

DESIGN
OF
A DORMITORY BUILDING
FOR J. C. BOARDERS

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Recd.
5/22/47

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PARTS OF THE DORMITORY BUILDING FOR I.C. BOARDERS

I. Basement

- A. Boiler's Room
- B. Luggage Room
- C. Toilet Room

II. First Floor

- A. Entrance, Staircase and Corridors
- B. Office
- C. Visitor's Room
- D. Library and Stack Rooms
- E. Janitor's Room
- F. Smoking Room
- G. Soda-Fountain
- H. Game Room
- I. Handicraft Room or Workshop
- J. Gymnasium Room

III. Second Floor

- A. Private Rooms (Each for three students)
- B. One Private Room for one or two students
- C. Toilet Room and showers
- D. One dormitory for six students
- E. Two double rooms for two supervisors
- F. Bath and toilet for the two supervisors.

I N T R O D U C T I O N

I have gone around and visited a good number of the boarding schools all over Lebanon. Among these schools are: Brummana High School, Shwayr, Aley Shwaifat, Sidon, Tripoli, Suk-el-Gharb and a number of secondary schools here in Beirut. It is not my job to criticize any of them, although most of the directors of these schools confess that their buildings are far from being satisfactory. Aley High-School is the one which was recently built, and yet its principal admits that it should have been built quite differently.

Our buildings here in the American University of Beirut seem to be the most appropriate for boarding students, but they do not meet the demands, especially those of Preparatory students.

The College students have a beautiful campus and the West Hall building which compensate for the things their dormitory buildings lack, while the students of the Preparatory Section and those of the Section Secondaire have nothing of the sort. Our Campus is very shaby and we have nothing except a class room building and two dormitory buildings in which I am interested and which I will describe briefly.

One of our dormitory buildings is Thomson Hall. It is at the western end of the University Grounds and was built to lodge eighty Junior students whose ages range between 9 and 15. (It comprises large dormitory buildings very well ventilated, but their supervision is quite a job. The building can accommodate the 80 students when twelve are put in each room, and the beds are put 30 cms. apart with all lockers put out in the corridor. Parents coming out to see their children have to pass between these rows of lockers in the narrow corridors with pyjamas and towels hanging on the sides. The worst thing about its planning is the fact that all toilets and showers are put in the basement, so a student 10 or 12 years old living on the top third floor has to go down to the basement in order to wash his hands or take his shower. We did our best to install toilets and showers on each floor, but that means spoiling one dormitory on each floor, and the department will run with at least 24 students less. Putting the financial aspect of the problem aside, the administration will be handicapped in such a situation especially when there is a great demand and applications coming from all over the Arab World. Rooms for extra-curricular activities such as, games, sitting room, and reading

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room are hardly available. The luggage room would be a sitting room one year and a game room the other.

Our second dormitory building is Sage Hall. It was built in 1911 and was made to accomodate 130 students. It consists of large dormitor^{ies} and small private rooms. Each of the dormitories can accomodate eight students with small cupboard 50 cms. wide separating the beds. The corridors are long, and narrow. On top of that the dark blue paint helps in making the place look dead and gloomy. The private rooms take two students each, but they are large enough for one student. Each floor has two toilets only, while all showers are put on first floor and basement.

In addition to the private rooms and dormitories on the first floor, there are three rooms which can be used for all sort of things. Their use alternates between sick rooms, visitors rooms, games rooms and any thing that may come up.

WHY DID I CHOOSE MY TOPIC??

The greater part of my work is devoted to the International College boarders and to their boarding life in general with all of its complicated phases. It is my duty to look after their welfare, their comfort, their education, and their extra carricular work. In other

words I am a sort of a (PAPA) to these boys, some in their early teens and others in their late ones. This age is the most difficult to handle, and a comfortable dormitory building with enough space for extra curricular activities will help the development of the physical and intellectual phases of the students' life. I have been doing this work for the last 13 years, and during this time I always desired that this or that must be done, but the lack of space and the nature of the design, which does not lend itself to all that I want, hindered our work to a great extent. To illustrate I will give one out of at least fifty instances. A good number of the Preparatory and Section-Secondaire boards are not allowed to go to the University Campus, and this is, in my opinion, a wise measure except one hour every afternoon between 4:00 and 5:00 p.m., Sundays being excluded. Most of the boards in the Elementary School and those living in Thomson Hall are not allowed to go except Sundays. In order to take care of the 250 boards on our poor campus we cut off a corner in the basement of Sage Hall, turned into a room 4 m. by 3.10 m. with a small window and a door and we called it a Soda-Fountain. The place was quite dark even at noons of mid-summer days. It could accomodate 20 or 25 students at most and was surrounded by stairs leading to Elementary school on one side,

and a cobblers shop on the other. We knew that the place would not prove satisfactory but that was all we could then do. We had to close it down shortly after and this ended the story until this year, and after a good deal of discussions of committee meetings and sub-committee meetings we were authorized to take two good adjacent private rooms and make them a nice soda-fountain; we were even allowed to take a part of a corridor and use it as a kitchenette for the place. Between the closing of the first and the opening of the new one we had all sorts of troubles. Peddlers with their dirty food stuffs gathered at the Prep Gate and since the student had no other alternative they resorted to them. Even with the interference of the Police we could not drive them away, but now they are slowly clearing off and we hope that by the end of this year none would remain.

From the preceeding discussion one would see that the nature of my work and the difficulties I meet in disciplining the students due to improper living conditions which do not lend themselves to the development of the spiritual, mental and physical lives of students made me design a dormitory building which lends itself to the work we would like to do. I admit that the building I

designed is not the ideal one and probably in twenty years from now or even less, it may become as obsolete as the existing buildings, because one can not tell what would then be required to meet the progressing social demands. Any way in designing this dormitory building I concentrated on two phases only, the first that it should be hygienic and the second it should cost the least possible. I did not design it in such a way that it will come out as a piece of art, decorated and proportioned to the highest mathematical scale. The different aspects of modern architecture dealing with tone, mass, colour, proportion, scale etc. were not entirely left aside, but the functional part of architecture was the main one considered.

At the beginning I intended to have a small comfortable apartment, on the first floor, for a married teacher to live in. He and his family would be a sort of father and mother to the 120 boarders living in that building, but later I changed this idea because it is beyond human power for one father and mother to take care of such a big family. I also intended to have a very large hall which would be used as a restaurant, but that idea was also discarded because I believe that a restaurant with its kitchen is a source of trouble. The odor, rats and cockroaches

which always go hand ⁱⁿ by hand with a restaurant, even if the best modern devices are used, would render the place a nuisance.

I confessed that this designed building is not the ideal one from an educational point of view. The ideal one would be a small building consisting of two flats. The lower one containing a nice big sitting room, a dining room, a kitchen, an office and bed rooms. Here a married teacher and his family will live, while the top floor would consist of 4 bed rooms, each big enough for three students and the necessary showers. These twelve students and the married teacher would live as one family. The school would then be consisting of these different small units, or hostels, each designed according to the ages of students and a large central building would be designed, with its different pieces, to take care of all the extra curricular activities which form an important part in the development of the students. These different units ~~of~~ⁱⁿ this large building should be designed for reading, games cinema, handicraft work, restaurant, soda fountain, social gatherings etc., and they ought to be designed and placed in such a way that one unit would not interfere with the other. This scheme would cost a sum which would make the University

authorities shiver and reject the idea all together.

DESCRIPTION OF THE BUILDING I DESIGNED.

The building consists of two floors and a small basement, It is designed to accomodate seventy boarders and enough rooms or pieces to take care of some of the different extra carricular activities required. The third floor identical with the second, may be added.

BASEMENT:

Right under the game room of the first floor two and a half meters of earth are dug out and the place is divided into a luggage room, a room for the boiler and a small room containing two toilets and two showers. These are needed for the people going about the first floor. The showers may be used by the students going out of the gymnasium room. The boiler's room has one iron door which opens on the back yard of the school. It is completely isolated from the building so as to minimize the danger of fire.

FIRST FLOOR:

A nice big porch ~~which~~ will lead to the main entrance of the building. To the right of the entrance

there is the door of the supervisors office. People desiring to see the officer in charge do not have to go into the building. This office has another door which opens to the inside of the building so that the supervisor may go into the building and make the necessary tours of inspection. The furniture of this office should consist of nice desks and a number of good easy chairs with a telephone connected with the city.

Facing this office is another room, which has an entrance on the porch and on the building too. This room is to be used as visitors room. Parents coming over to see their boys and relatives of friends go into this visitors room and carry on the necessary conversation. As conditions stand now, in our present dormitory building, people coming out to see students ^{room} ~~room~~ blindly about the building without knowing where to go. It is ^{not} ~~a~~ very pleasant to see ^{harm} ~~harms~~ going about the building and peeping through dormitories looking for some one they want to see. If they do find him after going all over the building they do not know where to go and talk to him. The dormitories and private rooms are not appropriate for parents to meet their sons. This visitors room should look very attract-

ive and should be well furnished as it reflects on the school in general. An office boy should be always around so that he goes about the buildings and calls to the visitors room the desired person. At the same time the parents may drop in the office, which is across the porch, interview the supervisor and get all the necessary information and remarks concerning their boy.

LIBRARY AND STACK ROOM:

Next to the visitors room there is the stack room where all books, magazines, periodicals and newspapers are kept. This room is a part of the library. The library is a large room, whose dimensions are put down on the plan, which should take between 30 and 40 students. It has a separate entrance so that the students may go in and out without going into the building. It has another entrance opening on the corridor. At night students may go down to it when all outer doors of the building are closed. This library room is designed in such a way that all rooms which are to be used for certain noisy activities are quite far from it.

A JANITOR'S ROOM:

A janitor's room is very essential, and should be

placed as close to the entrance as possible so that the janitor can watch and supervise all those going in and out of the building. Theoratically it ought to be placed next to the entrance, but the mere fact that this room is far from being the best furnished one in the building, made me put it a bit out of the way. Moreover when such a room is placed next to a libray it would add to the quietness of the place.

A SMOKING ROOM:

If I had to design such a building ten years ago I would never have thought of designing a smoking room, but present conditions warrant it. A good number of International College students who smoke, do it with the knowledge of their parents. In as much as smoking is a necessary evil and one can not make the smokers stop, and in order not to have smoking allowed all over the building and especially in the bed rooms, a special room is designed for that purpose. Smoking in any other place besides the soda fountain will be prohibited.

GAME ROOM:

A game room is essential for the mental recreation of the students. It should be equipped with all sorts of

games such as chess, trick-track, dominos and many other games. There is even enough room for two ping-pong tables and one for billiard. This room is right across the soda fountain so that a student may order a cup of coffee or some ice cream while playing his games.

SODA-FOUNTAIN:

The importance of a place for a soda fountain was discussed previously. The place should be carefully inspected by the administration so as to make sure that the students get clean wholesome food at reasonable prices. In designing the first floor I should have opened a door between the office and the kitchenette of this place for two reasons. The first and the most important one is that the supervisor, in the office may drop in and inspect the cleanliness of the place at any time of the day, and the second secondary one for ordering refreshments to his official guests without having to leave the place. The place may be used for small gatherings in the form of informal receptions or soirées.

A WORK SHOP OR A HANDICRAFT ROOM:

The saying, "We learn by doing", is a correct one, and when thinking, imagination and physical senses work in col-

laboration the all round development of the students is assured. Some of the simple handicraft works such as wood carving, lace work, leather work were newly introduced in one of our buildings. We had to empty the luggage room and use it for this purpose.

GYMNASIUM:

Although the American University of Beirut is well known all over the Arab World for its sports and for encouraging the students to take part in one athletic activity or another, yet I do not know of a single place, all over the campus, which was originally designed for a gymnasium. The large room on the second floor of Bliss Hall, which is now used as a class room for the engineering students, was once used as a gymnasium.

I can not tell for what purpose this large space was designed but I know it served as library, auditorium, gymnasium, drawing room, dormitory and infirmary. As to what it will be used in the future we have to wait and see.

This large room, on the first floor of my dormitory building is especially designed for a gymnasium. It is not big enough to accomodate all the boarders, but it will take care of some who are not in the other units.

In the near future, the place may be used for dancing,

tea parties or bridge tournaments.

The plan of the first floor is missing three doors which do not show due to a mistake on my part.

1. There must be a door between the kitchnette of the soda-Fountain and the Office.
2. There should be a door to the right of the staircase leading to the basement.
3. There should be a door under the staircase leading to the back yard of the school.

SECOND FLOOR:

The second floor consists of private rooms designed for three students each, a dormitory designed for six students, one private room for one or two students, double rooms for two supervisors, corridors and toilets and showers.

PRIVATE ROOMS FOR THREE STUDENTS:

Each private room is six by 4.80 m. The reason why a private room is designed for three is educational and financial. The educational reason is long and complicated to be discussed here but the financial one is quite simple; the cost of constructing a room for three is not 50% greater than constructing one for 2 while 3 students actually pay 50% more than 2.

The room is made 6 meters long, ^{this} is based on the grounds that every student needs 2 meters for his bed, table and chair across the length of the room.

The cupboards are put in the wall because in the long run it is cheaper and the room looks tidy; students will not have a chance to move them around and put them any where they want.

ONE PRIVATE ROOM FOR ONE OR TWO:

One private ^{room} was designed for one or two, for the fol-

lowing reasons. First, the room being smaller will break the long line along the eastern façade of the building and secondly we often get one or two ~~students are~~ princes or *stude* coming from high families and parents insist that they should be given private rooms by themselves.

The corridor is designed to be two meters wide but it should have been designed at least half a meter wider so as to give more air and light to the building in general. Every room has a transom above the door which is 50 cms. high and these give enough light to the present corridor.

A DORMITORY FOR SIX STUDENTS:

After a long experience with the boarders and according to some statistics I have, the students who come to the American University of Beirut ask for private rooms and they do not like to stay in dormitories unless they do not have any other choice. The reason to that is due to the fact that the dormitories are very large and the most important one is that the fees of the University are high as compared with other fees around, and in as much as a private room costs 75 Syrian pounds per year more than a dormitory, a student who can afford ^{to pay} a high fee can easily pay this extra sum.

The dormitory room is designed for six students, while our present dormitories are designed for eight or twelve students and some in the Upper Departments are designed for 40. It has six cupboards put in the wall and two doors. If the rush on private rooms should continue, and I have reasons to believe that it would, a partition wall can be put across and it will be turned into two private rooms taking three students each.

DOUBLE ROOM FOR EACH SUPERVISOR:

Two double rooms are designed to each of the two supervisors. One room is to be used as an office or as a reception room, where the supervisor receives his students, their parents if necessary and his friends. It is not dignified for a teacher of the American University to receive any body in his bed room.

Between these double rooms for the two supervisors there is a private toilet and a private shower which open on these rooms and have no connection what soever with the corridor.

TOILET AND SHOWER ROOM:

According to schoold regulations one toilet and one shower should be designed for 15 or 20 students. In my

design I allowed five showers and 5 toilets for 62 students
Three urinals were installed but if it were left to me I
would not put up any. No matter what care we take we can
not keep the place clean.

Between toilets and showers a double row of wash
stands will be installed with mirrors above.

The toilet and shower room is put in a central place
so that it has an access to the two corridors. It should
be equipped with an aspirator so as to make the place as
hygienic as possible.

The dormitory and one of the private rooms which
face the toilet room across the corridor have a balcony
each and that would compensate for their location.

The third floor is exactly identical with the first
and that is why I did not show it in the plan.

The shape of the building was chosen as such so that
an addition to it, for future requirements, such as big
halls for dramatics or dancing or any thing of the sort,
may be made and these would add to the symmetry of the
building.

The site for the building is chosen, as shown on

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building.

The site for the building is chosen, as shown on

on the location plan, in such a way that enough land is available all around. Tennis courts, basket ball field and gardens can be made. These and the different units on the first floor take care of the extra carricular activities of the students.

May 23, 1947

A. Kawwaf

