That Exceptional One

Indiana's Early Female Architects & Builders

I cannot, in whole conscience, recommend architecture as a profession for girls. I know some women who have done well at it, but the obstacles are so great that it takes an exceptional girl to make a go of it. If she insisted on becoming an architect, I would try to dissuade her if then, she was still determined, I would give her my blessing—she could be that exceptional one.

—Pietro Belluschi

This quote, by a well-known Fellow of the American Institute of Architects, shows just how devoted a woman had to be to pursue a career in architecture. She had to be not only smart, but also driven, tough, and determined to face such attitudes and still persevere. And this was in 1955! Imagine what it must have been like in the late 1800s for a teenage girl who wanted to take mechanical drawing classes—or trying to persuade a professional architect to take her on as an apprentice, knowing that the odds were massively stacked against her. Mr. Belluschi was correct, each of the women pictured here is indeed "that exceptional one."

This year the DHPA is highlighting the women who worked in Indiana and shaped our built environment, at least those few we know about and could find photographs of. Certainly, there are others. Some sought a college degree in the field, others were apprentices to existing architects, and still others taught themselves. To learn more about those women and their work, follow the DHPA's Facebook page during May 2022.

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