

Biography of Alfred W. Eichler

By Paul D. Werts, grandnephew of Alfred W. Eichler

Alfred Eichler was born in 1895 in Missouri, the oldest son of Dr. Alfred and Laura Eichler. The family moved to San Francisco in 1896. Alfred had a sister, Lucille (born 1892), brothers Francis (born 1897) and Irwin (born 1898). Dr. Eichler was a surgeon at St. Joseph's Hospital in San Francisco.

Alfred went to St. Ignatius High School and College in San Francisco. He worked as an architect in San Francisco, went to Washington D.C. as a civilian architect with the U.S. Navy (1917-1918) and other positions on the East coast until he took the California state exam for drafting (early 1920's). He was ranked very high and obtained the position of Senior Architectural Designer in 1925. In 1949, he was promoted to Supervisory Architect and retired from his position in 1963.

One of the most interesting aspects of Alfred life was that he contracted spinal meningitis as a boy around 1908, and became deaf from the illness. He was pretty much self taught the discipline of architecture for during the early part of the century, there was very little help available for him.

Alfred was the architect for many buildings in many cities. His work is found in Chico, Folsom, Fresno, Long Beach, Modesto, Sacramento, Santa Barbara, and Stockton to name a few.

One of the projects that were dear to Alfred was working with Dr. Elwood Stevenson on the building program for the California School for the Deaf in Berkeley. It was 1929 that Alfred starting working on the project and the project continued through the 1950's. The buildings that Alfred was the architect were the Boys Dormitory, the Girls Dormitory, the Administration Building, and the Primary Dining Room.

In 1958 Alfred wrote his recollections of working on the architectural project at the California School for the Deaf.

“All the while during the planning and construction of the new buildings, the faculty and students had many an opportunity to observe an architect in action. They have come to know me, and I them. I have seen the teachers and students in the classroom, residence halls, in the dining room, and on the playfield. I observed each student being taught according to his ability to learn, and graduating as well adjusted individuals. This is the purpose for which the buildings are built.” *

In 1935, Alfred was the architect for the Tower Bridge in downtown Sacramento. It was early in his career that he was assigned this project. In 2002, the landmark bridge is going to be painted. The residents of Sacramento are currently voting on the color. Alfred was very proud of his work on the Tower Bridge.

Additional Eichler information on the web:

<http://www.learncalifornia.org/doc.asp?id=1985>

<http://hubpages.com/hub/A-Mark-of-Merit---Sacramentos-Tower-Bridge>

<http://www.viamagazine.com/weekenders/sacramento02.asp>

<http://www.sos.ca.gov/archives/collections/photographs/public-works-architecture.htm>

<http://www.hmdb.org/marker.asp?marker=16490>

*The California News, April 1958, Volume 73, Number 8