

THE KOBE COLLEGE PLANT
from the Architects' Point of View

The first consideration which faces an architectural organization (and architecture in these times has become so complex that no individual can adequately handle a large project, any more than the old "family doctor" can handle all departments of modern medicine) is how to fit the plant to its site.

We do not believe in slashing or smashing up a beautiful natural landscape in order to make a shelf on which to locate a building. Neither is it wise to design a rambling "artistic" building merely to make a pretty picture in the landscape, regardless of convenience or economy in use. The site must be studied in connection with the nature of the structure to be erected; and a solution must be reached which makes the maximum use of natural landscape and building materials alike.

Kobe College was particularly fortunate in having a hill-top site—well isolated and with a fine view—which had a wealth of natural pines and of planted trees and shrubs of various kinds. Practically the only grading necessary was the leveling of the playground, and since it is covered with grass there is no scar left by this leveling.

This hilly site overlooking the sea to the South and mountain ranges to the West and North—with sufficient space to avoid crowding, and attractive natural features like deep valleys and glens—could hardly be surpassed as a location for a school.

The style of building naturally caused some discussion among those most concerned. It would have been ideal to employ the lines and proportions of Japanese architecture. But there are several difficulties in the way of such a procedure. For example, if strictly followed this style would provide too little light for class rooms, too great an area of building and length of corridor for efficiency, and, especially, a very much greater expense would be involved for construction, and probably also for maintenance.

The ultimate Japanese style of the future is yet to be evolved, and whatever is done now will be merely tentative and experimental.

None of the traditional styles seemed entirely suited to the site and the climatic conditions. But the Mediterranean styles in certain aspects appeared to fill the requirements best. So these were made the basis of what the plans called for in their exterior appearance and general details. But a good deal of freedom was used in their interpretation, and the practical usage was always kept to the fore.

Three things had to be done. The various buildings, individually and in groups, had to be arranged for administrative convenience, for educational efficiency, and for healthful living. There were also three main groups to be separated and yet not too far apart: the College group, the High School group, and the Residential group. Within the College group are four divisions: literary, scientific, musical, and physical training. And these four had to be closely tied together; and yet the disturbance of noise from the music-practice rooms and from the gymnasium reaching other departments had to be avoided.

In solving these problems a main quadrangle of four College buildings was designed with the music building adjoining one end and the gymnasium adjoining the other. The music building is placed below the main group, in a deep valley and is screened from it by a dense pine grove. Furthermore its noisier rooms are all faced away from the quadrangle. The result is perfect absence of disturbance. Yet the distance is but slight and a covered corridor thru the pines connects this building with the quadrangle.

The Library is located at the south end of the quadrangle, nearest the music building. Since the noise problem has been solved, this is very convenient for the music pupils. It also makes possible the independent heating of the Library and Music buildings from a single unit, these two departments being the only ones used at night.

The Library's main reading room is a large room, Italian in

feeling, amply lighted with great windows along its north side—thus giving an even illumination without the glare of direct sun.

To the right, as one faces north from the Library, is the Literary Building and to the left the Science Building. These two are rather long structures of two stories, containing all the class rooms, lecture rooms, laboratories, and other academic quarters. Their broad corridors are floored with rubber, in warm colors; which gives both a pleasing appearance and a quiet tread.

Facing the Library, to the north, is the Administration Building, which closes the quadrangle. Behind it, and so closely connected that the three form practically one building, are the Auditorium and Searle Memorial Chapel. The Auditorium is a bright, airy hall, seating 1000 persons, and provided with an ample stage for dramatics. Because of the sound-absorbing materials of the curved ceiling, there is no acoustical problem, and the ordinary voice is easily heard throughout the room. The Chapel is a much smaller room in a very dignified Romanesque style, with an interior of fine proportions and notable quietness.

All these buildings are connected up by covered corridors, which may even be entirely enclosed in bad weather, as all their archways are provided with concealed glass doors. Such a corridor also extends northward to the Gymnasium.

The Gymnasium is built on the edge of the hill, so that while its visitors' gallery and physical-examination-suite floor-level opens onto the large, grassed playing field, there are two lower floors, one containing the locker rooms, showers, apparatus rooms, and the main gymnasium floor, and the lowest floor the heating plant for the greater part of the entire institution.

All the college buildings are of reinforced concrete—except the auditorium, which because of the great span of its roof is framed in steel. Their exterior finish is of a creamy stucco for the second stories with the first stories and the trim elsewhere of bronzed-toned scratch tiles, about the size of elongated bricks, laid with

wide joints horizontally, pointed in cream colored mortar. The effect is to emphasize the horizontal lines of the buildings. The roofs are fairly low-pitched and are covered with mottled Spanish tiles, in brown, red, and bronze tones. The eaves troughs are of concrete construction, a part of the roof itself. The down-spouts are of copper. In a country with so much rain as Japan, these features—and the covered connecting passages between buildings—are highly practical, and in this case they are also an attractive element. The passages have the same roof tiles as the buildings. They also have a peculiar one-way-sloped roof, which gives a different effect entirely from inside and outside the quadrangle; while in the hidden triangular space, formed by the “false” ceiling which balances the interior, is provided space for pipes and wiring for lights, telephones, etc.

From the farther end of the Auditorium foyer, a covered passage connects with the High School Building, which occupies a nearby, but segregated, spur of the hill top. This is the largest building in the entire plant since it contains all departments of the High School even to its own gymnasium. It is of the general type of the College group, yet sufficiently different to indicate its independence. The outstanding distinction is a flat roof, which serves as additional space for outdoor exercise.

Farther to the north, and beyond a beautiful wooded glen, lies the residential group. The College Dormitory is of an original design—diamond shaped, with a patio in the center. It is so arranged that every student room faces approximately south, thus securing the maximum of sunshine. Social rooms, dining rooms, and a guest suite are provided besides the students' quarters. All rooms, except the guest suite, are in European style, with beds, chairs, and desks for all pupils, in compliance with the modern trend and for greater sanitary value. Ample toilet and bath facilities are provided.

The High School Dormitory is a smaller building and of a less distinctive design, but contains equal facilities. Its dining room is

distinct; but both dormitories are supplied from a single Kitchen—and eventually others may be added with the same Kitchen serving all.

A single heating plant takes care of these dormitories and also of the faculty residences, near by.

The styles of the dormitories and residences, and also of several smaller structures—such as gate houses, alumnae club house, employees' apartments, etc.—are all harmonious, altho there is enough variety to avoid tiresomeness.

The main entrance Gate and the Gate Lodge are noteworthy, as they set the key-note of the "Mediterranean" atmosphere. The drive-way enters thru an archway supported by columns and provided with wrought-iron gates of generous proportions. On one side the tiled roof shelters the gate-keeper's lodge and on the other a pavillion which provides a sheltered space for pupils waiting for interurban buses.

The winding roadway up the hill, with its flanking pines and shrubbery, and the buildings glimpsed thru the foliage, all seem to fit into the landscape as a natural development.

The only conscious effort at "effects" has been an attempt to secure balanced proportions, both inside and outside the buildings, which should exert a stabilizing influence and inculcate standards of taste in the pupils whose lives should be deeply influenced by their years of sojourn in this place of learning and character-molding.

W. M. Vories

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