

FINDS SKYSCRAPERS BLOT ON CITY BEAUTY

**Curran Says New 'Paper Box'
Type Rears an Ugly Head
to Mar the Skyline.**

NO 'MUNICIPAL ART' HERE

**Bassett, Head of Zoning Committee,
Regrets That 10-Story Limit
Was Not Continued.**

The ten-story building limit established in New York City forty years ago would have proved a boon to the metropolis if it had been continued in effect, according to Edward M. Bassett, Chairman of the Mayor's Zoning Committee, who was one of several speakers who advocated decentralization of skyscrapers yesterday at a luncheon of the Municipal Art Society at the Hotel Biltmore. Mr. Bassett spoke of the necessity for revising the zoning laws and said that revision would spread out the business sections of New York.

If the ten-story limit had been continued, said Mr. Bassett, the streets and buildings would have been lighter, new business centres would have arisen and there would have been distribution instead of concentration, with its resultant congestion.

Mr. Bassett did not deny that American architects and builders had created buildings of greater individuality than in Europe and South America, where types of buildings are fixed by legislative act, and no architect may deviate from the hard and fast rules.

Major Henry H. Curran, counsel to the City Club of New York, who recently blamed skyscrapers for traffic congestion, attacked the skyscraper problem from a new angle, and asserted that the new "paper box" type of skyscraper was blotting out the more ornate skyscraper which had created New York City's beautiful skyline.

"I find it hard to talk about municipal art in New York," he said, "because, practically speaking, there isn't any. We have individual objects of art, a great many indoors and a few outdoors, but I know of no more than two or three objects of art in New York that may be called municipal.

"Nature gives us, the heavens, the hills and the waters. France gives us the Statue of Liberty. We built our beautiful City Hall ourselves, and so we did with Brooklyn Bridge and with the templed towers that rise so magically from the foot of Manhattan Island, as one sees them, coming up the Bay. Then we did more. We smothered the approaches to the Brooklyn Bridge with great ugly sheds. We waited a hundred years and then we spoiled the City Hall by placing in front of it a pudgy statue, surmounted by a face studiously devoid of character, flanked by a toy sword of 2,000 years, and standing on the necks of two mermaids, who are nevertheless innocent until they are proved guilty. I refer to the statue of 'Civic Virtue,' otherwise known as 'The Rough Guy.'

"But we did more than that. We started a civic centre in the bottom of an old pond, two backyards removed from the back of the City Hall, with the great gray masses of the Municipal Building and the Hall of Records forming a palisade between the City Hall and the new Courthouse in the bottom of the pond. As a civic centre, this is the joke of the century!

"A first glimpse, from the steamship deck, of the towers of the Battery is still a beautiful thing," but the moment the ship noses up past Wall Street, the view of our skyscrapers changes to a long row of upended, right-angled packing boxes that look like a set of dinosaur's teeth with a few missing. On top of each tooth rests a squat-legged water tank, sacred to the cause of American municipal art. Our scattered towers are lost amid the jungle of their surrounding packing-box neighbors. The pristine beauty of the Singer Tower has disappeared. The wonderful Woolworth tower now has a neighbor thrusting its pill-box top up in the air just across Barclay Street. The Metropolitan Tower is safe so far, but how long will it last in its beautiful aloofness?"

Grosvenor Atterbury, architect, speaking on "The City and The Home," said:

"One half of the population of the United States lives in less than one-eight-hundredth of its area. We have wrought miracles in construction—but they are Frankenstein's we cannot control. We have gone Mahomet one better and brought the mountain (in the form of high buildings) to us. And now that we have them in our streets we don't know what to do with them.

"The only real reason for the existence of a city is the welfare of the men, women and children who dwell and work in it. In building the city, we have forgotten the man."

Richard Howland Hunt, President of the Municipal Art Society, presided.