

The New Commonwealth Hotels

- Unless all signs fail in dry weather, Sibul, Tagaytay, Pagsanhan, and Legaspi are to have them. . . . Frank Lloyd Wright should plan them.

President Quezon has the right cue about the Commonwealth's developing a travel business, he knows it can't be done without comfortable hotels at the places the travelers are to visit. So in his four-year public works program he includes hotels for Sibul in the low foothills beyond San Miguel de Mayumo, to exploit Sibul's bracing mineral springs; for Tagaytay in Cavite, to exploit artificial attractions still to be provided, and the sweeping view of Taal; for Pagsanhan, to exploit its falls, *Talom Talahib*, and rapids; and for Legaspi, though we ourselves would not say Legaspi at all, but Tiwi-Tiwi, a little way beyond, for wonders that we will presently explain.

All this is to the good, very emphatically.

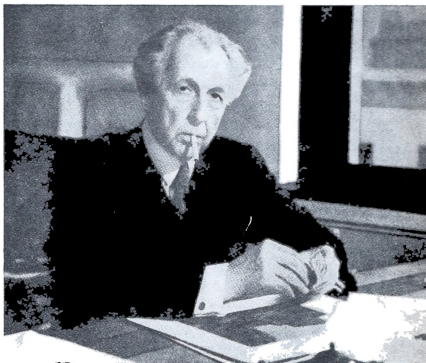
But it is also a big job, by no means a casual one. When done, it will be done. Opportunity to do it to the very best advantage will never recur. Therefore, there is only one man living who should be entrusted with the final plans—provided his services as consultant to collaborate with local architects are procurable. This man is Frank Lloyd Wright, whose offices are in Chicago, Los Angeles, and Tokio, and whose home (and school) is Taliesin, Spring Green, Wisconsin.

Wright burgoned into the Far East with his building of the Imperial Hotel at Tokio, the one that rocked so gallantly through the earthquake of 1923. Esthetically and materially, the Wright *Imperial* pleases the Japanese, whose requirements of taste and serviceability are rigid. Because Wright loves the Far East, and likes helping builders out of difficulties, we believe he would accept an invitation to Manila to help with the building of these hotels. And we even think it quite probable that while here he would look the country's architecture over generally, and leave behind as many hints as possible—greatly to the advantage of everyone, architects and builders more especially.

Wright harmonizes his structures with nature, without neglecting their functional purposes. He is so superior in this as to be, in himself alone, a veritable school of architecture. Time Publishing Company devotes a complete recent number of *The Architectural Forum* to him. All the illustrations are of his work, and all the commentary his own. Just as there can be an Einstein in mathematics, so in architecture there can be a Frank Wright, and so there is. Let us have him, then, granted he will come. Inevitably the whole world would learn of it, news of it would be sought everywhere, and the project—after all, the purpose is to make it a paying proposition—would start with an excellent press.

We wager a veritable stream of travel would set in from the Orient, on no further hint than that Wright built the hotels. This is but one example. Japanese love and respect Nature, and would be no end curious to see these Wright hotels—all built to enhance, not to intrude or encroach upon, their incomparable natural environment. For it is this supreme touch in Wright's work that, in the Imperial, had, to a degree, to be foregone. Japanese would come here to see it at its best. And so they might.

Hardly less curiosity would be roused in China, where what Wright loves best to do is quite as deeply lodged



Frank Lloyd Wright

as in Japan, and certainly in America and Europe an appreciation of the Commonwealth's discernment would be equally spontaneous. But we think too of the more lasting and widespread benefits sure to accrue from having the old genius here a while. We think Manil's bohemian atmosphere would be tonic to his gay gray years; and we know that he would go away with portfolios of pictures, and would write—and how he can write!—in the generous Commonwealth's behalf.

So much for that. There is no argument, Frank Wright should come.

The Tagalog name for Pagsanhan Falls is of course as eloquent as a poem. It is *Talom Talahib*, from the silver-shafted blossoms of the wild talahib that borders the banks of the river above, *talom* meaning falls. Any hotel that does not take this fact into consideration will not, to us, be worth looking at. But how this is to be done is beyond us, naturally. A secondary guide to the architect handling the job at Pagsanhan is the general style of the better buildings in the town. It is strongly influenced by the Chinese, who were for long a mighty *cofradia* in the parish. The peasants' huts have some unique features, and pavilion effects might take them into account advantageously.

Sibul is a setting entirely different. The remarkable spring pouring copiously from the mountain glade is the tie-up there. Whatever is built should rise around an immense pool, and there should be the most careful study of the effects to be gained from lights against this brilliant water. Swimming would be the game, the pool continuously emptied and replenished. Around the pool drinking fountains should be fixed, for while bathing, which gives the skin a satin glow, you should drink as much of the water as you possibly can: it corrects all manner of alimentary ailments and disorders, also alcoholism, and this is no idle statement. How much ad-

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vantage could be taken of the natural surroundings of the spring (*sibal* means spring), no lesser man than a Frank Wright should say.

Tagaytay involves the sweep of the winds, the black richness of the volcanic soil, the vistas curtsying away over the lake. It is a distinct building problem, of course; and as such other public building may be undertaken there later, the hotel, as the first structure, should be a model for all that follow. Horizons, all these projected hotels call for them, are a Wright specialty, the buildings must have horizons, literally, complementing the horizons of Nature round about them.

We have said that we should set the hotel for Legaspi at Tiwi-Tiwi. Maybe it means the Place of the Little Blacks. It is tradition that long ago when Negritos lived in the lowlands, some of them lived here. It is readily credible, since Negritos warm the ground where they are to sleep with fire, and bed down in the ashes; and at Tiwi-Tiwi they would have found the ground already warmed.

Years ago the *Journal* described this place of bubbling wonders, we will do so again. Basically it is a lava flow, quite a field of it, running down to the gold-sanded shore of Tabaco bay. Up through the lava, at frequent distances, gurgle two sorts of springs, some very hot, even boiling, some very cold—a cold spring and a hot one may not be two feet apart. When we were there, the place afforded some rude bath houses whose accommodations were rectangular concrete basins ten or twelve feet square and three or four feet deep. The folk who ran these dug little ditches through the lava, for the water to reach them. Sluices, with adjustable gates, poured this water into the baths, one sluice for the hot water, another for the cold. Attendants stood at the sluice gates, adjusting the flow to the temperature bathers desired—you could have the water quite cold, or hot enough to take your skin off.

It was exciting, seeing the hot water steam in and wondering whether the boy at the gates would neglect to let in the cold. Not far from the baths a very large spring seethes all the time. It must be fifteen feet

across. Peasants scald chickens for the plucking there, and swine for the scraping; and believe us, the scalding is thorough and doesn't take long.

The possibilities of these hot springs and cold springs in such juxtaposition are of course many. Should a Frank Wright build a tourist hotel at Tiwi-Tiwi he would utilize lava lavishly, he would get indescribable effects with all sorts of browns, and blacks and grays; and his completed work would give no offense to the majestic heights in the background, or the souging opalescent waters below—God knows the sinful gossip of those gentle waves!

That enthralling bay. We set out across it toward sunset, at a season such as now. Back of us towered that chain of gigantic volcanoes that figure so eloquently in the poetry and legends of the people. Bulusan, down in Sorsogon, could not be seen because of intervening distance, though it begins the chain, but Mayon, Masaraga, Malinao, Iriga, and Isarog were all in view.

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The Second...

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present low ebb. The entire purchasing power situation has been aggravated by the fact that capital could not be expected to put money into plant expansion when only an average of 66% of plant capacity was being utilized even during the most favorable period of the first New Deal. On top of this, labor troubles have not been so serious in several decades, and such disturbances are not confined to mere struggles between employers and employees, but have developed, as a result of the intensity of the struggle, into wars between classes.

With both capital and labor completely disillusioned, Franklin Roosevelt steps up to the pitcher's box for the second game of the series. His own team is no longer behind him 100%, having lost a considerable amount of their former confidence in him; the opposing team is, on the other hand, more strongly united than ever. The first

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The New Commonwealth...

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The sun was sinking behind Malinao, the wind was still, the bay calm, its purple waters like a velvet carpet.

Clouds flared out behind Malinao, the loose laces of a veil; and it might be Venus, giving Vulcan the slip and hastening to a tryst with Endymion. One veil's end was tinted flame, the other green as Old Nile. Then the red turned slowly darker, merging at last into a black as dead as burned-out embers. The green faded too, into blue, black-blue, dead black. Night shadows claimed the universe; the mighty heights—yes, even Mayon's wild-forested grandure—receded into them.

The sunset had been Cleopatra, sending herself as a royal present to young Caesar of Rome, but the hurrying night was the captive last blood of the Ptolemies, the sensuous flesh of Egypt's queen in fetters for a Roman holiday. Or the sunset had been Troy, fortifying against the mighty Greeks, and the night was Troy's anguish. Or again, the sunset had been Ahab's rendezvous with Jezebel, asking Naboth's vineyard, that it be added to the royal gardens, and the night was the dour wrath of Elijah cursing the awful crime: "Hast thou killed, and also taken possession? In the place where the dogs licked the blood of Naboth shall dogs lick thy blood; . . . the dogs shall eat Jezebel by the walls of Jezreel." Or yet again, the sunset was Jerusalem's defiance of Babylon, and the night the long captivity.

Amid such moving natural phenomena, the noble passages of the psalms also recur to memory. The valley of the Jordan, the locale that inspired them, it but a paltry show beside Tabaco bay at sunset in a luscious season of the year. The East is a spiritual land. The Commonwealth partakes of this pervading mysticism, and it is possible even for Westerners to merge their senses into such scenes and catch the constant mood of the people. There is no such location at Legaspi, as at Tiwi-Tiwi, for a Commonwealth hotel for tourists, and for the consirebale patronage that should set in from Manila; and so, since the motoring is first rate, Tiwi-Tiwi is the place for this hotel. All four hotels should be Wright masterpieces. The man approaches death; if commissioned for them, the hotels would be almost his last work, in all probability: as such, destined not merely to set better architectural modes in the Commonwealth, but to become meccas of the profession and thereby bring here from time to time the best talent in it.

We think it worth trying.

Correction

An article and an editorial in our February number referred to a monetary circulation of P162,000,000 for the year 1929, which should have been 1920. It is 1920's monetary circulation that was approximated at the end of last year with a total circulation of P161,000,000. J. Bartlett Richards, the American trade commissioner, quotes correct figures in his annual report on Commonwealth economic conditions during 1937, while our figures were reprinted from a newspaper. Remarkably the fact that monetary circulation in the Commonwealth at the end of 1937 practically equaled the peak previous figures, May 1920, the trade commissioner adds that the present circulation is fully secured by reserves, which present circulation is fully secured by reserves, which 1920.

Correction of the error as to the year, makes more emphatic the editorial view that a circulation of P162,000,000 in the Commonwealth is no sign of inflation. The population has increased at least 34% during the years intervening since 1920: what was inflation then, if it was, is at least well on the edge of the opposite now.

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