

Architects Clothe New Downtown Buildings With Concrete

Glass Walls Make Way For New Ornamentation

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An Oregon snail recently ended a long day's crawl and stopped to find safety and comfort within the walls of his shell. He curled up, in a manner of speaking, for a deep snooze in the ooze.

The snail was about as content as a snail could be; for he knew he possessed a mollusk's manor which served as a flawless piece of animal architecture. Who could improve it?

Of course his fellow mollusks of earth and sea had their various styles of mollusk residence — horned shell, spiral shell, turban shell. But whatever the design, the snail and his house were a perfect blend of form and function.

Within the walls of another structure — the New English Dictionary on Historical Principles, Oxford, England, Volume IV, Part II, anno domini 1888, page 170 — a reader discovers that gingerbread has been known to man since the 15th century.

Who mixed the first batter? The baker's name has been lost to antiquity but not the formula: It was made of treacle and ginger and then cut into shapes of men, animals and letters of the alphabet. It was often gilded.

Thus the word "gingerbread" has been passed along to the 20th century American as an ordinary noun to describe something showy, tawdry or superfluous in architecture.

New Buildings Listed

Snails and gingerbread: Both edible and both perishable. But one with a more or less lasting shell and the others — the gingerbread man, et al — victims of change, style, trend and fashion.

A walk through the streets of Portland this August will show evidence of another change in architecture — a new trend in Oregon building in the city shelters for office workers. Glass walled buildings have some new neighbors: Concrete walled buildings. In sum, a cycle of design goes onward: The plain log structure of the western pioneer yielded to a more ornate building . . . the ornate yielded to the smooth surface of the utilitarian . . . wood made room for steel and glass . . . and now signs of a return to more decoration. Some architects here call it a new attempt to enrich the human spirit.

For examples of the new concrete architecture in Portland — sometimes pre-cast concrete, sometimes poured-in-place concrete, sometimes a combination of pre-cast and poured-in-place — Oregonians may view the following buildings:

—Pioneer Broadcasting Co., KGW radio and television, 1501 SW Jefferson St., now under construction, designed by Fred Bassetti and Co., Seattle.

—The new Home Office Building for Equitable Savings & Loan Association, 1300 SW 6th Ave., now under construction just east of The Oregonian Building, designed by architect Pietro Belluschi, dean of the Massachusetts Institute of Technology school of architecture and a former Portland associate of Skidmore, Owings & Merrill, in association with Wolff & Zimmer, Portland architects.

Lloyd Plaza Rises

—The IBM Building (International Business Machines), owned by Amco-Portland, Inc., situated in the urban renewal area at 2000 SW 1st Ave., under construction, designed by Seattle architects Kirk, Wallace, McKinley & Associates in association with Portland architects Lewis Crutcher and Charles E. Johnson.

—The Lloyd Plaza, 1425 NE Irving St., an assembly of four office buildings completed and occupied southeast of the Lloyd Center, designed by Skidmore, Owings & Merrill.

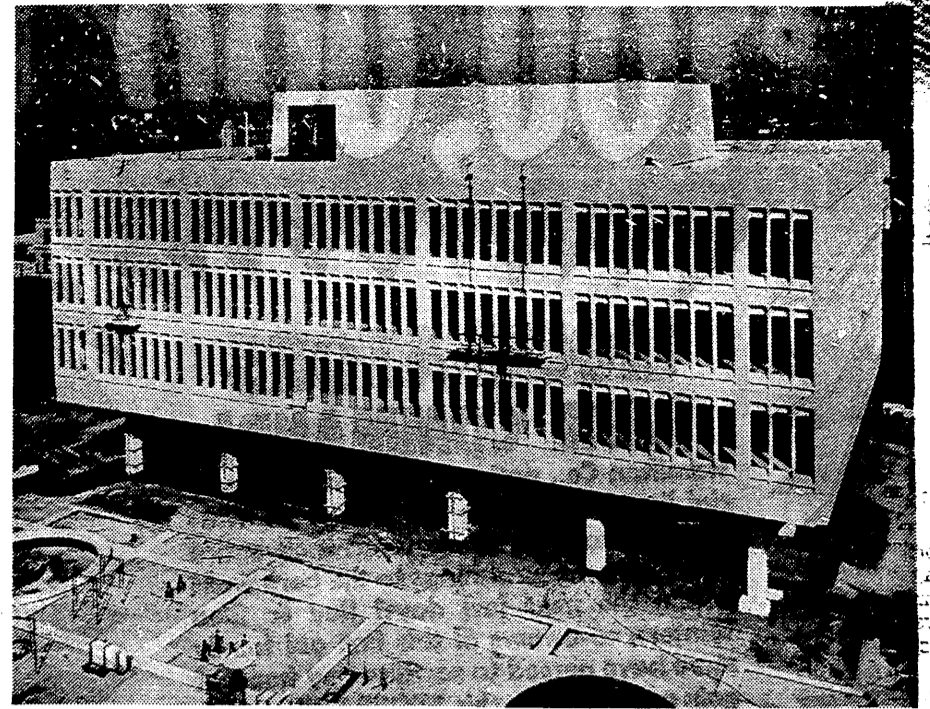
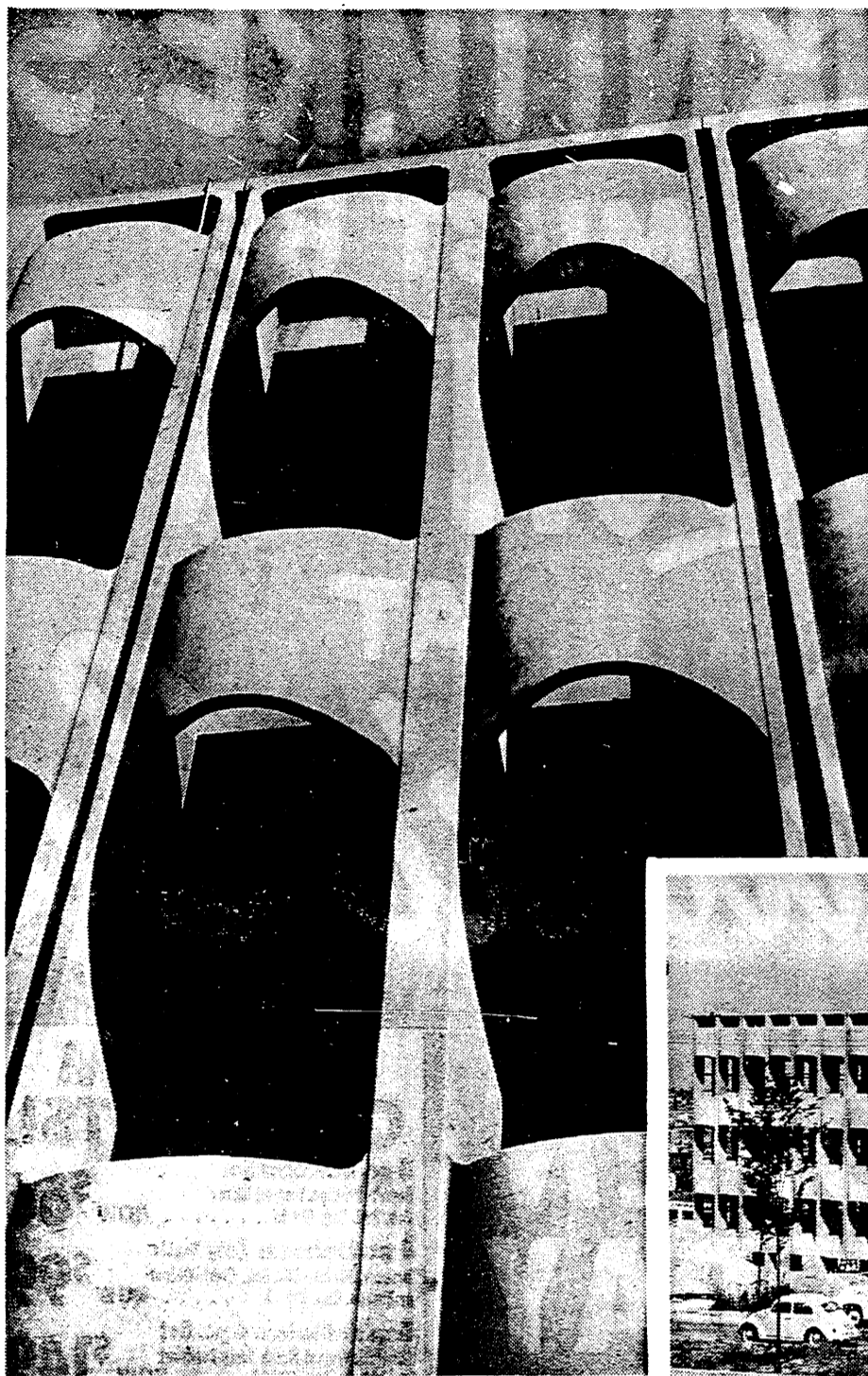
—The "1500 Plaza Building," a five-story building across the street from the Lloyd Plaza and now under construction, also designed by Skidmore, Owings & Merrill.

Do five new buildings indicate a trend? Does one?

Belluschi's first Equitable Building at 421 SW 6th Ave. was among the first in the nation to employ the glass skin surface and, according to several architects here, served as a model for architects in America and abroad who sought "clean," "functional," and "utilitarian" lines.

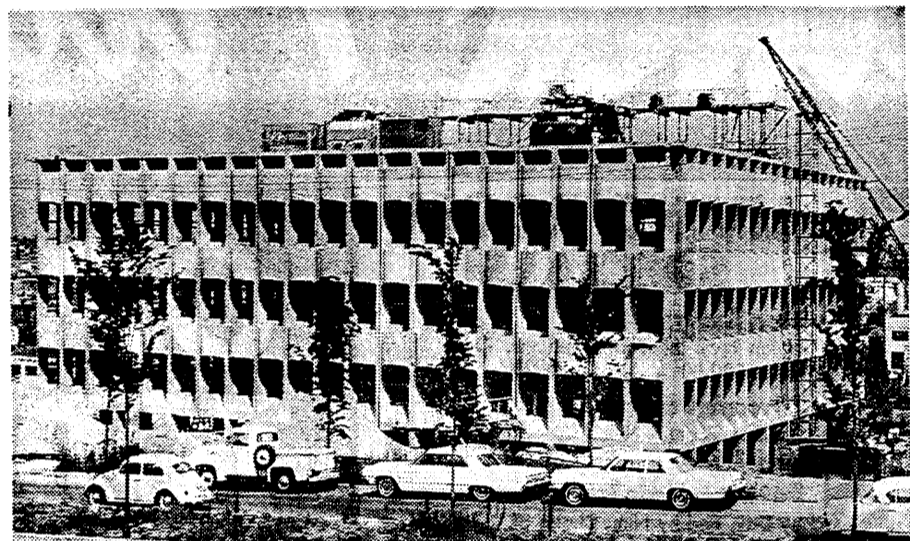
David A. Pugh, one of eighteen partners in the national architectural firm of Skidmore, Owings & Merrill, said he believed contemporary architecture will be propelled into new directions opened by economics, aesthetics and improved technology.

Pugh spoke of the history of architectural design and said he thought Portland was following a trend which has occurred elsewhere



A SECOND EQUITABLE Savings & Loan Association building designed by Pietro Belluschi has brought light-colored concrete walls — pre-cast at Swan Island — to 1300 SW 6th Ave. The new home office for

Equitable will include wide arcades at street level, two fountains, 18 trees and a pedestrian mall. The project has been supervised at Portland by Wolff & Zimmer, architects.



NOVEL USE OF pre-cast concrete will be seen in this four-story IBM (International Business Machines) office building under construction at 2000 SW 1st Ave. in the urban renewal area. Designed by Kirk, Wallace, McKinley & Associates, Seattle, the project has been guided here by architects Lewis Crutcher and Charles E. Johnson. Each vertical wall unit with its "eyebrow" appearance was cast at Tacoma, weighs 32 tons and was anchored to concrete floors to serve as a structural part of the edifice.

in the country — away from the severe glass cover and towards more surface ornament.

Search Being Staged

The period ahead, Pugh said, might be compared to the post World War II era; it may be a threshold of new design.

An imaginative and creative period, he continued, will be guided still by economics and changing technology.

Pugh said his firm sought to sell clients on design and that SOM continued to seek new ways to meet the needs of its clients in the best manner possible. Many architects' tasks, he said, are those of "economic engineers." During this period of evolutionary change, he concluded, "something good will result."

Glenn Stanton, a former president of the American Institute of Architects and a partner in Stanton, Boles, Maguire and Church, said he believed contemporary architecture has taken steps towards a better sense of scale in relation to human needs.

Stanton viewed the current trend as a search for "a little more elegance" in design with a variety of materials employed. "Not," he remarked, "necessarily ornate."

Stanton spoke of color, contour and shadow and said architects must attempt to foresee how new materials and colors will "weather."

Today, he said, there is a movement towards more stability and mass.

Concrete Costs Less

Stanton said extensive use of concrete may be seen in Spain, Italy and Mexico because of the comparatively low cost of labor in those countries.

All in all, Stanton said, American archi-

itects have leaned too far to the cliché of "the big statement" in design; novelty for novelty's sake alone. Semantics, he remarked, were growing threadbare.

Seattle architect Fred Bassetti said that he sought a new "humanism" in architecture, and that he believed the general state of American architecture was "low."

Bassetti urged greater variety in design and more use of regional materials — and regional characteristics. He said too many architects were "hypnotized" by the "big names" and have forgotten to be themselves; forgotten to attempt original designs.

Bassetti said he and his colleagues sought more sensitiveness, richness and human warmth. He attacked what he called the sterile, glassy "slick stuff." Paintings and sculptures, he said, ideally should be an integral part of a building's design when appropriate.

'Rebirth' Predicted

Portland architect Neil Farnham said he thought a rebirth of regional architecture in the Pacific Northwest will refresh the atmosphere. Wood shingles, he said, have returned. Too, there is evidence of new use of arches and an attempt to make buildings more human.

George Wolff, partner in Wolff and Zimmer architects, said he also saw a quest for more originality and that modern architecture revealed a more plastic quality.

"There's more individual thinking," he said.

Wolff said he believed more good architecture was on its way within the next 15 to 20 years and that better architects will create the transition.

Architect Lewis Crutcher spoke of the new IBM Building as an attempt to establish stability and permanence. The concrete struc-

ture, he said, was unusual because its pre-cast, 32-ton sections of walls served as a structural part of the building. These units, he said, were anchored directly to reinforced floors.

Architects Need Confidence

Crutcher decried much of Portland's architecture but said he believed that a new trend was evident that went beyond the use of new materials . . . a trend that seeks human enrichment. More and more, Crutcher said, architects think in terms of good design and its relationship to the human spirit. A good building, he said, starts at the inside.

One of the foremost employers of architects in Oregon — the United States National Bank of Oregon — has dealt with designers through its buildings development director W. Stuart Kidd.

Oregon architects, Kidd said, need confidence in themselves and must sell good design to their clients. Good design and minimum maintenance — these are important factors, he said. Kidd said the numerous Oregon architects who have designed branch banks for U.S. National have used various indigenous materials as well as paintings and sculptures to enhance appearance.

Kidd said the bank has won several awards for the designs of its branches; but, more significantly, the banks fitted their locales and have been welcomed by the people who use them.

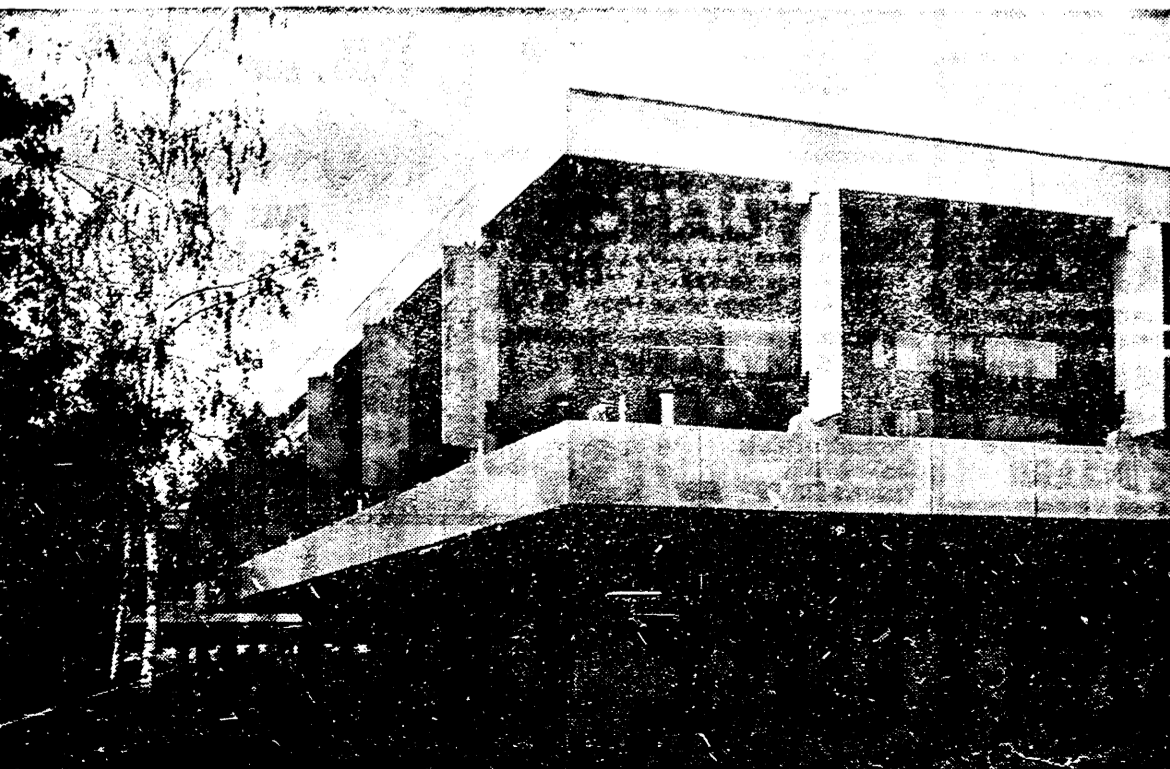
What then of the shell-dwelling snail; of the art of building; of the means of architecture?

In sum, three old Latin words of counsel from the ancient Roman critic, engineer and architect Marcus Vitruvius Pollio:

Firmitas, utilitas, venustas — stability, utility, beauty.



ONE OF THE NATION'S first glass-walled office buildings was Equitable Savings & Loan Association, 421 SW 6th Ave., designed by Pietro Belluschi and constructed after World War II. The tower served as a model for smooth-surfaced buildings and helped to establish an international trend. Architects now seek more decoration and variety of materials.



A LOW SILHOUETTE against the eastern horizon of Portland has been created in this four-unit office building called the "Lloyd Plaza," designed by Skidmore, Owings & Merrill, and situated southeast of the Lloyd Center at

1425 NE Irving St. Pillars, floors and roofs of concrete appear to "float" above ground — ground which serves as covered parking territory for tenants. The Lloyd Plaza has been divided by concrete walls, grass lawns and trees.



POURED-IN-PLACE CONCRETE posts were topped with concrete prongs to support the second floor of the new Pioneer Broadcasting Co. building at 1501 SW Jefferson St., designed by Fred Bassetti & Associates, Seattle. The

second deck of the structure also has concrete canopies over the windows. Designed to house studios and offices of KGW radio and television, the extensive use of concrete for structural, ornamental purposes is evident.