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POMPEII

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**FORUM** was one of the principal centers of life in Pompeii. It is laid out on the plan of early Italic market squares, but is adorned

with Greek colonnades. It was closed to vehicles and beasts of burden. In the distance is the profile of the volcano Vesuvius.



**THEATER DISTRICT** was another principal center of life in Pompeii. The city had two theaters, the larger of which is in the back-

ground. In the foreground is a spacious portico which served first as the lobby of this theater and later as a school for gladiators.

# POMPEII

The city which was buried by Vesuvius has been excavated for two centuries. Two thirds of its 165,000 acres have now been cleared, providing a unique view of Roman life in the first century A.D.

by Amedeo Maiuri

**T**he eruption surprised Pompeii on a warm August day in the year 79 A.D. The people of the town were not unaware that Vesuvius was a volcano, but it had been quiescent from time immemorial, and its slopes were covered with villas and vineyards. Although sections of the city still lay in ruins from a local earthquake which had shaken the region 17 years before, no one had taken that disturbance as a warning of the disaster to come. The volcano's awakening was sudden and unbelievably violent. Its crater abruptly collapsed and a great black column shot into the sky. Pliny the Younger (whose uncle, Pliny the Elder, was nearby and was among those killed) vividly described the eruption: it looked like an Italian umbrella pine—a tall “trunk” spreading out at the top to a dense cloud shot with flashes of lightning. From that cloud, driven by a strong northwest wind, there fell upon Pompeii a heavy hail of pumice stones, which smashed roofs, riddled the houses and buried the city under a blanket of pumice more than 12 feet deep. When the hail diminished, survivors who had taken refuge in cellars and vaults tried to escape to the shores of the bay nearby. But they were overtaken by a second, slower fall from the cloud—a rain of suffocating ashes that piled up to a height of six to nine feet. Like a palpable fog or a quicksand, it trapped and enveloped people in their houses and even those fleeing in the streets. Their bodies were encased in ash as in a mold, and these casts of hardened ash are today the most moving evidences of the tragedy of Pompeii. By pouring liquid plaster into the now hollow molds we can recreate the shape of the body, the form of the clothing, the footgear, even the last exhalation of men and

women who lived and died in that ancient city.

Pompeii was so utterly wiped out that even its site was lost. But in the last two centuries the city has in a sense been reborn. In 1748 canal diggers came upon the buried houses, and the excavation has continued almost without interrup-

tion ever since. Generations of archaeologists and laborers, Italian and foreign, have devoted their entire lifetimes to uncovering or restoring the ruins of Pompeii. The 210-year excavation of Pompeii is the longest ever made of any city of the ancient world. In part the lure has been the dramatic circum-



**FALLEN INHABITANT** of Pompeii was reconstructed by pouring liquid plaster into a cavity in volcanic material which covered the area. The cavity was located by tapping ground.

stances of the city's death; in part the fact that in Pompeii we can see an ancient city caught at a certain moment at the height of its career, showing its qualities unspoiled by the overlay or the wear and tear of history to which living cities are subject. But above all Pompeii has a special attraction for scholars interested in studying the everyday life of an ordinary town of an ancient time.

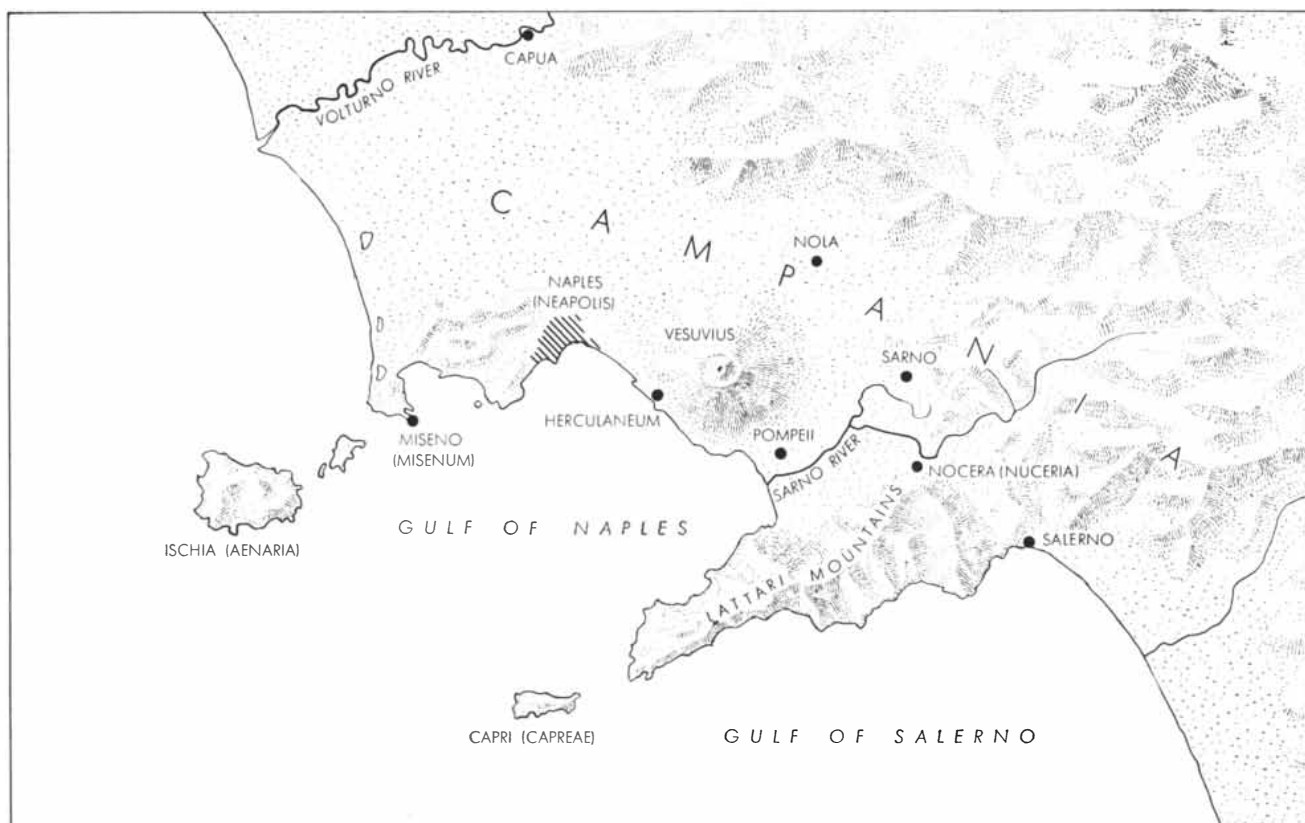
Pompeii was not a city of great events nor of great historical personalities (although Cicero had a villa nearby). We find no indication that its population included any immensely wealthy patricians or merchant princes or famous statesmen or dominant ruling families. Its citizenry was made up of well-to-do landowners, prosperous manufacturers and merchants, tradesmen, craftsmen, artisans, drifters, and slaves who could aspire to and achieve the condition of freedmen. The city was governed by a Council of Notables, chosen annually in elections conducted with all the vivacity and heat of a southern population. The balance of power among the various classes of citizens, and between the local autonomy of the city and the authority of the Roman state, created that mixed rule of the privileged and

the populace which was, at bottom, the secret of the vitality of the Roman regime. And precisely because Pompeii was not a dominant metropolis but a medium-sized provincial town (of about 20,000 population) in a region of more powerful cities (among them Capua and Naples), it gives us a typical picture of the civilization and organization of the average city of its time.

When the excavation of Pompeii was started in 1748, the object of the diggers was to recover its works of art to enrich the museums of the kings of Naples. Consequently during the first hundred years the search concentrated on the most important buildings—the city's Forum, its theaters and its largest houses. After 1860 the new kingdom of Italy assigned direction of the excavation to Giuseppe Fiorelli, and he instituted a systematic uncovering of the whole city—street by street and building by building. But the true rebirth of Pompeii did not begin until about 50 years ago, when, with the discovery of the beautiful House of the Vetti, it was decided not to remove the city's treasures but to keep the decorations on the site and restore the houses so far as pos-

sible to their original condition. Since World War II the work has been helped immensely by funds made available by the Italian Government through the Fund for the Development of the South, which is interested in using the rich volcanic soil covering Pompeii for land reclamation in the surrounding area. More than 600,000 cubic meters of earth have been taken from the diggings and dumped on the marshes in the valley of the Sarno River and on the slopes of Vesuvius. With this impetus, nearly two thirds of the city's 165,000 acres have now been excavated. We can see much of the life and history of Pompeii in fine and rich detail.

Pompeii is intimately associated with the history of the Campania district, a region below Rome on the western coast along the gulfs of Naples and Salerno. The city was founded some time in the ninth or eighth century B.C. by the Oscan farmers of the region, who needed a marketplace and seaport. Because of its strategically important position, Pompeii became a prize in contests for control, not only among the Italic peoples but also on the part of the expanding Greeks. In the seventh and sixth centuries B.C. the Etruscans of mid-Italy



POMPEII IS LOCATED in the map at left. The map at right shows the plan of the city. The numbers indicate Forum (1), Capitolium (2), official halls (3), Comitium (4), market (5), Temple of

Apollo (6), treasury (7), bureau of weights and measures (8), basilica (9), wool-industry building (10), sanctuary of the public lares (11), Temple of Vespasian (12), Sanctuary of Venus (13),

and the Greeks vied for rule of the area, and there are clear traces of their successive periods of domination in the sequences of architecture in Pompeii. Toward the end of the fifth century B.C. the Samnite people of Italy won control of Campania from the Etruscans, and Pompeii became an Italic commune. When Rome rose to power, Pompeii joined it as a federated city, but in 91 B.C. it rebelled for greater rights. After a long siege the town was taken by the army of Sulla. Thereafter Pompeii was a Roman city, but to the end of its life it retained its character as a mixture of Italic and Greek cultures.

**I**t's structures and institutions show that Pompeii was a healthy, well-managed city, whose citizens loved it so well that they took pains to preserve its form from century to century without drastic change. The crown of the city's pride was a beautiful porticoed forum with temples and public buildings, and statues of which a much larger city could have been proud. The town had a flourishing show district boasting two theaters, an amphitheater and two palaestras (sports parks). Three great public baths were distributed at strategic

points in the city. It had a well-articulated street network, with an aqueduct and public fountains at every street crossing and even safety islands for pedestrians. There were inns and stables for country folk who came to town to sell their produce and merchandise. There was a bureau for the control of weights and measures. It was a town with well-ordered arrangements for living and conducting business, public and private.

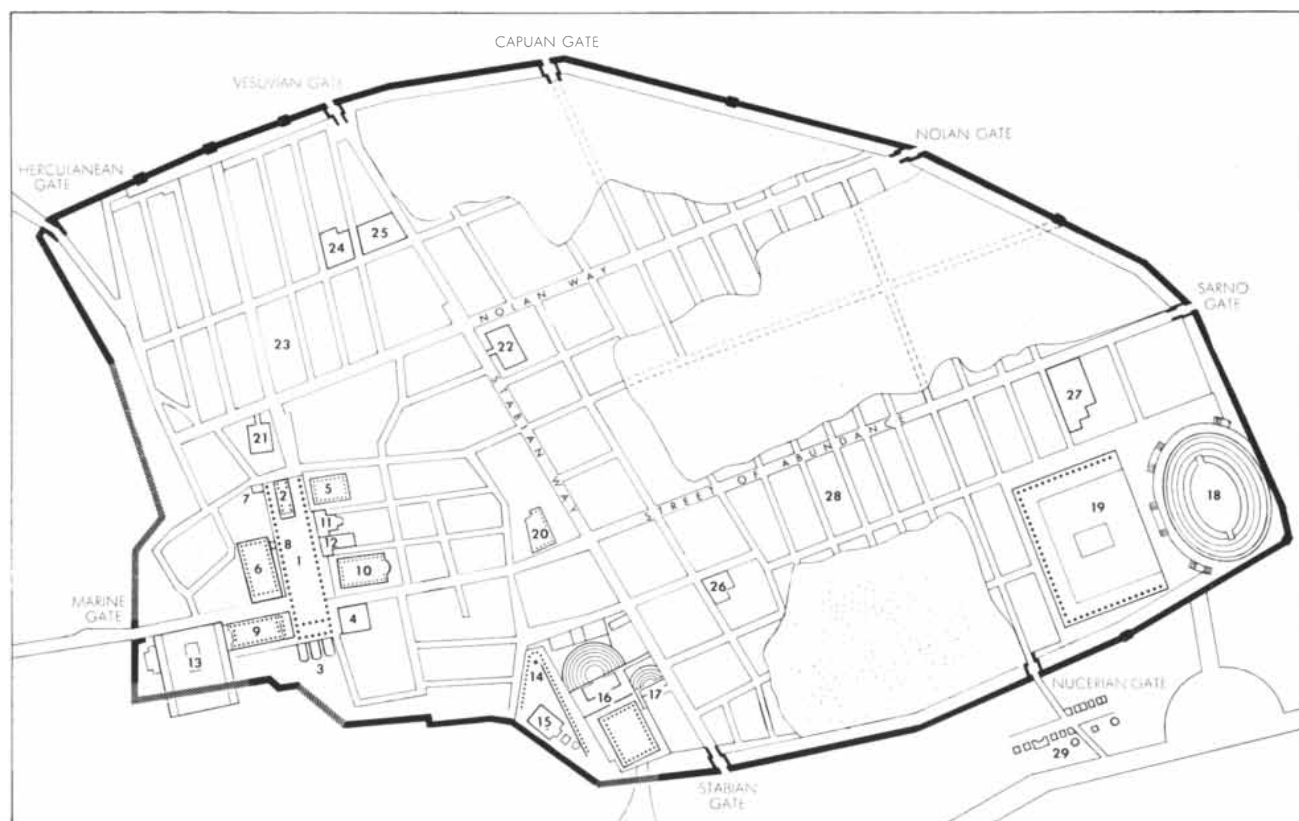
Nor were the residents burdened with taxes. Possessing no great resources for public revenue, the city used to appeal to its richest and most influential citizens to meet its main needs. The town repaid these patrons with the honor of public office, of statues and honorary inscriptions in the Forum, privileges at the great public spectacles and special burial plots for their families. We know that Pompeii owed its large palaestra to the last will of a certain Vibius Vinicio; its amphitheater and the smaller of its two theaters to the generosity of C. Quintius Valgo; restoration and enlargement of the larger theater to the Olconius family; an imposing wool textile building to the private munificence of a lady Eumachia, and restoration of the Sanctuary of Isis

to one Numerius Popipidius Celsino. Annual private donations also provided for many current public expenses, such as the spectacles in the amphitheater, the sacred festivals and maintenance of the sanctuaries.

The public life of Pompeii revolved around three principal centers: the Forum, the theaters and amphitheater and the great palaestra. Besides these, the three public baths of course also played an important, if less formal, part in the life of the city.

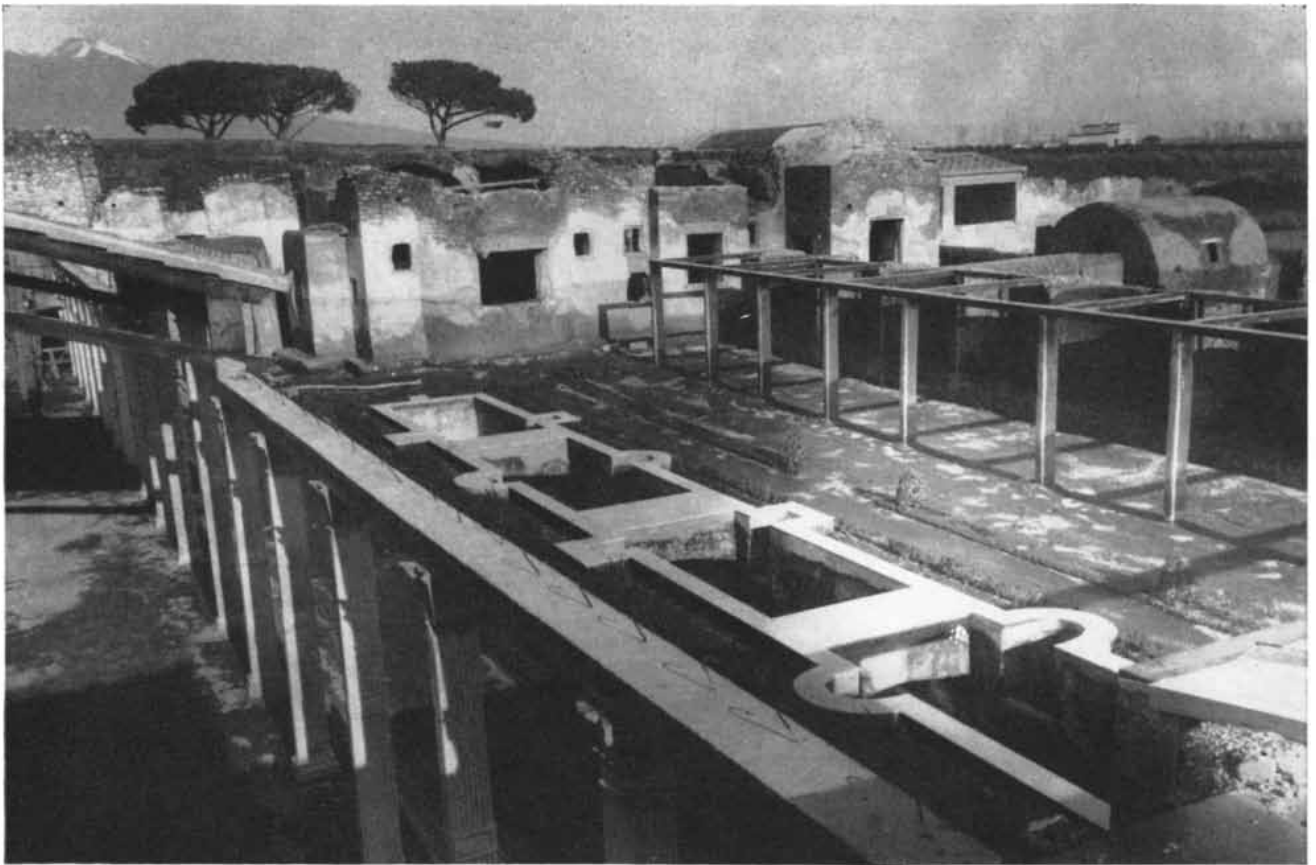
Pompeii's Forum is one of the most beautiful of all ancient city squares [see photograph on page 68]. It stands against a background of the wooded chain of the Castellammare Mountains, with Vesuvius towering almost directly overhead. The Forum is modeled after Italian market squares, but it is also adorned with the grace of Greek colonnades. As a sacred place, the square was barred to vehicles and reserved for pedestrians alone.

The north end of the square was dominated by a temple known as the Capitulum, dedicated to the tutelary deities Jove, Juno and Minerva; on the south side stood the halls of the city officials and the Council of Notables—almost as



triangular forum of the theater district (14), Doric temple (15), large theater (16), small theater (17), amphitheater (18), palaestra (19), Stabian Baths (20), Forum Baths (21), Central Baths (22).

Famous houses of Pompeii are those of the Faun (23), the Vetti (24), the Gilt Cupids (25), Menander (26), Giulia Felix (27) and the Fruit Arbor (28). Outside walls of the city is its necropolis (29).



**VILLA OF GIULIA FELIX** lies on the outskirts of Pompeii. At the time the city was buried the owner of this villa was in the proc-

ess of converting part of it into baths, shops and apartments. In the center is the garden of the villa and a pond for breeding fish.



**HOUSE OF MARCUS OBELLIUS FIRMO** is seen from its central court, or atrium. The houses of wealthy Pompeians were character-

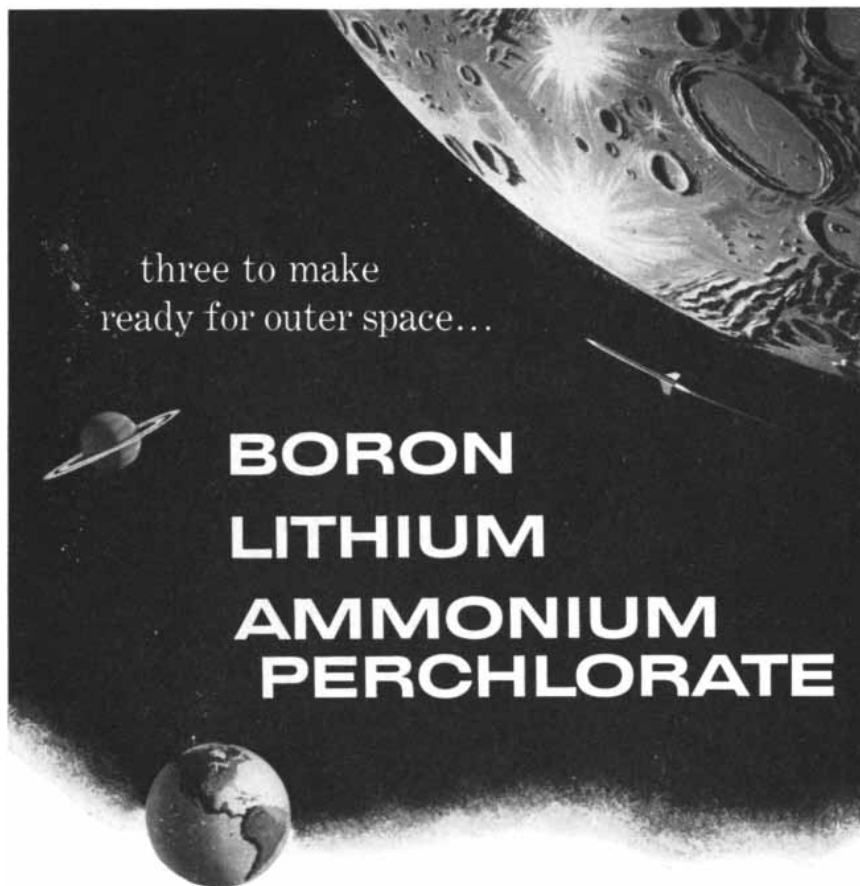
ized by a traditional atrium, portico and bedrooms to which were added, under Greek influence, a peristyle, garden and other rooms.



if to counterpose human authority to divine authority. On the east side of the square were the hall of the Comitium, where the electors met annually to vote for town officers, and a covered food market. Opposite, on the west side, were the great temple of Apollo, the city treasury, the bureau of weights and measures and the basilica, a very large roofed hall with three naves which was the seat of the tribunal and a business meeting place. Sandwiched among these important centers were other buildings fronting on the square, some no less imposing: the magnificent headquarters for the wool industry built by the benefactress Eumachia; the sanctuary of the public lares, dedicated to the protecting gods of the city; the temple of Vespasian, dedicated to the rites of the Roman emperor. Not far from the square was the sanctuary of Venus, the protective goddess of the city. From some paintings found in the town we know also that the Forum of Pompeii was not entirely restricted to sacred or official activities: the shadows of its porticoes teemed with itinerant peddlers purveying sandals, ironware and foodstuffs to crowds of customers.

The theatrical district of Pompeii occupied a happy and convenient location against a hillside. On a high bastion there is a triangular open area with a Doric temple which, like an acropolis, commands the Sarno River valley and the port of the city. Off the triangle the two theaters lean against the hill. The large theater has a great porticoed square, originally used as a lobby and later as a school and shelter for gladiators. Behind the stage is a stupendous backdrop formed by the Lattari Mountains. The smaller theater, or odeon, had a roof sheltering the seats, thereby representing a transition from the ancient to the modern theater.

Pompeii's amphitheater is one of the earliest yet found—a pioneer in this form of architecture. Although it does not approach the grandeur of the Colosseum in Rome, it is an elegant and graceful structure, with an oval arena, arcades, external stairways and a series of little arches crowning the highest tier of seats. The amphitheater seated about 20,000 people, and it stood in a park against a wall of the city, where it was easily accessible by many roads to spectators from nearby towns as well as Pompeians. The citizens' passion for the gladiatorial games is attested by posters painted on their house fronts, by highly decorated arms found in the gladiatorial school and by scribbings on the walls by youngsters



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**NUCERIAN GATE** was discovered during excavations after World War II. It stood athwart the road to Nuceria, a city to the east of Pompeii. Beyond gate is city's old cemetery.



**MAUSOLEUMS** line the road from Pompeii to Nuceria. These tombs are decorated with statues or busts of the dead. They were made largely of tufa, a soft stone of volcanic origin.

depicting memorable contests between gladiatorial champions and between men and wild beasts.

Alongside the amphitheater stands the large palaestra, main playground of the city. It is a great rectangular athletic field with a huge swimming pool in the center. Porticoes surrounded the field on three sides, and it was shaded by a double row of plane trees (whose existence has been deduced from the cavities left in the earth by their roots). Here the young men of the city periodically showed their prowess in racing, wrestling, boxing and swimming. These games were a Greek rather than an Italic tradition of sport, and Pompeii shows the two traditions side by side in sharp contrast: on one side the amphitheater, an arena of bloody spectacles; on the other the palaestra, where youth learned the lessons of the athletic field.

The three public baths of Pompeii are particularly noteworthy because they show the development of this Roman institution from the very beginning. The oldest of the three, the so-called Stabian Baths, dates back to the third century B.C. and is the earliest example of public-bath architecture yet found in Italy. It includes a small palaestra and rooms for exercise and recreation; the baths were originally heated by bronze braziers. The Stabian Baths stood at the intersection of the two main streets that quartered the city—the “Times Square” of Pompeii. The second public bath was near the Forum: it is known as the Forum Baths. The third, called the Central Baths, was being constructed at a convenient crossroads in another quarter of the city, but it had not quite been completed when Vesuvius erupted. This building, even more elaborate than the Stabian Baths, was to have been heated by a system of radiant heating through the floors and honeycombed walls.

**B**ut Pompeii's greatest gift to history and social science is its houses. Other ancient cities have furnished fine examples of temples, baths, theaters and governmental buildings, but nowhere else can we see so complete a documentation of ancient home life as at Pompeii and the nearby town of Herculaneum, also buried by Vesuvius's eruption. At Pompeii we have houses of various classes, perfectly preserved in the details of structure and decoration, and we can follow the evolution of home styles through at least three or four centuries. The evolution begins with the Italic *domus*, characterized by a central court (atrium), a living room, bedrooms and an attached orchard; on this basic plan





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**COLUMNS OF PALAESTRA**, or sports park, are excavated from drifts of volcanic material. These columns were part of a portico which stood on three sides of a large athletic field.

there was later grafted the grace and beauty of Hellenistic house architecture—a peristyle and a garden, living and reception rooms, decoration of the walls and floors with paintings and mosaics. One of the finest examples of this happy union of Italic and Hellenistic architecture in Pompeii is the House of the Faun, with its two atriums, two peristyles, a bath, guest quarters and a reception room whose floor was paved with a great mosaic, picturing the battle of Alexander, which is regarded as perhaps the most spectacular work of artistic composition preserved from the ancient world.

There are many other mansions in Pompeii which have become famous for their richness and sumptuousness. Among these, of course, is the House of

the Vetti, built in the first century of the Roman Empire by a member of the *nouveaux riches* who poured his wealth into a joyful and ostentatious abode. His theatrical house was opulent in color, in works of art and in the play of water in nymphaean nooks and fish ponds. In the same genre is the House of the Gilt Cupids, with a peristyle raised like the stage of a theater above a garden strewn with statuettes and reliefs. There is also the House of Menander, so called because its owner (who, like Nero, did not hide his literary predilections for the Greek theater) had a portrait of the Greek dramatist painted in a sort of chapel sacred to the Muses, along with other paintings of major poets.

After the damaging earthquake of 62 A.D. some owners of the great man-



**STONE FOUNTAIN** stands beside a street intersection. In the middle of some Pompeian streets are islands where pedestrians could stop for traffic while crossing to the other side.

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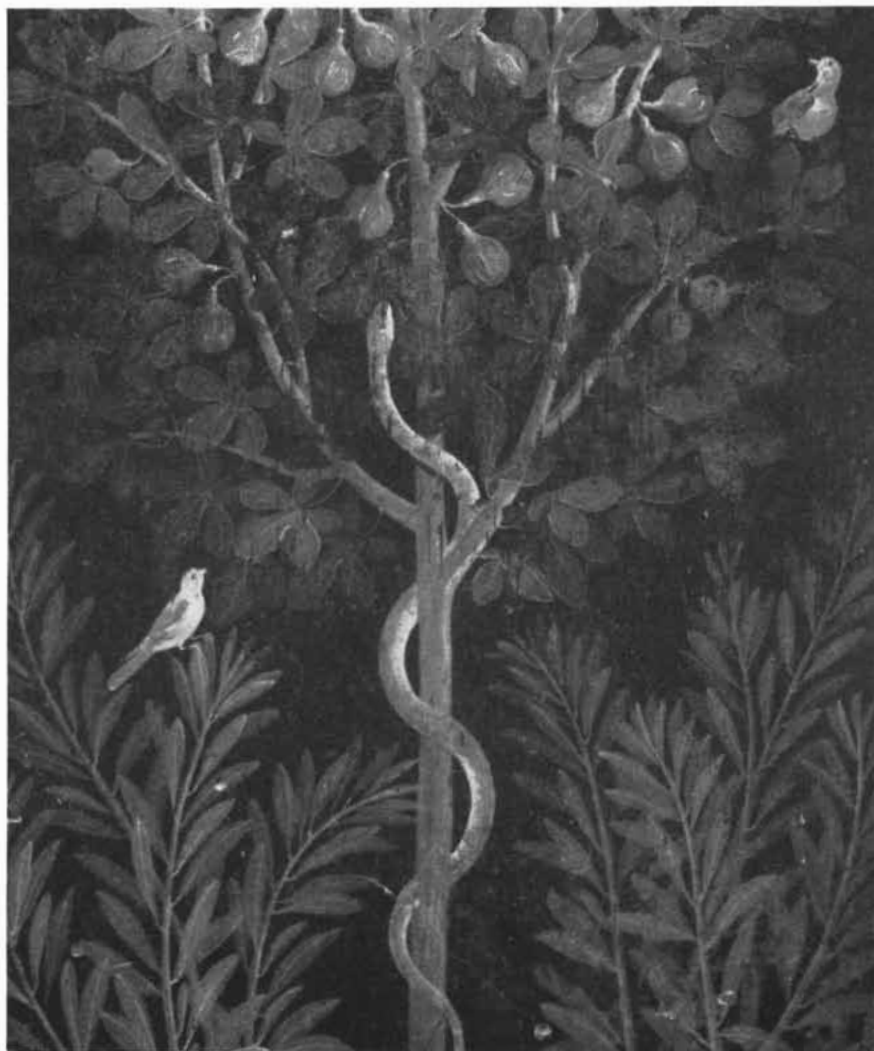
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sions, overwhelmed by the costs of restoration and by the city's economic crisis, were induced to sell or rent part of their houses for shops to help restore the city's commercial life. Among these patricians was a singular woman named Giulia Felix, who had a rich villa with a vast orchard on the outskirts of town. She converted part of her home into a paying public bath (the city's baths having closed) and boldly advertised her commercial enterprise with a sign on the gate of her estate.

The Villa of Giulia Felix is a recent find. During the past 15 years we have devoted ourselves to clearing the southeastern quarter of the city, beyond the theater section, and the city's southern wall and adjoining suburban area. In the newly uncovered quarter we have found the typical pattern of a city's outskirts: widely spaced shopping centers, villas, large orchards and middle-class suburban homes. Especially interesting among

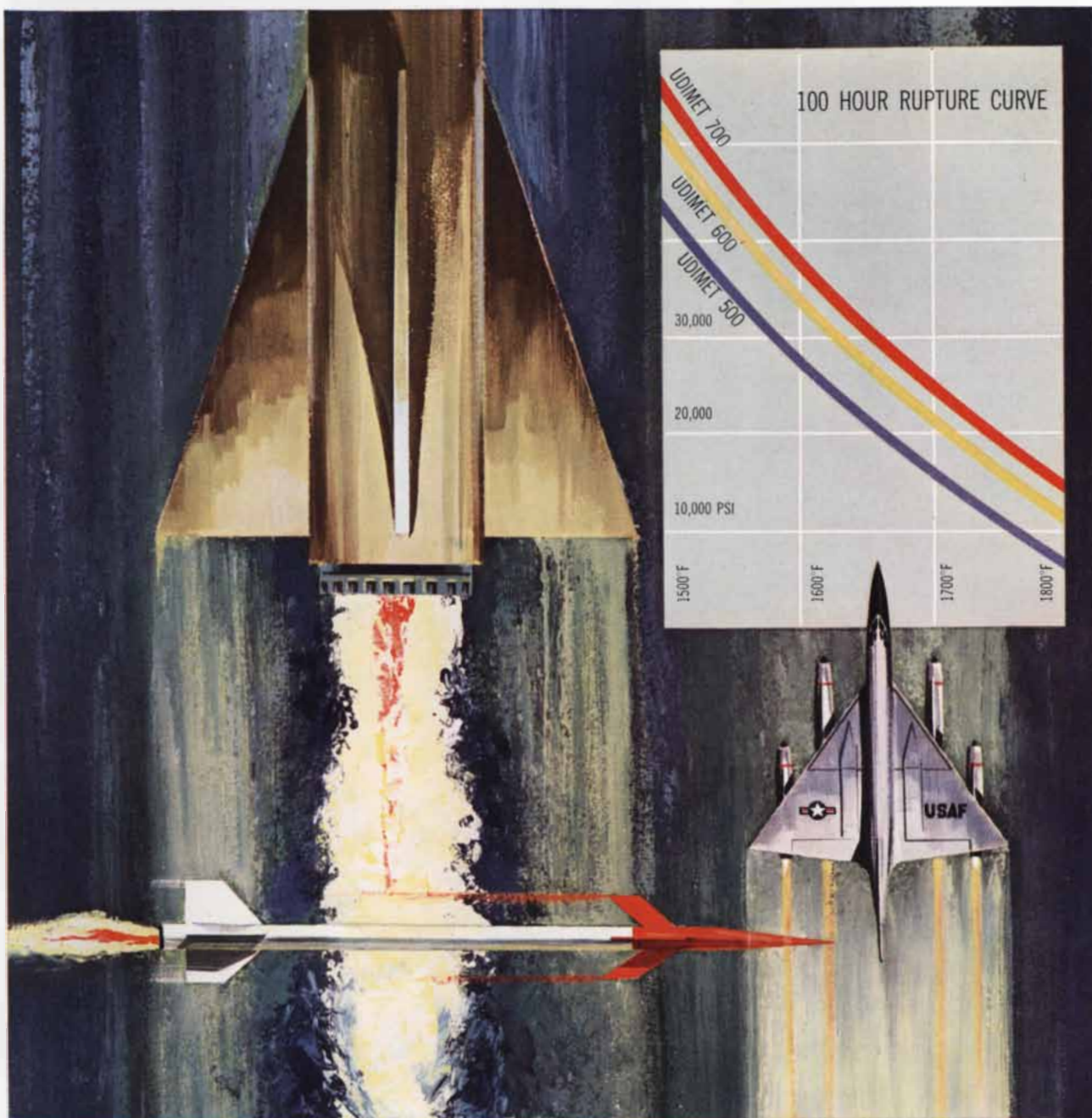
the latter is the House of the Fruit Arbor, which contains wall paintings not only of fig, pear, plum and arbutus trees, but also a lemon tree—the first indication that citrus fruit was cultivated in Campania in ancient times.

The most important discoveries in the postwar excavation period have been the Nucerian Gate (the seventh gate of the city) and the nearby cemetery. Outside the gate, along an arterial road which connected Pompeii with Nuceria, a major city of south Campania, we found a long series of tombs, ranging up to stately mausoleums. Almost all have commemorative inscriptions and statues or busts in stone, marble or tufa (soft volcanic stone, the principal building material of Pompeii). Here in these proud tombs, with their dignified statues of magistrates and freedmen, we can see best epitomized the serene, normal career of the city whose life was so dramatically ended in 79 A.D.



**WALL PAINTING** was found in the House of the Fruit Arbor. The tree in the painting is a fig. Other paintings decorating the same house depict pear, plum, arbutus and lemon trees.





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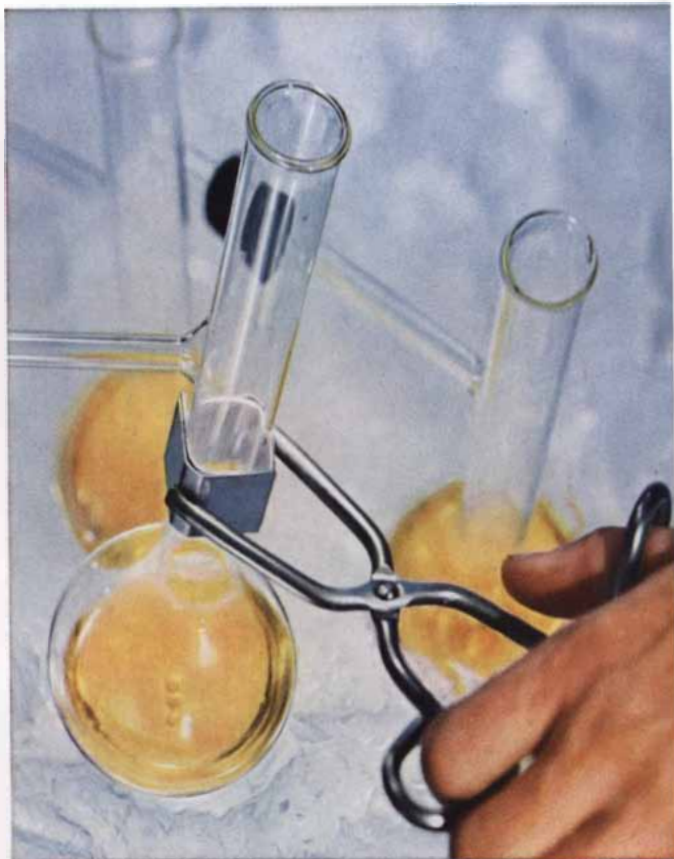
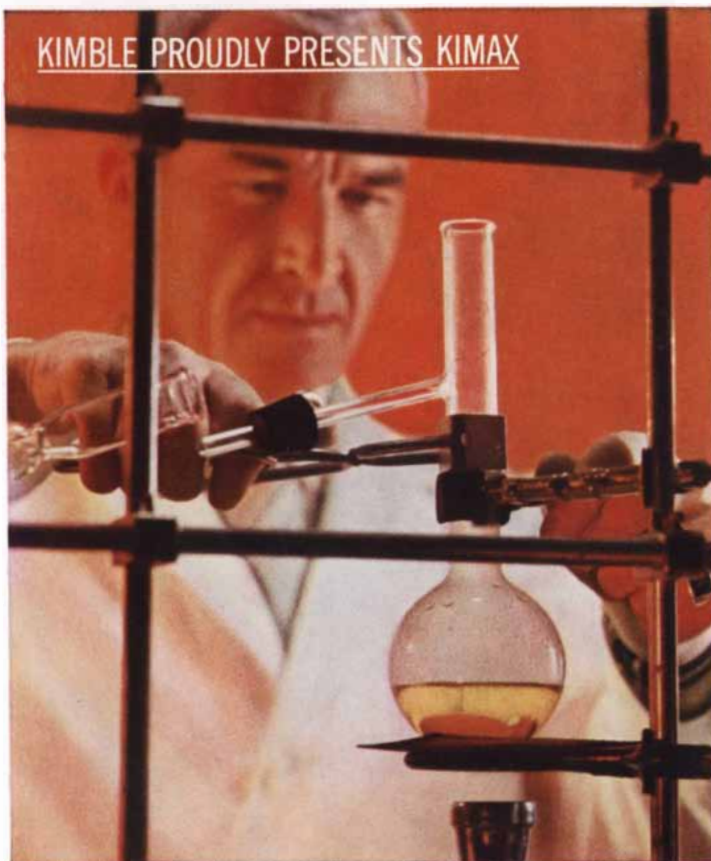


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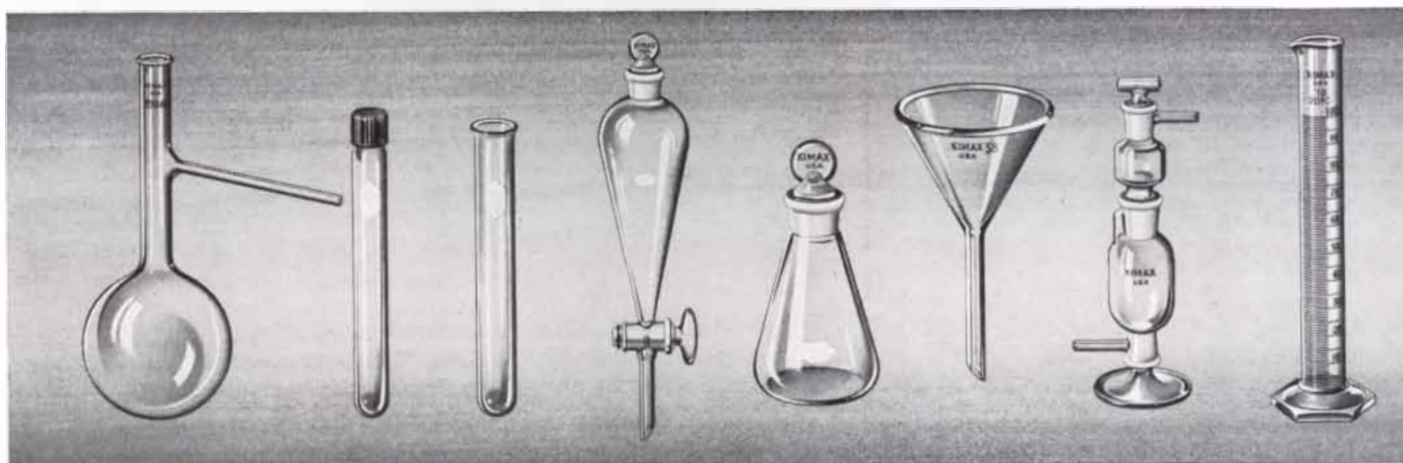
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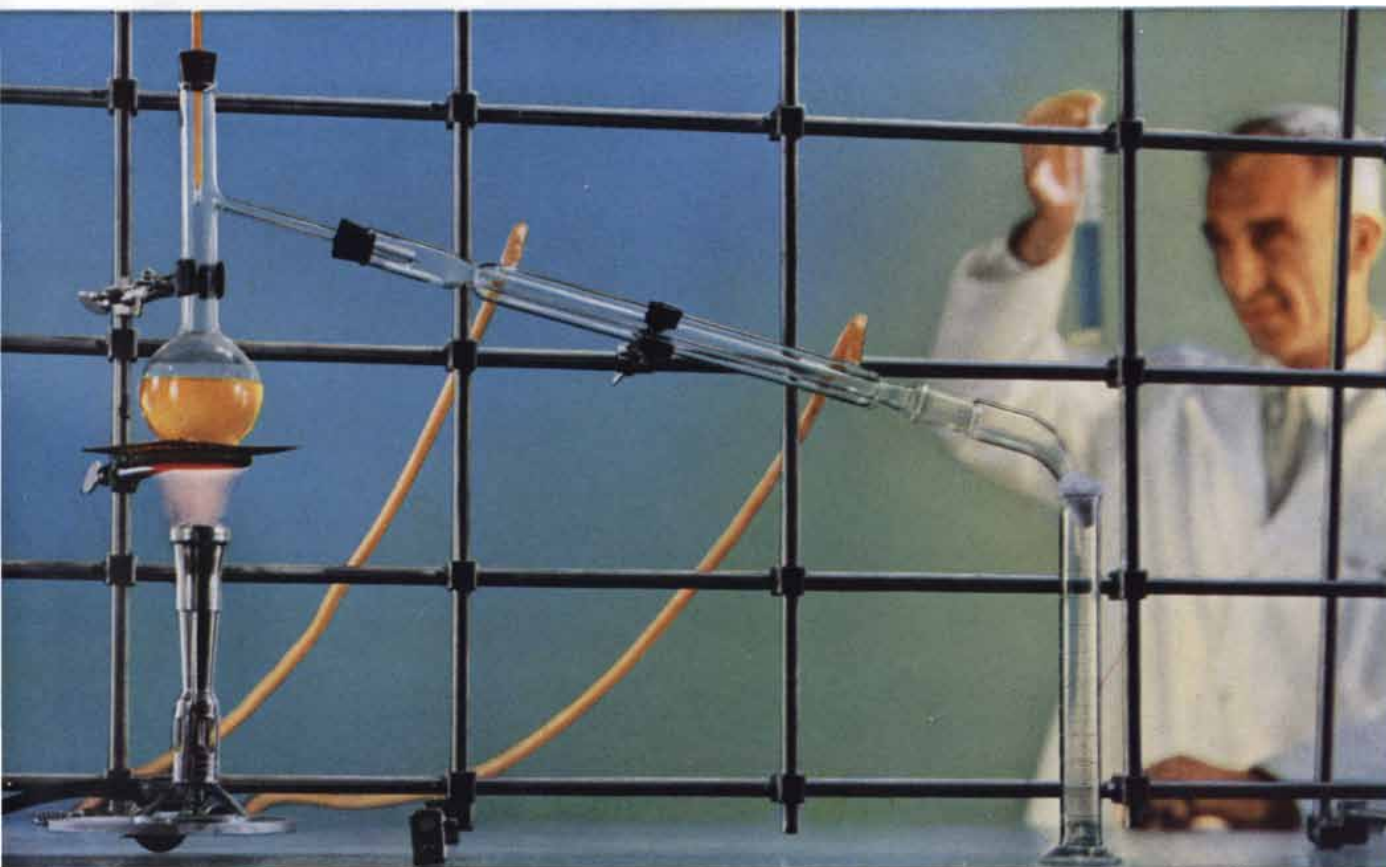


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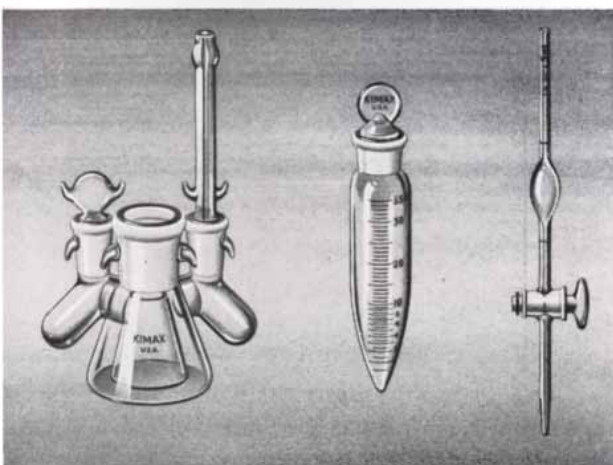


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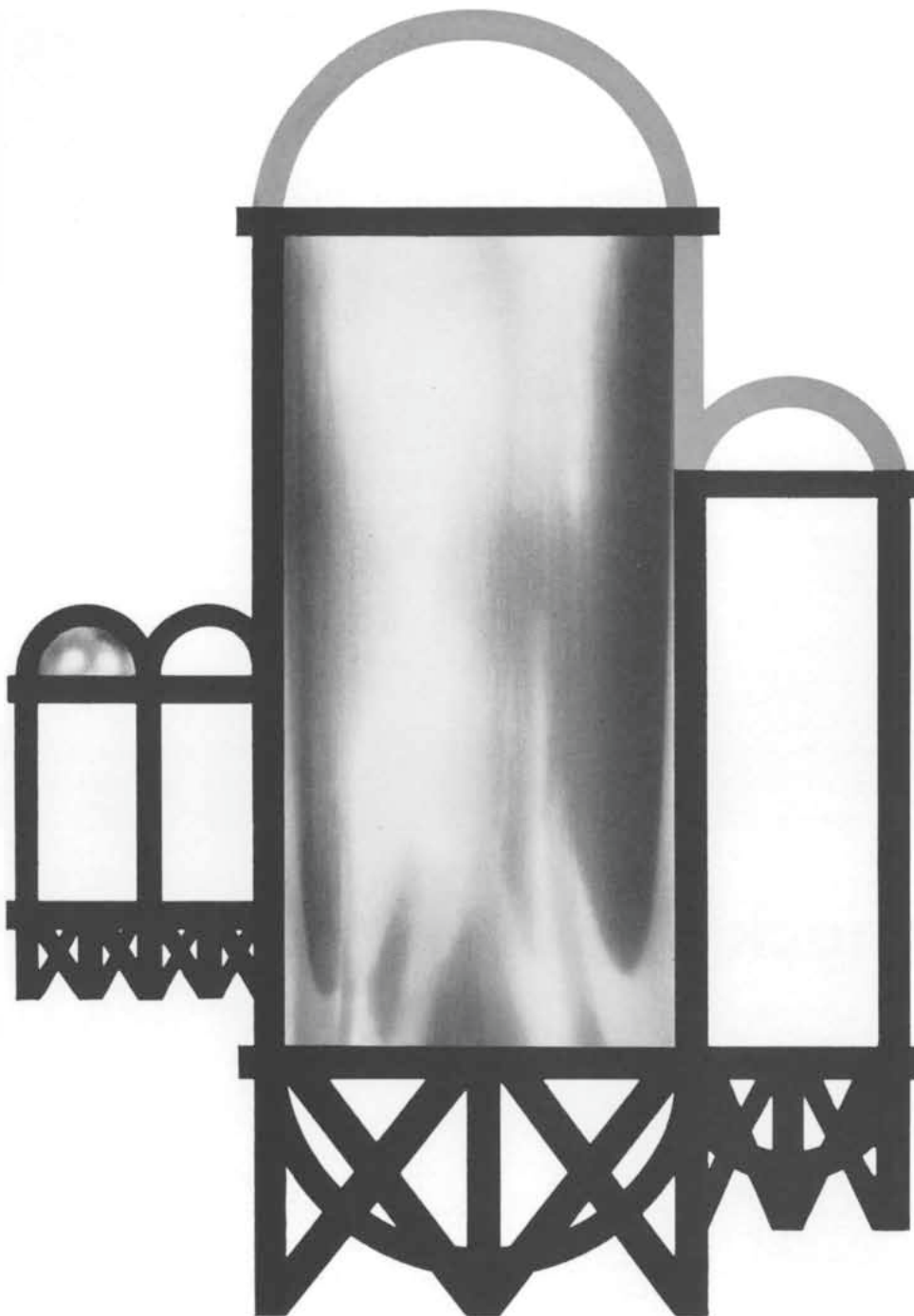
"Hard" glass is vital to many of the procedures in modern laboratories, where its unique properties permit uses never possible with common glass.

Amazing resistance to sudden temperature change is but one property which makes KIMAX invaluable in the world's laboratories. KIMAX also is virtually unaffected by alkalis and boiling acids, other than hydrofluoric, and possesses unusual physical strength.

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