



the LOOKOUT

SEAMEN'S CHURCH INSTITUTE OF NEW YORK



DECEMBER 1966

The Basis for a Decision

We are presenting our new headquarters to readers of "the Lookout" and our friends. "25 South Street", our address for almost fifty years, will soon change to "15 State Street".

The old address was known to seafarers throughout the world as an anchor to windward where understanding and help were always at hand.

While times and conditions ashore and at sea must change and old associations give way to new, we remember the foresight and courage of those who conceived the program and plan for "25 South Street".

The new building will contain every modern device to further our program. However, the basic concept undergirding our work is changeless. We give thanks to our Lord for the inspiration and devotion of those men and women who have led the way before us in demonstrating those elements of Christian brotherhood on sea and land which give meaning to all we do at Seamen's Church Institute.

Franklin E. Vilas
President

SEAMEN'S CHURCH INSTITUTE OF NEW YORK

Since it was founded in 1834 the Seamen's Church Institute of New York has carried on its program in over a dozen different buildings on the waterfront. As conditions relating to seamen have changed, the program of the Institute has changed to minister to the present need. And in more than one instance the forward looking program of the Institute has brought about changes which have beneficially affected active seamen. In each era, however, the Institute has seen to it that an appropriate building was provided so that its program could function effectively.

In our day, cognizant of our responsibility, we are erecting a new building which will house our current program and enable it to function effectively and efficiently on behalf of the Church, serving the needs of seamen in the great Port of New York now and for the foreseeable future. In this new venture of faith we ask your continued help and support, which you have so generously given in the past.

The Rev. John M. Mulligan
Director

SEAMEN'S CHURCH INSTITUTE OF NEW YORK



The Rev. John M. Mulligan; C. Gates Beckwith, architect; and Franklin E. Vilas examine rendering of building exterior.

the LOOKOUT

Vol. 57, No. 10

December 1966

Copyright 1966

SEAMEN'S CHURCH
INSTITUTE OF NEW YORK
25 South Street, New York, N.Y. 10004
BOWLING GREEN 9-2710

The Right Reverend
Horace W. B. Donegan, D.D., D.C.L.
Honorary President
Franklin E. Vilas
President

The Rev. John M. Mulligan
Director

Harold G. Petersen
Editor

Published monthly with the exception of July-August, February-March, when bi-monthly, \$1 year, 20¢ a copy. Additional postage for Canada, Latin America, Spain, \$1; other foreign \$3. Back issues 50¢ if available. Gifts to the Institute include a year's subscription. Entered as second class matter, July 8, 1925, at New York, N.Y. under the act of March 3, 1879.

COVER: Architectural rendering of new building as it will appear at the corner of State and Pearl Streets.



View of Battery Park, including historic landmarks, from where new building to be located. Foreground area shows building plot being excavated.

*I*n October 20, 1966, an announcement was issued to the New York area news media by SCI. It began:

“The world’s largest shore center for merchant seamen, Seamen’s Church Institute of New York, will build a 23-story structure at State and Pearl Streets in Manhattan as a new center and headquarters to replace its existing building at 25 South Street, erected by the Institute in 1913.”

Hardly had this news been given out when snorting, earth-moving machines began work at the new site . . . where once Dutch soldiers of Nieu Amsterdam manned a fort in defense of the colony.

The Institute had once again embarked on a phase of its renewal and modernization — just as it has done periodically since its founding over a century and a quarter ago.

Indeed, the 1966 Board of Managers, in announcing its decision, might well have explained the *rationale* for its action in precisely the same terms as expressed by its predecessors of 1868.

In that year the SCI Board of Managers' Minutes read, in part:

"This metropolis is peculiar to rapid changes — everything must yield to the necessities of the living present, with little lingering respect for old landmarks or time-hallowed associations.

"So now we turn to the future with bright anticipation of increased means for usefulness in new, commodious and substantial quarters."

The new building will be located on a choice site overlooking beautiful and historic Battery Park. Since the structure had to be fitted into a wedge-shaped land parcel, the architects designed accordingly; in so doing they achieved a form somewhat suggestive of a ship's bow — the "bow" in approximately the same axis with the Statue of Liberty in the harbor.

Completion of the new SCI building is anticipated by 1968; the Institute will continue to function in its present location until the replacement building is ready for occupancy. Cost is placed at around \$7.5-million.

The State Street SCI will be of steel and concrete fireproof construction, air-conditioned throughout. A reflecting pool and fountain will be located on the plaza at the Pearl and State Street intersection. Vertical panels rising between the windows will be of textured brick, and the horizontal spandrels will be of exposed concrete.

The structure will be comprised of two principal elements: One is a five-story base which will house social, religious, recreational and educational facilities; the other is an eighteen-story tower which will provide living or "hotel" accommodations for visiting seamen.

The first five floors will contain public and semi-public lobbies, chapel, cafeteria, dining room, administrative offices, registration area, service areas, bag-

View of New York harbor and Battery Park from new site at about 15-story level (building to be 23 stories in height). Statue of Liberty may be seen in distance.

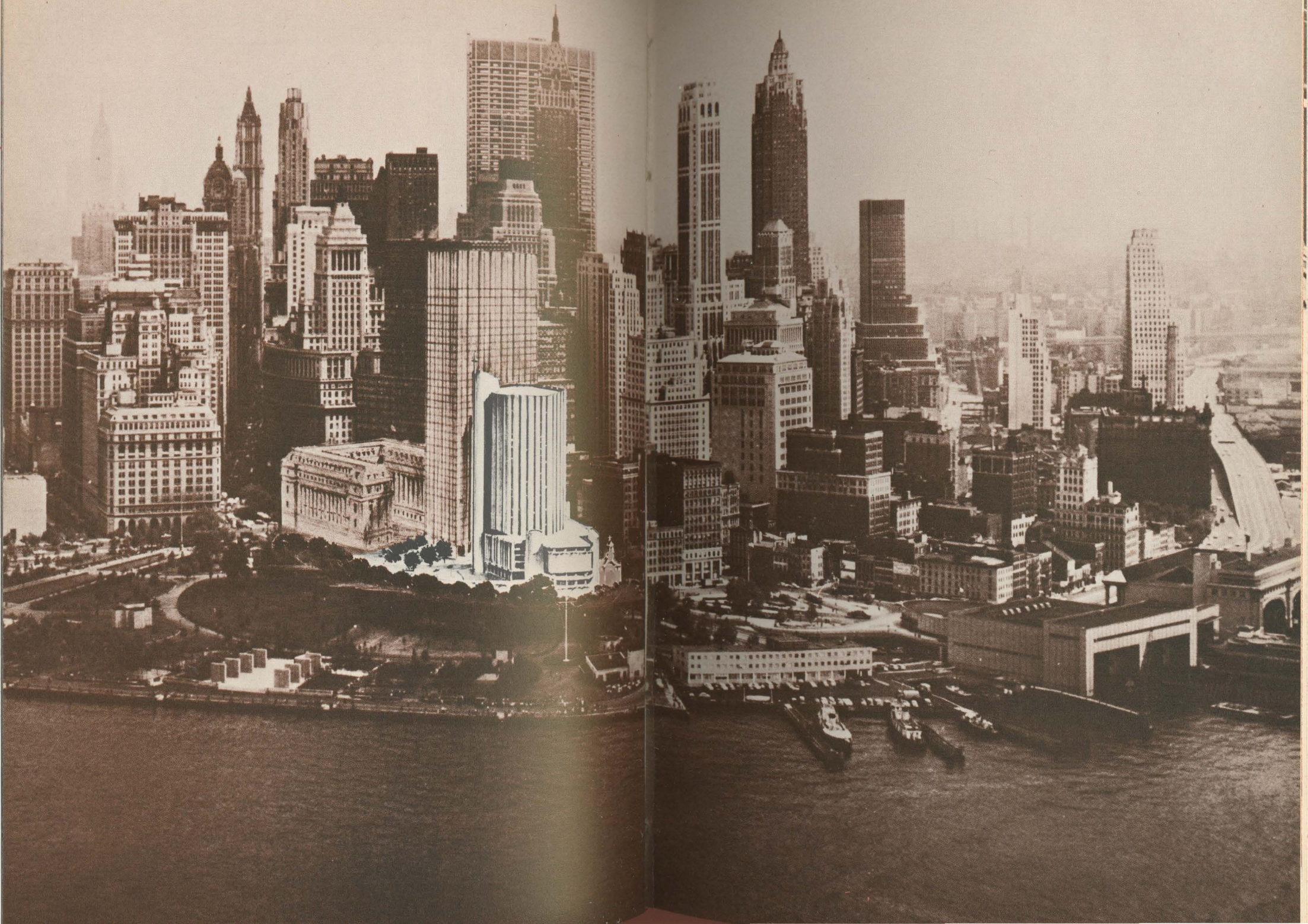


gage store rooms, kitchens, lecture room, Merchant Marine School, library, International Club and lounge, a gymnasium with showers and sauna.

Housed within these floors, also, will be a branch of the U.S. Post Office, especially designed to meet the particular needs of seamen. The Post Office in the existing building serves as the only permanent mailing address for hundreds of seafarers, and it was felt such an important service should be continued.

The new building and its program will embody innovations reflecting requirements of the modern sea-

New building as it will appear in relation to existing other structures at the tip of Manhattan.





man. Some programs and customs no longer relevant to today's ministry will be discontinued.

Where, during the trough of the Great Depression, SCI could and did shelter — with the connotation of “shelter” — 1,400 men under somewhat spartan circumstances, the building to arise on State Street is projected as a plain yet comfortable seamen's center and hostelry to accommodate around 340 persons.

The thirteen-story South Street building has 760 rooms plus dormitory areas. But there are no lavatory facilities in these rooms. Only central lavatories on each floor.

Each of the 240 single rooms in the State Street building will have its own lavatory. There will be an additional fifty rooms fitted for double occupancy — by a seaman and his wife.

Few merchant seamen were married in the old days. Now many of them are. But their families often reside in cities and towns many miles from the Port of New York or Newark. Then there is the fact that today's modern ships accomplish fast port “turn-arounds”; the seaman may have no more than four or five days ashore; if he wants to visit his family he might have to consume most of his shore leave in travel.



The new SCI hostel plan will make it feasible for the seaman's wife to come to New York for a visit with him. Moreover, SCI officials point out, increasing numbers of women are taking jobs at sea and lack shore accommodations.

The building on Battery Park will, in a sense, be part of a massive redevelopment of the lower tip of Manhattan. Those who have not visited this area for some time are astounded at the changes which have already taken place; blocks of crumbling old waterfront buildings have been knocked down by the wrecker's ball and others are in process of demolition, the air is thick with mortar dust and the rattle of the jack-hammers is everywhere.

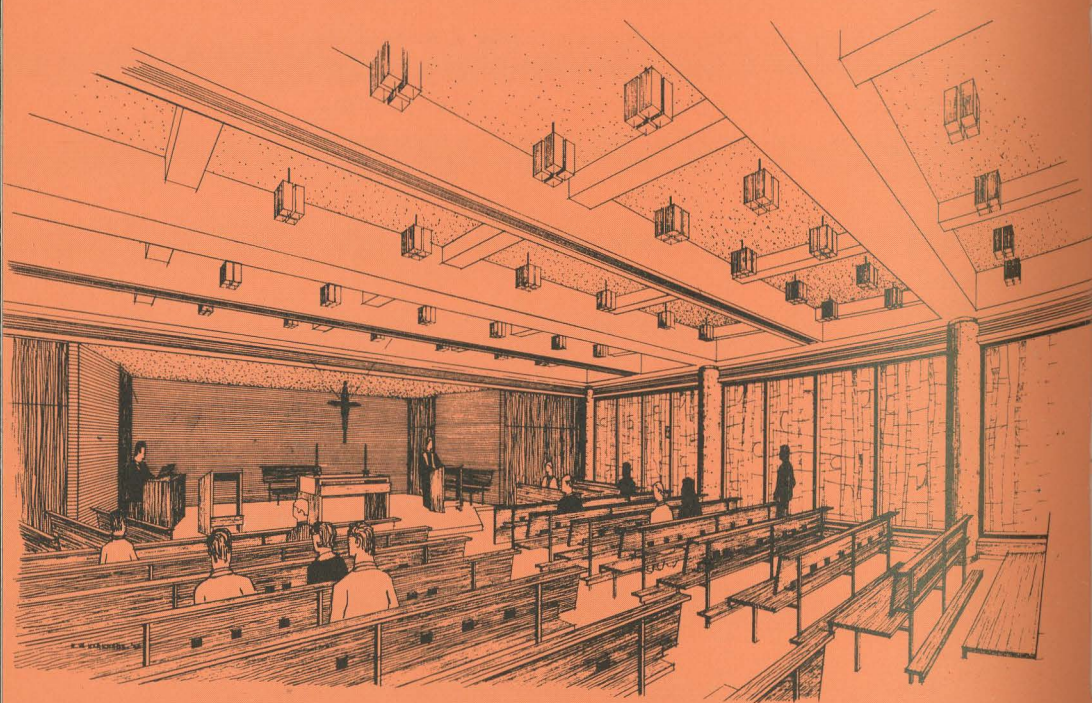
It is predicted that a huge strip of land stretching from the ferry slips northward along East River — including the section where SCI is now situated — will eventually provide the sites for towering new apartment and office buildings.

A bit north of the new SCI State Street building, and fronting on the Hudson River, will be the mammoth World Trade Center, costing over a half billion dollars and spectacular in concept.

There will be other changes. Because . . .
... *“This metropolis is peculiar to rapid changes.”*

Speaking for the Architects

by C. Gates Beckwith, Partner
Eggers & Higgins, Architects



Early design study of chapel — one of several under consideration by SCI building committee. Final chapel design had not been selected when this issue of The Lookout was printed.

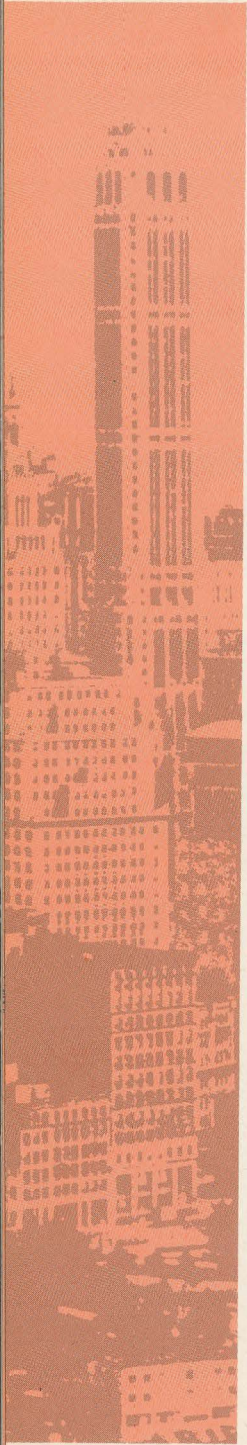
Designing a new home for the Seamen's Church Institute in a new location has been an extremely challenging commission and as architects we have found the program unusually stimulating. Even in the early design stage when the SCI requirements were being translated from the written word into sketches, changes in the program occurred for various economic and aesthetic reasons.

For example, it was decided to eliminate the "museum floor" from the plan because other well-known plans for re-development of lower Manhattan include a marine museum.

Thus, instead of duplicating functions, it was decided that coordination between the Institute and the proposed museum would serve the best interests of all groups concerned. Meanwhile, much of the memorabilia contained in the existing museum will be so distributed throughout the new building as to make the entire complex more interesting to everyone in it.

There were three major aesthetic criteria for the design of the new building, two of which had to do with the total design of lower Manhattan: (1) Maintain the pyramidal form of the skyline as seen from the harbor; (2) Design a building which retains and emphasizes the random street pattern indigenous to the Battery Park Area; (3) Design a building which would be compatible with the adjoining Shrine of Blessed Elizabeth Seton without sacrificing its own identity.

Added to the above criteria, which would give the proposed building a definite identity with the nearby residentially-scaled buildings and the lower Manhattan area as a whole, was the desirability of creating "a home away from home" for visiting seamen. It should have warmth of both material and scale, qualities which are sadly lacking in most institutional buildings.



This site chosen for the new SCI (Nos. 11 through 18 State, and Nos. 10 and 12 Pearl St.), consists of 18,344.5 sq. ft. of the most historic, continually populated real estate in New York City and is roughly triangular in form. The shape or "form" of any new building on this site must of necessity be influenced by the severe zoning requirements that determine the heights of buildings as well as their plans.

The resulting design clearly expresses the dual function of the buildings: (a) as a hotel for visiting seamen, and (b) as a social, religious, recreational and educational center.

The 18 story tower has 290 perimeter rooms facing six directions which will provide the best views of the harbor and lower Manhattan in the city. The "hotel" rooms are planned around a central core which will contain the elevators, a stairway, and utility space. The building has been designed as functionally and economically as a ship. No marble will be used. The structural members, like the steel columns (stanchions — on ships) and beams will be exposed. The cast-in-place concrete stair towers will be without veneer. The stair and handrail will be of simple concrete and pipe-rail; the glass in the windows will be aluminum framed.

The warm red brick, which was chosen for the exterior walls, and which is compatible with that of the neighboring shrine, has also been used as a flooring for the terrace and extended into the interior in the main lobby, lounge and chapel areas. The concrete slabs of each floor are exposed on the exterior facade as spandrels between the vertically accented windows.

The other major exterior material — glass — is appropriately stained on the first floor Chapel's outside wall, to provide the necessary privacy from the busy street outside and to create the mood of a room intended for religious worship. In the lobby and entrance area the walls are clear glass as they are on the floors above, because, no matter which direction one faces — the views are all unique to New York City.

One of the most striking elements of the design is the 26 story stair tower which will be topped by an illuminated cross.

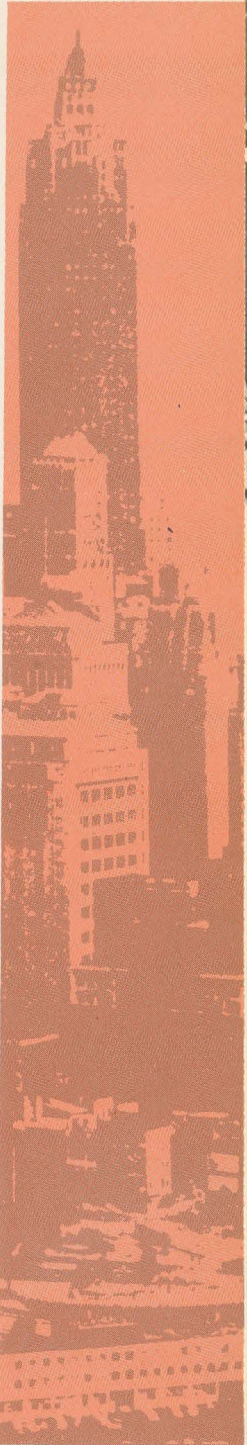
The stair tower is a necessary element of the design and, while it could have been put inside, it was decided that the building should have a beacon that would distinguish it from all others visible from the harbor. Projecting from the exterior of the building and carrying up from terrace level to a height three stories above the roof, the stair tower will have a narrow window rising its full height and which will appear to be the illuminated, perpendicular shaft of the cross directly above.

The two lower stair towers that will project from the building facade will serve only the five-story portion of the building, but they too will be constructed of cast-in-place concrete and will have curved enclosing walls.

The view of visitors as they sit in the dining room on the second floor, and from various office and classrooms, is directed toward the harbor by irregular, saw-tooth walls.

Panoramic views of the endlessly fascinating inbound and outbound ships with a clear view of the Statue of Liberty above and across Battery Park will be provided along the outside walls of the cafeteria, on the second floor, and from the International Club on the fifth floor. Both of these large social spaces have sliding glass walls with terraces just outside . . . much the way liners have promenade decks.

An important consideration in the overall effect of the new building is that rather than looking like any utilitarian steel and glass 'package', the Seamen's Church Institute building has been designed to last for many, many years and to have an identity that is hospitable; a scale that is friendly and familiar. We consider it vitally important that the SCI look exactly right, that it belong exactly where it is as much as do the other prominent landmarks which distinguish New York City's unparalleled skyline.



THE END OF IT ALL

*A small brown leaf, curled tight and dry,
Within my Christmas tree has tried
A piggy-back, to see
What travelling greeneries became
When snow ordained that he should die,
Consigned to rot or flame.*

*Deep in the tightly knitted bough
Tenaciously he clung till now
Having survived the Christmastide
He dreams of journeys far and wide
With brighter lights than yet he's seen
In his bespangled palace green.*

*So sorry, brave adventurer,
If I prove executioner
For one who broke through caste,
But in this tower where I live
I have no real alternative
When my own need has passed.*

*I hope you will not need to burn
But are with those trees that return
To serve as ocean fill
So that your dream of going far
Will bring to you the sea and star
As boundaries of your restless will.*

—L. A. Davidson

