

A. Henry Detweiler

October 4, 1906 — January 30, 1970

With the passing of Henry Detweiler, professor of architecture and associate dean of the College of Architecture, Art, and Planning, the University lost a persuasive administrator, enthusiastic teacher, and loyal supporter. A scholar concerned with the past, he was also a man devoted to improving the present and the future.

He came to Cornell to teach architectural history. Beginning as an instructor in 1939, he rose to the rank of professor by 1948. His remarkable adaptability was tested by special wartime assignments which by 1943 included: assistant to the director of the Army Area and Language Program, geography instructor for the U.S. Military Academy Preparation Program, and instructor in aeroplane drafting techniques for Curtiss-Wright trainees. His administrative talents were soon recognized, and he served, often as chairman, on a number of *ad hoc* study groups and standing committees of the University. Following the student disturbances of 1958, as chairman of the Committee on Student Conduct, he was responsible for the implementation of recommendations made by the deans of the undergraduate colleges and the organization of a new judicial system. When the Faculty determined to make the University Lectures program more effective, he was persuaded to accept the chairmanship of the University Lecture Committee with outstanding results. In 1956 he was appointed associate dean of the College of Architecture. To the discussion of the innumerable University-wide problems with which he was concerned, he brought special talents: directness, organization, and an ability to understand the views of those who did not agree with him.

Professor Detweiler died in New York on the day he was to have begun his term of office as president of the Society of Architectural Historians. He had looked forward to this as the capstone of a lifetime of professional, educational, and administrative achievement which had already brought him many responsibilities and honors, most recently election as a fellow of the American Institute of Architects.

Of even longer standing than his association with Cornell was Professor Detweiler's relationship with the American Schools of Oriental Research. An architectural fellow from 1932 to 1935, he was acting director of the school in Jerusalem in 1949, and visiting professor, then director in 1953-54. He was chairman of the school committee from 1951 to 1954 and president of the Schools from 1955 to 1966, leading the organization from the low ebb of the post-World War II era to financial security, an expansion of facilities and activities, and new heights of achievement. After eleven years as president, he resigned and was appointed a life trustee.

His familiarity with the Near East dated back to 1930, when, as he put it, he became an “archaeological hobo.” There was in this tall, bespectacled, scholarly-looking Pennsylvania Dutchman a streak of the adventurer, the knight errant of architecture, something which responded to the age-old romantic lure of the Near East. Emerging from school in 1930, during the Depression, as a bachelor of architecture from the University of Pennsylvania, he became field architect to a galaxy of the most famous excavations of the thirties. He worked in Mesopotamia, Palestine, Jordan, Syria, and Iraq as familiar and friend of the great archaeologists and field architects of that era. He recorded the excavations and monuments unearthed by expeditions to Tell Billa, Tepe Gawra, and Seleucia on the Tigris (Iraq); Tell Beit Mirsim and Samaria (Palestine); Gerasa (Jordan); Bosra and Dura Europos (Syria).

His seven years of archaeological effort in the Near East included the survey of the d’Juma Mosque in Isfahan in 1936 and association with the great historian M. I. Rostovtzeff at Dura. His restoration drawings of Bosra Cathedral and the monumental buildings of Gerasa have become classics, while his *Manual of Archaeological Surveying*, published in 1948, is a systematic distillation of his vast experience in the field.

The breadth of his interests is suggested by his study of seventeenth-century architecture in England, undertaken in 1947 on a Langley Fellowship of the American Institute of Architects, and his investigation of Renaissance architecture in central Italy in 1953-54. Much of his research into the origins of early Christian architecture was embodied in the Haskell Lectures on “The Architectural History of the Early Church,” delivered at the Oberlin Graduate School of Theology in 1964. During the last years of his life, he was engaged in the preparation of a comprehensive study of the Lombard churches of northern Italy. Much of the field work for this was accomplished on a Guggenheim fellowship in 1961-62, but he continued his investigations on several subsequent visits to Italy, when he also kept in touch with the American Academy’s excavation at Cosa on the Italian coast where he was an adviser in 1954.

Keenly interested in problems of architectural conservation and restoration, Professor Detweiler was called upon between 1963 and 1966 by the Department of State and other authorities to serve as adviser on the protection of the monuments of Egypt, including the salvage of the great cliff temples at Abu Simbel, and as director of a U.S.A.I.D. program for the preservation of sites and antiquities in Jordan.

In 1957 Professor Detweiler joined George M. A. Hanfmann of Harvard in organizing the archaeological exploration of Sardis in Turkey. They formed an inspired team, and the Cornell-Harvard Expedition greatly enlarged on the work inaugurated by a Princeton University group before the first World War. In the central area of the historic capital of Lydia, extraordinary architectural remains were laid bare, including a monumental Byzantine shopping

street, a Roman gymnasium complex centering on a court lined with ornate multistoried marble colonnades, and an unparalleled giant synagogue% As associate director, Professor Detweiler was responsible for much of the organization of the project and participated in the campaigns for ten seasons, his keen eye and wealth of experience enabling him to make essential contributions to the understanding and interpretation of the buildings at Sardis. He was often accompanied by Mrs. Detweiler, who served as numismatist.

He first met Catharine Bunnell in Athens, where she was a member of the American team excavating the Agora. They were married in 1939 and moved the same year to Ithaca, where their family grew to include a son and three daughters.

Henry Detweiler was a well-known figure throughout Cornell University, an institution of which he was exceedingly proud and to which he was intensely loyal. He seemed inexhaustible and indefatigable, and his never-failing resourcefulness and ingenuity resolved many problems for his colleagues and associates, often without their becoming aware of the innumerable complications with which he was involved. He may have been helped in dispatching the College's business by the early experience as radio repairman and technician which paid for his architectural schooling and was reflected in his lifelong hobby of electronic tinkering. At the time of his death, he had nearly completed the assembly of a color television set. For the generations of architecture students whom he came to know well through admissions procedures and advising, he was a surrogate father. Although he could be stern and direct in counsel, he was sympathetic. Students understood his concern for their welfare, as well as for their academic and professional careers. An enthusiastic teacher and persuasive organizer, Henry Detweiler made a lasting contribution to three related professions: archaeology, architectural history, and architecture.

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