Iowa State University

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Iowa Architect: Promoting the noteworthy design of yesterday, today and tomorrow

M. Monica Gillen

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TO CREATE, FASHION AND CONSTRUCT IS TO DESIGN. Ideas begin in the mind and are brought out through various acts of creativity, including but not limited to drawings and writings. An underlying theme governs the process and the plan becomes the means for articulating its execution.

Architects have a critical charge through their chosen vocation. Members of the profession must take care to design with competence, with the public in mind and with the user’s needs and desires considered as part of the process. Whether they notice or not, the casual observer is dramatically affected by the actions and thoughts of architects. Each person is affected by his or her surroundings.

In 1954, J. Woolson Brooks, FAIA, wrote in Iowa Architect, Vol. 1, No. 2, “It is not too late for the Profession to take a conspicuous constructive interest in the visual improvement of our cities. Architects as individuals should be found among the active ranks of those interested in City Planning, Parks, Recreation, Art, Music, Social Improvement.”

IOWA ARCHITECT AND IOWA ARCHITECTS—ADVOCATES FOR THE PEOPLE
In 2007, according to www.aiaiowa.org, the AIA defined the following as 10 principles for livable communities:
- Design on a human scale
- Provide choices
- Encourage mixed-use development
- Preserve urban centers
- Vary transportation options
- Build vibrant public spaces
- Create neighborhood identity
- Protect environmental resources
- Conserve landscapes
- Design matters

Iowa architects, charged with imagining design concepts aimed at enhancing the lives of Iowans, have produced countless examples of excellence in building design. Over the past 53 years, Iowa Architect has documented this cultural history through photographs and editorials highlighting these endeavors.

The first issue of Iowa Architect was published in April of 1954 as a vehicle to inform the Iowa Chapter members of the American Institute of Architects. We mourn the passing of Robert E. Savage, founding partner of SVPA Architects Inc., in 2007. He was the journal’s creator and originated the idea to promote Iowa architecture within the chapter. The inaugural periodical, essentially a newsletter, consisted of four mimeographed pages. Stanley Ver Ploeg, who also passed away in 2007, was the secretary of the Iowa Chapter of the AIA when the first issue was distributed. A call for ideas for what should be contained in future issues was published, along with a letter to his fellow architects from Oswald Thorson, of Waterloo, then-president of the Iowa Chapter of the AIA, thus allowing content to be determined by its chapter affiliates. In their foresight, Savage and Thorson made this publication a democratic showcase for all members.

THE EVOLUTION OF MIMEOGRAPH TO MAGAZINE
The following request for information from chapter members was published in the first mimeographed printing: “...if you will send in news and suggestions, this publication will grow and prosper.” These words would prove prophetic.

Five decades later, the purple print on those first four pages has faded and given way to the evolution of an award-winning publication, noted for the dissemination of design excellence in the architecture discipline in Iowa.
National Travelers Life Insurance Company, Des Moines, was designed by Wetherell & Harrison, Des Moines.

Newton’s Maytag Company addition and renovation as depicted in 1958. Brooks-Borg of Des Moines offered the design.

July-August 1958 Vol. V, No. 3

In the early days, when the university in Ames was Iowa State College, the journal was published bi-monthly and was mailed to AIA members without charge. The second issue contained submitted news, photographs, cartoons and a feature called “Arch-Tickles” (satirical thoughts, musings and creative writings). From the beginning, an editorial board was established, which included Savage, James Walsh, Don McKeown, William Woodburn and Paul Skiles. Over the first five years, the mimeographed pages were transformed into a professionally published magazine, and adopted as the official publication of the Iowa Chapter of the AIA, complete with paying advertisers. Vinyl Plastics of Sheboygan, Wisconsin, and Iowa Concrete Block and Materials Co., Des Moines, were among the first advertisers to take stock in the journal and aid with its growth.
The men's dormitories on the campus of Iowa State University were designed by Crites and McConnell, Architects, Cedar Rapids. Ray Crites is also credited with the design of C. Y. Stephens Auditorium, which earned Building of the Century honors in 2005.

January–February 1964 Vol. XI, No. 1

The first directory issue was published in 1959, and included associate members and members. The inaugural directory issue also included content relative to "the adjacent arts," featuring Christian Petersen’s work.

IN THE INTEREST OF A COMMON AND CONSISTENT GOAL, IOWA ARCHITECT PRESERVES HISTORY

Since the first issue, Iowa Architect has depicted many projects familiar to Iowans. The original building occupants and owners may have changed, but the recognizable architecture remains. One such example is The Principal Financial Group’s building at 711 High Street. The building, designed by Leland A. McBroom, was completed in 1940 as the Bankers Life Building. Other examples include Mercy Medical Center in Des Moines and the Maytag Company in Newton.

Signature architecture by Wetherell & Harrison, the design of National Travelers Life Co., Ninth Street and Keo Way in Des Moines, was featured in the July–August issue in 1958. Arthur H. Neumann & Brothers was the general contractor and the estimated budget was $1,600,000.

C. Y. Stephens Auditorium, one of the four-building complex known as Iowa State Center on the campus of Iowa State University, was named the Building of the Century in Iowa Architect in 2005. Ray D. Crites, FAIA, a former Iowa State faculty member of Crites and McConnell, Cedar Rapids, is credited with the design. According to Iowa Architect September–October, 1962, Vol. 9, No. 5, Crites was cited in an article in Life Magazine as "A Red Hot Hundred," a group the journal also called "The Take Over Generation."

Editorial content has remained constant, through the publishing of completed projects and student work. The editors have each strived to make changes to improve the content and quality, maintain and grow advertisers and increase revenues for the journal.

William Anderson, FAIA, of Substance, was the editor of Iowa Architect from 1989 to 1994. As the editor, Anderson’s goal was "to represent the very best architectural design in Iowa in the very best way we could (i.e., with the design of the magazine) and to set a standard of design excellence for architects in Iowa." Under Anderson’s direction and with the design expertise of Kent Mauck, Hon. AIA Iowa, the journal earned an Honor Award in the magazine category from the AIA in 1995.

Since 1992, Mauck and Mauck Groves Branding and Design have been charged with creating the venue that is Iowa Architect. Mauck began his career as a magazine designer at Meredith in the 1980s. As a self-described magazine "junky," Mauck is an avid architecture observer, who jumped at the chance to publish the journal when the opportunity arose. Mauck’s goal as the publisher was to not overshadow the content with the design of the journal. Key to Mauck Groves’ organizational effort is Jane Nieland,
The NDS Company (Negley Design & Sales Company) placed this ad in 1980. The Total Kitchen Concept by Dwyer offered the user “40 square feet of shelf storage space, plus a big, 10-cubic-foot refrigerator with freezer, cutting board and a storage drawer that glides out on nylon rollers!”

September–October 1980 Vol. 27, No. 4

who has worked with the magazine’s editorial board, writers, advertisers and printers.

A NEW ERA IN IOWA ARCHITECT BEGINS NOW
Dawson Publishing, Inc., in Timonium, Maryland, will be the new publisher of the magazine. According to Mauck, Dawson produces several magazines with wider circulations, so they may be able to cross-sell some national advertisers and increase revenue for the chapter.

The process of making in any realm, be it publications, works of art or the process of design in architecture has a potentially large audience, purely as a matter of curiosity. The maker and the user alike will have thoughts and ideas about what is aesthetically pleasing. Like the 53 years of history contained in the archives of Iowa Architect, the architecture found on the pages has obviously remained relevant and noteworthy, along with the dreamers and creators who had ideas about communicating good design through writing and photographs. Iowa Architect has been and will continue to be a consistent vehicle for public promotion of noteworthy design in Iowa.

—M. Monica Gillen lives and works in Ames.

Hands Jewelry Store Remodeling, Iowa City, earned Hansen-Lind-Meyer of Iowa City a Merit Award in 1970. The jury commented “…to gain space by excavating a basement; to introduce a vision of elegance on a perfectly ordinary small town street…”

January–February–March 1970 Vol. 17, No. 1

IOWA ARCHITECT EDITORS

1954–1956 Robert Savage
1956–1958 James Lynch
1958 James Walsh
1958–1961 Harold Bullington
1961 James Lynch
1962 N. Clifford Prall
1963–1966 Carl Ver Steeg
1967–1968 James Lynch
1969–1970 William Dikis
1971–1975 H. Ronald Walker
1976–1979 Bryan Shiffler
1980–1989 Kirk Blunck
1995–1997 Paul Mankins
1998–1999 Stephen Knowles
2000–2003 Steven Strassburg
2003–2004 Strassburg/Swanson
2005–2007 Channing Swanson
2007– Tim Schroeder