NEBRASKA STATE HISTORICAL SOCIETY COLLECTION RECORD

RG3927.AM: Solheim, Selmer A., 1912-1979

Papers: 1956-1967
Lincoln, Lancaster County, Neb.: Architect
Size: 0.5 cu. ft.

BIOGRAPHICAL NOTE

Selmer A. Solheim was born in Fairfax, Minnesota in 1912, the son of Emma A. and Oscar C. Solheim. He moved to South Dakota to attend college in Watertown and Rapid City, but left to earn a degree in architecture from the University of Nebraska in 1935. In 1938 he married Ruth Bley.

Solheim began his architectural practice in 1939 in Lincoln, Nebraska. In the course of his career, he designed many single- and multiple-family dwellings. In the 1940's, he worked on war housing projects in Sidney, Hastings, Grand Island, Fremont, and Kearney, as well as Lincoln. He won awards for his designs, including the National Association of Home Builders Award for Lincoln's Colonial Terrace Apartments in 1950. He also designed commercial buildings in Lincoln, such as the Union Loan and Savings Building and the Weaver Potato Chip Company Building, and schools, such as the Clare and Pound Junior High Schools. He served for two years as Secretary of the Nebraska Architects Association, and was licensed in 16 states. He died in Lincoln on December 4, 1979, at the age of 67.

One of Solheim's most well known projects was the Nebraska Governor's Mansion. In 1956, Solheim was chosen by the State Building Commission to design the new mansion. The idea of building a new mansion, which had been long considered, gained impetus in the mid-1950s from the increasingly poor condition of the current gubernatorial residence. Many designs were considered (including plans that added a conference center function to the building), but the Legislature's approved $200,000 for the structure limited some aspects of the design. In an attempt to stay within the budget and yet create a building befitting its purpose, the Building Commission approved Solheim's design of a Georgian Colonial residence. The design was criticized by many as inappropriately clashing with the adjacent State Capitol Building, but plans progressed and the mansion was completed in December 1957. Many of the building contracts went to Lincoln firms, such as the W.J. Broer Construction Company for general contracting, and the total cost of the building was $242,385.

Although the mansion was completed during Victor Anderson's term as governor, problems with trembling floors prompted structural tests in 1959. The first governor to move into the mansion was Ralph Brooks, in 1959. In the following years, land on the same block was acquired by the state and landscaped.
SCOPE AND CONTENT NOTE

This collection consists of one box and several oversize files of manuscript material arranged in two series: 1) Papers re: Construction of Governor's Mansion, 1956-1967; and 2) Drawings re: Governor's Mansion, 1956-1957. The collection relates to Solheim’s work in the design and building of the Governor's Mansion.

Series One contains papers that pertain to the various aspects of the mansion's construction. These files include correspondence, bids, contracts, specifications, state applications for payment and change orders, and other such documents.

Series Two includes drawings of the structure, from Solheim's early concept drawings that show various architectural styles, to detailed floor plans and blueprints.


DESCRIPTION

SERIES 1: PAPERS RE: CONSTRUCTION OF GOVERNOR'S MANSION, 1956-1967

Box 1

F1-2 General
F3-4 Plumbing, Heating, Air Conditioning, Ventilation
F5 Electrical
F6 Finish Hardware
F7 Interior Design, Furnishings

SERIES 2: DRAWINGS RE: GOVERNOR'S MANSION, 1956-1957

OB001

F1 Overall Plan Book

OD129

F1 Folio Drawings
F2 Concept Drawings
F3 Floor Plans
F4 Kitchen Drawings
F5 Design Element Detail Drawings
F6 Landscape Drawings

OD130

F1 3 drawings colored, Governor's Mansion, 1956

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