

# THE ARCHITECTURAL RECORD

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AN AMERICAN VENICE—CANAL THOROUGHFARES AND LAGOON IN  
THE RESIDENTIAL SECTION.

Near Los Angeles, Cal.

Marsh & Russell, Architects.

# NOTES & COMMENTS

## AN AMERICAN VENICE

Out of the hundred thousand Americans who yearly "do" the Old World are some who turn to the United States with ideas—and who have the money to give these ideas practical form. We need

not dwell upon the fact that many an art collection has had its inception in the casual visit of the millionaire to the Louvre or some of the galleries of Italy and Holland. The Italian garden, now so popular as an ornate feature of the country seat and suburban grounds, is the result of the observation of the American traveler. Without number are the churches, halls, schools and other structures modeled after Old World edifices whose architecture has caught the fancy of the one who would be a benefactor to his home community.

Thus it is that in the State of California a miniature Venice is in process of creation. Although the work of the designer and builder has progressed so far that a very truthful facsimile of parts of the city by the Adriatic can be seen by the visitor to the site of the American model. A few years ago Mr. Abner Kinney in a tour of Europe saw St. Marks and the Campanile, wandered through the Palace of the Doges, glided along the Grand Canal past those wonderful examples of the architecture

which line it. He came as do thousands of others—merely out of casual interest, but he returned to America an enthusiast in his admiration of the Italian Renaissance. His enthusiasm shaped itself into the idea of imitating some of the designs—of making a monument to his name by reproducing them permanently. Calling to his aid two of the leading architects of Los Angeles, where he resides, Mr. Kinney practically gave them *carte blanche* to plan this Venice in miniature, so that fully \$5,000,000 will be expended when the principal structures it is to contain are completed and its network of canals is ready for the gondola.

The California Venice also affords an illustration of how a barren spot of ground can be beautified by the efforts of the landscape engineer in connection with the architect, for its site is merely a strip of sand beach adjacent to the waters of the Pacific. Prior to the beginning of the project, it was destitute of tree or shrub. It is about twenty miles from Los Angeles and situated in the vicinity of several beach resorts which are so familiar on the Atlantic as well as the Pacific coast—rows of monotonous wooden cottages and bungalows for residences, the business thoroughfares lined with ugly frame shops, and hotels and "summer" boarding houses which are merely huge wooden boxes designed to hold as many human beings as can be crowded into a given space, regard-

less of harmony, taste or anything that savors of the aesthetic.

Consequently Venice stands out in conspicuous contrast to its neighbors, for the architects as far as possible have outlined structures which, while suitable for the various purposes intended, are in keeping with the Venetian idea. In a few instances it has been impossible to conform to this idea, as for instance in the bathing pavilion, which is of more modern design and necessitated construction suitable for the pur-

there are colonnades. The decorations of the exterior walls include carvings of figures familiar to all who have visited the Italian city, nor are the various buildings out of proportion. No "skyscrapers" have been built, nor is any structure allowed to exceed a certain height. The material and exterior finish also lend themselves to the general scheme. The one essential in which the "business part" of the new Venice differs from its prototype is in the absence of the canal, but the arrangement of such



AN AMERICAN VENICE—THE MAIN BUSINESS THOROUGHFARE.

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pose intended. But as the photographs accompanying this article plainly show, the impression produced as one traverses the principal thoroughfares is distinctly Venetian. On every side are evidences of the Renaissance. Even the smaller details have been faithfully reproduced. The footways for pedestrians are through loggias massively yet gracefully built, forming not only a protection from the weather, but adding greatly to the general effect. Here and

waterways was impossible owing to the character of the site and the material of the various buildings.

Three thoroughfares are devoted to the business interests of the town. Each has a width of about one hundred feet exclusive of the loggias, forming the ways for pedestrians. The streets terminate upon the ocean front and extend backward to a lagoon into which the principal canals converge. As the photographs show, the ma-

terials used in the larger structures are of such a character that they may be considered permanent. The more important buildings have a framework of steel, concrete or reinforced concrete. The exterior walls include not only brick and natural stone but concrete as well, while the interior finish in many instances is of hardwood of a design appropriate to the general architecture. In short, the designers of Venice are building a city intended for all seasons of the year. It is neither a summer nor a

into sleeping apartments, a restaurant, a kitchen, office and all of the appointments of the modern hotel. Some of the titles familiar to the visitor in European Venice have been utilized in its American imitation.

The canal system at present is about four miles in length and embraces a series of waterways upon which dwellings are being erected. Small steamboats as well as gondolas have been provided for transportation on the canals, being utilized for communication between the various parts of the



AN AMERICAN VENICE—A TYPICAL BUSINESS STRUCTURE.

Near Los Angeles, Cal.

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winter resort, but intended to be occupied permanently.

In the plans, provision has been made not merely for stores and dwellings, but for structures especially suitable for banking, for apartments, offices and for hotels. Among the hotels is one of extremely novel design, as it is afloat. The founder of Venice conceived the idea of having a galley modeled after the craft in which Balboa is supposed to have discovered the Pacific. This has been moored to a pier extending out into the ocean and is divided

town as is the ordinary street railway system in other communities. The lagoon, which is nearly circular in form, is intended as a pleasure resort, while it enhances the civic beauty of the place. It is approached from the business part of the town by a series of broad steps and is spanned by concrete bridges patterned to a certain extent after some of those seen in the older Venice. The canals have been excavated by large suction dredges and are filled with salt water. Including the lagoon, the waterways have enough current to prevent

the water from becoming stagnant and a supply is secured by pipe lines from the ocean, which is a few feet below the site of the town.

The plans for Venice at present cover an area of about two hundred acres, but as it increases in population the boundaries will be enlarged accordingly, for provision is made also for the expansion of the business portion as becomes necessary. The architects for this interesting community were Messrs. Marsh and Russell, who not only



An American Venice—Looking Down One of the Loggias.

designed the buildings but conceived the scheme of waterways which has been described.

DAY ALLEN WILLEY.

**CITY PARKS  
ASSOCIATION,  
PHILA-  
DELPHIA**

The City Parks Association of Philadelphia has issued another report. It contains the seventeenth and eighteenth annual reports—combining the years 1905 and 1906, and the many who have learned

to expect of these publications the models of their kind are glad to welcome another one, and to find their expectation once more justified. Folded into the front of the book there is an interesting plan of the parkway, from Logan Square to Fairmount Park; and folded into the back of the

book there is a "study for the improvement of the Schuylkill River embankment," prepared by C. C. Zantzinger, C. L. Borie, Jr., and Paul P. Cret. If the latter seems an ambitious dream, it has better precedents than had the parkway—which is already a dream coming true; and it has less complicated opposition to overcome. Besides, an improvement here is a favorite project of the secretary of the City Parks Association—Andrew Wright Crawford—and he has a remarkable way of bringing to pass the results he desires for the good of Philadelphia. The report is profusely illustrated, mainly with photographs taken by Mr. Crawford, and these present strong arguments to persons who lack the patience or the time to read of the opportunities of their city. But the text is interesting, too. The City Parks Association is in business for parks, not for politics; and the report declares almost at the beginning that it is the association's policy to eschew the latter—though, it says, "the city in which its citizens take pride, not because they feel that they ought to, but because it is really beautiful and they cannot help being proud of it, is apt to be the best governed city." Philadelphia has rare park opportunities, the report adds; but they are of no value if suffered to go to waste. "It is time to stop shouting and get to work," and the association adopts this excellent motto: "Agitate, educate," but do not exasperate." The report notes several great successes and one great failure for the two years. The former are the preservation, by ordinance, from building of six and a half miles of the valley of Pennypack Creek, and of four miles of the east side of the valley of Cobb's Creek; the placing upon the city plan of a plaza covering four squares around the intersection of Broad and Johnson Streets, the creation therefrom of a system of radiating streets, and the widening of Broad Street to 300 feet from the plaza to League Island Park, and the beginning of the construction of the Torresdale and the Fairmount Park parkways. The failure was the loss of Sherwood Forest, the magnificent trees of which were felled—despite earnest efforts—to create a flat and dreary field for building operations. The recommendations of the association are a loan of seven millions, to be apportioned as follows: \$3,000,000 for an outer park system, \$1,000,000 for recreation centres, \$2,000,000 for the extension of Fairmount Parkway, and \$1,000,000 for the beginning of an improvement of the Schuyl-



AN AMERICAN VENICE—THE UNIQUE CARAVEL RESTAURANT.

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kill River front; also a loan of \$2,000,000 for a library site on the parkway; and finally the creation of a City Improvement Commission and of a Municipal Art Commission—a step in favor of which the Fairmount Park Art Association lately took action. The report also notes a number of lesser undertakings, various gifts and the vigorous growth of the association.

#### DETROIT'S OPPORTUNITY

About two years ago, in reflection of a considerable public interest, the Board of Commerce of the city of Detroit engaged two students of municipal aesthetics to make reports on the improvement possibilities of Detroit. The investigations were independently made and the reports separately submitted; but when they were handed in it was found that both Messrs. Olmsted and Robinson—who were the men employed—had laid their special stress on the improvement of the waterfront. This was not surprising, but as an argument it was convincing, and the Board published the two reports together in a pamphlet. Though

not one of the committee having the matter directly in charge, the late James E. Scripps was deeply interested in the procurement of these reports. On invitation of the committee he accompanied the investigators on some of their rounds, and in honor of Mr. Robinson he threw open his house for an evening reception. His death occurred a few weeks ago, and it is found that his will includes a bequest of \$50,000 for a public improvement in the city of Detroit. The nature of this improvement is left to the judgment of the three trustees of his estate; and there has inevitably risen the hope that they may choose the river esplanade, of which he was an earnest advocate. In favor of this, as against any other improvement, authoritative decisions have already been rendered; the utility, practicability and even the manner of the improvement has been indicated, and it is obvious that this would be a development of Detroit's most distinctive claim to attention, the utilization of the noblest asset of the city. Indeed, as compared with this it is difficult to speak with patience of the two other projects that have been brought forward, viz.: the erection of a memorial to Mr. Scripps in a park that