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How a New Yorker Saw His Town, 1920's to 60's

By CHRISTOPHER GRAY

A MAJOR collection of historic architectural photographs of New York City is rarely seen by New Yorkers. After all, it's in Pennsylvania.

Copy prints of 10,000 architectural subjects, indexed by address, architect or client, are available for \$7 each from the Fay S. Lincoln Collection at Pennsylvania State University. Anne Champagne, rare-books librarian at the Pattee Library there, has computerized access to the collection.

The man for whom the collection is named studied engineering at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology but chose architectural photography and worked at it in New York City from the 1920's to the 60's. He died in 1976 in Pennsylvania, and a Penn State faculty member took the collection to the university. No New York City institution asked for it.

The collection covers decades for which there are few photographic archives: the 1940's and 50's. Mr. Lincoln's clients included Fletcher Steele, Albert Speer, Edward Steichen, William Pahlman, the Saarinens, Maurice Fatio, Rosario Candela, Elsie de Wolfe, Isamu Noguchi and R. Buckminster Fuller. The collection includes photographs of the residences of John D. Rockefeller Jr., Sophie Tucker, W. R. Grace, Cass Canfield, Stavros Niarchos, S. I. Newhouse, Hobart Winans and Katherine Brush, among others, on Fifth Avenue, Park Avenue, Sutton Place and places outside New York.

Some pictures are cross sections of entire apartment houses. For 740 Park Avenue, there are views of Mott Schmidt's neo-Regency interiors, done for the Rockefellers; of a notable installation of porcelain for them; of Clarence Shearn's trim, modernistic apartment, and of Lynde Selden's Georgian paneled living room (which could have been designed this year by Mark Hampton).

There are also pictures involving I. Magnin, W. & J. Sloane, Lord & Taylor, Contemporara, Modernage, Bon Marche, Philco, Bloomingdale's and Alcoa, among other companies.

Ms. Champagne, the librarian, says that if a designer is renovating a building designed by a specific architect, she can search the files for commissions. There may be 60-year-old views of the building or a comparable work -- or there may not.

The Penn State files embrace architecture and works by Raymond Loewy, Barry Byrne, Skidmore Owings Merrill, Philip Johnson (including model shots of the Glass House) and Wallace Harrison. There is a large miscellany: the Staten Island Ferry Terminal (1952), for example, along with shots of the Automats, Helena Rubenstein's apartment in 1937 and a Packard showroom in the Bronx in 1945.

Ms. Champagne takes reference questions by fax (814) 863-2653 or by mail at the Pattee Library, Room W342, Pennsylvania State University, University Park, Pa. 16802.

Photo: A rare glimpse inside 322 East 57th Street in 1933: the dressing room of Hobart Winans and Katherine Brush. (From Lincoln Collections, Historical and Labor Archives, Penn State)

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