

Institute History

In this Bicentennial Year, history is foremost on the minds of Americans. ACI Committee 120, History of Concrete, has suggested that we reprint a series of vignettes, of then-prominent ACI members, originally published between February 1931 and June 1932. Institute history was certainly made by these individuals, and it is especially interesting to read about them in the first-hand, human terms used in these biographical sketches.

The term "fellows of the Institute" was unofficial in 1931-1932.

*Fellows of the Institute**

John J. Earley

THERE used to be an impression that concrete was quite the homeliest of the entire construction materials family: just about hopeless and never to be seen in the parlor. She was admittedly a healthy, hearty and robust lass and she worked efficiently for most reasonable wages — but such a face! Enduring neglect cheerfully, she naturally received plenty of it. Of late years this hired girl has been seen repeatedly, stepping out in the company of the most handsome and particular architects and sculptors. Who put these *Cinderella-Ugly Duckling* ideas — and the ability to indulge them — into the contented head of plain old fashioned concrete? Let Lorado Taft, who has delighted us alike by his use of concrete as a sculptural material and by his moving recital of early experiences in the manufacture during freezing weather twenty odd years ago of an immense reinforced concrete Indian, the famous Blackhawk — let Taft introduce my hero.

"It was one of the happiest days of my life when I met Mr. Earley . . . he was pleasant and courteous, but he had his dreams too, and has been working on his material like another *della Robia*, trying to find something that would be serviceable, artistic and appropriate for the various uses of architecture. He has found it. . . . We used to spend weeks in the Beaux-Arts days in Paris, after shaping a figure and modeling the flow of its surfaces, in going over it and putting little dabs of clay on it, you know, to get a little sparkle in it, a little vivacity — well, you don't have to do that any more. Just make it of this aggregate of pebbles and wash away the cement and you find your little dabs there; it has a wonderful effect. . . . Mr. Earley took me into a vestibule in Washington — one of the most beautiful things I ever saw!"

John has taken others of us into vestibules and churches, into a fourteen-hundred-foot-beautiful monastery cloister, in Washington; to view a gorgeous Parthenon at Nashville, a cool

Fountain of Time at Chicago. Only a hardened artist like Taft comes away shouting. It takes most of us a while to recover our breath after standing before that new creation, an Earley "plastic mosaic" in concrete. Nothing more beautiful was ever fashioned in stone or wood by John's forefathers, by the four generations of architectural sculptors in his line that immediately preceded him. Working at the Bureau of Standards with Bates and Pearson, working in his own studio with gifted associates, working in the field with appreciative workmen, Earley has penetrated as deeply into the constitution and composition of enduring concrete as man has ever seen. He has sought out a more facile medium and thoroughly mastered a completely new technique of concrete, simple in its conception, exquisite in its control. In his Washington studio he heads the finest group of craftsmen yet assembled in this country, a group that would compare favorably with the best *bottega* of the middle centuries.

In recent months I have been overtaken by the thought that concrete is not just concrete but rather that it is in itself a whole family of construction materials; that we must learn to mold not alone the *shape* of concrete, but its every property, to our use requirements. John Earley must have had this same idea at least a decade earlier, for he was not content to use just concrete for his sculptural and architectural work. He set about to make a special kind of concrete, with highly controlled properties, for his particular use. Probably long before any other he discovered and utilized the advantages of a stepped grading, with wide gaps between those particle sizes with which he chose to work. When others were decrying the wet sloppy mixes of fifteen and twenty years ago, he remained calm, continued to use controlled excess water to secure the compaction of inundation, withdrew the excess through porous forms without permitting it to work its characteristic damage. These advances were quietly made. We took notice of the remarkable results but have been slow to adopt the technical



measures that made them possible, that would result equally in a structural material of supreme quality.

I once thought of Earley as the original and the origin of a stream of artist-builders going forth to increase his fruitfulness and to spread it through our land. That may yet occur, but it seems to require so unusual a combination of artist and technician and business man to establish such a succession that Earley's work has remained unique. The reason is not far to seek. The man himself is unique in my experience. He is a gifted, inspiring conversationalist, and terrible in his intensity when hunting down a fact or a thought that you are supposed to know but do not fully possess. He has the most dextrous hands that ever I have seen at work, the hands of a sculptor, the hands of an ace among fencers. Perfect coordination of hand and mind is evidenced alike in his recreations and in his creations.

Earley has been prominent and effective in the Institute. Highly original, on the very threshold of our highest office he resigned as vice president, in order to meet adequately the exacting demands of a crucial period in his creative work, unwilling to continue an honor without returning the implied service. He remains a most helpful friend and member. I hope that he may later be persuaded to take up again the march where he then left off.

—ARTHUR R. LORD.

*A special order of distinction to which nominations are made from among his friends and associates in the Institute work by the author of a series of biographical sketches of which this is the sixth. — EDITOR.

[†]*Proceedings, A. C. I., Vol. 19, 1923, page 178. Worth re-reading frequently for the sake of health, humor and happiness — Author.*

Protective design workshops scheduled at Wisconsin

A series of Protective Design Workshops has been scheduled by the University of Wisconsin-Extension at its Madison Campus during August 1976. The workshops are being held to improve design and evaluation skills of architects, engineers, designers, building code officials, government agency and insurance industry personnel. The three parts of this year's program are: Part 1, Designing for Security in Buildings, August 4-6; Part 2, Firesafety Design for Buildings, August 9-13; and Part 3, Wind Engineering — Design of Buildings and Structures for Wind Action, August 16-20.

Part 1 on security deals with methods for the mechanical and structural prevention of crime and vandalism in buildings. Topics include evaluation of security needs, site planning and design techniques, and discussion of proven crime-securing and detecting systems.

Part 2 on firesafety design presents a new and powerful organized "systems" approach, leading to economy in design and operation. This workshop is practical rather

than theoretical and includes substantial information about the fire phenomenon, its development and behavior, and the influence of specific design elements in response to the phenomenon.

Part 3 gives a rational and systematic approach to structural design for wind action. This course is designed to provide a good understanding of the source and nature of expected wind loadings of concern. It explores and compares several up-to-date design methodologies and relates them to the actual behavior of structures in the wind environment.

For additional program or enrollment information, contact: Prof. Lowell B. Jackson, P.E., Program Director, Department of Engineering, University of Wisconsin-Extension, 432 North Lake St., Madison, Wis. 53706.

Bicentennial in Wales Part of Concrete Society Convention

To celebrate the signing of the United States' Declaration of Independence in 1776, the Wales Tourist Board is encouraging all Americans to visit "the Land of their Founding Fathers" this year. This

slogan has been chosen in view of the prominent part played by Welshmen in the movement for American Independence. "Welcome American Package Tours" of Wales have been specially prepared for American visitors.

As part of the Welsh celebration, the Concrete Society invites any American members who will be in Wales in September to include attendance at their Convention in Cardiff September 21-23. The convention includes some international speakers and an attractive ladies program.

Among the speakers will be Sir Frederick Catherwood, Dr. Ulrich Finsterwalder, John Derrington, Sir Kenneth Wood, and Professor Alan Harris.

Further information on Wales and "Welcome America 1976" may be obtained from any British Tourist Authority Office in the United States or Canada, e.g., 680 Fifth Ave., New York, N.Y. 10019

Dusseldorf site of VDZ Congress '77

The Verein Deutscher Zementwerke (VDZ — Association of German Cement Works) will hold a second international Congress on the Process Technology of Cement Manufacturing in Düsseldorf, Sept. 27-30, 1977.

As in the first Congress held in 1971, the emphasis will be on the practical aspects of cement manufacturing. Its objective will be to shorten the innovation period of technologies already available and to indicate trends which are of significance for technical development.

Seven technical sessions will be held on the following subjects: raw materials quarrying and preparation; size reduction; pyroprocessing; process control; general installations; environmental protection and energy utilization; and influence of process technology on cement properties.

Supplementary papers on one of the above subjects are invited. Papers should be oriented towards practice. Delegates from the same company may enter only one paper for each subject. Title and abstracts (not more than 200 words) should be submitted for consideration by Sept. 30, 1976. Contributions may be written in German, English, or French. Manuscripts of all accepted papers should reach the Secretary of the VDZ Congress before Apr. 30, 1977.

For additional information contact: Der Sekretär des VDZ-Kongress '77, Verein Deutscher Zementwerke e.V., Tannenstrasse 2, D-4000 Düsseldorf 30, Bundesrepublik Deutschland

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