



# ARCHITECTURE

EHLINGER & ASSOCIATES

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**NATURAL HISTORY MUSEUM**  
London, England

This issue's limited edition print by Ladd P. Ehlinger is of the Natural History Museum located in the Kensington District of London, next to the Victoria and Albert Museum. The main building was built between 1873 and 1880 in the motif of Rhineland Romanesque cathedral architecture superimposed upon a Beaux Arts palace composition. The building is symmetrical and huge — 657 feet from end pavilion to end pavilion. The center is dominated by twin towers that frame the cascading Romanesque recessed arched entrance (to the left in the sketch).

The walls are composed of terracotta blocks in buff and slate blue hues, an unusual and striking color combination. The decorative sculptures in the arches and elsewhere include lifelike moldings of animals, birds and fishes: live ones in the western half of the building and extinct ones on the eastern half.

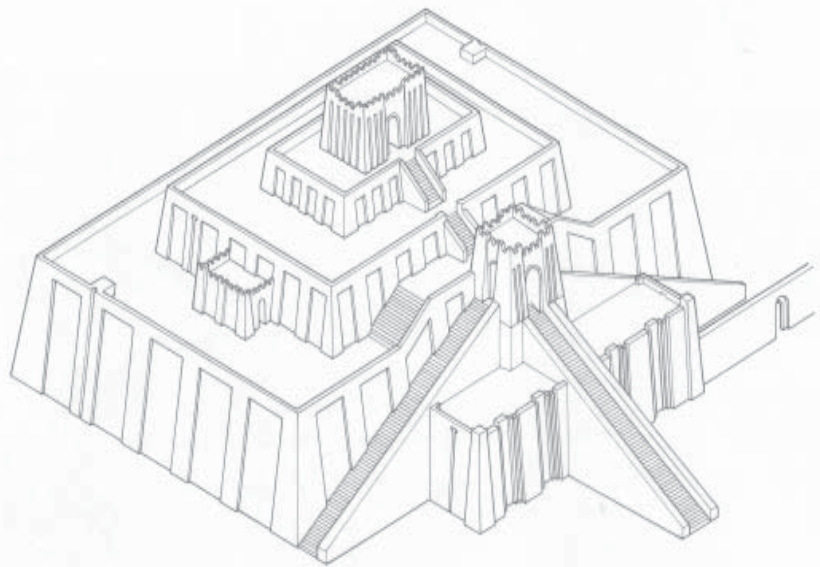
The architect was Alfred Waterhouse. He also designed the Town hall of Manchester, which has been described as a classic of its age. Other notable buildings by Waterhouse were Owens College at Manchester University and a number of buildings for the

Prudential Assurance Company, which he designed in red brick and terracotta.

This Natural History Museum was chosen for this issue's sketch because it is a prime example of the Beaux Arts palace composition. In Beaux Arts theory, the visual terminals (the end pavilions and the central entrance) were emphasized by making them much larger and prominent than the balance, and then connected with rhythmic identical elements - the arched bays between topped with gables. The "style" didn't really matter: it could have just as easily have been French Renaissance or Continental or Greek Revival. The massing composition of the building would have been the same.

This museum has over 50 million specimens and continues to grow with each year. The main galleries are devoted to life and to the Earth.

## ARCHITECTURE OF IRAQ



Baghdad is just one city in a region whose history goes back to the beginning of civilization. Babylon (which was located about 75 miles south of Baghdad) was the principal city of the kingdom of the Sumerian Empire for 300 years beginning around 2,000 BC. The Sumerian city kingdoms were located in

the alluvial plains between the Tigris River (on the east) and Euphrates River (on the west), from Babylon to the Persian Gulf. This was in the eastern part of the crescent shaped area of the middle east called Mesopotamia (Greek: *mesos* = *middle*; *potamos* = *river*, meaning land between rivers) where the development of cities had become firmly rooted since as early as 4000 BC.

Babylon occupied the East side of the Euphrates River where timber and good building stone are scarce. The region's architectural materials were clay sun-dried brick and bitumen.

Located about 100 miles south from Babylon, along the Euphrates, was the city of Ur which was near what was at that time the mouth to the Persian Gulf. It was home to the now famous great Ziggurat of Ur. Hopefully, archaeological sites have been undisturbed by any parties of the current/recent conflict.

Iraq has an extremely rich architectural history and interesting architectural character. Hopefully, the people of this country will be free to discover, develop and reconstruct the cultural sites of ancient Assyria and Babylonia and share them with the rest of the world.

## THE BAGHDAD - HOUSTON CONNECTION

50 years ago two cities both located in oil and gas rich areas of the world, each with a population of less than 400,000 people were to take similar yet different paths into the 21st Century. Both, at the time, were important trade and economic centers of their regions. The modern day oil boom had just begun.

In five decades, both cities have had enormous population growth, Baghdad is now over 5,000,000 people, Houston about the same. Both cities have modern infrastructure, schools, hospitals and suburbs. Houston's growing infrastructure was largely developed by American local and state government and American businesses. Baghdad's systems were probably only under entities contracted to Saddam's companies. The water system and most of its phone network (Alcatel) were built by French companies.

The oil fields and refineries that fuel the Houston economy were built by and supply the American market. The French helped redevelop the Iraqi fields before and after the Persian Gulf War, and prior to the current war held a percentage of production at some of those fields. France was Iraq's biggest oil customer.

As we know, the effect of the riches of the oil industry on the people and political institutions of Baghdad took a very different path, especially for the everyday working person.

In the 1950s Baghdad (or Bagdad) was considered one of the most magnificent cities of the Mohammedan world. The larger part of the city was on the eastern bank of the Tigris River. The older section remained on the other side connected only by two pontoon bridges.

The streets of Baghdad were crooked and narrow, lined by typically low houses centered around courtyards. There were large numbers of mosques in all sections. Sacred tombs located in the eastern Shiite sections were visited annually by thousands of pilgrims. Modern Baghdad, as seen from satellite photos on TV, has straight roads and grid pattern subdivisions similar to Houston.

In medieval times Baghdad was a seat of learning and culture. Before the opening of the Suez Canal, it was a major commercial center on the trade route between India and Europe. In the fifties, the city remained an important shipping center owing to the development of rail and air facilities.

50 years ago, the chief exports of Baghdad were wool, grain, fruits (mostly dates), horses, Oriental fabrics and rugs, skins, \*gum tragacanth, feathers and leather articles. Manufacturing consisted of copper utensils, cloth and felts. In Houston 50 years ago, and cattle were chief among the staples of commerce.

For several decades, the people of Houston, the US Government and the oil companies have continually worked together to protect the environment, their fishing and hunting grounds, swamps and wetlands as the oil fields were developed.

Unfortunately, in Iraq vast regions of precious and ancient marsh and swamp land in the lower regions of the twin rivers to the Persian Gulf were drained by the government to make access easier for development of new oil fields. Over 150,000 local people who lived on the marsh as had their ancestors for over 5,000 years were forced to flee, mostly into Iran. Hundreds of species of fish and animals were lost forever.

In 1950 the population of Baghdad was diverse: Arabs, Turks, Jews, Iranians, Kurds, Armenians, Syrians and Hindus. Houston in 1950 and now is where every one is proud to be an American regardless of their nation of origin or their religious background. The ethnic roots are totally blurred in Houston

*\*Gum tragacanth: a gum that is extracted from a shrub plant that is tasteless and odorless. It is used in pharmaceuticals, in baking, as a gelatin, and as a burn relief, among other uses.*

## GRETNA COMMUNITY CENTER

Below is a photograph, courtesy of Mick O'Connor Construction Co., Inc. (the General Contractor), of the Gretna Community Center. This facility which was recently completed was designed by E&A and is located on the West Bank of New Orleans in the City of Gretna, and in the district of Councilman T. J. "Butch" Ward, the gentleman who gets the credit for procuring the funding for the project.

