interest among the members.

When plans were being made in 1927 for the first Women's World Fair, a large amount of space was given for the use of women in science and the allied arts with Dr. Vida Latham in charge. A part of the space was offered to the women architects through Miss Juliet Paddle. This was in March, two months before the opening of the fair. Miss Paddle quickly got in touch with the few women who were known to be doing architectural work and plans were discussed. No organization was attempted at this time but every effort was made to collect as much material as possible for an exhibition. When the Fair took place, the women architects had a small but extremely interesting exhibit on one side of the booth given to science and the allied arts.

In October of the same year, a permanent organization known as the Women's Architectural Club Chicago Chapter was formed with nine charter members. Women eligible to membership were architects, architectural draftsmen, architectural students, architectural renderers and landscape architects at the discretion of the membership committee.

This club was then and is now so far as it is possible to ascertain, the only organization of women architects in the United States.

One of the first official acts of the newly formed club was to elect Dr. Vida Latham to honorary membership in recognition of her instrumentality in organizing the women architects.

The immediate need of the new club was members but due to the constitutional requirements a large number of new members was impossible. However, within a year practically every woman doing any sort of architectural work was enrolled as a member.

In 1928, at the second Woman's World Fair, the Woman's Architectural Club was given a small booth by the science and allied arts group and had a very fine exhibition including drawings, photographs of executed work, renderings, a wood carving of an English Chapel and a Model Nursery. A feature of this exhibit was a group of photographs of the drawings and models of the Shakespeare Memorial Theatre which was won in competition by Miss Elizabeth Scott of London, England, who at that time became the second honorary member of the club.

Realizing that an organization firmly knit together is the foundation of every club, the Woman's Architectural Club devoted the years from 1929 to 1931 to the work of organization. Keeping in mind the purpose of the club "To further the interests of women in Architecture," monthly meetings consisting of a dinner followed by a speaker were held during the winter months. After the annual picnic of the club at the home of Elizabeth Kimball Nedved in Glencoe in June, meetings were suspended until September.

Bi-monthly meetings were held throughout the summer of 1932 in the form of sketching trips. Trips to the Wilmette Yacht Harbor, the Dunes of Indiana, Century of Progress and the annual picnic at Glencoe were among the interesting ones taken.

At this time the most important change in the constitution was made pertaining to membership in the club. This change provided for three classes of membership, viz: active associate and non-resident, which made possible an increase in membership which was taken advantage of immediately. The membership of the club now totals thirty-three, being divided as follows: active members, fourteen; associate members, ten; non-resident, nine.

The club was now in a position to undertake the renting of permanent quarters. After a great deal of careful consideration the Architects Club of Chicago located at 18th St. and Prairie ave., was selected as the most suitable place for the Club home. The Architects Club is to be the official headquarters for all architects visiting Chicago during the Century of Progress and through their location in the same building the Woman's Architectural Club hopes to be able to welcome all women Architects who may visit Chicago at that time.

The major task undertaken for 1933 is the sponsoring of an International Exhibition of the work of women in Architecture and the allied arts to take place in Chicago during the Century of Progress. With this in view, women architects both in this country and abroad have been approached on the questions of non-resident membership and contributions for the exhibitions. To date the response has been wide and enthusiastic. At first it was thought that the Club headquarters in the Architect's Club which is within a few blocks of the grounds of the Century of Progress would be the ideal location for this but at the present time it seems possible to arrange space for the exhibition within the bounds of the Exposition itself.

In 1932 the club was firmly established and ready to start on a more progressive program. Its membership of fourteen included all of the registered women architects in Illinois, all women draftsmen in Chicago and the suburbs, several architectural students and renderers and a landscape architect. The meetings were increased to two each month. One held on the first Tuesday was devoted to the study "An Ideal American Community" and held through the kindness of Mr. Charles Morgan in his studio on the thirty-third floor of 333 No. Michigan Ave.

The second meeting held later in the month consisted of a dinner followed by a speaker. These dinners were open to the public and were well and enthusiastically attended. Among the speakers presented that year were, Mr. Charles Morgan, Mr. A. C. Webb, Dr. A. Martinez Delgado, Consul from Columbia, and Mr. Hamilton of the firm of Hamilton, Fellows and Nedved.

In May, 1932, at the offices of Hamilton, Fellows and Nedved on Tower Court, was held the first annual exhibition of the Woman's Architectural Club. The paneled walls of the exhibition room formed a perfect background for the exhibits while the tea table in the bay at the end of the room completed the picture. Two rooms and the stair hall were required for the exhibition which included Beaux Arts problems by Aileen Anderson and Mary Ann Crawford; Pencil sketches by Mary Ann Crawford, Juliet Peddle and Helen Brown; Mosaic Boxes and Panels by Margaret Fairman; Metal Bird Cage, Book Case and ornaments by Catherine Furlong; Water Colors by Elizabeth Kimball Nedved, Margaret Fairman and Mabel Wheelock; Photographs of completed buildings and architectural renderings by Ruth Perkins, Bertha Whitman, Mabel Wheelock and Elizabeth Kimball Nedved; Model and plans of a Modern House by Betty Weber; Blue Prints of Residences by Bertha Whitman and Ruth Perkins; and a Wood Carving of a Church by Jean Hetherington.

During the winter of 1932-33 the following were among the several very interesting and prominent speakers presented by the Women's Architectural Club: Mrs. Anita Willetta Burnham on "Around the world on a penny"; Thomas Tallmadge on "The Restoration of Williamsburg"; and Theodore Hoffmeister on "Modern Architecture."

Mrs. Bertha Y. Whitman
2656 Lincolnwood Drive
Evanston, Illinois 60201

And so a woman took the prize
For her design in architecture.
A World's Fair building will arise
To do her honor, I conjecture.
Thus woman's work takes on new features;
They always were designing creatures.

322.5-c Bull

Burnham Library

Pamphlet File

So spoke *Judge* in 1892 when Miss Lois Howe, an M. I. T. architectural graduate, was awarded first prize for her design in competition of the Woman's Building erected for the World's Columbian Exposition of 1893.

The world moves. Today it is announced that Georgina Pope Yeatman is appointed Director of City Architecture in Philadelphia in the cabinet of the mayor. Miss Yeatman will deal with housing, zoning and city planning for her city. She holds the degree of B. A. from the U. of P. and B. S. in architecture from M. I. T. She has studied architecture abroad and in a Philadelphia office. The lady flies her own plane and is a polo player. She holds memberships in no less than seven clubs and art associations.

The Women's Architectural Club of Chicago will feel encouraged by this advancement of a member of their sex.