

The Society of Architectural Historians
Missouri Valley Chapter

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News Letter

2009 ANNUAL GATHERING SUNDAY, FEBRUARY 8 AT AWARD-WINNING POWER HOUSE RESTORATION BY CANNON DESIGN

The board of the St. Louis Chapter is proud to announce that this year's Annual Gathering will be held in the newly restored Power House, Eleventh and Clark, in downtown St. Louis, through the generosity of Tom Bergmann, George Nikolaijevich, and the staff at Cannon Design. For reservations, please phone Esley Hamilton at 314-615-0357, or e-mail him at ehamilton@stlouisco.com. The cost of \$20, payable at the door. Treasurer Richard Mueller will be glad to take your 2009 membership renewal at the same time, if you wish.

Following our usual custom, we will meet at 6 p.m., dine at 7, and share pictures of interesting buildings until about 9:30. This year, food will be catered by the Hungarian congregation at St. Mary of Victories Church, which has recently reopened. Some members may remember the delicious goulash this group provided several years ago.

Curbside parking should be available on nearby streets, or you can park in the recently built Cupples Parking ramp at 421 South 10th Street, just below Spruce.



The Power Plant seen from 11th and Clark, during renovation. Photo by Brian Cassidy, St. Louis Business Journal.

If you would like to make a presentation, with or without pictures, please limit yourself to no more than four minutes. If you plan to use PowerPoint or any other computer system to project your images, John Guenther has

kindly consented to provide a projector. To project from John's system, please contact him *by February 2* at john_g@mackeymitchell.com or phone him at Mackey Mitchell 314-421-1815. A carousel slide projector will also be available, coordinated by Esley Hamilton.

Completed in 1928, the Power House was part of the Municipal Service Building complex that still occupies an entire block of downtown St. Louis—providing parking space for city vehicles, a fire house, and an electric substation. The building replaced the Municipal Courts Building, popularly known as the Four Courts, an impressive-looking but structurally faulty Second Empire design by Thomas Waryng Walsh. Study and Farrar designed the present building part of the civic center project funded by the 1923 bond issue. Eventually the Power House provided coal-fired steam heat to a dozen buildings, including Kiel Opera House.

Guy Study (pronounced Stooddy, 1880-1959) and Benedict Farrar (pronounced Far-er, 1886-1978) had been in partnership since about 1915. An early building was Our Lady of Lourdes Catholic Church on Forsyth, 1917, and a late one was Salem Methodist in Ladue, 1966. They were best known for finely crafted period revival residences, but they also did several outstanding buildings for the Water Department, including the newer intake tower at Chain of Rocks, the pavilion at Compton Hill, and the monumental five-building complex at Howard's Bend.



Faced with more stringent air-pollution regulations, the Power House closed about 1968. The building was sold to a private developer in 1984 but remained unoccupied and increasingly endangered. Mimi Stiritz wrote a National Register nomination for the whole complex in 2004. Cannon Design purchased the historic Power House in 2007 and provided all design, development and construction management services for the present renovation. The exterior shell and original structural steel were fundamentally sound, but every component of the building's interior is new and designed both to current life-safety codes as well as U.S. Green Building Council standards for environmental sustainability.

Cannon's insertion of mezzanine floors into the massive volume of the Power House has preserved the signature arched windows on the north and east elevations and provided gallery and exhibit space for the firm and the community.

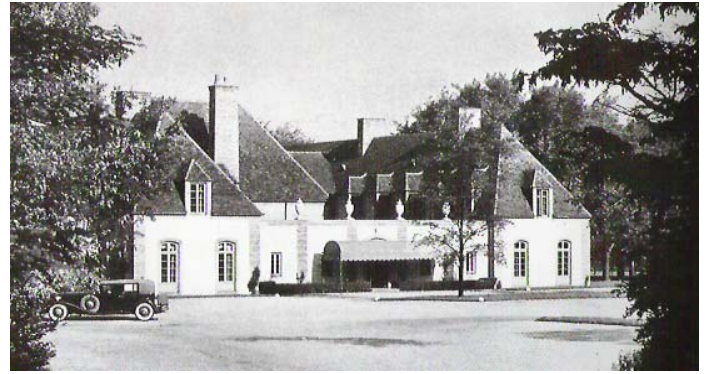
The Partnership for Downtown St. Louis recently recognized Cannon Design with a 2008 Better Downtown Award for its adaptive re-use of the Power House. The landmark Power House building opened as the new offices of Cannon Design on September 8, 2008.

THE SECLUDED GLORIES OF A GOLDEN AGE: THE SAH TOUR OF LAKE FOREST

by Daniel C. Williamson

I was fortunate to be one of thirteen participants in an SAH American tour, "Estates and Gardens of Chicago's North Shore," June 10 to 15, 2008. The tour was ably led by Arthur Miller, special collections librarian at Lake Forest College, and one of the three authors of *Classic Country Estates of Lake Forest* (2003).

Lake Forest, about thirty miles north of Chicago, spreads across a relatively flat terrain. It meets the Lake Michigan shore, however, in a line of ninety-foot-high bluffs bisected by precipitous ravines reaching as much as three-fourths of a mile inland, creating a romantic landscape that would have appealed to 19th-century tastes. The easternmost part of the suburb, between the lake and the eastern north-south line of the Chicago and North-western Railroad, in the 1850s attracted a group of Chicagoans of Presbyterian loyalties, led by Sylvester Lind. Chicago, less than thirty years away from being an unpopulated swamp, then had about 40,000 people. The 1850s was the first decade of the American suburb, with Glendale, Ohio, near Cincinnati, 1851, and Llewellyn Park, New Jersey, 1853, being notable examples.



Onwentsia Club, Lake Forest, Illinois, 1928, Harrie T. Lindeberg. This and others photos are from Stuart Cohen and Susan Benjamin, North Shore Chicago (Acanthus Press, 2004).

Lind's Lake Forest Association was able to buy the land between the railroad and the lake, an area about one mile by two and a half miles in extent, which was then platted into two-acre to five-acre lots along a network of curving roads which reflected the garden path plans of the "English Garden" of the 18th century. This plan was more immediately descended from American cemeteries, in particular Bellefontaine Cemetery in St. Louis. Bellefontaine had been planned in 1849 by Almerin Hotchkiss, who was hired by the Lake Forest Association and produced a layout of roadways that was more or less a scaled up version of the layout of Bellefontaine, with the railroad limiting entrances rather as if it were the cemetery fence. Every other lot in Lake Forest was sold to benefit the school at the center of an otherwise residential community; now known as Lake Forest College, it was previously known as Lake Forest University. Here was a very early and rather idealistic example of the "planned unit development" that would become a building block of suburbia.



South Tower, left, and North Tower, right, Market Square, Lake Forest, 1916-17, Howard Van Doren Shaw

Golf first reached Chicago at the Chicago Golf Club, in Wheaton, 1893; shortly afterward, in 1895, the Onwentsia Club opened in Lake Forest at its present location on Green Bay Road, west of the area platted in 1857, with

both golf and equestrian facilities. Many of the principal families in Chicago, by then a city of about one million people, joined the club, providing an inducement for those without Lake Forest houses to build there. Soon grand houses with extensive acreage, sometimes over 100 acres, were erected along Green Bay Road, and later along Waukegan Road. Many were designed by Howard Van Doren Shaw (1869-1926, active in Lake Forest 1897-1926) who would also design the attractive towered commercial center, Market Square, completed in 1917. This was the suburban alternative to the planned unit development: a fabric of large houses on abundant surrounding land, each its own independent unit. These estates, because of their size and the absence of a developer intermediary, could not be protected from subdivisions by the zoning and deed restrictions that protected planned unit developments.

So Lake Forest became the citadel of wealth it has remained ever since. Its population had been mostly of Scottish and New England descent, sympathetic to Presbyterian tradition in particular and to Protestant tradition in general. It was, and substantially continues to be, reserved, aloof, exclusive, and a little straight-laced: Onwentsia closed its golf course on Sundays well into the 20th century. That it was only a summer or weekend home for many of its residents nonetheless made it neither a casual nor an open place. For most of its history, Lake Forest seems to have had almost no Jewish population. Jewish clients of Shaw and David Adler built in adjacent suburbs, and Adler, a convert to Episcopalianism but from a Jewish background, lived in nearby Libertyville.

The gradual decline of the estates began with the crash of 1929 and the Great Depression, with high taxes depleting large incomes in subsequent decades. Staffing was undoubtedly a problem; for example, the Albert Lasker estate, a very large example of the problem, built in 1927 with an eighteen-hole golf course and a garden nearly as large, employed fifty; it lasted barely twelve years as a family home. Some houses lost wings to grotesque modifications, perhaps to reduce taxes and heating expenses. Typically a crucial moment occurred when a long-lived occupant died and the house was put on the market. Throughout the middle decades of the 20th century, economics favored subdivision, with the main house sometimes torn down, sometimes retained, and the new houses quite modest. According to the not-very-reliable Virginia Greene, five of Howard Shaw's 36 houses in Lake Forest have been lost. Of the 16 houses designed by David Adler 1882-1949, active in Lake Forest 1913-1934) in Lake Forest and Lake Bluff, only one was lost, a remarkable record, although several saw their surrounding land drastically reduced, with outbuildings being demolished as a consequence.

Whatever one may think of drastic tax cuts on high incomes or other factors, such as high CEO salaries, that have landed us in a second gilded age, the effects on the often deteriorated great house and gardens of Lake Forest have been highly beneficial. On the tour, we constantly heard that a house, now in immaculate condition, had been a wreck ten years ago, and its garden, largely vanished, now resurrected, such restoration being of course very expensive. We saw one house, built by James Ward Thorne, 1912, with Otis & Clark as architects, with a symmetrical central block that had been truncated on one side to reduce size, and also with many details removed, that was not being largely reconstructed to return it to its original state.

Most of the houses on the tour dated from the quarter century following 1912, a kind of golden age of residential design. A precondition for the eclecticism of this period, now so widely admired in Lake Forest and meticulously brought back to life, was the rejection of Victorian aesthetics previously ascendant there. The early 20th-century Craftsman and Prairie School styles never gained a foothold in Lake Forest, or on the level of society it represented. The characteristic interiors of those styles, with an obligatory brown color palette and an almost rustic kind of wood detailing, did not easily accept the range of sophisticated décor, often 18th-century in inspiration, then becoming fashionable; and the open plans and difficult-to-curtain windows offended certain proprieties. Frank Lloyd Wright built only one house in Lake Forest – for Charles Glore in 1951 – which joined the famous Ward Willits House in Highland Park, 1902, and the Sherman Booth house in the Ravine Bluffs section of Glencoe, 1915, on the tour; throughout his career he avoided affluent suburbs and seemed to both attract and prefer clients of more modest means and position. Much has been made of lost possibilities because Edith Rockefeller McCormick built her Lake Forest house, Villa Turicum, 1908-1918, from plans by Charles Platt rather than from a rather problematic Wright design that would have shrouded the Lake Michigan bluff with enormous concrete retaining walls; but the possibility of the Prairie School expanding its reach upward in society and supplanting eclecticism through the influence of this one large house, has always seemed to me to a delusion.

Howard Shaw, during most of his adult life a Lake Forest resident, came from a distinguished Chicago family and unlike Wright was entirely acceptable socially. He shared Wright's love of horizontality in architecture, deep eaves, and Arts & Crafts simplicity but gradually moved in a more traditional and classical direction, exhibiting a distinctly un-Victorian lightness of touch. The Shaw houses we saw were his own house Ragdale, 1898, now open to the public and preserving a warm and invit-

ing atmosphere; Glen Rowan, 1909, built for Clifford Barnes but now belonging to Lake Forest College; and the McBirneys' House of Four Winds, 1909.



"Ragdale," 1897, Howard Van Doren Shaw.

None could easily be placed in traditional stylistic categories. But the classical detailing of Glen Rowan's interiors, both rich and well ordered, is a characteristic of early 20th-century eclecticism that often found its way into houses in a picturesque style such as Tudor Revival, and forms an effective background for décor reaching in any number of directions, especially 18th-century directions. The stage was set for a brilliant future in which the emerging field of interior decoration would establish a position it holds to this day, in Lake Forest as conspicuously as anywhere, joining garden design, which had steadily gained importance since the turn of the century, and architecture, in making the suburban residence an entity of three parts. In the 1920s, architects would often plan a garden with the house, which was an eclectic, not a Prairie School achievement.



Water garden, "House of the Four Winds" for Hugh J. McBirney, 1908, Howard Van Doren Shaw and Rose Standish Nichols

Shaw's House of the Four Winds, with a stunningly beautiful, recently restored garden based on the Generalife at Granada, and planned by Shaw with the garden designer Rose Standish Nichols (who had worked with Charles Adams Platt) is a splendid example. The central axis of this garden, formed by a long narrow pool on two levels, extends the central axis of the house, whose interior is embellished by Spanish details; house and garden are one. The garden of the former Pirie House, on Rosemary Road, also designed by Nichols, was equally extraordinary, both for its sweeping scale and its careful working out of the English pattern of lawns with floral borders around the perimeter; it recently has been expanded by its enthusiastic owner, in part by demolishing adjacent houses.

Lake Forest was soon to become the Midwestern center of residential gardening, helped by its large sites (many dating back to the platting of 1857), level topography aside from the ravines, and abundant water from Lake Michigan. Virtually every house we saw seemed to embrace gardening and interior decoration with a passion. David Adler, the foremost Lake Forest enjoyed a special advantage in combining one of these fields with architecture; his sister Frances Elkins was an interior decorator of extraordinary talent. They collaborated on many projects. A series of excellent books on both Elkins and Adler effectively depict their work, none more so than Richard Pratt's *David Adler* (1970), which includes splendid photographs and biographical information; a classic, now out of print, it is a cult book among interior designers. We saw three of his houses, none, alas, with surviving Elkins décor. At the William McCormick Blair House at Crab Tree Farm in Lake Bluff, 1926, we saw the exterior only of the house but the interiors of Adler-designed outbuildings, including a tennis house with winter cottage, that diverge from the house's Colonial Revival/Early American style. The owner John Bryan's immense collection of Craftsman furnishings is kept in several concrete barns designed in 1911 by Solon Spenser Beman for an earlier client.



"Crab Tree Farm," Lake façade, 1926-28, David Adler

The Carolyn Morse Ely House, also in Lake Bluff, 1922, is based on Le Vau's Pavillon de la Lanterne near Versailles, in a striking setting of level lawns above Lake Michigan, the lake being hidden by summer foliage. The Clow House, 1927, at the intersection of Deerpath and Green Bay Roads, mingles Greek Revival with Art Deco in response to a client who had encountered the highly classical modernism of 1920s Sweden and sent Adler a telegraph "stop everything, make it modern, sending book." The very specific sources, conscientiously pointed out by Pratt unless they were contemporary, were characteristic of Adler. These sources were typically 18th-century houses smaller houses than the clients desired. Adler resolved this problem by designing extensions that looked like later additions, a strategy popular with eclectic and traditional architects of our own time, such as Ken Tate. The house at Crab Tree Farm looks like a five-bay frame Colonial that has acquired partly stone additions on both sides; at the Ely house Adler added flanking wings, one of them later moved to an adjacent lot to become a separate house, both fronted by engaged porticoes not found on La Lanterne.



Carolyn Morse Ely Estate, 1916-23, David Adler

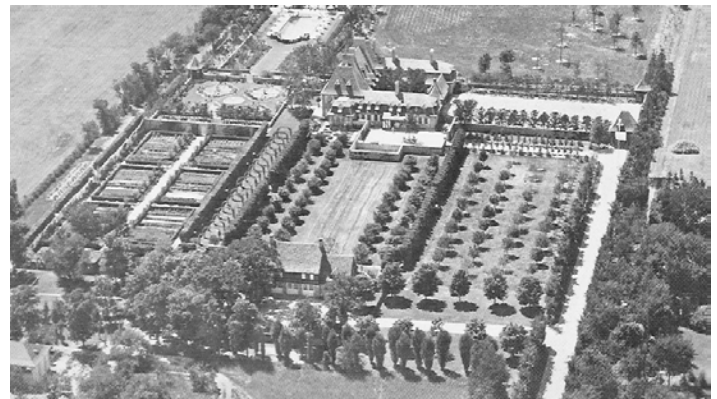
Adler participated in a revival of the "maison entre cour et jardin" (house between court and garden) by facing entrance facades onto a vehicular forecourt architecturally defined, often by outbuildings, with the principal rooms oriented to the garden on another side of the house. The house unfolds in stages, a pleasant experience that also increases the perceived scale of occupied territory, so compensating for simplicities of style.



Clow House, 1927, David Adler, showing entrance court and fence

At the Clow House, the court is bounded by an iron and concrete Art Deco fence; the entrance on the north façade

is into an apparent first floor that becomes a basement due to the elevation of a walled garden on the west and south, with virtually all the living space on the upper level, an arrangement having affinities with the Petit Trianon. This house, like the Ely House and several other Adler houses in Lake Forest, is constructed of buff-colored Chicago common brick, often initially painted or whitewashed, rather as if Adler and his clients were above an overly fastidious rejection of the material by their less secure neighbors. One occupant referred to this sort of Adlerian ploy as a "reverse snobbery," and often Adler's architecture, mingling grandeur with charm and restraint, benefits from a tactic of achieving snobbish objectives while appearing to shun them.



Noble B. Judah Estate, 1924-25, David Adler; 1925-28, Philip Lippincott Goodwin. Note that entrance drive is at right angles to the entrance court, entered through the gabled gatehouse at upper right..

The most extraordinary version of the house between court and garden on the tour was the Noble Judah House, 1928, in which Adler, the initial architect, was replaced by Phillip L. Goodwin, due to disagreements with the headstrong Mrs. Judah, a National Cash Register heiress (who later ran off with a groom employed in her stable). It is a house on the grandest scale, perhaps the largest in Lake Forest, full of fine, largely antique paneling, and impeccably restored and furnished by its present occupants. The forecourt, quite large, is entered via a picturesque drive-through at one corner, revealing an entrance façade constructed of half-timbering with brick nogging, in Norman French style. The opposite façade facing a splendid formal garden, is built of stone in a classical 17th-18th-century French style, a reversal of a similar dual pattern found in Adler's Tobin Clark house in Hillsborough, California. A smaller courtyard in the center of the Judah house is encircled by corridors, to attractive effect on the interior.

Also Norman French, Wyldwood, the Clyde Carr house, designed by Harrie Lindeberg and visited on the tour, is similar in scale to the same architect's Knight house on Warson Road in Ladue, built a year later in 1927; the surrounding landscape designed by Horatio Manning, with

lawns reaching down to the lake, is intact. These two houses could have satisfied the most ambitious dreams of one of the characters of F. Scott Fitzgerald, who visited Lake Forest in his youthful pursuit of Ginevra Kink, a lifelong resident of that community.



"Wyldwood," Clyde Carr House, 1916, Harrie T. Lindeberg

Shaw was broadminded, idealistic, and liberal, supporting Jane Addams at Hull House and building workers' housing for Clayton Marks, as well as office buildings and churches.



David Adler House, Libertyville, an 1864 farm house modified by Adler in 1926, 1934, and 1941. Now the David Adler Music and Arts Center.

Adler, very much an aesthete, built only houses and club-houses, for upper-income clients who were usually his friends, and was obsessed with the visual aspects of architecture, particularly proportion, of which he had an unsurpassed, intuitive understanding, and with details, largely classical, documented in a vast corpus of working drawings. The unique character this attention gave to his interiors can be observed in his own house, an old farm house much remodeled and expanded by Adler between 1914 and 1941 and located on Milwaukee Road in northern Libertyville, which I visited the day after the tour concluded. It is now a public facility, the David Adler Music and Arts Center (also called the David Adler Cultural Center), used largely for music lessons, and contains

four distinctive Adler rooms that are well worth visiting, although only one is properly furnished.

On the same day I found on Estate Lane in southwestern Lake Forest the remnant stables and sprawling, buff brick main house, rural French in style, of Mill Road Farm, the former Albert D. Lasker estate, designed by Adler. Still a residence, the house suddenly appeared amid a sea of the most ordinary tract houses occupying the subdivided grounds, in a way both poignant and a little spooky. On the tour we had visited the Italianate, down-the-bluff cascade remaining from the demolished Villa Turicum, which exercised a similar fascination.



"Villa Turicum," Edith Rockefeller McCormick Estate, 1908-11, Charles Adams Platt, showing the cascade based on the Villa Lante, as it was in its heyday

At any time during the 20th century, one could have undoubtedly convened a group of observant Chicagoans who would readily assert that the inhabitants of Lake Forest, swollen with wealth and pride, and their outrageously spacious and expensive culture and way of life, had become hopelessly remote from what was suitable for modern America. The architecture of Frank Lloyd Wright, so laudably oriented to Americans of modest means, and the simplifications of modernism generally, would seem to have provided an alternative whose triumph could easily have been foretold. But that was not at all what happened. Houses closely re-

sembling those of Wright are but a tiny handful among the thousands built in 20th-century America, and in some very large conurbations are entirely absent; the future they were so eloquently pronounced to have anticipated has never come. Wright is idolized, but his style (or styles) has essentially failed. Instead the Colonial Revival, which dominated residential architecture throughout the middle decades of the 20th century, is so precisely anticipated by Adler's Blair House at Crab Tree Farm, his Shoreacres Club in Lake Bluff, and indeed most of his 1930s output, that an architect who in his final years spoke of himself as a relic of a vanished era became instead an unwitting prophet. Eclecticism continues to dominate American residential architecture, alas typically in awkward and crudely ostentatious form. And Onwentsia, a country club so early as to be pioneering, has descendants in half the real estate developments of modern North America. That is not the kind of irony we expect to find in this most privileged of American suburbs.

SOURCES

The three books on David Adler are conspicuously superior to the two on Howard Van Doren Shaw, due to their format, quality of illustrations, and abundance and accuracy of information. Leonard K. Eaton produced an unusual and interesting attempt to evaluate the work of two architects by studying their clients; however his thesis, that Shaw was the archetypal defender of a conservative, besieged establishment and Wright the triumphant revolutionary, does not fit the facts, as critics have noticed; he also illustrates as Shaw's Prentice Coonley House another house entirely, probably not by Shaw. Both Salny and Greene compile lists of Adler's and Shaw's works, respectively that are useful and ostensibly complete – omissions from such lists are more or less unavoidable – but Greene garbles information on Shaw's five St. Louis area houses, raising the possibility of other errors in her book.

Leonard K., *Two Chicago Architects and Their Clients: Frank Lloyd Wright and Howard Van Doren Shaw*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1969.

Virginia Greene, *The Architecture of Howard Van Doren Shaw*. Chicago, Chicago Review Press, 1998.

Richard Pratt, *David Adler*. New York: M. Evans, 1970.

Stephen Salny, *The Country Houses of David Adler*. New York: W. W. Norton, 2001.

Martha Thorne, editor. *David Adler, Architect: The Elements of Style*. Chicago: Art Institute of Chicago; New Haven: Yale University Press, 2002.

Of the books focusing on Lake Forest architecture, the standout is the one by Coventry, Meyer and Miller: ambitious, greatly informative and well written; it includes biographies of architects active in Lake Forest, and an invaluable list of estates.

Stuart Cohen and Susan Benjamin, *North Shore Chicago: Houses of the Lakefront Suburbs, 1890-1940*. New York: Acanthus Press, 2004.

Kim Coventry, David Meyer, and Arthur H. Miller, *Classic Country Estates of Lake Forest: Architecture and Landscape, 1856-1940*. New York: W.W. Norton, 2003.

Arthur H. Miller and Shirley Paddock, *Lake Forest: Estates, People and Culture*. Chicago: Arcadia, 2000. Part of the "Images of America" series, this book consists of vintage photograph with captions.

James L.W. West III, *The Perfect Hour: The Romance of F. Scott Fitzgerald and Ginevra King, His First Love*. New York: Random House, 2005.

ST. LOUIS ARCHITECTURAL CLUB: ADDITIONS TO THE COLLECTION

While many of the architects working in St. Louis in the first part of the 20th century had trained in the major architectural schools, another important educational source during that period was the St. Louis Architectural Club.

Suzy Frechette, head of the Fine Arts Department at the St. Louis Public Library, has recently added to the library's collection of club materials, including beautifully designed invitations for parties.

The highlight of the 150th anniversary celebration of the founding of St. Louis was an enormous outdoor theatrical event held in Forest Park and called the Pageant and Masque of St. Louis. One newsletter of the Club announces that they have been collectively cast as "Spaniards." Another item announces a program by members just returned from the front lines in France after World War I.

To see these materials, just ask at the desk in the Art Room at the St. Louis Public Library, 1301 Olive. And while you're there, take a look at the Steedman Room, specially designed for the Steedman Architecture Library.

AIA SHAPE OF AMERICA PROJECT

The American Institute of Architects is producing a series of short web-based films showcasing a selection of the 150 buildings chosen by poll last year as America's Favorite Architecture. Among the buildings featured so far are the Empire State Building, SOM's Air Force Chapel, and Gehry's Disney Concert Hall. Saarinen's Gateway Arch is included, with comments by our own Lou Sauer, among others. The pieces are not so much histories as appreciations, with architects telling how the buildings speak to them. To follow the series, go to www.shapeofamerica.org.



News Letter

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