

Designer Defends Outline For Air Academy Chapel

A partner in the firm which is designing the Air Academy said Saturday, "If we produced a chapel design that everyone liked, it would be very dull."

John Merrill, partner in the architects firm, Skidmore, Owings and Merrill, made the statement when asked to comment on the criticism of the chapel design Thursday by noted architect Frank Lloyd Wright. Merrill is a guest at the Broadmoor hotel.

"MR. WRIGHT has a perfect right to his opinion of the designs. I don't think it necessarily represents the opinions of most architects.

"We have a great deal of respect for Mr. Wright's work. He is a great architect. He has never been known to pull his punches on something he doesn't like and he evidently doesn't like this.

"The chapel design must be developed, but I don't think it will be changed. I believe that as a start, it has a lot of merit."

Walter A. Netsch Jr., the man who drew the actual designs, declined to comment on the Wright statement when contacted at his Chicago home. "If there is going to be any announcement, it will have to be through Nathaniel Owings. I feel that he should make any comment."

OWINGS SAID earlier that "this is a free country and everybody has a right to express his personal opinion on any subject."

Meanwhile, in Washington, the Air Force said the sketch of the

chapel is something an artist might whip up but not the actual print for a church.

In response to questions from the Associated Press, an Air Force spokesman said the chapel sketch "is nothing more than an artist's conception."

HE SAID IT definitely is not "the design of a chapel" because the Air Force will not decide on actual design "for at least a year."

"There is no such thing as discussing a redesign" because there have been no formal plans drawn.

Sen. A. Willis Robertson (D-Va.), who compared the chapel to "an assembly of wigwams," told Gov. Ed C. Johnson last week that Air Secretary Harold Talbott has called a conference of experts to consider the chapel design.