



TEMPLE OF JUPITER

E&A FEATURE ARCHITECT

FRANCISO "FRANK" M. MERCHAN, a valued member of the E&A team of Architects, was born in 1945 in Havana, Cuba and is now a naturalized U.S. Citizen and has resided in New Orleans for the past 26 years.

He is a graduate of De La Salle High School in New Orleans, received a Bachelor of Architecture degree from LSU in 1969, and his Architectural license in 1972.

Frank is an extremely talented designer and has over 17 years experience in the production and management of architectural projects of a variety of types and sizes.

In 1984 he received the Vieux Carre Commission's Award as project architect for the renovations of the Bourbon Orleans Hotel, which was subsequently featured in Interior Design Magazine.

In 1986 the magazine also featured the new \$68 Million Meridien Hotel in New Orleans for which Frank was a project architect and coordinator.

Over the years, he has had the oppor-

tunity to work as a designer, project architect or team architect on a variety of innovative and interesting architectural projects including: a \$3.4 million regional library, the Piazza d'Italia, a \$4.3 million jail, the \$5 million renovation of a hospital, renovations to the French Market, and the restoration of St. Martin de Tours Church on Bayou Teche in the Louisiana Cajun country (early 1800's).

He is married (Bertha) and has two children. He is active in the Cuban Club of Professionals and the Boy Scouts of America.

IVY STREET PROFESSIONAL OFFICE BUILDING

The elevations on the back of the newsletter are of the Ivy Street Professional Office Building designed by E&A for the Ivy Street Partnership in Huntsville, AL.

TEMPLE OF JUPITER

This issue's signed limited edition print by Ladd Ehlinger is of the only six columns that remain standing on the south side of the temple of Jupiter, Baalbek, Lebanon. It was actually the house of the worship of Baal.

Baal was the Phoenician Sun-god, a father-god ruling the productivity of the sun, lightning, rain, storms, fertility & fecundity, and creativity and as such was the paramount or supreme god. Baal was the primeval god of the Semites, his cult was practiced by both the Hebrews and the Canaanite-Phoenicians in the beginning. Later, the Hebrews were obligated by their prophets to renounce Baal and worship Yahweh. A competition ensued, and Yahweh remained confined to the He-

brew nation. The worship of Baal flourished throughout the remainder of the region, and continued to when the Hellenes took over, and also when the Romans took over, and expanded throughout their respective empires.

The word "Jupiter" is derived from the Latin 'Diu-pater', meaning 'father-god'. It was more of a title than a name to the Romans. The Romans referred to the Hebrew Yahweh as Jupiter, the same for Christ, Amon or Zeus. Baal was distinguished by the Romans from other Jupiter figures by calling him Jupiter Heliopolitanus. It was a clear and straight translation into Latin from the Aramaic and Greek when the Romans took over in 64 B.C.

Astarte', consort of Baal, was identified with the earth and its fertility, and added sex to worship in her cult. Under the Hellenic rule she was called Aphrodite, and under the Roman, Venus. The son of Baal and Astarte' was Ason, Dionysos in Greek, and Bacchus in Roman, the god of wine, women and song. They were worshipped at Baalbek along with Baal.

All three were worshipped as nature-gods who personify the generative physical powers of nature; the cult of these powers being an inherent part of the primitive religion which fostered the practice of promiscuity, sacred prostitution, and later bacchanalian orgies. All this was mixed with the primitive blood sacrifices at the end.

The priesthood was crafty and never lost sight of the idea that religion without joy and mysticism was neither religion nor a lucrative business. So they spared no effort in promoting suitable festivals several times a year. Historians at the time wrote; "Feasts and festivals were orga-

nized for spectacular sacrifices, mystical prayer, and secret orgies in which the devout gyrated, twirled and danced in a collective in a collective ecstatic frenzy, flagellating themselves happy to suffer, and in a spasm of demented mysticism would tear out their sexual organs to offer them to the goddess. These were Phoenician Nights of blood and pleasure around the temple of Astarte.’” The biographer of Constantine wrote: “...the cult of Venus has given birth to luxury habits. Men and women clasp together to honor their goddess; husbands and fathers allow their wives and daughters to prostitute themselves publicly to please Astarte.’”

The Romans adapted themselves at Baalbek in a fashion of total integration with the culture as they did elsewhere. They rebuilt the city, expanding the temples and the cult, adopting it for themselves. Baalbek in a fashion of total integration with the culture as they did elsewhere. They rebuilt the city, expanding the temples and the cult, adopting it for themselves. Baalbek is in the lower end of the Bekaa valley, the most fertile valley in the middle east. It served for a while as the breadbasket of Rome.

The Romans brought their own architectural ideas to the task. Temples were built to Venus and to Bacchus as well. Because the valley is relatively flat, the Romans built monumental bases for all of the buildings with huge stones to visually elevate the buildings.

The lower walls of the Temple of Jupiter on the south side (in the print) are composed of 6 stones measuring 33’ long x 14’ high x

10’ deep, weighing 400 tons each. The west wall to the rear has three stones 64’ long x 14’ high x 12’ deep, weighing 800 tons each and were set 20’ above ground level on top of smaller stones! The north wall is similar to the south. These stones are laid with no mortar and joints thinner than a razor blade. These walls are called ‘Cyclopean’ because of the belief that no mere humans could have handled such superhuman blocks. Contractors today would have difficulty with these blocks that are larger than any stones handled anywhere else in antiquity.

The total height of the stone base was 45’. The Temple was technically a decastyle peripteral Corinthian temple comprising 54 columns, 19 being on the sides,, and 10 on the ends. It measures 310’ in length and 175’ in breadth, a total of 54,250 square feet. It was the largest corinthian style temple ever built.

The columns, a quintessence of imperial Rome, were 65’ high, composed of three stone drums that are 7’6” in diameter at the base, with no fluting. The huge Corinthian capitals were beautifully carved with designs which gracefully reached to the top of the abacus. Although the ratio of total height to lower diameter is 9 1/2 to 1, the columns seem to stand surprisingly high above the plain of the valley. All that remain today are the six in the print, the remainder having been toppled in an earthquake.

The pedestals on which the columns are supported by an more than 6’ in height. The entablature above the columns totals more than 16’ in height, and contains the clas-

sical architrave, frieze, and cornice, all three of which are richly, decoratively carved.

In 321 A.D. Constantine made Christianity the official religion. In subsequent years, he forbade the worship of Baal and especially of Venus. Theodosius made it a crime.

In 635 A.D. Baalbek was taken by the Moslems, and in 1171 the Crusaders took it for a while. The Turks took over in 1517, and in 1850 lost it to the Sultan of Damascus, who held it until the end of World War I, when it was occupied by the British, then the French with Syria and the rest of Lebanon. The turmoil today resulting from the political instability created by the British and French prevents anyone from safely visiting these magnificent ruins.

