

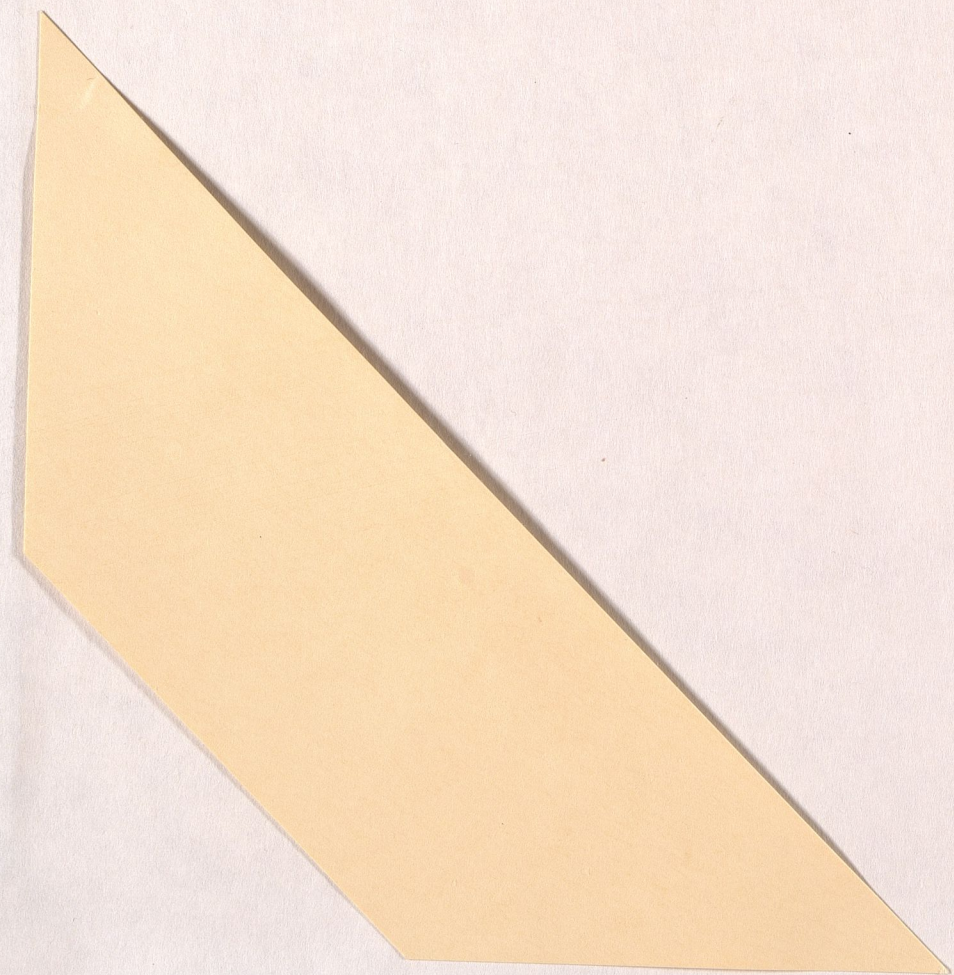
KANSAS STATE UNIVERSITY LIBRARY



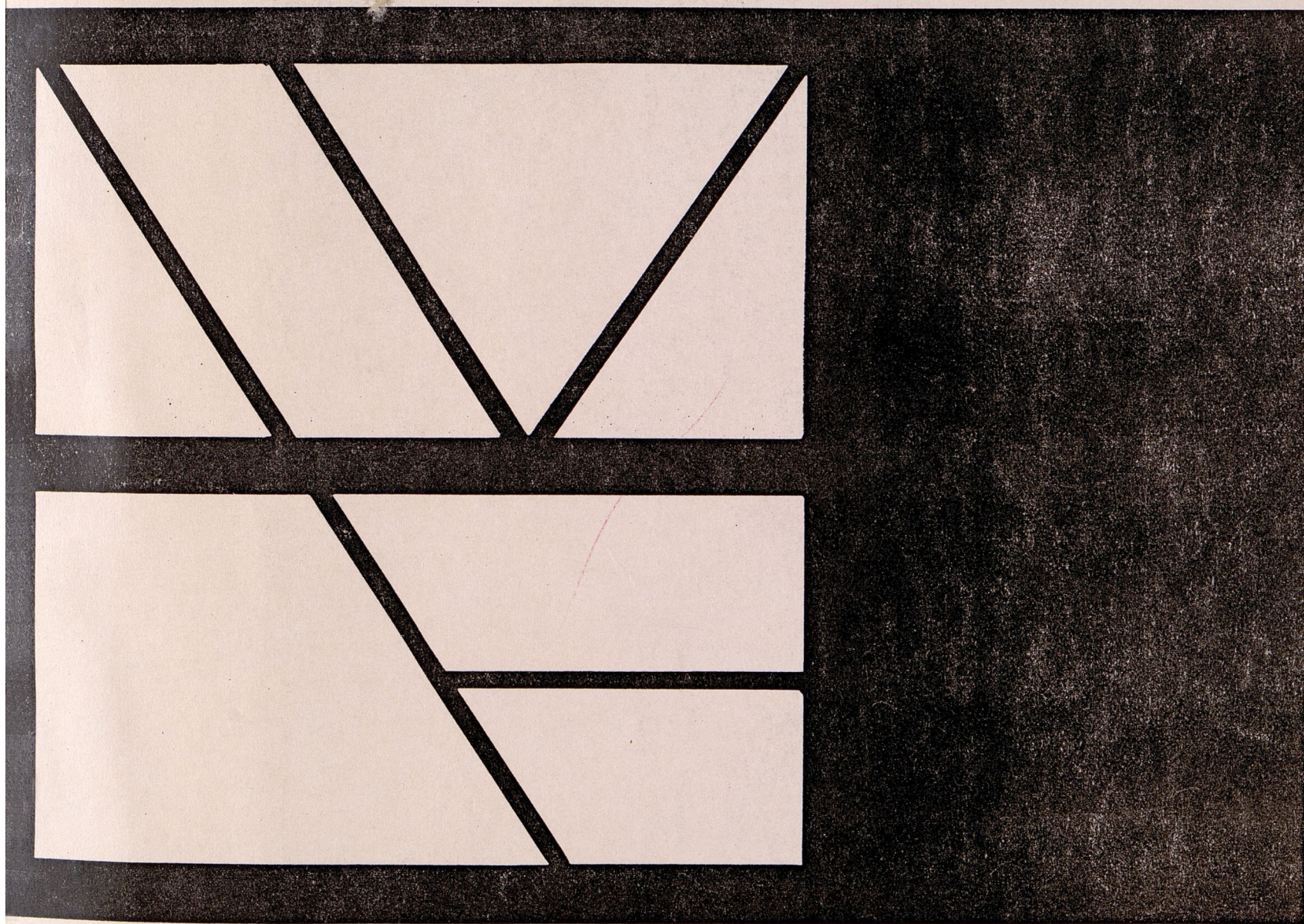
A11213 979617

Property of
K. S. U. LIBRARIES
MANHATTAN, KS
Property No. 100021

OCR
Labelled



WILLIAM R. EIDSON



A KANSAS
ARCHITECT

arch
NA
737
E32
A4
19802

A11203 926256



PHOTOS AND TEXT BY WAYNE CORN

INSTRUCTOR/ADVISOR - BOB HABIGER

Bill Eidson was truly a Kansas architect. From my research for this essay I came to feel that, to Bill, Kansas was the source that he drew his strength from and the center from which he expanded his skills.

Bill was born in Clifton, Kansas in 1928 to John and Estelle Eidson. It was in Clifton that Bill's mother noticed that, even as a very young boy, Bill was interested in building. Bill's grandfather was a contractor in the Clifton area and Bill delighted in following him around the construction site. Bill showed a lively interest in all that he saw there. His grandfather commented to Bill's mother that, "Young Bill will be a smart boy, he asks more questions than I can answer!" Bill told his mother that he wanted to be just like his grandfather.

John Eidson, Bill's father, was in the oil business in Clifton. In 1933 he moved his family to Manhattan, Kansas to start the Manhattan Oil Company, which he operated for 50 years. John and Estelle lived and raised their family, in the early years, at 1031 Thurston.

It was in high school that Bill made the decision to become an architect. Naturally, he chose Kansas State University to study for his degree and in 1951 he graduated with a B.S. in architecture.

While he was attending college Bill met Patti, the woman he would marry. Patti was also studying to be an architect and later went on to become an instructor in the Interior Design Department at K.S.U. They were married in 1955. Patti and Bill blended their careers and worked together on many projects throughout their marriage. Patti is now teaching design at Amherst College in Massachusetts.

After graduation, Bill left Manhattan to take a job with Shaver and Associates of Salina, Kansas. At this point Manhattan could have lost a promising young architect. But

fortunately, Professor Paul Wiegall, who was Head of the Architecture Department at that time, had taken an interest in Bill's career and was concerned that Bill wouldn't meet his full potential working within a firm. Bill had a great deal of respect for Professor Wiegall, so when the professor went to convince Bill to return to Manhattan and start a practice, Bill listened and took his advice. At the time, Bill wondered how he would be able to make a living on his own. Professor Wiegall suggested that he start by designing houses. Soon, Bill was back home in Manhattan.

With help from his parents it didn't take Bill long to turn his modest beginnings into a growing business. He set up his drawing table in the rec room of his parents home and began by designing a new house for them. This house was built at 300 S. Delaware. It was the beginning of a challenging and prolific career for Bill.

Bill read a great deal and, consequently, was very aware of the new ideas and new developments that were taking place in the world of architecture. In his years at K.S.U., and during the early years of his career, architecture was just coming out from under the influence of the international style and moving into a more humanistic, organic and traditional style of architecture. Marcel Breuer, an architect whose work Bill admired very much, was taking house design into a new area at that time. Breuer's architecture combined the modern and traditional styles by using new forms of design with traditional building materials. With the use of natural materials, like rough wood and field stone, Breuer returned to a vernacular architecture that caught the eye of inquisitive architects around the country. Bill Eidson was one of those architects that took notice.

With Bill's awareness of current ideas, and his interest in the Flint Hills region of Kansas, he developed a style that wasn't imposed on him by the trends of the day, but one that he developed through his deep concern for a functional and appropriate regional design. His style clearly reflects the hills and praries of the region. The native limestone that Bill used is now regarded as his trademark. The stone makes an effective reference to Kansas history and geology. He built walls of glass open to the prarie vistas; the unpainted wood that he used was intended to be worn and weathered by the Kansas wind; the heavy posts and beams are often exposed to the interior assuring the inhabitants that their home is here to survive for many seasons in a, frequently, harsh environment.

Jack Durgan, one of Bill's good friends and currently Head of the Interior Design Department at K.S.U., feels that Bill based his regionalism on a relationship of material, space, structure and construction. He feels that Bill integrated these elements to create an environmentally sympathetic architecture. Jack also speaks of Bill's ideal design process, his holistic approach to design. Bill was concerned with every aspect of the building process, from the site, to the design of the space, to the choice of materials and the construction itself. Bill felt strongly that a good relationship between the architect, the contractor and the supplier was essential in creating successful architecture.

Bill died on January 13th, 1979. His career lasted approximately 30 years. In that time, with his philosophy of regionalism and skill as an architect, he made an important contribution to the life of Manhattan. His contribution, however, wasn't entirely one of providing Manhattan with some of it's finest buildings. I feel that

he made another, more personal, contribution to Manhattan. When he accepted Paul Wiegall's challenge to return to Manhattan he very likely did so with dreams of the buildings he wanted to create and the awareness that if he stayed in a small town the opportunities to develop a unique architecture might not be his. He could have been a successful architect anywhere he went, but he accepted the challenge, stayed, and found that Manhattan and the Flint Hills gave him the spirit he needed to not only be a successful architect, but also a special architect. His example may encourage Manhattan's young people to create their futures in the regional sense that Bill created his architecture.

Bill's talent as an architect surely came, in part, from his identity with this area and his concern for the community he lived in. We get a sense of Bill's spirit and personal involvement in the community with his answer to this question asked by the board of trustees of the Manhattan Public Library in their proposal questionnaire:

Why would you like to design this building?

In my opinion the new Public Library for Manhattan is the most important building project that will ever be undertaken by this City ... a building with the potential of being a work of Architecture. The very function of the building and its relationship to all the citizens of the community and to that one basic human attribute, intelligence, makes it absolutely imperative that whoever is selected to be the Architect for this project, he must produce Architecture, not just another building. True Architecture is very hard to define and in general is in the eye of the beholder, at least the aesthetics are. Architecture must not only

be beautiful but functional, for they are one in the same. There is one thing that is true of Architecture that is true of all knowledge and that is it is a product of the human intellect. No matter how thorough the research of the problem, the technical know-how of the Architect, there must be added the spark that produces Architecture, and, like any other work of art, this spark comes from the individual who conceives it.

I would like very much to be selected as the Architect for the new Manhattan Public Library.

On the following pages I have presented a portrait of Bill Eidson through his architecture. These are only a few of the many fine homes and buildings he designed in his career. I hope something of the joy he felt for his work and the strength of his character can be seen in these photographs.



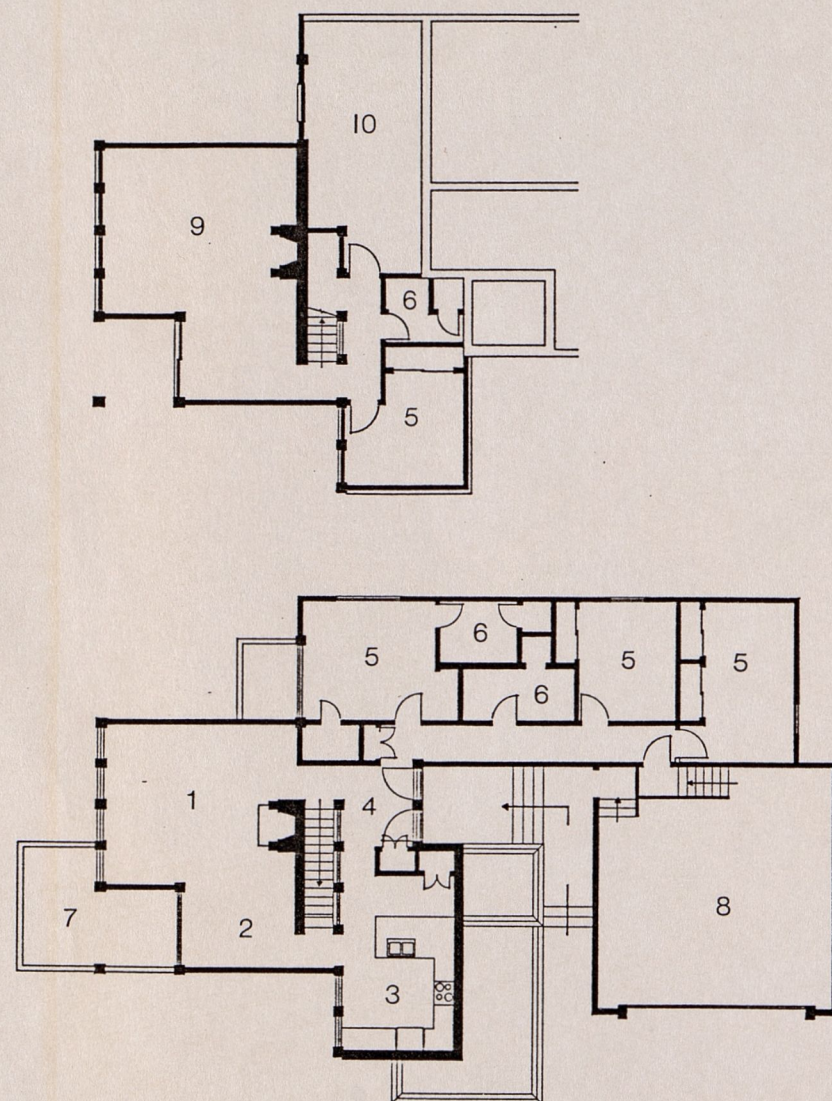


" ... the most important design consideration will be that a work of Architecture be produced which will reflect the nature of its being, the region in which it is located, and the pride and cultural aspirations of this community now, and for future generations."

Bill Eidson, from his proposal for the new public library.



The Mr. And Mrs. Richard Hayter residence
original owner: Mr. and Mrs. R. Stanley Hayes
1920 Grandview Dr. 1962



Floor plans (lower level, ground floor). Legend:
1 living room, 2 dining, 3 kitchen, 4 entry, 5 bedrooms,
6 bathrooms, 7 deck, 8 garage, 9 rec room,
10 equipment/utility.

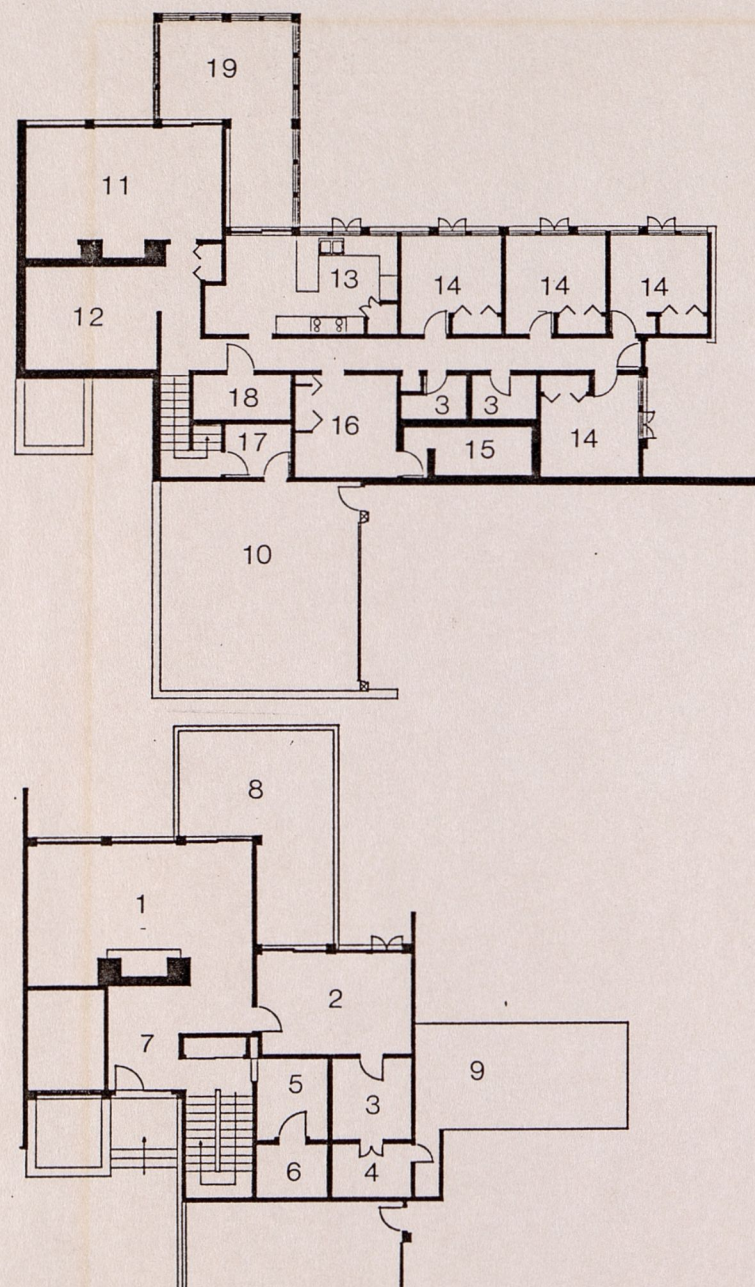


the HAYTER RESIDENCE





The Mr. and Mrs. T. William Varney residence
216 Fordham Road 1968



Floor plans (lower level, ground floor). Legend:
1 living room, 2 master bedroom, 3 bathrooms, 4 closet,
5 study, 6 storage, 7 entry, 8 deck, 9 attic, 10 garage,
11 rec room, 12 dining, 13 kitchen, 14 bedrooms, 15 shelter,
16 laundry, 17 mudroom, 18 equipment, 19 screened porch.



the VARNEY RESIDENCE





The Mr. and Mrs. Dean Campbell residence
original owner: Mr. and Mrs. Phil Howe
1707 Thomas Circle







The Mr. and Mrs. Max Milbourn residence
original owner: Mr. and Mrs. John Eidson
300 South Delaware



the MILBOURN RESIDENCE





International Student Center
Mid-Campus Dr. and Claflin Rd. 1977



the INTERNATIONAL STUDENT CENTER





W. C. Robinson Education Center
2031 Poyntz 1965



the W.C. ROBINSON EDUCATION CENTER





First Lutheran Church
928 Poyntz Avenue 1963



the FIRST LUTHERAN CHURCH





Manhattan Public Library
Juliette and Poyntz 1968



the MANHATTAN PUBLIC LIBRARY



For giving me their time and cooperation, and sharing their interest in this project with me, I sincerely thank Dr. and Mrs. George S. Bascom; Mr. Brent Bowman; Mr. and Mrs. Dean Campbell; Mr. Jack Durgan; Mrs. Estelle Eidson, Mr. Bob Habiger; Mr. and Mrs. Richard Hayter; Mr. and Mrs. Max Milbourn; and Mr. and Mrs. T. William Varney.

Most of the information I used to write this essay came from conversations with Mrs. Estelle Eidson; Mr. Jack Durgan, Head of the Department of Architecture at K.S.U.; and Mr. Brent Bowman A.I.A.



~~688~~ NT

1430-333
CA-10

