



## IAWA NEWSLETTER

### INTERNATIONAL ARCHIVE OF WOMEN IN ARCHITECTURE

Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University

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#### ALBERTA PFEIFFER

On her first day at Tallmadge & Watson in September 1923, Alberta Pfeiffer was sent to measure the basement of Chicago's St. James Church on the near north side. She recalls that the basement was a "dusty, coal-furnace heated, dark place," and that surely she was sent as a test of her fitness to do any kind of work in the firm. She notes that she "succeeded, with no lunch, to come back to the office with a sooty face, and hands, and a suit that had to be cleaned."

That first day was just the beginning of Pfeiffer's fifty-five years in architecture. Since then she has gone from working at firms in Chicago and New York to her own thriving private practice in Connecticut. Although now retired, she retains an active interest in architecture and in the projects she designed over the years. She kept the project files for all of her designs and has bequeathed these papers to the IAWA.

Alberta Pfeiffer (nee Raffl) was born in Red Bud, Illinois, in 1899. In 1919 she was one of the first women to attend the University of Illinois School of Architecture. Pfeiffer graduated in 1923 first in her class, and was also the first woman ever to win the prestigious American Institute of Architects School Medal. After working one year at Tallmadge & Watson she returned to the University of Illinois for graduate work. It was there that she met Homer Pfeiffer, also an architecture

student, who would later study and teach at Yale University and win the Prix de Rome.

In 1925 she moved to New York City to work for residential architect Harrie T. Lindeberg. Pfeiffer remembers that she was first set up in the library, away from the "boys" in the drafting room, for fear that she would be exposed to the swearing. In Lindeberg's office she sharpened her residential design skills, working on some of the finest country houses of the time. Several houses she drafted for Lindeberg are depicted in *Domestic Architecture of H.T. Lindeberg* (1940). In 1927 Homer Pfeiffer left for an extended tour of Europe. Alberta joined him in 1928 and again in 1930, when they were married.

In 1931 the Pfeiffers moved to Connecticut so that Homer could join the faculty at Yale. They bought an abandoned 1789 farmhouse on 110 acres of land in Hadlyme, Connecticut, and began the long process of renovating it. Setting up an architectural practice from the house, the Pfeiffers completed seventy residential designs and renovations in Connecticut, mostly in the Hadlyme area, from 1933 to 1940.

When Homer joined the Navy in 1940, Alberta continued the firm's work on her own, although she remembers there was little residential work available during the war. After the war Pfeiffer established her own private architectural practice. She recalls that during the 1950s and 1960s she was never without a project, and often

had as many as ten designs on her desk at the same time. When she retired in 1977 she had more than 170 residential designs, renovations, and alterations to her credit. Almost all of her work was done in Connecticut (in addition to residences she designed a bank and a church), although she designed two ranches in Arizona and a house each in Illinois and Wisconsin.

Pfeiffer's style drew upon English country architecture. She is most proud of the quality of detail in her drawings, and claims her bay windows were so popular that almost every client insisted upon them.

Pfeiffer has also been active in professional and community groups. She joined the Society of Connecticut Craftsmen in 1935, and later served on its Board of Directors. A life member of the Connecticut Society of Architects, Pfeiffer was a member of the local Board of Education and the Zoning Board, and is still involved in local mental health issues and activities.

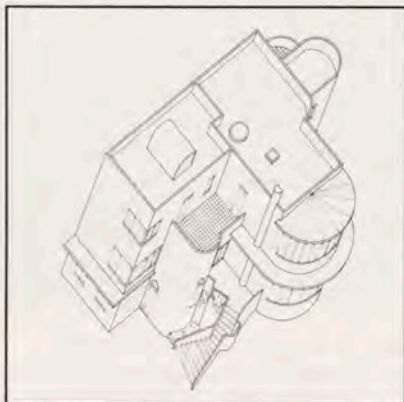


Alberta Pfeiffer, 1954





## RECENT ACQUISITIONS



Elsa Levisour. Additions to residence in Los Angeles, CA, 1986

**Elsa Levisour** was educated at the University of Cape Town in South Africa, where she became licensed to practice architecture. She first designed hospitals, apartment complexes, and warehouses before working in residential design and implementation.

After leaving South Africa, she worked for a major London architect as project director on a department store and, while raising three children, studied landscape architecture and began establishing a small architectural practice.

In 1969 she moved to California, where she worked from her home on small residential remodels and landscapes. After securing a master's degree in architecture and urban planning from UCLA, she joined an architecture firm and taught landscape architecture. In 1983 she founded her own design firm, and in 1986 she joined Marsha Zilles to form *Architerra*. After becoming licensed as a landscape architect in 1987, she changed the focus of her firm to landscape architecture and planning.

She left the United States last February to return to England, where she now teaches landscape design at the Manchester Polytechnic Department of Architecture and Landscape Architecture.

Levisour's extensive collection in the archive includes project files, photographs, specifications, and architectural drawings of designs she has executed in the 1980s. The collection focuses primarily on her work renovating the Hollywood Bowl in Los Angeles.

**Diana Lee-Smith** was born in England and lives in Kenya, where she coordinates the Habitat International Coalition Women and Shelter Network, edits *Settlements Information Network Africa (SINA)* newsletters, and serves on the board for the Mazingira Institute. A former architecture professor at universities in Canada, California, and Kenya, she has worked in architecture offices in Sweden, the United Kingdom, and Greece.

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*"The absolute poverty of the majority [in Africa] makes conventional building industry solutions inaccessible" -- D. Lee-Smith, 1987.*

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Lee-Smith's interest in the housing and shelter issues of Africa are reflected in the collection she has donated to the IAWA: *SINA* newsletters, *Mazingira Institute* publications and public health magazines for children she has edited, and articles and speeches by and about her.

**Susana Torre** was born in Argentina and received her architectural diploma from the University of Buenos Aires, where she also studied urban planning, before continuing her studies at Columbia

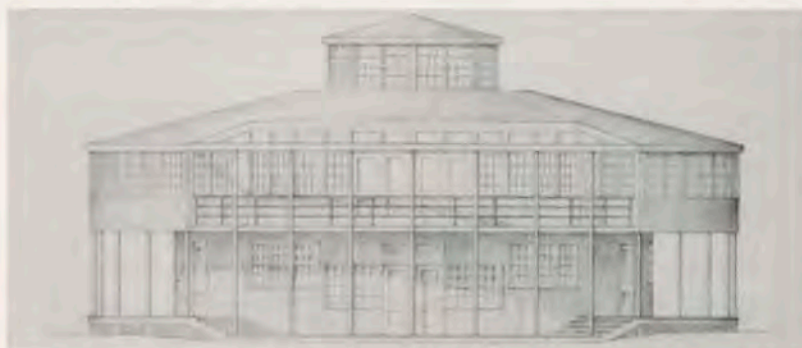
University in New York City.

An educator and practitioner, she was principal of The Architectural Studio of New York, a partner at Wank Adams Slavin Associates and Torre Beeler Associates, director of the Barnard College of Architecture Program, and an associate professor of architecture at Columbia University before establishing *Susana Torre and Associates of New York* in 1989.

Among her notable renovation and remodeling projects are the editor's and graphic designer's lounges in the Old Pension Building in Washington, D.C.; the interior of the Consulate for the Ivory Coast in New York City; a master plan for the restoration of Ellis Island in New York Harbor; a turn-of-the-century carriage house in Southampton, New York, which received a 1982 Award of Excellence from *Architectural Record*; Schermerhorn Hall at Columbia University; and Fire Station Five of Columbus, Indiana.

Torre also edited *Women in American Architecture: a Historic and Contemporary Perspective*, published in 1977, and was project director for the exhibit "Women in Architecture," which toured the United States after opening at the Brooklyn Museum that same year.

The Torre collection consists of architectural drawings, photographs and slides, project files, a model, a video tape, and writings by and about Torre. The focus of the papers is primarily on her design and the construction of a residence in Amagansett, New York.



Residence in Amagansett, NY, designed by Susana Torre in 1987





## IN THE ARCHIVE

One hundred and ten women and organizations are currently represented in the International Archive of Women in Architecture. This list continues those noted in the first issue of the *IAWA Newsletter*.

**Alexandra Biriukova** (1895-1967). Russian architect. Received architecture degree in 1914 from the School of Architecture in Petrograd, Russia. Exiled in 1914; moved to Italy where she received a degree in 1925 from the Royal Superior School of Architecture in Rome. Emigrated to Toronto, Canada, in 1929. Elected the first woman member of the Ontario Association of

Architects in 1931, yet inexplicably gave up her architecture practice that same year to become a nurse.

**Urmila Eulie Chowdhury.** Architect of Chandigarh, India. First woman to qualify as an architect in Asia and to be Chief Architect of an Indian state (Punjab).

**Doris Cole.** Partner in the firm Cole and Goyette, in Cambridge, Massachusetts; and author of *From Tipi to Skyscraper: A History of Women in Architecture* (1973).

**Anna W. Keichline** (1889-1943). Architect and inventor of Bellefonte, Pennsylvania. First registered woman architect in Pennsylvania. Inventor of the K-brick.

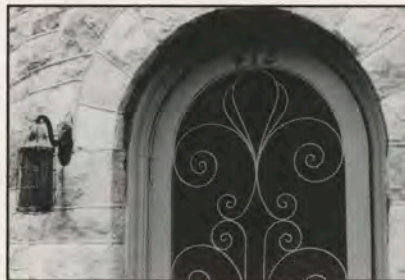
**MATRIX: Feminist Architectural Co-Operative Limited.** Non-profit women's architectural cooperative in London, England, designed to help women's groups and groups that benefit women by finding and assessing potential building sites, aiding in obtaining funding for construction, making models, and giving workshops to help women's groups understand and take part in the design process.

**Liane Zimmler** (1892-1987). First licensed woman architect in Austria, and an interior designer in the United States after 1938. Member of the California-based Association for Women in Architecture.

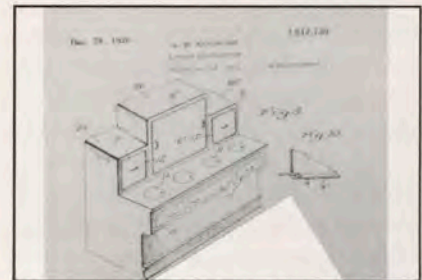


Anna Keichline

K-Brick



Detail of residence in Bellefonte, PA



Kitchen patent, 1926

### Let us know if you are interested in (please check)...

...Learning more about the IAWA and its associated programs: < >

...Donating your papers to the IAWA: < >

...Becoming a Friend of the IAWA: < >

The International Archive of Women in Architecture invites you to join the Friends of the IAWA. Contributions can be made in the following categories:

- \$25 - \$39 Friend (\$10 for students)
- \$40 - \$99 Sustaining Member
- \$100 - \$499 Benefactor
- \$500 - \$1000 Life Member

Enclosed is my check payable to the **Virginia Tech Foundation/ International Archive of Women in Architecture** for \$ \_\_\_\_\_

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Please return to:  
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Attn: Archivist, IAWA; P.O. Box 90001  
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## TRANSITIONS

**Charles Burchard, FAIA**, a member of the IAWA Board of Advisors, died July 5 after a lengthy illness. Burchard was the first dean (1964-79) of the VPI&SU College of Architecture and Urban Studies and a university distinguished professor. After stepping down as dean in 1979 he became the campus architect until he retired in 1981.

Educated at Harvard University and the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, Burchard was a member of the Harvard School of Design from 1945 to 1953. Following that, he was a senior partner with A.M. Kinney Associates in Cincinnati, Ohio, before coming to Virginia Tech in 1964.

Burchard's many honors included the Award for Excellence in Architectural Education from the AIA and the Association of Collegiate Schools of Architecture (1983), and the Virginia Cultural Laureate Award (1986) for his contribution to education. Burchard was president of the Association of Collegiate Schools of Architecture and director of the National Architectural Accrediting Board.

Burchard was named a fellow of the AIA in 1971. He had been a member of the IAWA Board of Advisors since the archive's beginnings in 1985.

We want to bid farewell and thanks to **Bela Foltin** as a member of the Board of Advisors. Foltin recently left his position as Assistant Director for Collection Development and Public Services at the VPI&SU Libraries to become Dean of Libraries at Northeastern State University in Oklahoma. Foltin had been a member of the IAWA Board since 1988.

As we say goodbye to one board member we welcome another to our ranks. **Annette Burr** recently assumed the position of Art and Architecture Librarian of the VPI&SU Libraries, after working on her Ph.D. in Art History, and teaching and traveling for the last several years. Burr was previously employed during the 1970s at the Libraries as a cataloging and reference librarian. She will prove a valuable asset to the archive's Board of Advisors, donors, and researchers.

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