

Nomination of
LAWRENCE A. ENERSEN, FAIA, FASLA
(deceased)
for the
Harry F. Cunningham, FAIA, Gold Medal



Harry F. Cunningham, FAIA, Gold Medal

Nomination Form: It is the responsibility of the nominator to inform nominee of consideration for this honor.

Nominator:

WILLIAM D. SCHLAEBITZ LINCOLN
Member Name RETIRED Position & Chapter Affiliation
THE CLARK ENERSEN PARTNERS
Firm
600 NBC BLDG 477-9291
Address Phone
LINCOLN NE 68508
City State Zip

**Note: All nominations will be considered by the committee. Information submitted from this nomination will be the only materials used by the jury. In the event of questions, the committee may ask the nominator for clarification of information. Nominator agrees 1) to compile introductory material for awards presenter, and 2) to act as host or obtain a host for the nominee at the awards ceremony.

Nominee:

LAWRENCE A. ENERSEN _____
Name Phone

Address Phone

City State Zip

Profession / Business Phone

Supporting Information: Prepared in a uniform 8 1/2" x 11" format

- Nominators Letter: Describe nominees qualifications. Not to exceed 1 page.
- Biographical Data: Not to exceed 4 pages.
- Statement on contributions, specific in nature: Not to exceed 3 pages.
 - Service to Profession
 - Service to the community/state
 - Significant works (if applicable)
- Miscellaneous Material: photos, clippings, articles, etc. Not to exceed 3 pages.

William D. Schlaebitz 4/23/95
Signature of Nominator Date

Return this form and supporting materials by Friday, July 14, 1995 to:
AIA Nebraska: mailing • P.O. Box 80045 • Lincoln, NE 68501-0045 or
shipping • 102 Architecture Hall / UN-L • Lincoln, NE 68588-0106

Late forms will not be accepted

July 14, 1995

Selection Committee
Cunningham Gold Medal
102 Architecture Hall
Lincoln, Nebraska 68501-0045

Lawrence A. Enersen, FAIA, FASLA, was one of those rare individuals whose work has had a profound impact on everyone in the State and continues to do so through his many legacies: Landscaping some of the Interstate Highway, master planning many State Parks, designing the Folsom Children's Zoo, and the Green Belt around Lincoln, to name but a few.

Most importantly, Mr. Enersen designed the 15th Street Mall which leads from the University to the State Capitol. Like Mr. Cunningham, he finished the items needing completion after Mr. Goodhue's death. Mr. Enersen's design complements the very essence of the Capitol design.

Mr. Enersen also served on many commissions for the State Capitol where his expertise was greatly valued.

To my knowledge, Mr. Enersen, is the only person to be named a Fellow in both the American Institute of Architects and the American Society of Landscape Architects (prior to 1977).

Although Mr. Enersen is no longer living, his many contributions are seen and enjoyed by everyone on a daily basis.

Respectfully submitted,


William D. Schlaebitz, AIA

An editorial in the Lincoln Journal said, upon the death of Lawrence A. Enersen, FAIA, FASLA: "His rare sensitivity for fusing utility and beauty, his concern for human values and scale, in structures and landscape, were expressed time and time over.... This community is a more graceful and more decent place because of the impact of Enersen's involvement and professional achievements. ...Larry Enersen's life mission was helping process civilization. Few have such a happy vocation. Few leave so enriching a legacy."

Education

Larry Enersen was born in 1909. He received his early education in Lamberton, Minnesota, where his father was an attorney, and later in Marshall, where his father was a district judge.

Enersen's college and university degrees seemed to coincide with times of economic depression. On receipt of his A.B. from Carleton College in 1931, he had decided upon a career as a Landscape Architect. Despite the onslaught of the Great Depression, he was determined to go to Harvard, where his brother was in law school, and to enter the Graduate School of Design. At Harvard he studied design, plant materials, etc., as well as architectural design, history and construction. He received his Master of Landscape Architecture in 1935.

Travel

At Harvard he was successful and won, in competition with other "Masters Class" candidates, the Charles Eliot Travelling Fellowship for European Study. Before leaving for Europe, he spent six winter months in the employ of the Mount Vernon Ladies Association, housed in former slaves' quarters, measuring and doing detailed drawings of Mount Vernon--both the home and the site. This work was done to enable the owner to faithfully reproduce the historic structures in the event of destruction.

In 1936 and 1937, the Eliot Fellowship took Enersen on a 10-month tour through the Mediterranean, Europe, England and Scandinavia, where he studied devotedly, sketched diligently and gained lasting respect and admiration for the impressive accomplishments in architecture and landscape design of the past 50 centuries or more.

In later years, Enersen traveled frequently, planning every vacation to coincide with study of a locale or a civilization of interest. He was known as the foremost student of architectural history in this area. He traveled to Algeria, Denmark, Egypt, England, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Ireland, Italy, Lebanon, Norway, Russia, Sweden, Tunisia, Turkey, and Yugoslavia, not only researching and sketching great architecture, but conversing for days with historians and architects in the area, with whom he had arranged meetings before he ever left Nebraska. His wife, Eleanore, whom he married in 1939, lovingly said, "the only time he took pictures of me on our vacations was when he needed me for scale".

Teaching

After his Eliot Fellowship travels, Enersen began his teaching career at the Boston Architectural Center. In 1940 he was invited to join the faculty of the University of Michigan, and remained there until 1942. He was Assistant Professor at Harvard University from 1942-1943, a professor

at the University of North Carolina from 1947-1952; a visiting critic at the University of Pennsylvania in 1956; a member of the Harvard University Graduate School of Design Advisory Board from 1956-1962; a visiting critic at the University of Illinois from 1958-1960. He taught off and on at the University of Nebraska from 1952 to 1970 and was a visiting critic at Nebraska until his death in 1983. He served as a member of the University of Nebraska College of Architecture's Professional Advisory Board.

Military Service and Work Experience

1943 was a year of change for Larry Enersen--from Harvard professor to Lieutenant J.G. in the United States Navy. After serving his time in the Pacific Theater of Operations, he was returning to his home in Massachusetts in December of 1945, when he stopped off in Lincoln to visit his former Harvard friend, Kenneth B. Clark.

Ken Clark, who planned to open his own firm and wanted Larry Enersen to join him, embarked on a concentrated program of friendly persuasion. He showed Enersen the broad, barren expanse of "O" Street, and the view from the tower of the Nebraska State Capitol. We are told that Larry Enersen remembered at that time Bertram Goodhue's plans for four radiating vistas projecting north, south, east and west and even then visualized a mall to the north to connect the Capitol with the University. Sensing an interest, Clark began a hard sell and convinced Larry Enersen to uproot his family back east and move to Nebraska. On February 1, 1946, the Clark & Enersen partnership began operations.

Over the next 37 years, Enersen's significant works ranged from a whimsical, award winning Children's Zoo and Botanical Garden in Lincoln to a museum for Nebraska's own John G. Neihardt in Bancroft, to an amazingly contextual Apple House on the J. Sterling Morton Orchard in Nebraska City, to a lively community theater. He developed master plans for the University of Nebraska-Omaha, University of Nebraska-Lincoln, Peru State College and Chadron State College, as well as several Nebraska State Parks.

He became deeply involved in the concept of finding new or adaptive uses for old structures and the restoration and preservation of historically significant buildings. His reuse of a railroad station for a branch bank was published nationally several times and his idea of recycling Old City Hall and the Old Federal Building into a performing arts center garnered a lot of support and lost a bond issue election by only 600 votes. He was instrumental in planning and commissioning the State Capitol murals, and, yes, he achieved his dream of completing the plan conceived by Bertram Goodhue for a vista from the State Capitol to the University, when the 15th Street Mall he designed was completed. (The Mall, incidentally, earned a 1970 Honor Award from the American Institute of Architects, Nebraska Chapter.)

Public Service

He gave back to the city and its people too--to the schools and universities, to the arts, to the handicapped, to a broad range of social agencies. He served as advisor to city and state officials, and wrote frequent columns and commentary on architecture, ecology and the environment for the newspaper. Some of his service to others is listed in another section of this nomination; much of it was done anonymously. Armed with only the merits of ideas, Larry Enersen could

assemble and lead at any time an action group of interested and dedicated citizens to meet specific community needs.

Nebraska had a place for Larry Enersen; his niche was soon identified. Joe W. Seacrest, publisher of Lincoln's only daily newspaper, said of Enersen, "...contributed more and made a more indelible imprint on the personality and character of Lincoln, Nebraska, than any other person I can think of. ... Never have I seen a man do so much so quietly and so modestly, ... a compliment to the tremendous intellectual and human capacities with which this individual is endowed."

Professional Societies

Enersen was active in his professional societies--the American Institute of Architects (AIA) and the American Society of Landscape Architects (ASLA), and held several offices in each, in Nebraska and elsewhere.

Both national professional societies recognized the outstanding contributions made by L. A. Enersen, and honored him by electing him Fellow--FAIA in 1971 and FASLA in 1976. In 1977, careful research into the records of these two organizations failed to identify any other person as having been so honored.

Awards

Enersen was a recipient of a number of awards in his lifetime, including:

- Conservation Award--Lower Platte South Natural Resources District
- Service Award--St. Elizabeth Hospital, Lincoln, Ne 1971
- Kiwanis District Service Award,, 1977
- Governor's State Art Award, 1979
- Doane College Honorary Degree of Fine Arts, 1979
- Nebraska Chapter, AISA, Distinguished Architect, 1980
- Nebraska State Board of Landscape Architects, Certificate of Recognition for distinctive Landscape Architecture Design, 1980
- Nebraska Statewide Arboretum Tree Planters State Award--1983
- Tau Sigma Delta, national honorary society's silver medal--1981
- Design Award from AIA, 1958-1983 (the firm earned 29 over this period)

Upon his death The National Arbor Day Foundation Board of Trustees named "a new Arbor Day Award in memory of Lincoln architect, Lawrence Enersen". The announcement of this honor continued:

"The Lawrence Enersen Award will be presented annually to the one person in the **United States** who does the best job of enhancing the planting of trees in his local community.

"Enersen helped beautify Nebraska with trees by creating the Lincoln Mall Lincoln Foundation Garden, Interstate Park and Wilderness Park.

"The four National Arbor Day Awards are presented to individuals, corporation, institutions, media and organizations throughout the country at Nebraska City during the spring Arbor Day celebration.

"Past Arbor Day award winners have included Lady Bird Johnson, McDonald's and Peanuts creator Charles Schulz."

Legacy

The City of Lincoln and the State of Nebraska would certainly not have been just the way they are if Larry Enersen had not come here, and had not devoted his particular kind of talent and dedication to a constant struggle toward the elimination of "visual pollution" and its replacement with visual order and excitement.

Larry Enersen left a legacy in this state that adopted him as its own in 1946--a legacy to the architects and landscape architects who continue to work to achieve his dreams at the firm which still bears his name; and a legacy to this city and state, through his unique ability to visualize a better future and persuade people to work together to achieve it.

Lawrence A. Enersen, FAIA, FASLA died July 9, 1983. A few weeks earlier he was honored by state and city dignitaries for his accomplishments and one of his last works, the Lincoln Mall connecting the State Capitol and the County/City Building to the west, was dedicated. To Enersen's surprise, a bronze plaque was permanently placed at the entrance to the County/City Building, recognizing him as "one of Lincoln's greatest champions of improving life through architectural quality, design excellence and environmental order." At the dedication, Governor Bob Kerrey said of Enersen, "I share a great admiration for his vision and the legacy he has left" and Mayor Helen Boosalis spoke for all when she said, "Here was a man who truly dedicated his life to beautifying Lincoln, who had such unselfish dedication to improving the environment. There isn't any doubt of the imprint he left on the community".

Or on the profession of architecture. This modest, unassuming man, with his dry wit and innate skills--in teaching, in design leadership, and in working with people in all economic and social levels--is certainly a credit to his profession, and a worthy candidate to receive the Harry F. Cunningham, FAIA, Gold Medal.

Lawrence Enersen was a remarkable designer, a respected professional architect and landscape architect, a community leader and a dedicated community servant. To recite all of his accomplishments or all of his involvement would be impossible, so a simple listing of some of his activities follows:

SERVICE TO THE PROFESSION*

Nebraska Chapter, AIA, President, 1958-1960
Nebraska Chapter, AIA, Vice President,
1957-1958
American Institute of Architects, Regional
Development and Natural Resources
Committee
American Institute of Architects, Chairman
of Committee Promoting Prohibition of
Billboards on Interstate Highways

Central States Region, AIA, Chairman of
Regional Convention, 1962 and 1969
Established First AIA Awards Program in
Nebraska, 1958
Nebraska Examining Board of Landscape
Architects, Treasurer, 1971-1982
North Carolina Chapter, ASLA, Secretary
Missouri Valley Chapter, ASLA, Vice
President
Missouri Valley Chapter, ASLA, President

SERVICE TO THE COMMUNITY AND THE STATE*

Capitol Murals Commission, Secretary
Lancaster County Mental Health Association,
Chairman
Mayor's Committee on Human Relations
Better Lincoln Committee, Chairman
Mayor's Committee on Urban Design and
Natural Beauty
Lincoln Arts Council
U. S. Army Corps of Engineers Advisory
Council on Environmental Planning,
Chairman
Wilderness Park Committee
Old City Hall Committee
Lincoln Center Development Association,
Planning Commission, Chairman
Lincoln Community Playhouse Foundation,
Director
St. Elizabeth Health Care Center Advisory
Council
Lincoln Fine Arts Council, President

Lincoln Centennial Committee on Culture
Lincoln Housing Authority, Advisory
Committee
Nebraska Roadside Council
Arbor Day Foundation, Treasurer
Governor's Committee on Employment of
the Handicapped
The Old West Regional Commission
Nebraska Safety Board
Lancaster County Mental Health Association
Mayor's Committee for Urban Renewal,
Chairman
Mayor's Parking Committee
Nebraska Arts Council
Community Arts Council
Modern Community Developers
Lincoln Centennial Committee
Mayor's Urban Design Committee, Chairman
Nebraska Statewide Arboretum, Incorporator

*Information about awards earned, offices held and dates of service is incomplete, due to the time elapsed since his death and that of his early associates.

SIGNIFICANT WORK

During the 37 years that Lawrence Enersen served as Managing Principal of Clark & Enersen (now known as The Clark Enersen Partners), the firm earned 29 design awards. It is safe to say that Enersen's design excellence, in both architecture and landscape architecture/site planning, was part of each project. But over the years there were some that were especially meaningful to him. Because of limitations on space in this nomination, only a representative sampling of his life's work is included.

Fort Kearney Master Plan (1948) - Kearney, Nebraska

Archeological investigation, including research of war department drawings and subsurface investigation, leading to master plan of restoration of the fort.

Capehart Housing and Elementary School (1958 NAA First Award) - Lincoln Air Force Base, Nebraska

Six hundred homes and an elementary school were planned for the families of military personnel stationed at the Lincoln Air Force Base. The homes are now used for low income housing.

Peru State College Student Center (NAA First Award 1960) - Peru, Nebraska

One of many buildings Enersen was responsible for on the Peru campus, each sited carefully to take advantage of the heavily wooded campus.

Center for Community Services and Foundation Garden (NAA First Award 1965) - Lincoln, Nebraska

Office building for 20 charitable organizations overlooking the Foundation Garden, a popular 17,000 s.f. public gathering place for downtown workers.

Folsom Children's Zoo (1965) - Lincoln, Nebraska

From its stegosaurus fountain guarding the entrance, to its 5/8 scale western town, the original design for the zoo offers animals to be observed and petted as well as a botanical garden with ponds, a water course, and extensive plantings to separate and screen the various displays, one from the other.

Interstate I-80 Road Ranches (1968) - Gibbon and Grand Island, Nebraska

Rest stops along the interstate with campgrounds, access roads and parking, water supply, electrical distribution, waste treatment and earthwork.

Citibank Depot Drive-Up (1969) - Lincoln, Nebraska

Adaptive reuse of a 1883 abandoned railroad station for a branch bank.

Centennial (15th Street) Mall (NAA Honor Award 1970) - Lincoln, Nebraska

Implementing Goodhue's plan for vistas extending from the Capitol, this project extended north for seven blocks to the University. Traffic was replaced with fountains, plantings and furnishings. Facing the Capitol, the changes in elevation were developed to seem as an extension of Goodhue's flight of steps leading to the main entrance.

Wilderness Park (1972) - Lincoln, Nebraska

A county-city park along Salt Creek for the purpose of preventing development in the floodplain and preserving natural wooded areas. 1,000 acres provide nature trails, day camps and other easily accessible recreation facilities.

Black Thunder Strip Mine (1975) - Gillette, Wyoming

Atlantic Richfield retained Enersen to work with biologists, botanists, geologists, ecologists and environmentalists in the preparation of a 100-year plan for the removal of coal deposits and the restoration of the ground surface to its original, or improved condition for a massive coal mining operation.

Crescent Green Park (1975) - Lincoln, Nebraska

A linear development from Wilderness Park to the City Landfill (called Mount Trashmore by Enersen), 3170 acres were brought under single control to allow development of recreation areas, neighborhood parks and open space preserves.

Pinewood Bowl (1975) - Lincoln, Nebraska

Planned for summer concerts, dance performances and theater, a large opening at the rear of the stage retains the natural setting. This "window to the woods", as Enersen called it, has the classic Greek proportions of the Golden Section, and other design elements are derived from the principles of dynamic symmetry.

Neihardt Center (1976) - Bancroft, Nebraska

Enersen worked closely with the man this library/museum/educational center honors, Nebraska's Poet Laureate for 52 years, John G. Neihardt. Located on the site of Neihardt's early home, the design evolves around the symbolism of Black Elk Speaks. The site was faithfully landscaped and includes a Prayer Garden.

13th Street Beautification (1976) - Lincoln, Nebraska

Enersen suggested adding a green buffer zone between the street and sidewalk to give pedestrians a more comfortable sense of scale, a quieter environment and a rekindled association with the natural world.

Civic Center (1977) - Lincoln, Nebraska

Plan for reuse of the Old Federal Building and Old City Hall by filling the U-shaped courtyard with a 2,500 seat performing arts center (the facade of City Hall would become the back of the stage) and creating offices in the remainder of the renovated buildings. Voters rejected the concept by 600 votes.

Lewis & Clark Lake Visitors Center (U. S. Army Chief of Engineers Distinguished Design Award of Merit 1977) - Yankton, South Dakota

An architectural landmark from miles away, the Center rises majestically atop the bluff to provide an overview of the Gavins Point Dam, the Lewis & Clark Lake and the Missouri River. It earned a national design award from the Corps of Engineers.

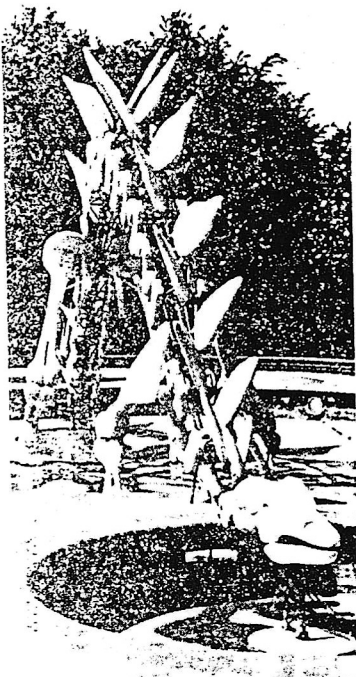
University of Nebraska-Omaha, Master Plan for Landscaping (1980) - Omaha, Nebraska

As the owner says, this plan "brings the atmosphere of parks to our south and east throughout the campus, to try to blend with the park atmosphere that surrounds us, and to take the harshness out of the feeling one gets with so many parking lots and buildings."

Arbor Lodge Apple House (NSA Honor Award 1985) - Nebraska City, Nebraska

On a 220 acre site west of Arbor Lodge, this building's massing and materials are consonant with neighboring 19th Century barns. It is used to continue and promote the tree planting ideals of Morton, while selling the orchard's products to raise funds for the Foundation. (The early design concept was Enersen's, although the project was not completed until after his death).

From parks to promenades, he's had a hand in it all



By Nancy Hicks
Star Staff Writer

On a Friday night in 1959, Larry Enersen looked down from a University Club window at the spring rain beating on the Lincoln sidewalks and wondered whether his grass would wash away. The two inches of dirt and grass planted atop the O St. concrete weathered the spring storm, and Lincoln's first downtown mall opened the next morning.

That mall, as Enersen recalls, was his first community project of "real consequence." But his accomplishments since have been more lasting than the temporary centennial mall, which by early summer had deteriorated, the pieces scooped up and carted away.

Enersen had a hand in the green and majestic spouting oases — the mall — between the Capitol and the University of Nebraska-Lincoln campus, the Lincoln Foundation garden, the Lincoln Center itself, the beautiful 155-acre interstate park along the I-80 spur into downtown Lincoln, the quiet and diverse beauty of the Children's Zoo, Wilderness Park, three-lined downtown streets, the murals for the grand hall entrance to the Capitol, Pinewood Bowl, Lincoln Community Playhouse — and more.

Enersen, 68, has left and still leaves his mark on the town he has called home for 31 years.

The war to end all wars, World War II, had just ended when Enersen stepped off the train for his first ride down Lincoln's O St. And he remembers thinking that here was one of the cleanest, most attractive towns he had seen.

He was particularly impressed with the store windows — "the most attractive shop windows between Chicago and the West Coast."

Just a few months later in 1946, the former college professor cast his lot with the plains city and started an architectural firm with his old college friend, Kenneth B. Clark.

From "the bridge table in K.B.'s basement" the firm has grown to 45 employees occupying a 15th floor suite in the Sharp Building. Below the office windows lie the red, white and black of Lincoln's downtown district.

Quietly unassuming, Enersen is more comfortable giving credit to others or describing the accomplishments of his wife, Eleanor, whose gracious charm and organizational abilities have helped a legion of civic projects and state citizens.

Enersen, who is the only person in the United States named a fellow of both the American Society of Landscape Architects and the American Institute of Architects, diminishes his own role.

Take that temporary O St. mall. "Somehow or another" Enersen got on a committee for the city's 1959 centennial. Enersen suggested looking forward instead of backward and offered "off the top of my head" the idea of a pedestrian mall.

When the committee bought the idea, Enersen said he became frightened. He took comfort in the fact that O St. was a federal highway. He was certain the Department of Roads would never allow the mall.

The department agreed to the project. Enersen said he then was certain that the city engineer would pull the plug. The engineer thought it was a good idea.

Approval came from all quarters: money was raised and finally one Thursday night at 9:30 p.m., O St. between 11th and 13th Sts. was barricaded. In the next 24 hours, like a couple of mechanized divisions, Olson Construction crews put down the grass and erected fountains.

On Saturday, May 2, 1959, the day the first permanent shopping mall in the United States opened in Kalamazoo, Mich., Lincoln's temporary pedestrian mall opened.

Enersen's interest in the downtown area has remained throughout the years. "The worst thing that can happen is to have it (downtown area) turn into a great aching void," he said.

It was Enersen's persuasion that led to the first tree plantings in front of the First National Bank drive-in 20 years ago.

From one roll of film and a 30-minute walk more than a decade ago has come a lecture slide-show which has been presented more than 100 times.

"I forced people to look at Lincoln as a visitor looks at it. There are these things . . . ugly things . . . but we don't want to look at the ugly things . . ." The slide show has had results. For example one early slide lecture showed a parking lot overgrown with weeds. The next week the weeds were gone. Enersen coined the term "visual pollution" and plugged away, often successfully, against the escalation of larger, striking, commercial signs.

One of Enersen's plans grew into the tree-lined 13th St. improvement project. And Enersen's firm is helping with the Centrum parking garage and development of the Centrum's north half.

When Enersen first came to Lincoln three decades ago, "there wasn't a fountain any place. Now we've got squirts everywhere," he said.

And Enersen had a hand in many of these flowing waters. He helped turn the quagmire of 15th St. into a mall which blends the beauty of the university campus with the renowned architecture of the Capitol.

From a children's book came the idea for the bony stegosaurus whose spurring water greets visitors to the Lincoln Children's Zoo.

While working on plans for the zoo, Enersen's wife brought home some library books on prehistoric animals. He discovered a picture of the stegosaurus, an animal once indigenous to Nebraska.

He drew his plans on a napkin at the University Club, while having lunch with Arnott R. Folsom, the driving force behind the zoo, and Jim Ager, then city park director. And from there grew the unique zoo fountain.

Although there scarcely is an area of the city that does not reflect Enersen's handiwork, there have been disappointments over the years.

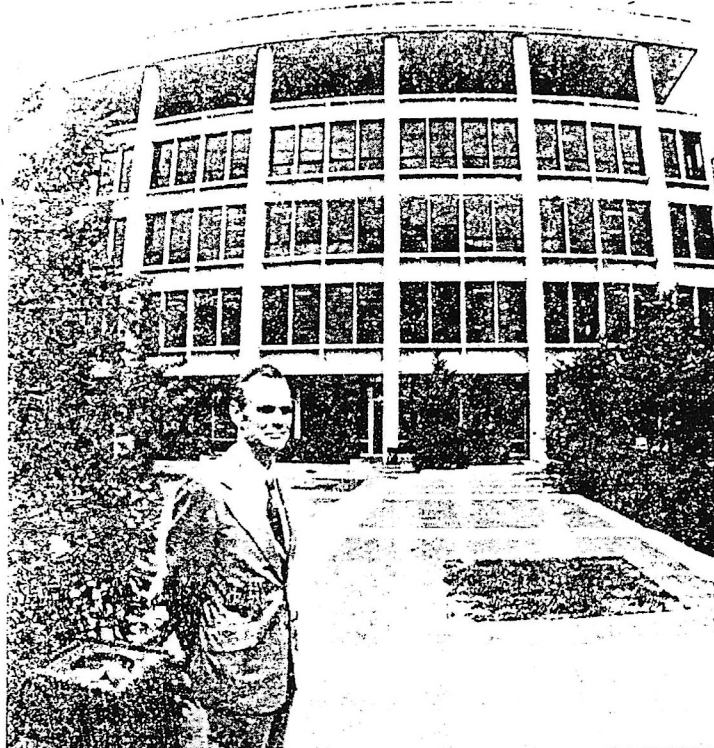
A plan for an urban renewal authority was defeated at the polls in 1967. Ten years later voters rejected Enersen's plans to convert the old federal building into a civic center and office complex.

And each project didn't always work out exactly as he originally had dreamed, or as fast as he would have liked. "Architects tend to be more self-critical than normal," he explained.

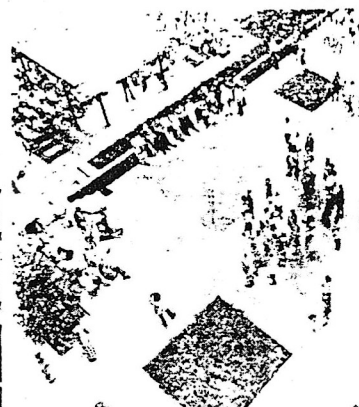
True to Enersen form, the man who has added so much beauty to Lincoln and the state, prefers to call attention to a woman who has contributed equally toward improving the lives of Nebraskans.

"Mrs. Enersen, now she's the one who's really involved in a lot of things."

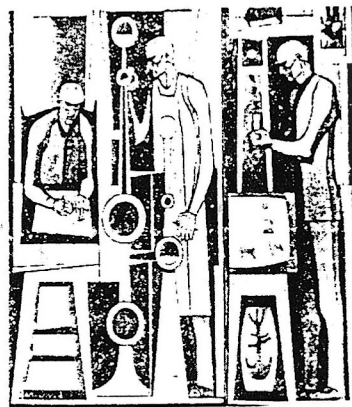
Zoo boasts Enersen's dinosaur fountain.



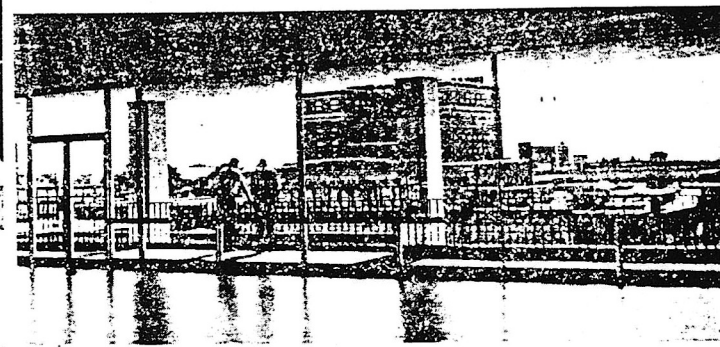
Architect Larry Enersen stands before Lincoln Center which he helped create.



Enersen's Fountain Park lends beauty.



Capitol murals trace back to Enersen.



Lincoln Center fifth floor window displays city's panorama.

Mall architect Enersen praised during dedication

By Matt Truell

Journal County-City Bureau

The steps of the County-City Building were the scene Friday of a tribute to the values deeply held by a community and to a man who embodies those values.

Landscape architect Larry Enersen, designer of the Lincoln Mall which connects the County-City Building with the State Capitol, was given special thanks by Gov. Bob Kerrey, Mayor Helen Boosalis and other dignitaries. Ken Hake, president of the Nebraska Statewide Arboretum, officiated at the Lincoln Mall dedication, attended by more than 250 people.

"It would be difficult to travel around Lincoln without seeing Enersen's work," Boosalis said. He has "communicated the values of a community, the joy of living," she said, and understands the need for trees to



Larry Enersen

soften the harsh prairie landscape.

The Lincoln Mall beautification project, which began in February, features 53 Red Jade flowering crab trees, a dozen benches, 40 yew shrubs, and five new flagpoles at the entrance of the County-City Building. Enersen said the "real show" will be in the fall, when the trees are covered with red fruit.

Two plaques, one recognizing Enersen as "one of Lincoln's greatest champions of improving life through architectural quality," and the other describing the mall's development, were unveiled.

The Lincoln High School band provided music, and two Boy Scouts and two Girl Scouts were the color guard.

"Larry Enersen's vision, his creativity and superb leadership have certainly gotten things done," Boosalis said. "We salute you, each and every one of us."

The mayor suggested a beautification project for the mall that runs south of the Capitol to A street, and construction of an east mall. The latter "may seem impossible," she said. "But nothing is impossible in Lincoln."

Enersen's vision can be seen in other projects, including the Centennial Mall, Wilderness Park, the Lincoln

Foundation Garden and the Pioneers Park Pinewood Bowl.

Arbor Day was a fitting time for the tribute to the landscape architect. Enersen is one of the incorporators of the Nebraska Statewide Arboretum.

"I share a great admiration for his vision and the legacy he has left," Kerrey said.

Many people think of trees only in economic terms, the governor said. They are shelter belts, improve property values, provide fuel.

But those who have grown up around trees have an affection for them that goes beyond economics, he said.

"They symbolize for me the solid values of the people of Nebraska," Kerrey added.

He said he was reminded of the adage that people do not inherit the land, but borrow it from their children.

Lancaster County Board Chairman Joe Edwards said the mall symbolizes the cooperation between local and state government.

The beautification project was paid for by contributions from downtown Lincoln financial institutions, foundations, private corporations and individuals.

New award to honor Enersen

The National Arbor Day Foundation Board of Trustees has named a new Arbor Day Award in memory of Lincoln architect, Lawrence Enersen.

The Lawrence Enersen Award will be presented annually to the one person in the United States who does the best job of enhancing the planting of trees in his local community.

Enerson helped beautify Nebraska's capital with trees by creating the Lincoln Mall, Lincoln Foundation Garden, Crescent Green park system, Interstate Park and Wilderness Park.

The four National Arbor Day Awards are presented to individuals, corporations, institution, media and organizations throughout the country at Nebraska City during the spring Arbor Day celebration.

Past Arbor Day award winners have included Lady Bird Johnson, McDonald's and Peanuts creator Charles Schultz.

Ask Larry Enersen what Lincoln projects he is most proud of.

"The Children's Zoo, I guess. Probably because it's a lot of fun for kids and the elderly."

After some rummaging in a file folder, up comes a note written by a young boy:

Dear Mr. Enerson (sic)

I will try to clean up the city when I am down there. Your friend,

Mark Dam

Architect's impact is all around Lincoln

Wherever one goes in Lincoln, one can see the work of architect Larry Enersen.

"He has left quite a mark on Lincoln, Nebraska," said Lincoln architect Deon Bahr.

Enersen, 73, 2346 Harwood St., is highly acclaimed for providing excellence in landscape design and for his leadership in efforts to improve the physical appearance of the city.

"He is like E.F. Hutton. When Larry talks, people listen," said Ken Hake,

president of the Nebraska Statewide Arboretum.

Enersen has received a host of awards and recognitions, and has served in many leadership positions in both the arts and architecture. He is the only person in the United States to be recognized as a Fellow by both the American Institute of Architects and the American Society of Landscape Architects.

"Architecture, in itself, is the most rewarding and the most satisfying creative effort that you can engage in," said

Enersen.

Many local projects

His skills are evident in the Lincoln projects he has designed: Folsom Children's Zoo, Wilderness Park, Interstate Park, 15th Street Centennial Mall, 13th Street beautification project, Lincoln Foundation Garden, Lincoln Community Playhouse Theatre, Pioneers Park Pine-wood Bowl stage and Lincoln Mall (formerly the J Street mall), to be dedicated Friday in a ceremony honoring Enersen.

Tree planting

"I think the thing I would take most satisfaction in is the increased interest in landscape development, in planting, and for instance what we've done downtown," Enersen said. He calls his effort for 20 years to get trees planted on O Street a "long struggle." Enersen's skilled advocacy converted many skeptical politicians, business owners and bureaucrats.

"Never have I seen a man do so much but in such a manner as to avoid the eruption of major controversy," said Lincoln Journal Editor Joe R. Seacrest. "This is a compliment to the tremendous intellectual and human capacities with which he is endowed and his fine sense of finesse and giving credit to others in his many enterprises."

Architect Patrick Horsbrugh, formerly on the faculty of the University of Nebraska and Notre Dame University, calls Enersen "an outstanding architect of our time whose qualities are yet to be recognized. He is quiet, unassuming, good humored and superbly able to gather ideas from others and mold them into a collective whole in which others can feel participation."

Interestingly enough, one of Enersen's fondest projects involved pointing out ugly things.

"I suppose in the '60s sometime, I got hold of a photographer and we started out by the Cornhusker Hotel parking lot and we made a circuit around here photographing all the ugly things we could find. I suppose I've shown those slides a hundred times and everybody said 'This can't be Lincoln...'"

"Well, from that time on, things began to happen. Years later, I went back and made the same trip with the camera and of course I couldn't find most of those things. I have gotten great satisfaction out of that and the results that have seemed to come from it because I think there's a great hulla-baloo now if we cut down a tree. That wasn't the case 15-20 years ago. The public's attitude has changed," he said.

Architect's brainchild

Editor's note: This is the last of a three-part series on the proposed Lincoln Civic Center which would house a performing arts center and municipal offices. The \$7 million bond issue will be voted on in the Tuesday, May 3, city election.

By Gordon Winters
Star Staff Writer

"So listen. We're going to take these two old buildings and, plop, right in the middle we'll put this 2,500-seat auditorium for performing arts.

"It can't miss. Price tag of \$7 million for all the bluegrass and opera you want, plus enough office space for 20 years."

Who dreamed up this hybrid of historical preservation, culture and supposedly hard-boiled economics?

Lincoln architect Larry Enersen.

Other ideas floated around, but his was the one that took root. Gradually support mobilized behind it.

Lawrence Enersen

The sadness felt at the death of Lawrence Enersen is lightened by the presence of the many gifts he has entrusted for our continuing enjoyment and safekeeping.

Lincoln was especially lucky to have had an architect, and a man, like Larry Enersen within its company for almost four decades. His rare sensitivity for fusing utility and beauty, his concern for human values and scale, in structures and landscape, were expressed time and time over.

We are the beneficiaries.

This community is a more graceful and more decent place because of the impact of Enersen's involvement and professional achievements. His legacy is so visible. Just look around and see . . . from Wilderness Park to street beautification projects, from the malls radiating out from the Capitol, from distinguished buildings.

Larry Enersen's life mission was helping process civilization. Few have such a happy vocation. Few leave so enriching a legacy.