

THE CONTEMPORARY AMERICAN INTERIOR OF 1945-1955 AS SEEN IN
ARCHITECTURAL RECORD AND *HOUSE AND GARDEN*

by

TARYN NOELL SPENCE

(Under the Direction of Wayde Brown)

ABSTRACT

Specialized consumer trade magazines issued publications confronting America's shift toward modern design in residential interiors after World War II. Themes regarding the modern home emerged in two noted publications, *Architectural Record* and *House and Garden*. An analysis of the modern plan form, furniture, and finishes throughout these publications reveal the modern home as a reflection of America's changing social, technological and economic values. Are post-war domestic interiors a cultural resource worthy of preservation? What is the preservation challenge encountered in preserving post-war interiors? What is a preservation strategy that could be implemented to provide protection for post-war interiors?

INDEX WORDS: Historic preservation, Post war housing, Modern interiors, Interior design, World War II

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DEDICATION

To mama.

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I would like to thank my friends and family who provided guidance and direction for this study as well as to Stephen White who gave up his time to help me in the last part of this journey.

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

Growing up in rural America, my idea about a sense of community was shaped by my father's barbershop that was tucked away in the back of our home. Every Saturday morning I would awake to my dad's customers laughing and telling farming stories. The Saturday morning barbershop ritual not only offered close cut shaves, but it established a strong community among its clientele. Customers knew that their visits to Bobby Spence's Barber Shop made them a vital part of a community and made them feel a part of something greater than themselves. When my father closed his business, the sense of community that his clientele had been a part of, dissipated. Much like my dad's barbershop, the nation's post-war domestic interiors are powerful social vehicles with an overwhelming sense of community and place.

Purpose of thesis

Are custom-designed post-war domestic interiors a cultural resource worthy of preservation? If so, what is the preservation challenge encountered in preserving this resource-type? What strategy could help to protect interiors? This thesis will identify and define post World War II modern domestic interiors as cultural resources with an exploration of preservation challenges and potential preservation strategies to ensure recognition and protection for these

cultural resources. The analysis of post-war interior plan forms, furniture, and finishes as illustrated in *Architectural Record* and *House and Garden*, reveal the home as a reflection of the nation's changing social, technological, and economic values that is worthy of preservation.

Post-war resources provide unique challenges to the preservation community because as products of the recent past, they defy the notion of 'historic'. Beyond this break from traditional nomenclature, several questions arise when confronting their documentation, evaluation and protection: How do you best preserve private residential interiors vulnerable to the whims of owners? Can the preservation industry support recent past resources with its present ideology? Are traditional models for resource protection adequate for preserving this resource-type? How can post-war interiors be documented? These questions must be met with creative answers which focus on education, awareness, advocacy, and legislation. Traditional preservation devices such as interior easements and the historic house museum must be coupled with broader, innovative strategies to meet the needs of this unique resource-type.

The inclusion of post-war plan forms, furniture, and finishes on the continuum of material culture would heighten awareness, recognition, and appreciation for products of the recent past as non-traditional historic resources. Without this endeavor, valuable resources will be lost with people becoming disconnected from their more immediate, intimate, and personal past. The process begins with the preservation community's support of education and attempt to identify applicable strategies to address this type of resource.

Methodology

The primary resources used for this study were two specialized consumer trade magazines including *Architectural Record* and *House and Garden*. Issues from both publications were reviewed for a period of ten years, from 1945 to 1955, in order to evaluate the contemporary interior plan forms, furniture, and finishes marketed in post-war America. While *Architectural Record* and *House and Garden* catered to a narrow market of post-war consumers, both resources confronted contemporary themes in America, showcased custom-designed homes as a means of post-war expression, and revealed the modern design principles guiding interiors of the post-war elite. Even though the majority of homes illustrated in these publications represent America's elitist response to the need for modern homes, they serve as a powerful 'trend-setter' for the subsequent building of homes.

The topics covered by *Architectural Record* and *House and Garden* yield insight into various aspects of interiors including modern home plans to fashionable selections of wallpaper. Advertisements were cunningly placed to pull on the heart strings of readers. Significant collaborations between the private sector and the federal government supported various advertising campaigns during and after the war. As indicators of social, technological, and economic thought, these publications provide critical insight into America's shift to "modern living". The following chapters are devoted to the components of the modern post-war home as revealed in two consumer trade publications. The conclusions and recommendations provide a preservation strategy to further define, evaluate, and suggest a plan of documentation to acknowledge and capture the importance of post-war domestic interiors as a unique cultural resource.

Modernism in America

Early twentieth century social, economic, and political ambitions produced considerable shifts in the design of the nation's interiors. Woman's suffrage, the television, and the Great Depression coupled with both World Wars were significant forces behind a new direction for American domestic life. In particular, World War II marked a critical ideological shift, out of which grew the modern American home.

Social, technological, and economic factors stimulated the evolution of interiors. The arrival of European Modernism in the 1930s influenced American design. The design ideals embraced by European Modernism were spread by immigrants to America. Their philosophy embraced new materials including the use of glass, concrete, and steel, as well as the expression of form and structure, and the omission of ornament and historical references.

The new architecture is anti-cubic; that is, it does not seek to fix the various space cells together within a closed cube, but throws the functional space cells...away from the centre...towards the outside, whereby height, width, depth + time tend towards a wholly new plastic expression in open space. In the way architecture acquires a more or less open floating aspect, as it were, works against the gravitational forces of nature.¹

Architects Mies Van der Rohe and Walter Gropius were leaders in the dissemination of Modern aesthetic through prominent teaching positions at some of the country's most esteemed architectural institutions. Walter Gropius directed the program at Harvard School of Design and influenced a generation of architects with modern ideology. Mies Van der Rohe taught at Chicago's Armour Institute (now the Illinois Institute of Technology), where he implemented the Bauhaus philosophy that fused art with technology.

¹ Theo van Doesburg, 1913. 'Vers une construction collective'.

Modernism was only one of the architectural reactions of the time period. Significant architectural statements were also offered by the Chicago School, the Arts and Crafts movement, and the Prairie School pioneered by Frank Lloyd Wright. Some historians suggest that Modernism was rooted in the Industrial Revolution and the Enlightenment period, but the full architectural expression was not developed until the twentieth century.² Modernism made its official debut in 1932 at the Museum of Modern Art in New York City. Henry-Russel Hitchcock and Philip Johnson collaborated on an exhibit that displayed the progressive ideas of Modernism both in Europe and in America.³ Modernism's rise was partially credited to the correct blend of conditions, including a mechanization of the city, the rise of the automobile, and the use of industrial materials, as well as clients willing to experiment with new ideas.⁴ America moved closer to acknowledgment and a narrow acceptance of modern living during the 1930s, but was forced to face the potential of total modern living when World War II hastened technological and economic advancement.

² Gregory Votolato, *American Design in the Twentieth Century* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1998), 10.

³ Carter Wiseman, *Shaping A Nation: Twentieth Century American Architecture and Its Makers* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, Inc., 1998), 163.

⁴ William J.R. Curtis, *Modern Architecture since 1900* (New York: Phaidon Press Inc., 1996), 22.

CHAPTER TWO

AMERICAN IDEALS

Life on the domestic home front during America's forty-five month involvement in World War II was a time of demarcation. For better or worse, traditional relationships of every description underwent sweeping change. No segment of society- men women, minorities, young or old- escaped the hurly-burly of the war years.⁵

The classic title from legendary rock and roll artist Elvis Presley's 1957 hit *All Shook Up* captured the mood of post World War II America. Sweeping change disturbed American traditions and divided the nation's emotions. The prewar years in the United States were characterized by a series of changes and evolution.⁶ Insight into society prior to the war illustrates the extent of change in daily routines and patterns. During the war, prosperity and productivity experienced in the United States contradicted the battles taking place on foreign soil. Altogether, these broad-ranged shifts in the nation's social, technological, and economic position reshaped American lives.

One unique and significant impact affected residential preferences. The plan form of homes, the hierarchy of the family, relationship and adjacency of spaces within the home, and the components of the interior, including furniture and finishes, were directly tied to the shifts in American ideology and were depicted in several architectural and design magazines prevalent during and after the war.

⁵ Paul Casdorff, *Let the good times roll* (New York: Paragon House, 1989), ix.

⁶ David E. Kyvig, *Daily Life in the United States, 1920-1939 Decades of Promise and Pain* (Westport: Greenwood Press, 2002), 112.

Social ideals

An examination of prewar social patterns reveals more clearly the strides that the nation made during and after World War II. The 1920s and 1930s was an era of transformation for social, technological, and economic ideals. The country authored new constitutional directives, witnessed significant political gains, and saw increasing demand for the automobile, radio and motion picture. The National Prohibition of Alcohol act ushered in the two consecutive decades quickly followed by the federal declaration of women's right to vote. Undeniably, the most significant event was the stock market crash on October 24th, 1929. The ensuing years were shadowed by the Great Depression and an uneven growth of the economy.⁷ During this dark chapter in American history, the popularity of the radio drew urban and rural communities together, with common experiences shared by the respective groups. The automobile became affordable to a majority of Americans and, thus, a glimmering cultural icon. Entering the war in Europe triggered significant consequences at home. Vast military and internal migrations of the American people ensued. Social struggles commenced.

Central to social thought in the 1940s and 1950s was the aspiration of achieving the ideal life. Returning veterans were proud to have upheld the democratic ideals of their country. It was natural for returning veterans and the public alike to reevaluate their position in society. The war triggered a reexamination of values, goals, and personal achievements. Woman's active role in wartime production efforts led to greater competence between the genders. These newly empowered women and men formed a new, educated class with the installation of the Government Issued Bill, commonly known as the G.I. Bill. Universities and colleges offered

⁷ Ibid. 178.

multicultural experiences to increasing enrollments. Meanwhile, the increased number of marriages gave rise to the birthrate. The Census Bureau stated that the highest birthrate in U.S. history was during 1943.⁸ Wartime propaganda alluded to the attainable ideal life with support from mainstream architects, developers, and manufacturers. General Electric advertised, “Jim’s going away tomorrow...and there will be long, lonely days before he comes back. But that little home sketched there in the sand is a symbol of faith and hope and courage. It’s a promise, too. A promise of gloriously happy days to come....”⁹ For many returning veterans, the attainment of a home symbolized a complete and ideal life. Social advancements in prewar and post-war America translated into new approaches to modern living. The schemes of interiors evolved and clearly illustrated the changes in America’s social fabric. Social change was only one impetus in domestic transformation. Science and technology also provided for modern expression in the home.

Science and technology ideals

Franklin Delano Roosevelt encouraged the nation to be daring, to move beyond mediocrity in order to reach full potential. The country listened and worked towards progress and advancement to fulfill the American dream. Donald Albrecht, curator of *World War II and the American Dream*, summarized the position of the nation at the outset of war,

Industrialist entered into lucrative partnerships with the government to construct and expand thousands of war plants. Architects and engineers came up with ingenious,

⁸ Eugenia Kaledin. *Daily Life in the United States, 1940-1959 Shifting Worlds* (Westport: Greenwood Press, 2000), 22.

⁹ *Architectural Record*. General Electric advertisement.

practical solutions to wartime construction challenges. Manufactures created substitute material for those in short supply, while scientists devoted their research to the pursuit of war technologies. War workers migrated by the millions to areas offering better defense industry jobs....Americans who endured both the great depression and the war building program, with its innovation in technology and phenomenal levels of productivity, made the achievement of that dream a reality for millions.¹⁰

Advanced technology and consumer craze revolutionized modern living. (See Figure 2.1) Collaborative research served as a primary conduit to technological advancement. The mass marketing of new materials and home appliances forged a new modern home design for a new, emerging middle class. Mass production and the demand for housing after the war allowed architects and designers to derive efficient plans, create new construction techniques, manipulate interior space, build furniture, and produce innovative textiles as a means to modern living. Historians often accept the 1940s and 1950s as a consumer crazed culture. The proliferation of the television eventually made it a central household item, further transforming the plan form of homes and altering furniture design and arrangements. The post-war building industry experienced increased demand from returning veterans who wanted a piece of the American dream.

Military related research, crucial to the war effort, eventually impacted civilian lives. The atomic bomb, dropped on Hiroshima in 1945, led to many scientific-military ventures during the war including power plants and radiated agriculture.¹¹ Despite continued complex moral questions regarding the atomic age, it remained a decisive force in the closure of the war and ensuing advancement. One historian commented that “Just as the astonishing increases in the production of tanks and airplanes seemed to prove what a hard-working, committed democratic

¹⁰ World War II and the American Dream exhibit brochure, Available from <http://www.h-net.org/~local/exhibitions/dream.html> Accessed online.

¹¹ Donald Albrecht. *World War II and the American Dream*. (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1995), 213.

work force could achieve on a material level, so the building of the bomb similarly represented a different kind of intellectual accomplishment.”¹²

Some people became enchanted with newly developed suburban life and their ability to custom-build their own American dream. An analysis of these homes portrays the way in which new materials and appliances changed domestic life. The emergence of several materials altered home construction techniques and decreased time required for construction. Some materials included molded plywood, prefabricated window units, weather resistant plywood, latex glues, composite board products, and plastics and fiberglass. *Architectural Record* and *House and Garden* advertised innovative materials and appliances including glass block, steel products, plywood panels, asphalt tile, linoleum, thermostats, and gas equipped kitchens. A 1946 *House and Garden* issue featured an advertisement by the American Gas Association boasting, “Your new Gas range is so automatic it thinks for itself...turns on and off...cooks a delicious meal – all by a simple clock control.”¹³ Standardized building parts further industrialized the construction market which transformed the interior of the American home.

Social influences and the progress of science and technology were responsible for numerous ways in which home interiors evolved and together with powerful consumer and economic influences America transitioned to new modern living.

¹² Kaledin, *Daily Life in the United States*, 47.

¹³ *House and Garden*, August 1946, 10.

Consumer and economic ideals

An unstable economy characterized consumer society prior to World War II. Although America was ready for the construction of new homes, the building boom was halted by the Great Depression. Restrictions on housing during the time helped to stimulate the development of new materials.

The Great Depression was followed by President Franklin Roosevelt's New Deal, designed to regulate money policy and generate economic growth through the creation of jobs. The New Deal established numerous administrations including the Works Progress Administration, National Recovery Act, Civilian Conservation Corps, and National Youth Administration. With the real effects argued by historians, the New Deal did restore Americans faith in the federal government.

Besides Roosevelt's unprecedented kick-start, World War II was also instrumental in our economic recovery. The country was poised for the expansion of home construction and had the expertise to produce homes that would ultimately change the fabric of America's landscape. The readiness for change rooted in the mindset of many Americans triggered the investment of accumulated savings from the interwar years. Favorable post-war home financing came in the form of the Federal Housing Administration and Veteran's Affairs loans, with low interest rates and low down payments. As a result, families were able to invest in the American dream. Suburbia was on the rise.

Women contributed to the workforce in historic proportions during the war. They comprised a significant part of the skilled labor force and were prepared to continue their duties there. Singer and songwriter Woody Guthrie released *Sally, Don't You Grieve* as a tribute to

woman who would enter the workforce during the war. He wrote,

Sally, get a job and save your pay
Work your best for the U.S.A.
Write me a letter 'bout ever' day
And I told her not to grieve after me¹⁴

¹⁴ Available from: <http://www.geocities.com/Nashville/3448/guthrie.html>. Accessed online.

CHAPTER THREE

HOUSE PLAN FORMS

We must realize the ultimate architectural responsibility for the design of America's houses. The custom-designed house of the well-to-do today becomes the model for the imitators all down the line tomorrow. Style seeps downward. So we may expect, in time, a pervading style based on the architects' efforts of today, even on the experimental houses of the present. Since both good and bad features of the architects' work seem to be copied indiscriminately, it behooves the profession to eliminate the less desirable features, the inept and the ugly, at the drawing board stage and to emphasize the innovations that really contribute to greater convenience, livability, efficiency, economy and adaptability – to a better home environment for the American family.¹⁵

Innovative house plans proliferated in America's post-war market as a response to advanced technology and science and new cultural patterns. An intense examination of the home by architects and designers led to ambitious strategies to modernize the American home. Inventive modern house plans were showcased in specialized consumer trade publications and disseminated to mainstream America. *Architectural Record* and *House and Garden* were two trade publications geared to different audiences, but both offered similar themes, concerns, and pressures of post-war America. *Architectural Record* concentrated on growing trends in commercial, industrial, and domestic architecture from 1945 to 1955. Men were the primary target audience as revealed by advertisements. *House and Garden*, a design based publication,

¹⁵ Kenneth Stowell, "Who designs America's houses?" *Architectural Record*, September 1948, 81.

dedicated a majority of its content to the interior of homes including finishes and furniture as well as topics concerning the garden. *Architectural Record* acknowledged the shift to a new design philosophy,

The public is being conditioned to new concepts of architecture, or to new emphasis at least on certain aspects of domestic architecture, through the printed word and the public press. Only a few years ago the consumer home magazines were highly critical of – and even ridiculed – the early efforts to create a more rational architecture. Today they vie with one another to show with adulation, though not always with discrimination, the latest works of the most advanced designers. As this popular movement grows, we believe that there will be more critical analysis of these houses, more help to the prospective client in separating the wheat from the chaff, more encouragement to the innovations and ideas that will prove sound.¹⁶

The analysis of plan forms published in *Architectural Record* and *House and Garden* provide physical evidence of the changes in American social, technological, and economic culture at this time and how they influenced an elite class of American society. The plans for modern living were markedly different from prior decades.

Evolution of the home

The decades preceding World War II witnessed significant changes in the purpose and plan of American homes that lends critical insight into the . The Victorian period of the middle to late nineteenth century was characterized as the ‘cult of domesticity’ by several historians.¹⁷

This era concentrated on reforming the middle class single family dwelling by implementing

¹⁶ “Houses are for Humans”, *Architectural Record*, May 1947, 119.

¹⁷ Clifford Clark, *The American Family Home: 1800-1900*. (Raleigh: University of North Carolina Press, 1986), 28.

new standards of living.¹⁸ A wide following was secured with plan-book writers, architects, temperance and abolitionist proponents, and the church which managed to shift the view of the home from its role of shelter, protection, and place of work to its moral attributes.¹⁹ Gradually, with encouragement from reformers, middle class America started to purchase new homes in the suburbs that were characterized by three popular styles including Gothic Revival, Italianate, and ‘bracketed style architecture.’²⁰ (See Figure 3.1) The reform era “hoped to eradicate vice, stabilize society, and create a more perfect world.”²¹

Riding on the coat tails of the Victorian reform era was the increased population growth accompanied by the automobile industry’s growth. The automobile gave Americans an opportunity to migrate out of the city limits and settle in suburban areas. Around the 1930s, the nation witnessed a new minimalist approach to house design with the proliferation of the bungalow. The bungalow became, to some, a national style symbolized by a simple, casual, and efficient plan form.²² (See Figure 3.2)

¹⁸ Ibid.,16.

¹⁹ Ibid.,19.

²⁰ Ibid., 23.

²¹ Ibid., 28.

²² Ibid.171.

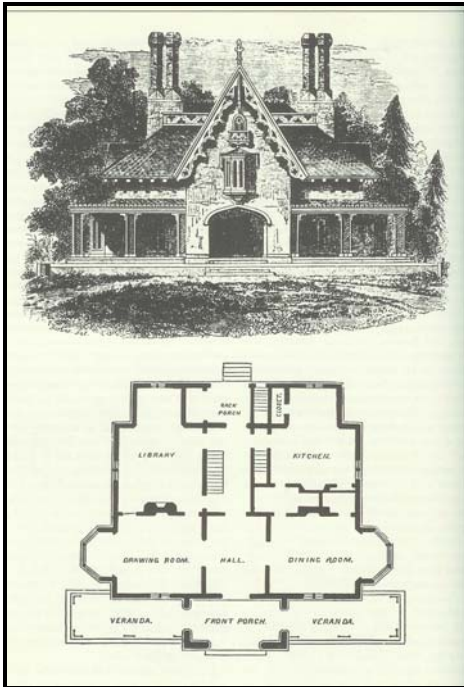


Figure 3.1. Gothic Revival house

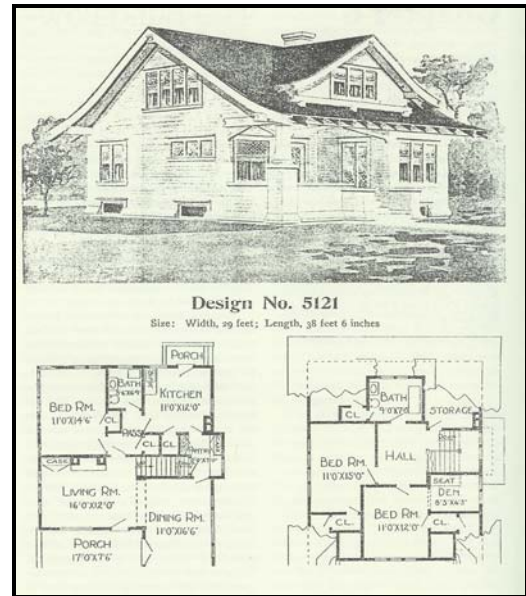


Figure 3.2. Bungalow house

The war cultivated a different social, technological, and consumer culture directly affecting America's domestic priorities. Building construction escalated in attempts to house the millions of returning veterans. The wartime ethos that reshaped America's character paralleled the transformations taking place in the nation's homes. Post-war domestic production prospered and gave increasing status to the American home.

Characteristics of the modern plan

Prevalent themes in *Architectural Record* and *House and Garden* capture the underlying principles of ideal post-war homes: economy of design and building, open plan schemes,

flexibility of rooms, compact and efficient plan forms, industry standardization, and the integration of technology. A floor plan published in *House and Garden* magazine in 1951 suggested the themes prevalent to the modern home. (See Figure 3.3)

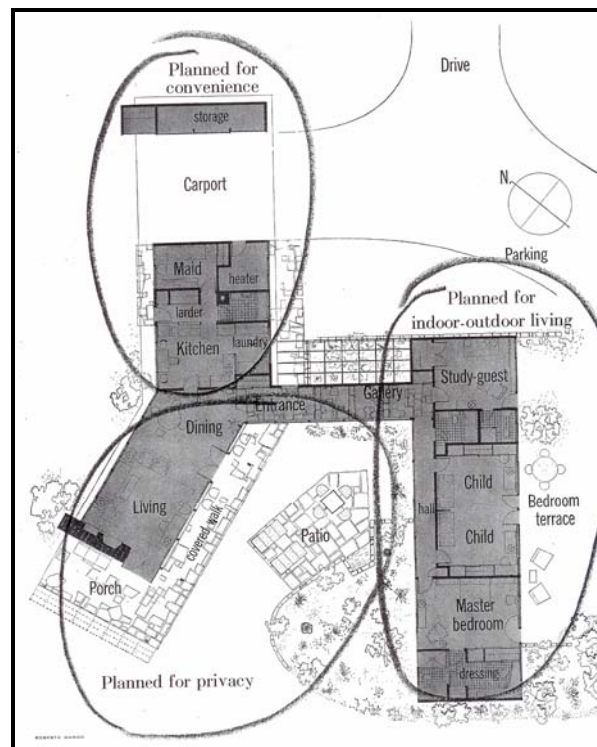


Figure 3.3. “Our House of Ideas” *House and Garden*. July 1951. Page 32.

These themes were not based on tastes and trends, but were substantial responses to the transition of post-war culture to modern living. *Architectural Record* addressed the distinction: “It seems accurate to make a distinction between fads, which seem motivated by no important forms, and those manners or fashions which are powerfully moved by existing conditions.”²³

As the plan form of American homes started to shift and new themes emerged, *Architectural Record* reminded readers of the fundamental principles of the home. The article,

²³ *Architectural Record*, May 1947, 106.

“Houses are for Humans” appeared in the 1947 May issue and reminded readers that the basic principles of house design would not change in the Modern era. A fourteen point checklist for home planners was listed as follows:

1. Protection from the elements – from rain, storm wind, fire, dust and changes in temperature.
2. Safety of persons and personal property from harm or loss by persons, animals or insects.
3. Privacy from intrusion by unwanted persons, sights or sounds. Individual privacy for each person.
4. Convenience in space arrangement, furnishing and equipment, for ease in use and to save time, steps, work; minimizing costs of operations and repair.
5. Flexibility. Adaptability to changing needs and uses.
6. Abundance of air, light (natural and artificial) and sunshine, with devices for their selective control.
7. Temperature and humidity control.
8. Sound control.
9. Complete sanitary facilities.
10. Facilities for rest, recreation, exercise and cultural and social activities.
11. Facilities for food preservation, storage, preparation and consumption.
12. Means of dirt, dust, and refuse elimination.
13. Means of communication within and without.
14. Esthetic appeal – that elusive hard-to-define character (beauty, if you will) that produces in the beholder and user a spiritual lift, a sense of well-being of appropriateness of form, color, and materials to their purpose.²⁴

It was important for society to remember the fundamental principles of the home as they satisfied the increased demand for housing. Money allocated to the new construction skyrocketed shortly after the war and fueled the nation’s residential building frenzy. (See Figure 3.4)

²⁴ “Houses are for Humans”, *Architectural Record*, May 1947, 121.

ESTIMATED CONTRACT VOLUME FOR 1946 (in millions of dollars*)				
* 37 Eastern States	PROJECT TYPE	*Year 1945	Estimate Year 1946	% Change
	COMMERCIAL BUILDINGS	260	480	+ 85
	MANUFACTURING BUILDINGS	1000	900	- 10
	EDUCATIONAL AND SCIENCE BUILDINGS	95	170	+ 79
	HOSPITAL AND INSTITUTIONAL BUILDINGS	125	170	+ 36
	PUBLIC BUILDINGS	15	50	+ 233
	RELIGIOUS BUILDINGS	30	60	+ 100
	SOCIAL AND RECREATIONAL BUILDINGS	60	100	+ 67
	MISCELLANEOUS NONRESIDENTIAL BUILDINGS	155	150	- 3
	Total Nonresidential Buildings	1740	2080	+ 20
	APARTMENT BUILDINGS, HOTELS AND DORMITORIES	95	225	+ 137
	ONE- AND TWO-FAMILY HOUSES	348	1100	+ 216
	OTHER SHELTER	42	25	- 68
	Total Residential Buildings	485	1350	+ 178
	TOTAL BUILDING	2225	3430	+ 54
	PUBLIC WORKS AND UTILITIES	935	1320	+ 41
	TOTAL CONSTRUCTION	3160	4750	+ 50

Note: Estimates here given include volume of contracts and work started on new construction and major alterations and additions, such figures being comparable with F. W. Dodge Corporation's factual records.

* 9 Months Actual
3 Months Estimated

Figure 3.4. *Architectural Record*.
December 1945. Page 81.

Efficient and compact plans

America's ideal post-war home incorporated efficient and compact plans. Several issues of both *Architectural Record* and *House and Garden* presented efficient and compact plans as a means to successful residential planning. The 1945 February issue of *Architectural Record* published an article entitled "For Post-war Life at Post-war Costs". The article featured a house plan for Mr. and Mrs. Robert located in Portland, Oregon, designed by architect Van Evera Bailey. The architect commented on the efficiency of the scheme, "I have tried to compress the den part of living into a bed-sitting room, which anyway I think has a lot of merit, rather than

having what usually turns out to be two living rooms, with one favored to the exclusion of the other.”²⁵ Another article from the 1945 December issue featured a Pennsylvania house designed by architect Hugh Stubbins, Jr. The plan eliminated wasted space such as hallways and adopted an open plan with a movable partition for guest quarters. Essentially the concept of one large living room was achieved through minimal partitions. The entry opens onto a dining area adjacent to the fireplace. The transition of floor materials set off the dining area. (See Figure 3.5)

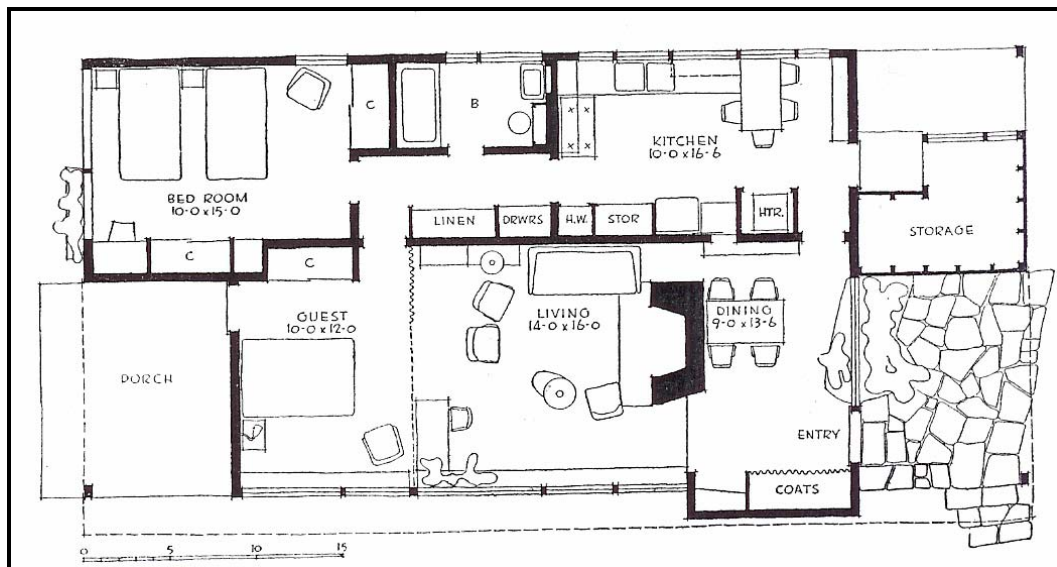


Figure 3.5. *Architectural Record*. “Pennsylvania”
December 1945. Page 110.

The residence for Mr. and Mrs. A.W. and Lieutenant George Hitchcock, in Highland Park, Illinois, was designed by architect L. Morgan Yost. The L-shaped plan form maximized space and incorporated the design of a partial basement and a living room service quarter as well as separate sleeping quarters. (See Figure 3.6)

²⁵ “For Post-war Life at Post-war costs”, *Architectural Record*, February 1945, 98.

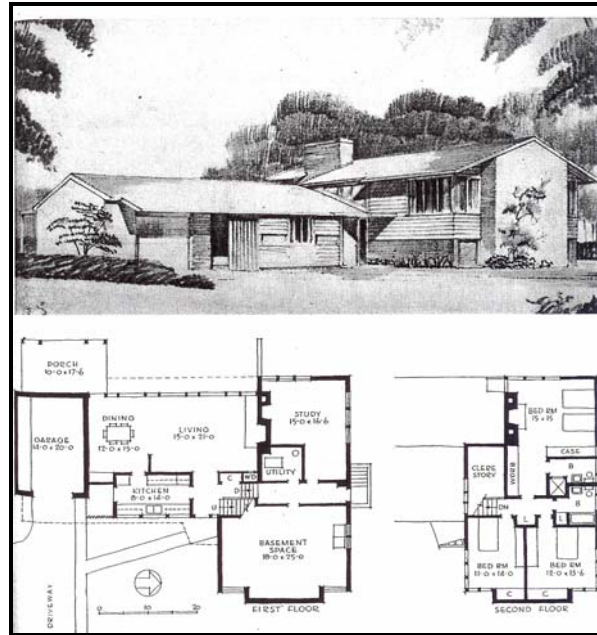


Figure 3.6. *Architectural Record*. “Illinois”
December 1945. Page 113.

Another residence in Highland Park, Illinois, for Mr. and Mrs. J.C. Frehner, was also designed by architect L. Morgan Yost. The close knit interior scheme revealed another example of compact, efficient planning to suit modern lifestyles. The three-level open plan created distinct private and public spaces within a small square foot plan. (See Figure 3.7)

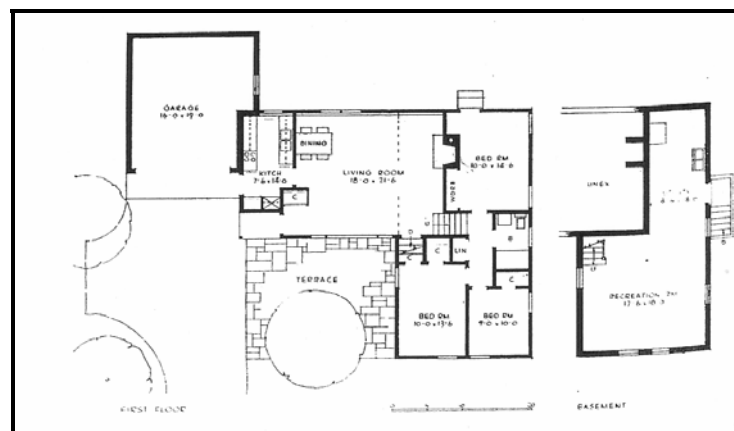


Figure 3.7. *Architectural Record*. “Illinois”
December 1945. Page 114.

Efficient and compact modern house plans were not isolated to specific regions in the country, but rather were disbursed throughout the nation. As a result, a region's climate sometimes dictated the house plan form. For instance, a Miami, Florida residence for Mr. and Mrs. N. M. Kaplan, designed by Snyder, Nims, and Lowry architects, offered a space well-suited to tropical living. The open plan scheme maximized outdoor and indoor living area and permitted abundant ocean views. The layout also provided compact bedrooms and servant quarters on the same level with the elimination of hallways. (See Figure 3.8)

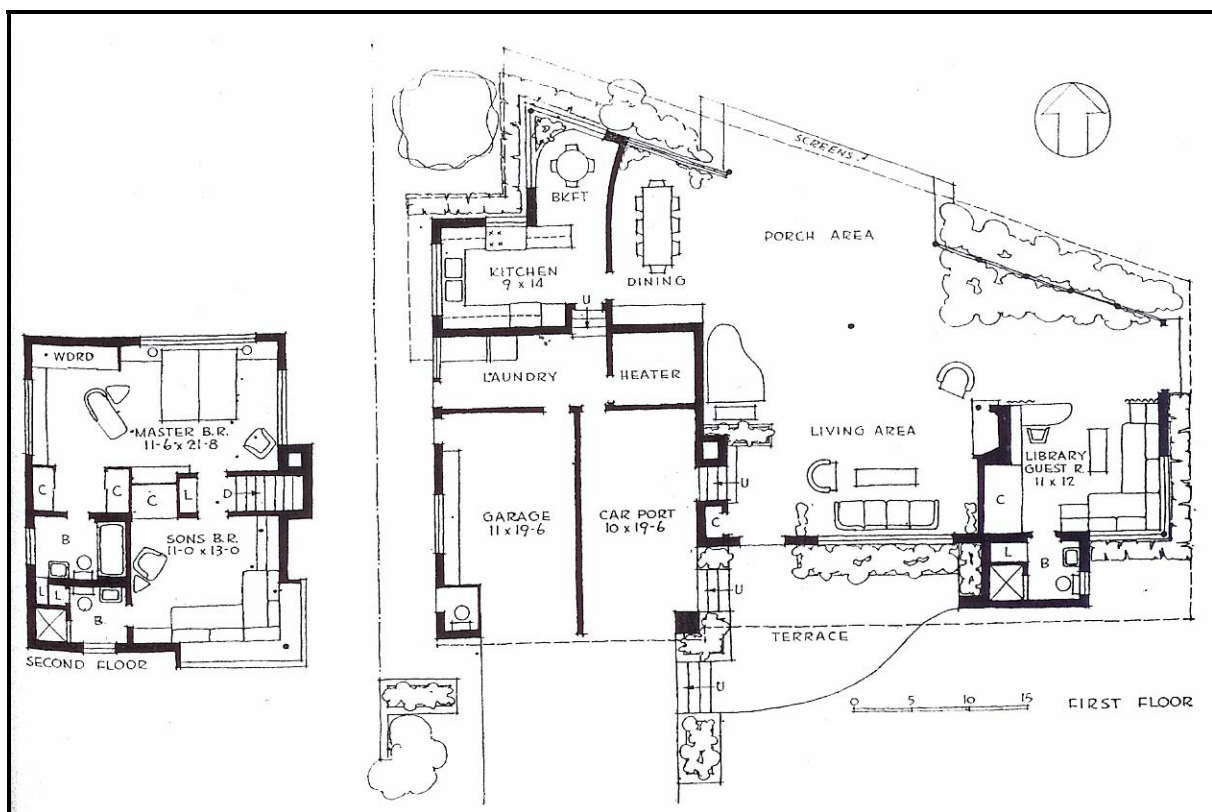


Figure 3.8. *Architectural Record*. "Florida"
December 1945. Page 115.

California designer Albert Henry Hill collaborated with Eckbo, Royston, and Williams, landscape architects, to create a compact and convenient small house. The house for Captain and Mrs. W.S. Chitarin, in Carmel, California, was featured in the 1945 September issue of *Architectural Record*. (See Figure 3.9)

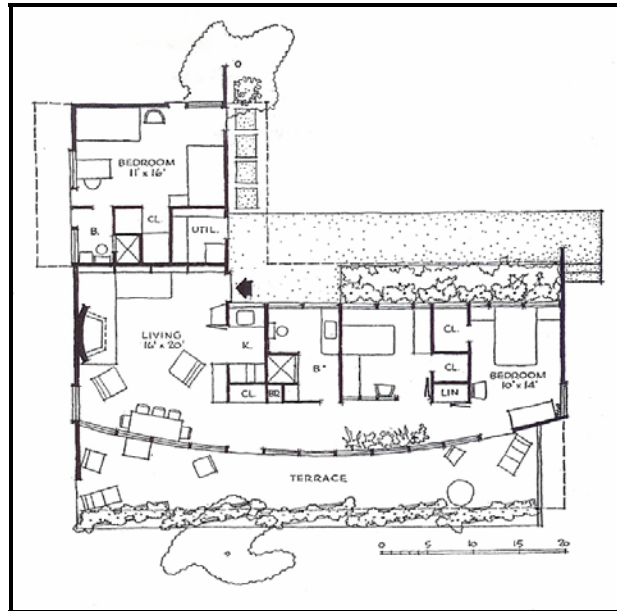


Figure 3.9. *Architectural Record*. "The Bow front faces the blue Pacific" September 1945. Page 101.

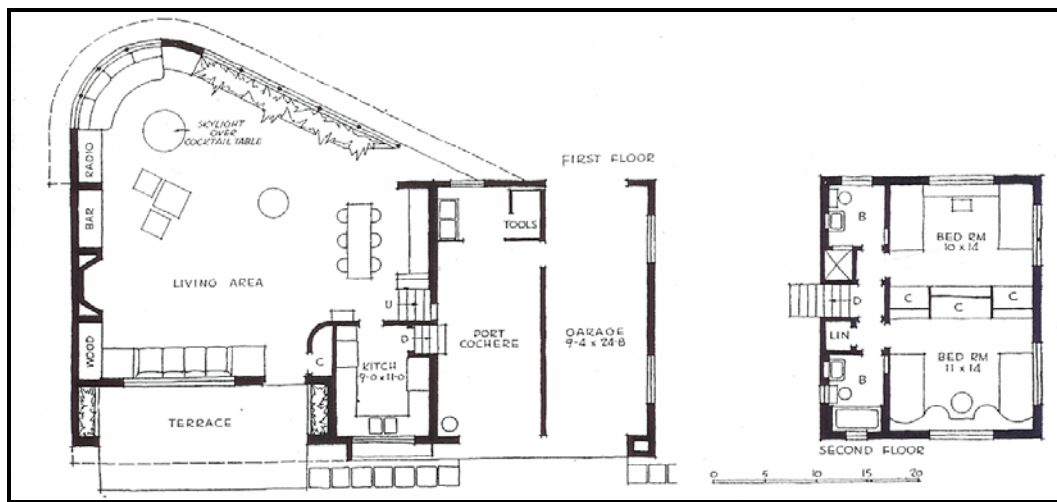


Figure 3.10. *Architectural Record*. "Florida" December 1945. Page 117.

Many experiments conducted after the war afforded solutions to the pursuit for the ideal small, compact, efficient American home. Although Modernism was a prevalent theme throughout *Architectural Record* and *House and Garden*, it was not the only means explored for efficient contemporary living. An article featured in the 1955 May edition of *House and Garden*, “Plan a Good House”, illustrated a traditional colonial floor plan and a modern plan form, both exhibiting exceptional qualities of a good small house. Some of the qualities listed included: a floor plan arranged for privacy and ease of circulation, exceptional storage space, an efficiently divided kitchen, large windows and doors open to a large terrace and privacy from the street. A small, but open interior plan was designed by architect Mr. L. Brooks Martin for his home in Bryan, Texas. Martin incorporated an expansive spreading roof as shielding from the heat. (See Figure 3.11)

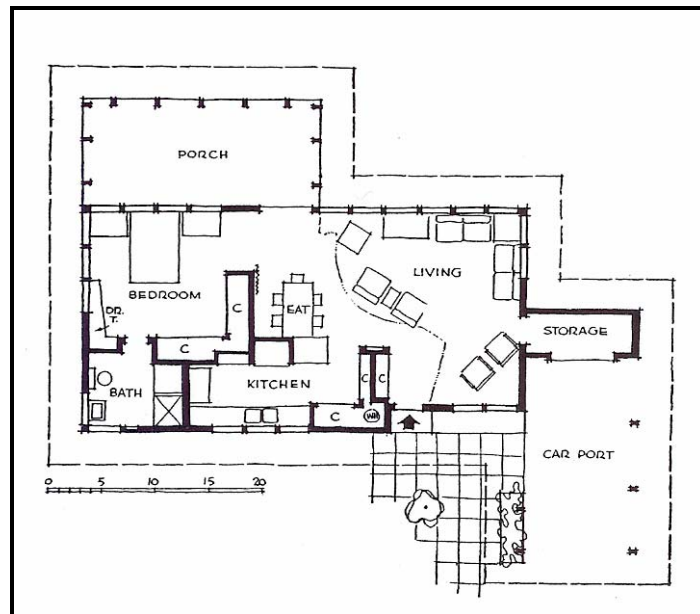


Figure 3.11. *Architectural Record*. “Where a spreading roof is a big asset”
September 1945. Page 112.

Another example of a small compact plan was the residence of Mr. and Mrs. Ted Bonnet in Hollywood, California, designed by architect Richard J. Neutra. “[The] little house with a western look” was featured in the September 1948 issue of *Architectural Record*. (See Figure 3.12)

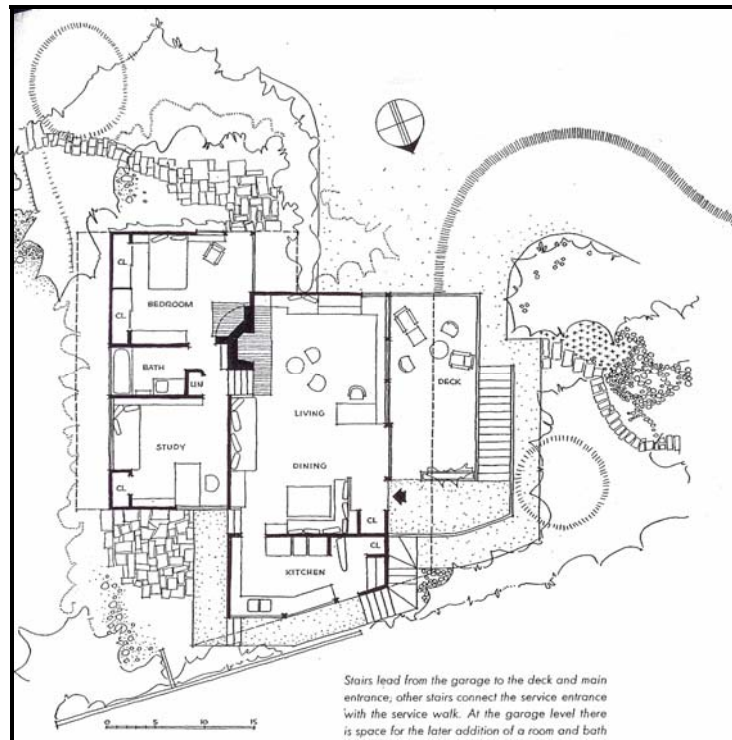


Figure 3.12. *Architectural Record*. “A little house with a western look”
September 1945. Page 105.

Flexible plans

Modern lifestyles encouraged plan forms to follow principles for increased flexibility. The residence for Dr. Harry C. East of Andover, Massachusetts was designed in this vein. Architect Hugh Stubbins Jr. carefully tailored areas of the floor plan to meet specific functions. The resulting plan form was open, casual, and flexible. (See Figure 3.13)

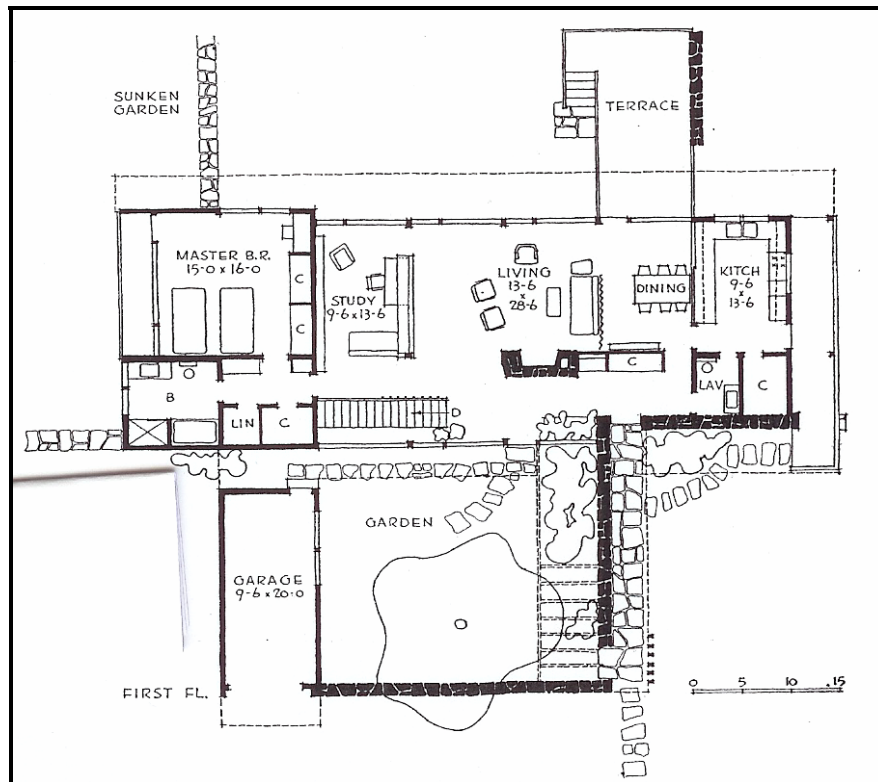


Figure 3.13. *Architectural Record*. "Massachusetts"
December 1945. Page 109.

Private plans

A large portion of print media focused on the need for privacy in the ideal American home, an emerging issue with a growing population. The residence illustrated in the article "For Privacy on a Narrow Plot" addressed the need for privacy from neighboring properties. The residence of Mrs. E. Telfer in Berkeley, California was designed by architect Frederick L. Confer. All of the luxuries of modern living were located in a confined area. (See Figure 3.14)

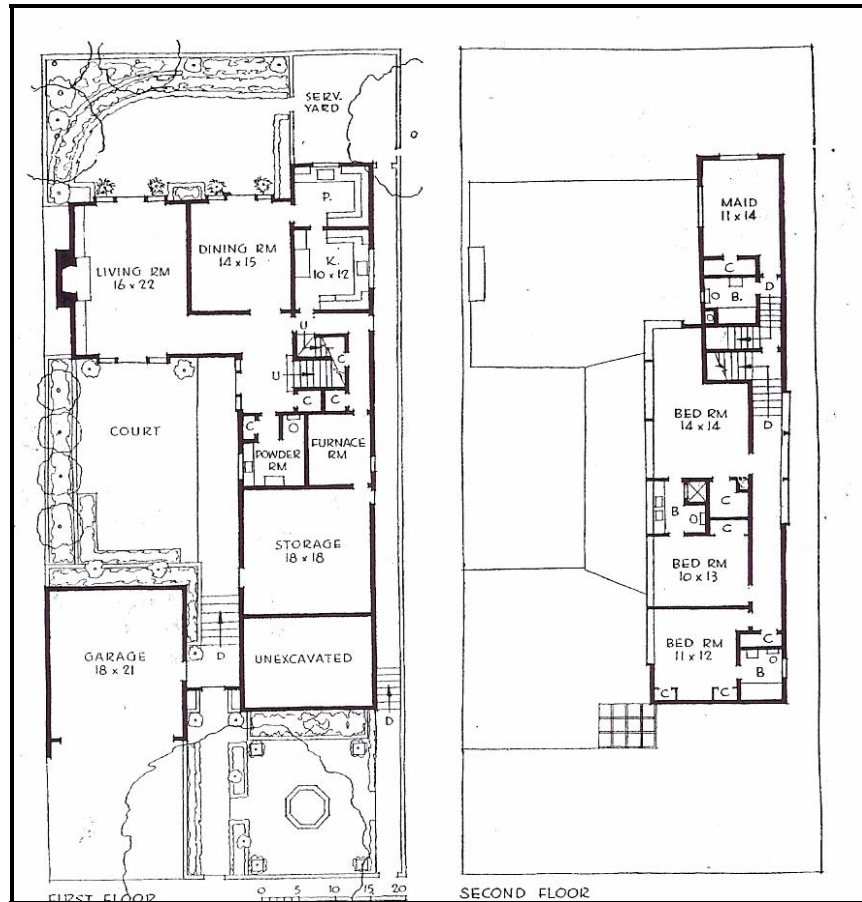


Figure 3.14. *Architectural Record*. "For Privacy on a narrow plot"
February 1945. Page 81.

Architect Francis Joseph McCarthy in collaboration with landscape architect Thomas Church designed a residence for Mr. and Mrs. Clarence Bowman in San Rafael, California as featured in the 1951 February issue of *Architectural Record*. The steep site contained a two-and one-half car garage building with a surrounding terrace. The central focus of the interior was the large fireplace with a sunken hearth. Modern principles were utilized in the exterior landscaping plan with the implementation of curved lines and the integration of the interior and exterior. (See Figure 3.15)

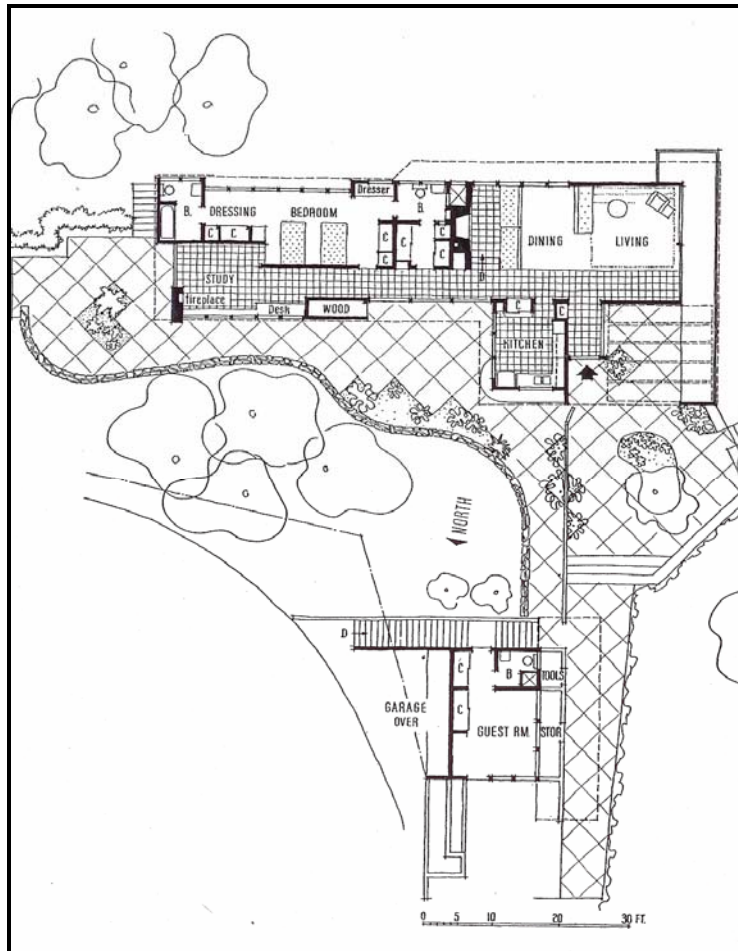


Figure 3.15. *Architectural Record*. “Hillside site used to obtain maximum privacy”
February 1951. Page 108.

Integration of indoor and outdoor plans

Blended indoor and outdoor spaces were common in many modern plans featured in both *Architectural Record* and *House and Garden*. Exterior spaces often achieved equal status to interior living spaces. The exterior became an extension to indoor living. Numerous articles in *Architectural Record* and *House and Garden* suggested modern living was an ability to transition

seamlessly from interior to exterior space. One article captured the essence of merging interior and exterior spaces. The residence for Mr. Herbert N. Witt of Kent Woodlands, California was designed by architect Howard Moise in a well coordinated effort to provide appropriate space for capturing views of the surrounding landscape. (See Figure 3.16)

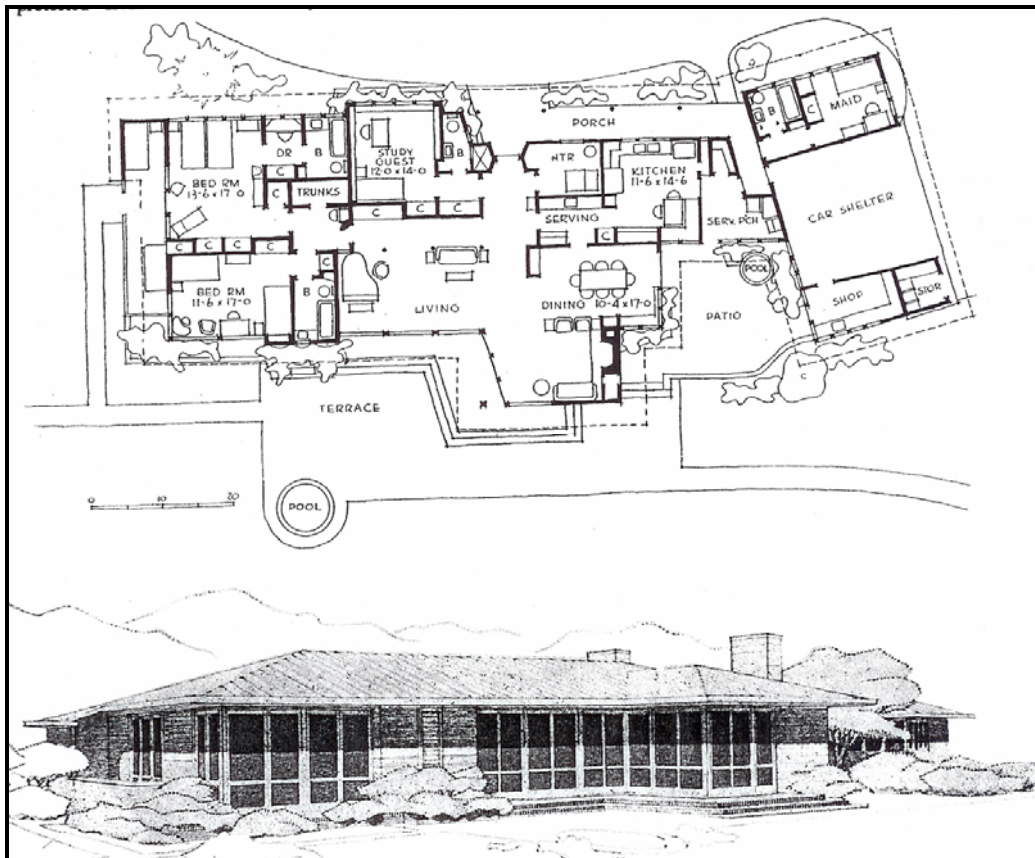


Figure 3.16. *Architectural Record*. "California"
December 1945. Page 111.

The 1953 March issue of *Architectural Record* featured the article, "Ranch House: (no quotes) for the (once) Wild West". The residence featured in this article was designed for Lawrence Minnick by architect Lawrence G. Waldron. (See Figure 3.17)

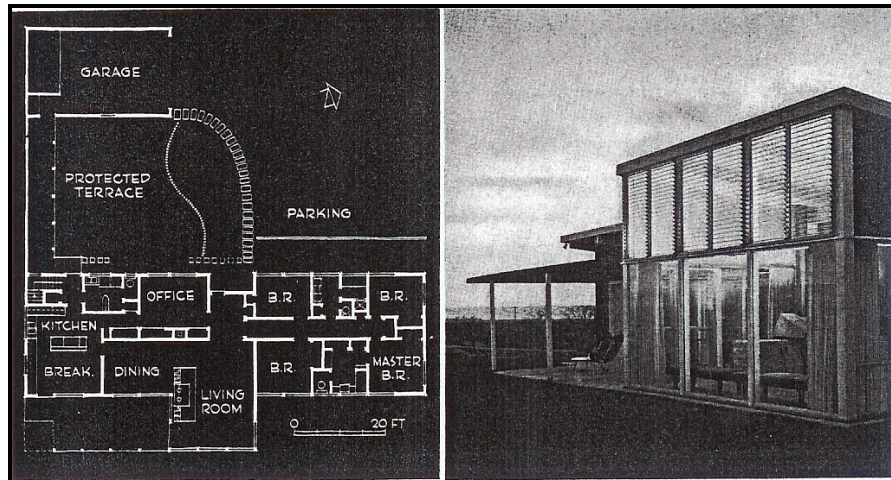


Figure 3.17. *Architectural Record*.
March 1953. Page 163.

The Mills' residence near Danville, California was designed by Anshen & Allen, architects for a family of four. The one story wood frame construction was oriented to take advantage of the surrounding views. The living room makes the most of the view with large windows and doors that open directly onto an open terrace. (See Figure 3.18)

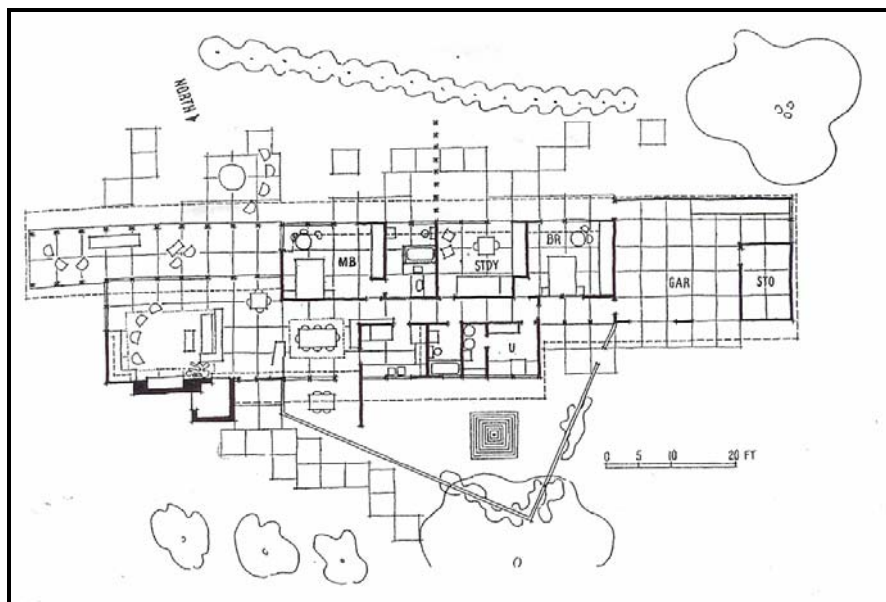


Figure 3.18. *Architectural Record*. February 1951. Page 113.

Standardization of plans

Another theme common throughout *Architectural Record* and *House and Garden* magazines addressed industry standardization for various rooms of the home. Particularly, the kitchen and bathroom were reconsidered during the Modern era as a result of new appliances, materials, and technology. Various heights for countertops, adjacency of kitchen appliances, and the layout of the kitchen and bathroom were maximized for efficiency and function. A July 1948 issue of *House and Garden* featured an article discussing new cooking heights, “Any housewife knows there is no one height that is right for all kitchen jobs. The kitchen on these pages is revolutionary in design because it allows for some of the work to be done standing up, some of it sitting down.”²⁶ Another issue of *House and Garden* illustrated a kitchen that achieved comfort through convenience. The article boasted, “Instead of looking like a clinic, the kitchen is now a friendly, congenial common room.”²⁷ (See Figure 3.19.) Many of the plans featured throughout this time period in *Architectural Record* and *House and Garden* exhibited clever, functional, articulate solutions based on calculated human behavior.

²⁶ “New cooking heights”, *House and Garden*, July 1948.

²⁷ “House of Ideas” *House and Garden*, July 1951, 51.

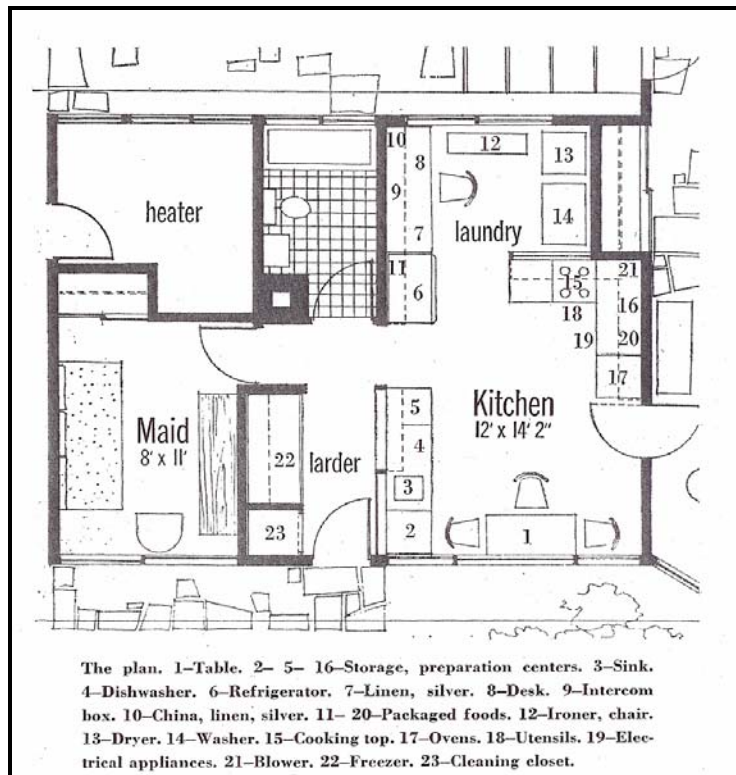


Figure 3.19. *House and Garden*. “Comfort through convenience”
July 1951. Page 52.

The house designed by architect Carl Koch for the Bitter family of Cambridge, Massachusetts reiterates the importance of custom-designed homes of the post-war era. The article commented, “we have the freedom to design the environment and facilities for the particular way of life for the individual family.”²⁸ Conveniences were incorporated into the design of this home such as radiant heating in the concrete floor and in the ceiling of the living room and service wing. (See Figure 3.20)

²⁸ “Planned for a Pleasanter Life”, *Architectural Record*, January 1949, 76.

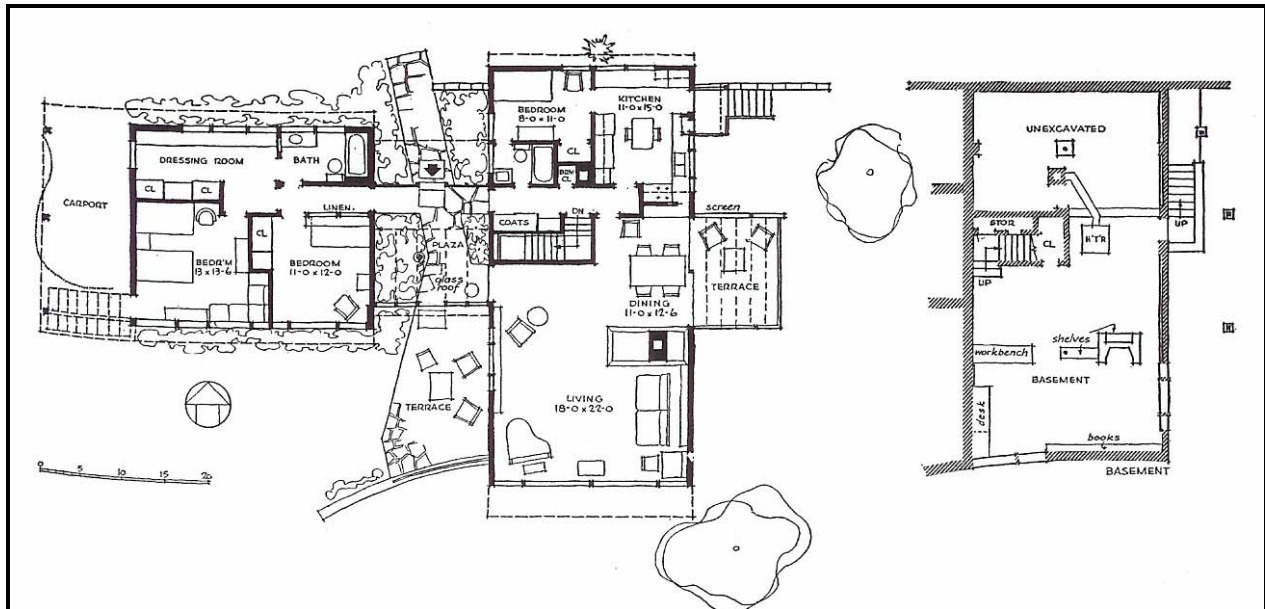


Figure 3.20 *Architectural Record*. “Planned for a pleasanter life”
January 1949. Page 76.

Servant-less plans

Changing family dynamics triggered the reexamination of plan forms. The advent of modern technology helped to eliminate the need for servants. Several articles addressed the interior schemes that eliminated servant quarters and welcomed modern conveniences. “Planned for a servant-less way of life” was one article that addressed the independence attained through home’s layout. The residence in Ladue, Missouri, designed by Robert Elkington, featured a kitchen adjacent to the bedrooms for ease of use and also located a laundry area adjacent to the home’s entry for convenience. (See Figure 3.21)

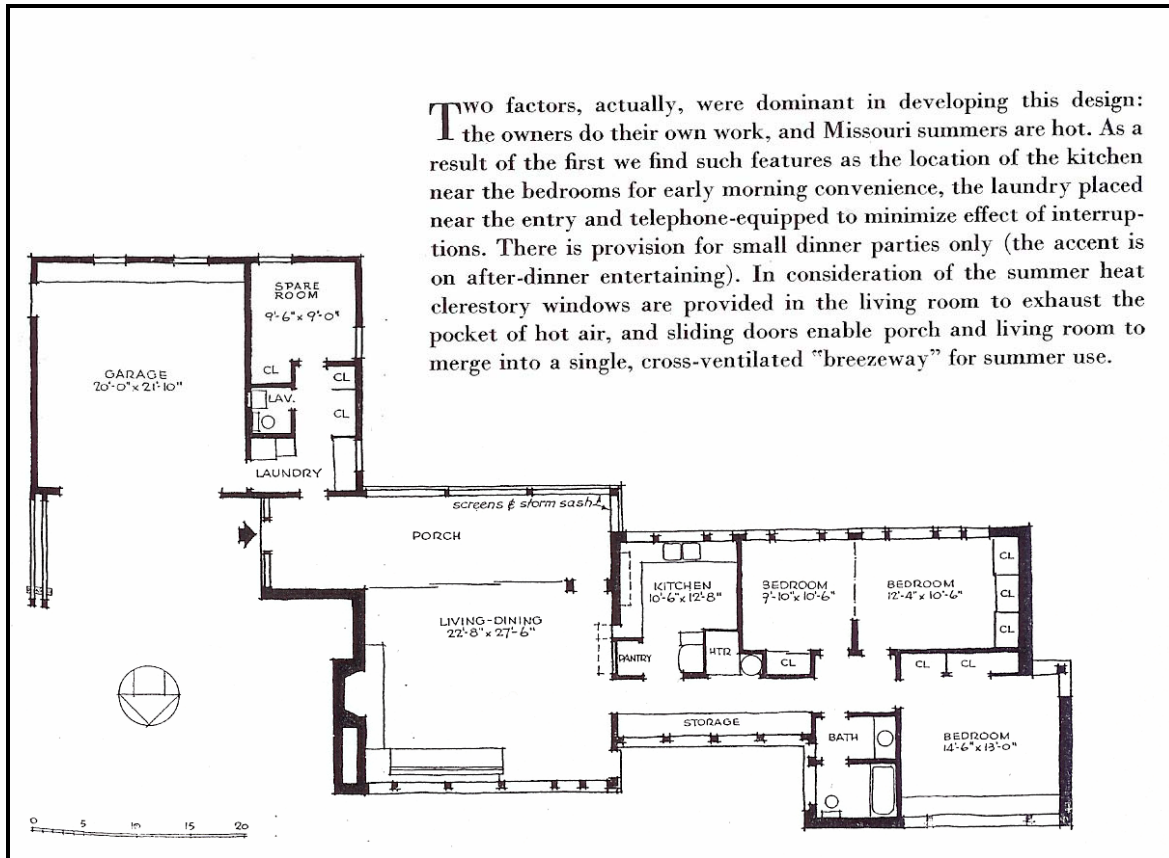


Figure 3.21. *Architectural Record*. "Planned for a servant less way of life"
April 1949. Page 127.

House and Garden published an article in its 1948 August issue that illustrated a plan independent of servants. (See Figure 3.22) The living room was the central focus of the interior layout and was positioned for commanding views of the surrounding landscape.

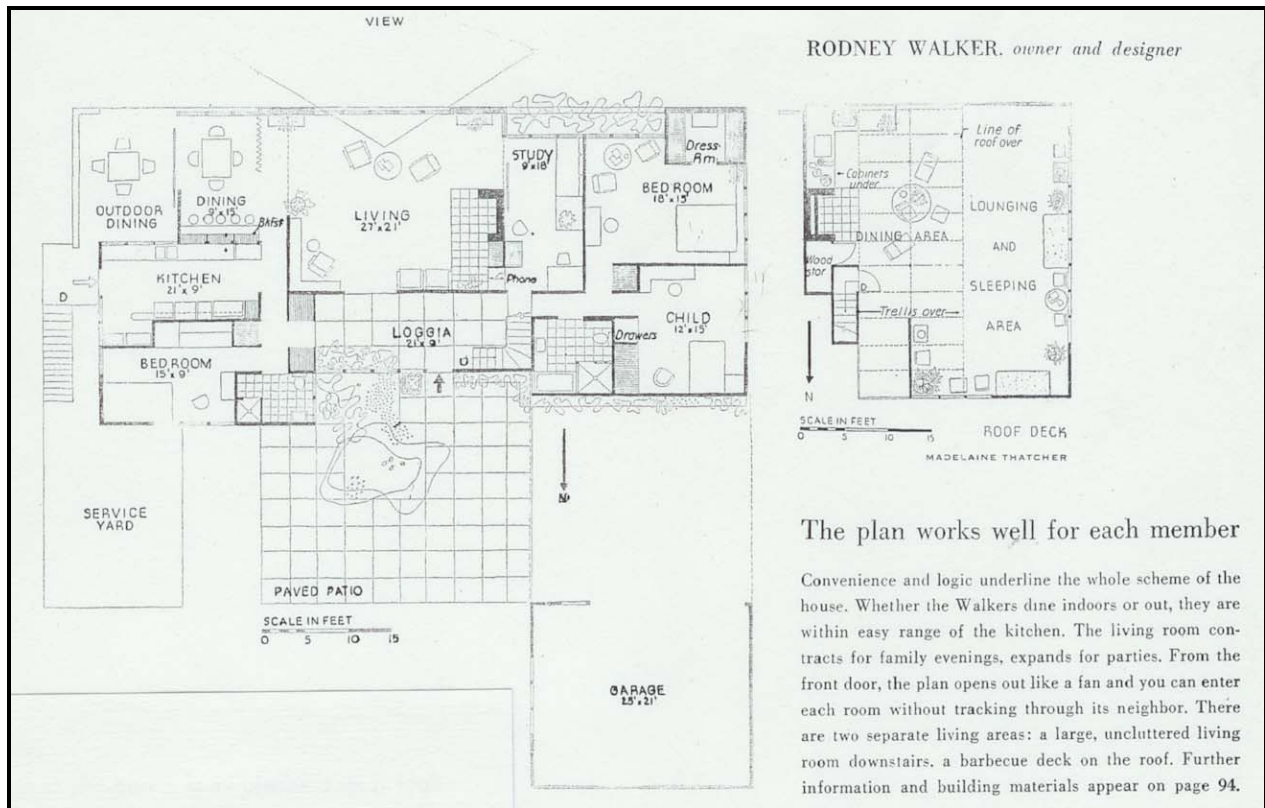


Figure 3.22. *House and Garden*. "A house that does not depend on servants"
August 1948. Page 38.

Room evolution

While the previous plans illustrate modern room adjacencies and sequencing, they do not address the functions of individual rooms within the home. The emergence of the open plan form greatly altered the function of rooms within the modern home especially the living room, dining room and kitchen. These areas started to share functions such as entertaining and eating.

The themes characterizing modern interiors were accompanied by harmonious changes in the individual functions of rooms including the kitchen, living room, bathroom and bedroom.

Kitchen

The traditional kitchen of prewar years underwent major redesign in the post-war years. *Architectural Record* and *House and Garden* addressed the kitchen and its development in many articles. Efficient storage, an appropriate mixture of counter heights, proximity of appliances, and new appliance offerings were discussed in several issues. *House and Garden* published, “The average American housewife prepares 1,085 meals a year.” as inspiration for reconsideration.²⁹ The frequency of use and need for efficiency in the kitchen fueled interest in new layouts. The popularity of the kitchen and its redesign was also stimulated by advertisement companies. One author commented, “After the war, all advertising energies went into getting women back into the kitchen.”³⁰ With focused attention on the kitchen, formulaic plans were derived and the kitchen was revealed in a new way to accommodate modern living.

House and Garden published an article in 1951 that listed ways to make a kitchen work well. The following were some of the points listed:

- You can hand the supplies from the freezer and larder through a pass-through in the wall for preparation work.
- Have baking center next to sink with its own supplies stored in cabinets above and below.
- Hooded lights attached beneath wall cabinets give you direct light on the job at hand.
- Front-opening dishwasher leaves countertop clear for sorting, stacking, etc.
- Electric disposal sink takes care of the refuse.
- Store dishes and glasses in cabinets directly over your dishwasher.³¹

²⁹ “3-way Kitchen”, *House and Garden*. July 1954, 53.

³⁰ Kaledin, *Daily Life in the United States*, 47.

³¹ “Attain a new standard of comfort through convenience”, *House and Garden* July 1951, 51.

The previous points illustrate the concern for efficiency with a focus on equipment placement.

Another article from a July 1953 *House and Garden* issue reiterated the need for efficient kitchen layout. This article promoted a three-way kitchen layout that proclaimed to simplify cooking, cleaning, and serving.³² (See Figure 3.23) The kitchen was divided to provide distinct zones for food preparation, laundry, and cleaning. Another publication discussed how one family gained livability through the remodeling of their kitchen with mention of a peninsula area to provide a dining area. (See Figure 3.24)

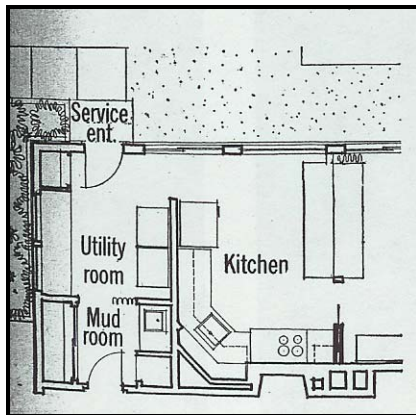


Figure 3.23.
House and Garden. July 1954. Page 53.

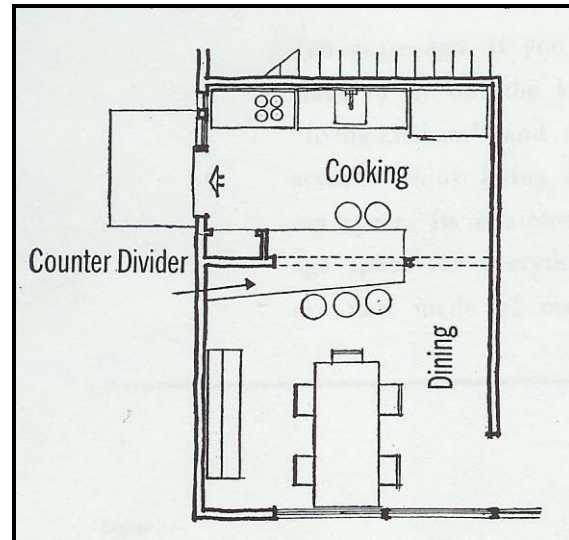


Figure 3.24.
House and Garden. August 1954. Page 67.

The L-shaped kitchen was also introduced with a stress on the need for housewives to be efficient in the kitchen. In this suggested plan, a serving counter separates the dining area from the cooking and is adjacent to a fireplace for optional indoor grilling. (See Figure 3.25) In the same article a kitchen was presented that maximized exterior views and created multiple options for dining areas both interior and exterior. (See Figure 3.26)

³² Ibid., 53.

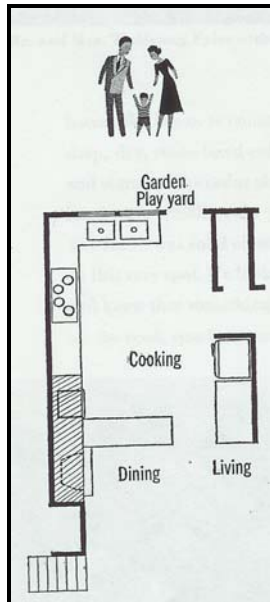


Figure 3.25.

House and Garden. October 1954. Page 67.

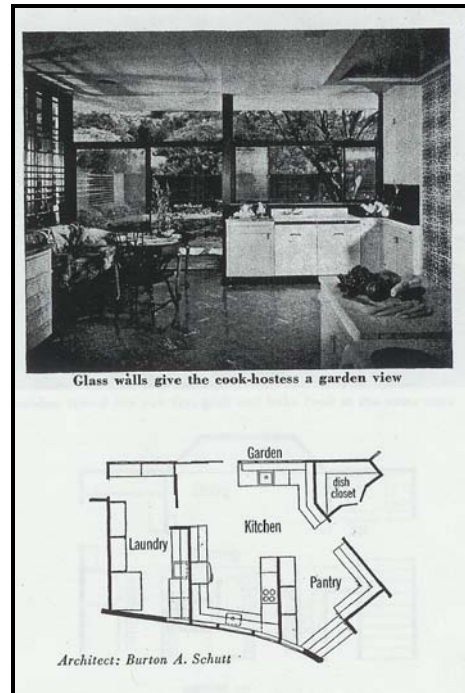


Figure 3.26.

House and Garden. October 1954. Page 63.

Bathroom

Bathrooms planned for single family dwellings were another room receiving attention from magazines throughout the era. New ideas for bathrooms centered on the availability of new equipment and new materials. One article expressed, “There is more to a new bathroom now than a tub, toilet and lavatory just as there is more to the kitchen than range, refrigerator and sink. The bathroom is becoming a more useful, comfortable and attractive room because of such new planning concepts and new equipment...”³³

³³ “Bathrooms are more practical and prepossessing today”, *House and Garden*, August 1950, 54.

Suggestions were given to readers engaged in remodeling and building new homes.

Some of the factors mentioned included separating fixtures in separate compartments for quicker access to multiple users, installation of direct and indirect lighting fixtures, countertop

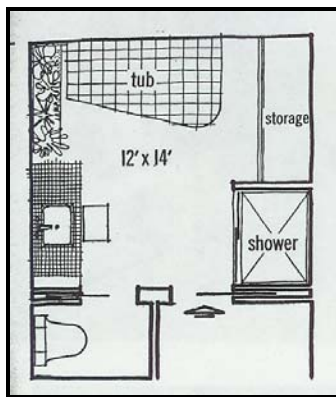


Figure 3.27.

House and Garden. April 1955. Page 85.

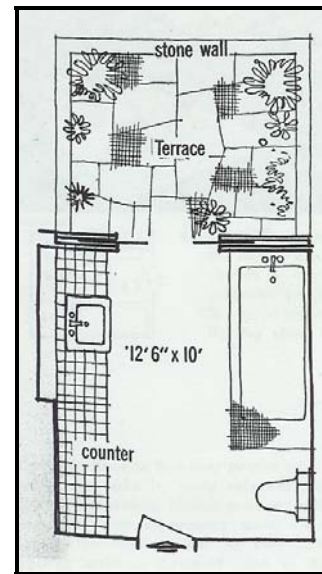


Figure 3.28.

House and Garden. April 1955. Page 85.

CHAPTER FOUR

FURNITURE

For the first time since 1941, significant collections of new furniture and fabrics are for sale in shops across the U.S.A. They are marked by identifiable, vigorous American designs.³⁴

Architectural Record and *House and Garden* not only illustrated the evolution of interior plan forms but also captured some of the changing trends in American furniture design after World War II. Throughout the years following the war, it was apparent that a clear independent American style had evolved, owing much of its success to talented designers. Backing the successful transformation of modern interiors were not only creative designers but also the availability of new technology, expressive materials, and refined manufacturing techniques.

House and Garden, in particular, dedicated several issues throughout the mid-century to the progression of American furniture. In 1945 *House and Garden* acknowledged the powerful influences of modern society on the evolution of American furniture styles,

Contemporary architecture and furniture are the result of the impact of modern inventions and new concepts of living. They focus freshly found principles on daily domestic existence. For many years they have been approaching, in one form or another, the point where their plans cease to be novelties for a few and become acceptable to many.³⁵

³⁴ "1947: Design year in the U.S.A." *House and Garden*, March 1947, 26.

³⁵ "Awards in Architecture", *House and Garden*, August 1945, 33.

House and Garden also focused on the appeal of American furniture in its July 1949 issue.

“Only in the U.S.A.” featured a cross section of American designers advancing novel concepts in the field of design. The article presented a range of household items ranging from refrigerators to wallpaper, while profiling the designers responsible for the proliferation of inventive furniture concepts. Key designers featured included Charles and Ray Eames, Eero Saarinen, George Nelson, Florence Knoll, Isamu Noguchi, Edward Wormley, T.H. Robsjohn-Gibbings, Jens Risom, Allan Gould and Harold M. Schwartz. The majority of these designers broke with traditional design philosophy guiding furniture design and established modern style furniture for post-war interiors. *House and Garden* commented on the clear break with European tradition that this new style of furniture signaled,

It is forthright. It is substantial. It is more honestly functional than any previous important collection of American furniture. Yet beauty has not been sacrificed to utility. Our designers are no longer shy of the curved line, of decorative detail for its own sake, of color to please the eye. Wartime isolation from European influence has indirectly helped to foster the maturity of these American collections.³⁶

Role of technology

The aggressive pursuit by aircraft and automobile corporations to advance technology which could benefit the war effort also helped to usher in new and exciting furniture ideas for interiors. Before the war, many American homes were furnished with mass marketed furniture

³⁶ “1947: Design year in the U.S.A”, *House and Garden*, March 1947, 26.

of mediocre to poor construction.³⁷ At the close of the war, the furniture market was positioned for significant advancement. New furniture manufacturing processes, increased availability of materials, and industry and government partnerships broadened the furniture industry's presence and popularized the modern style of home interiors. As a result, experimental furniture ideas begun decades before the war were realized in post-war America. Since the aircraft and automobile industries were primary leaders in developing new technology and processes, their specialized techniques were applied to furniture. Modern ways to construct furniture were explored and adapted, bringing modern furniture to the masses. The aircraft industry laid the foundation for the burgeoning industry with new methods for molding plastics and aluminum, advances in molded and laminated plywood, and development of industry utensils in power clamps and synthetic glues. An article on plastics appeared in the 1949 August issue of *House and Garden* boasting, "We live in a new era. Within a generation, we have seen the phenomenal rise of man-made materials-a rise so rapid that today's children are bewildered if you tell them there weren't always plastics. We accept these laboratory products as staples of contemporary living, asking not what they are, but what they can do for use. To understand them."³⁸

The partnerships between designers and the government led to new ideas. For instance, Charles and Ray Eames worked closely with the United States Navy in creating stackable leg splints made from molded plywood.

³⁷ Cara Greenberg, *Mid-Century Modern: Furniture of the 1950s*. (New York: Harmony Books, 1984), 8.

³⁸ "Plastics: a bonus in leisure made by man to make woman's lot lighter", *House and Garden*, August 1949, 66.

These early experiments were later used in their work with bent plywood furniture. The Chrysler Corporation developed a revolutionary spot welding process that allowed wood to be joined to metal, rubber, and plastic.³⁹

Ongoing research and experiments during the war broadened the palette of materials traditionally used for furniture designs. Traditional materials such as wood were complemented with the addition of new materials such as plastic, synthetic foam, and latex. The transformation of the furniture market in post-war America greatly depended on the marketability of these new materials. The new technology available to the furniture market gave designers an opportunity to experiment with the form of furniture. The design leaders featured in *Architectural Record* and *House and Garden* contributed to the large body of work that is viewed today as a distinct era in the history of furniture.

Furniture designers

Some of the designers featured in *Architectural Record* and *House and Garden* during the post-war period rejected reproductions of traditional furniture and developed a new vocabulary to express modern ideals and values. Furniture designer Terence Harold Robsjohn-Gibbings was featured in *House and Garden* for his straightforward approach to furniture design. His work celebrated rich forms and textures with clear structural harmony. His dismissal of

³⁹ Ibid., 25.

historical precedents and the perpetuation of traditional styles were central to his book entitled *Goodbye Mr. Chippendale*. Robsjohn-Gibbings also scorned the furniture industry in the United States saying it was,

...rotten to the very core [from] decades of reproducing the antique furniture of Europe and Colonial America....Not a single piece of furniture has come out of this hotbed of vulgarity, sterility and ignorance that would indicate that its so-called designers have seen anything in the contemporary architecture of America as an inspiration for new and fresh furniture.⁴⁰

Witticomb Furniture Company based in Grand Rapids, Michigan, approached Robsjohn-Gibbings in 1944 to design a line of furniture. His twelve year tenure with the company produced around two hundred furniture pieces.⁴¹

Edward Wormley was another designer featured in *House and Garden* and praised by his contemporary critics as a top recruiter for the modern camp.⁴² His primary interest in the way people lived their daily lives guided his design philosophy. His designs were often referred to as common sense approaches to delivering useful products. For instance, *House and Garden* featured his webbed front designed cabinet that allowed air to circulate and prevent musty linens while his swivel based tub chair allowed easy movement for the user. (See Figure 4.1)

⁴⁰ Available from: http://www.departures.com/ad/ad_0300_robsjohngibbings.html. Accessed 2.17.2005. Accessed online.

⁴¹ Available from: http://www.departures.com/ad/ad_0300_robsjohngibbings.html. Accessed 2.17.2005. Accessed online.

⁴² "1947: Design year in the U.S.A", *House and Garden*, March 1947, 31.



Figure 4.1. Webbed front side table.

Architect, author, and editor George Nelson was another celebrated designer of modern furniture. His collaboration with Herman Miller Furniture Company on several noteworthy pieces of modern furniture positioned him for mass market appeal. Nelson produced a sweeping collection of modern furniture for the manufacturer that is still in production today. He espoused function and aesthetic. (See Figure 4.2)

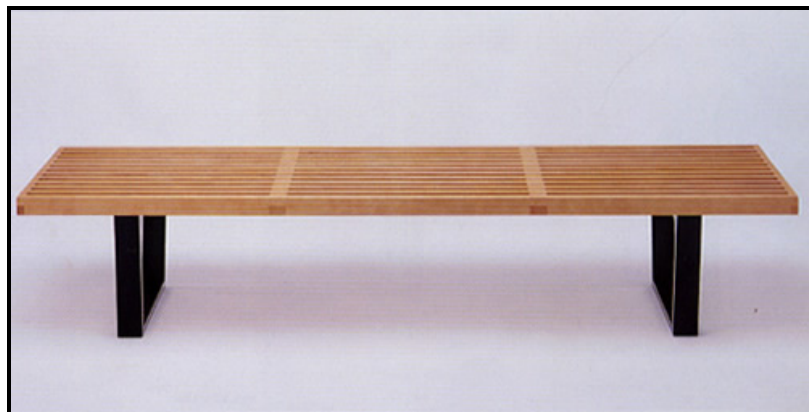


Figure 4.2. Slatted bench/Coffee table.

Other highly acclaimed designers joined the Modern camp of furniture philosophy and design and were published in both *Architectural Record* and *House and Garden*. Isamu Noguchi, sculptor and designer, contributed several designs to the field of modern furniture design. His palette-shaped dining table and stools manufactured by the Herman Miller Furniture Company were featured in *House and Garden* in a 1949 issue.



Figure 4.3. Noguchi stools. Isamu Noguchi.

Morris Sanders, celebrated modular furniture designer, was recognized in *House and Garden* magazine for his furniture based on interchangeable parts. His modular furniture was based on a six inch module that allowed good proportion and efficient manufacturing.⁴³ The flexibility of his furniture allowed for easy configuration in horizontal and vertical formats.

The designs created by furniture designer Harold M. Schwartz, "...unite drama with slide-rule efficiency."⁴⁴ *House and Garden* recognized his designs as having a sculptural effect,

⁴³ "Year of Design", *House and Garden*, July 1949, 32.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 34.

being fluid and purposeful. For instance, he would measure shirts, ties, and other personal items in order to design perfectly sized drawers.⁴⁵ (See Figure 4.4)



Figure 4.4. Dressing table. Harold Schwartz.

Other acclaimed modern designers featured in *House and Garden* were Charles and Ray Eames. When the talents of Charles and Ray Eames were coupled in 1941, the field of design exploded with a new charisma that focused on aesthetics and mass production in an effort to produce designs benefiting society and improving the quality of life. The husband and wife design team embraced a few tenants that were central to their work and included the following: production of high-quality, yet affordable furniture, well-designed, economical spaces for both living and working, an emphasis on beauty in everyday life, learning how to understand people, and presenting technology in an understandable way to the masses.⁴⁶

The early life experiences of the Eames' impacted and strengthened their design philosophies. Charles Eames was born in St. Louis, Missouri in 1907 and enjoyed a rich academic life. Charles was active in athletic programs and school politics. His work experience

⁴⁵ Ibid., 34.

⁴⁶ "The Work of Charles and Ray Eames: A Legacy of Invention [essay on-line]." Available from <http://www.loc.gov/exhibits/eames/overview.html>. Accessed online.

as a draftsman in a local steel mill gave him intimate knowledge of engineering and structure, an important concept in his work that followed with Ray. He attended Washington University and then accepted a fellowship to teach at Cranbrook Academy of the Arts in Bloomfield Hills, Michigan, under the leadership of Eliel Saarinen. Cranbrook Academy of the Arts was an internationally renowned graduate arts program that specialized in sculpture, architecture, metal working, textiles, and design

Ray Kaiser Eames was born in Sacramento, California in 1912. Ray's early encounter with notable designers, sculptors, and painters formed her solid commitment to the Modern design aesthetic that was reflected in both her early solo work and later work with Charles. Ray's early studies at the Art Students League, under the tutelage of Hans Hoffman, stressed the importance of understanding structure.⁴⁷ Both Charles and Ray's fascination with and understanding of structural integrity and ingenuity were critical in the engineering efforts of their architecture and several of their furniture designs. Ray enrolled at Cranbrook Academy of the Arts in 1940 with a strong commitment to Modern design principles. Charles and Ray met the year of her enrollment to the Academy. They married in 1940 and moved to California the following year for establishment of their design practice, the Eames Office.

The Eames Office, located in Venice, California, was an energetic and innovative environment that fostered the notion of design changing the quality of life and shaping the social attitudes of society. Charles's natural leadership ability and charisma led the office and maintained client relationships. Ray undertook the human resource responsibilities in the office and ensured the well-being of their employees. The employees at the Eames Office were highly

⁴⁷ Patricia Kirkham, *Charles and Ray Eames: Designers of the Twentieth Century*. (Boston: M.I.T. Press, 1995), 33.

innovative and possessed brilliant skills that contributed to the cultivation of the Eames Office goals. Employees were required to be well-versed in all areas of design and to be flexible. Charles and Ray both encouraged the personal growth of their employees, one of the major tenants in their design philosophy. The Eames Office not only produced architectural designs, but was also involved in the production of furniture, multi-media presentations and film.

The furniture designs produced by Charles and Ray Eames are perhaps some of the most regarded designs among the contributions to twentieth century modern furniture design.

Charles and architect Eero Saarinen collaborated on an entry for the Museum of Modern Arts Organic Furniture Competition in 1940 which addressed the use of molded plywood. Charles was intrigued with the technology required to produce molded plywood, a technology that was not yet available. Charles and Ray continued to explore molded plywood technology in their work for the United States Navy during World War II. After perfection of the machinery required for molded plywood designs, their work entered mainstream America. In 1946, the president of Herman Miller, Dirk Jan De Pree, saw an installation of the bold new furniture designs at the Museum of Modern Art in New York City after which he decided to contract with the Eames's as the exclusive manufacturer of their furniture. Herman Miller touted that the new molded plywood furniture was "...not only the most advanced part of the Herman Miller collection, but the most advanced furniture being produced in the world today".⁴⁸ Today the furniture pieces manufactured by Herman Miller reflect the Eames's dedication to designs that are universally significant.

⁴⁸ Ibid., 223.

The Dining Chair Metal, commonly referred to as DCM is a hallmark of post-war furniture. (See Figure 4.5) The chair's form was inspired by Ray's graphic work for Arts & Architecture as well as the paintings by her former professor, Hans Hoffman. The form was unique and offered, once again, a design of conflicting forms. The seat and back panels were separate pieces that produced almost an animated appearance. The tubular metal leg supports were inspired by Alexander Calder's mobiles.⁴⁹ The DCM was also manufactured in an all wood version but never gained the popularity of its metal counterpart. The DCM was profitable for the Herman Miller furniture company and added a modern collection to their traditional product lines.



Figure 4.5. DCM Chair, Eames, 1946.

In 1956, the Lounge Chair and Ottoman were introduced to the Herman Miller product line. The Lounge Chair embodied the American spirit with its upholstered comfortable seat and back. The shell was molded plywood with, typically, a rosewood veneer. The chair was also successful and accepted by the masses. (See Figure 4.6)

⁴⁹ Ibid., 224.



Figure 4.6. Lounge Chair and Ottoman, Eames, 1950.

The Eames' success with molded plywood encouraged them to try designing in other mediums as well. Plastics and fiberglass proved to be well-received, and consequently, the most popular. The development of polyester plastic reinforced fiberglass by the United States Air Force during World War II helped the Eames' further develop the shell concept that was introduced by Eero Saarinen and Charles in 1940. The first plastic shell design reached the manufacturing line in 1950. The designers who ushered in these new furniture forms left a rich legacy worthy of recognition and preservation.

CHAPTER FIVE

FINISHES

The art that is frankly decorative is the art to live with. It is, of all visible arts, the one art that creates in us both mood and temperament...The harmony that resides in the delicate proportions of lines and masses becomes mirrored in the mind. The repetitions of patterns give us rest. The marvels of designs stir the imagination.⁵⁰

Rather than radical departures, the materials used in post-war domestic interiors were traditional materials used in new ways within new limits to revolutionize the American home. The redesign of traditional materials and their application to domestic interiors confirmed the war's increased industrial pace and the adaptation of manufacturing processes that led to advanced means to modern living. During and after the war, traditional materials, that were decades old and older, were strengthened by new high style designs and newfound technologies which provided deeper color saturation, advanced adhesives, and a greater selection of patterns and styles available to architects and designers. Analysis of the finishes used in post-war domestic interiors reveals that both the exceptional and the common materials served as symbols of the dynamic post-war culture shaping the nation's domestic life.

⁵⁰ Oscar Wilde, *The Art as Critic*.

Textile industrialization

The industrialization of America's textile manufacturing techniques developed rapidly over the course of the late nineteenth century and played a critical role in the war effort. Early eighteenth century developments in manufacturing processes laid the groundwork for growth in the twentieth century. Independent cloth production in homes moved to large factory settings and positioned the textile industry for expansion and growth. Continued advances in spinning and weaving also helped to improve the process of textile production. Machine and ring spinning, power looms, finishing and coloring techniques, and the invention of the sewing machine increased product output and provided a new selection of materials for the fashion and home interior industry. The mechanization of the nineteenth and twentieth century streamlined the textile industry and its processes ultimately providing modern approaches to furnishing interiors.

Increased technological and industrial progression during the nineteenth century's Industrial Revolution continued through World War I and was perfected during the crisis of World War II. Textile industries dedicated their production energies to World War II from 1940 to 1945 and provided materials essential to fighting the war. The social ramifications of America's industrial progress were recognized during the mid 1940s,

Hundreds of manufacturing plants, throughout the nation, are constructing fabrics by weaving, knitting, twisting, and felting. These and other mills are finishing, dyeing, and printing fabrics. Huge chemical plants are making the essential chemicals. Still other companies produce synthetic fibers to add to the natural fibers. Elements from the air, water, and earth are all utilized. Nitrogen, hydrogen, oxygen, carbon and many others are combined to form often complex compounds that are used to make synthetic fibers, and chemicals for dyestuffs and finishes. Numerous plants and a vast array of intricate machinery go to make up the physical part of this tremendous branch of commerce...The

millions of Americans who produce and distribute America's fabrics attest to the full social significance of this great industry.⁵¹

Contrary to the typical household and fashion textiles being produced prior to the war, "Cotton plants wove canvas; lace machines turned out mosquito netting; wool mills made fabrics for military uniforms; silk mills wove miles of nylon parachute cloth; linen mills contributed airplane cloth; and rayon plants made yarns for tires-all a far cry from fashion's fleeting fancies."⁵² As a result of mass production acumen, high-style designs were easily mass produced and then marketed to new middle class consumers. Overall, the textile design and production capabilities transformed America's domestic appearance. Throughout the nation, residences incorporated a variety of materials, both exceptional and typical, into their homes including floor finishes, wall and window treatments, upholstery fabrics and surface materials.

Textiles

Major textiles utilized on the interior of homes were featured in *Architectural Record* and *House and Garden* and included drapery fabrics, upholstery fabrics, rugs, and carpets.

Inspiration for these textiles stemmed from a variety of contemporary sources including the automobile, television, satellite, and airplane.

⁵¹ Zelma Bendure and Gladys Pfeiffer. *America's Fabrics: Origin and History, Manufacture, Characteristics and Uses*. (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1946), 1.

⁵² *Ibid*, 3.

The modern aesthetic inspired an array of post-war textile designs with bold clean lines, abstracted and representative forms and new saturated color from new dyestuffs. Many textiles from this period in history have achieved great significance in the twenty-first century.⁵³

Avant-garde textile designers Charles and Ray Eames, Anni Albers, Alexander Girard, and George Nelson were among the leaders in their field who emerged in the twentieth century. Their innovative modern approaches to the design of textiles changed the look of interiors as illustrated in *Architectural Record* and *House and Garden*. Their work embodied a modern aesthetic that illustrated a new direction for the furniture industry. The Avant-garde designs that penetrated the post-war textile market represented only a portion of textiles used for interiors, though certain, both the exceptional and common designs of the post-war textile market contributed to the period's visual aesthetic. Author Susan Meller commented on the inclusion of ordinary fabrics in her book, *Textile Design*,

In selecting the swatches...we tended toward the typical rather than the exceptional. Most of them could easily have been replaced with others; any one design, in fact, may seem trivial, too bright, too bold- having any of the ordinary flaw as of the everyday...Yet what an extraordinary collection of images this common cloth turns out to be. Together, cumulatively, these patterns become individual words in a gigantic language of the visual imagination."⁵⁴

Similar to the author's comments above, the entirety of textiles from the post-war era represent the zeitgeist.

⁵³ Ibid, 3.

⁵⁴ Susan Meller and Joost Elffers. *Textile Designs: Two Hundred years of European and American Patterns*. (New York: Harry N. Abrams, Inc., Publishers, 1991), 13.

Avant-garde textiles

High style designers, as previously mentioned, contributed to the variety of designs available during the post-war period. Textile designer Marion Dorn was featured in a 1947 issue of *House and Garden* for her celebration of abstract and floral textile designs. Her pre-war success in England, allowed her entrance into the American design scene. Overall, her designs are inspired by nature and manipulated into bright modern abstracted works of art.

Dorothy Liebes was another textile designer featured in *House and Garden*. “From her studio in San Francisco, Dorothy Liebes has spearheaded the revival of hand weaving in America, yet found time to encourage talented young designers. Characteristic of Liebes fabrics are shocks of color, daring textures, use of accenting metallic threads.”⁵⁵

A survey of the work produced by Charles and Ray Eames during the mid-twentieth century reveals a prolific legacy in various fields of the arts including architecture, interiors, furniture design, exhibition design, textile design, graphic design, and film. Charles and Ray dedicated their lives to advancing new theories in all of these fields.

Ray Eames’ talent for arranging forms and color was paramount to the success of the Eames’ textile productions and graphic designs. Her contribution to textile design has recently been reintroduced into twenty-first century interiors. The Maharam Corporation, a wholesale textile retailer, introduced a new textiles product line in the year 2000 called “Textiles of the 20th Century”. The product line resurrected textile designs from some of the most prominent twentieth century designers.

⁵⁵ “Design year in the U.S.A”, *House and Garden*, July 1947.

Anni Albers, Verner Panton, Arne Jacobsen, Alexander Girard, George Nelson, and Charles and Ray Eames were among the designers whose work was featured in the collection. Eames's textile patterns included in the product line were the Dot pattern, Crosspatch, and Circles. (See Figure 5.1 and 5.2)

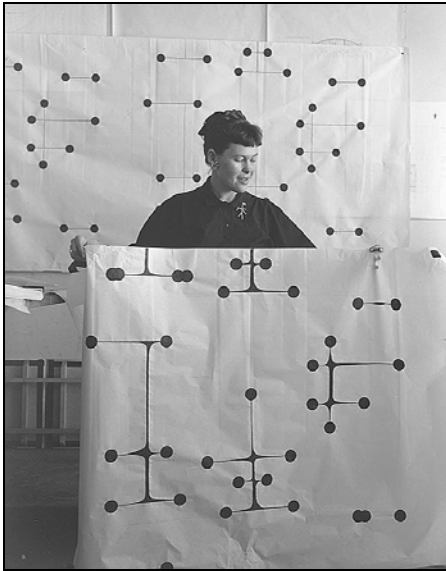


Figure 5.1. Dot pattern.

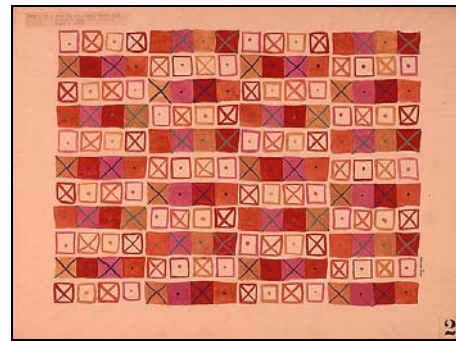


Figure 5.2. Crosspatch pattern.

The strength of the Eames' textile creations is typically credited to Ray. Her early training with Hans Hoffman instilled a passion for color, form, balance, and composition. Ray's training and dedication to graphic design helped to make her well-versed in this arena. She was commissioned to work on a few of the prominent architectural magazine covers for *Arts & Architecture*.

Role of advertisements

Architects and designers typically select interior finishes based on the functional characteristics inherent in materials such as strength and ease in cleaning, as well as on aesthetic

qualities such as size, pattern, scale, and color. Finishes often complemented both the architectural elements of the home as well as the interior furniture. Advertisements enticed readers to purchase products suggesting results of a complete and fulfilled life.

The products advertised for various interior applications included carpet, rugs, linoleum, asphalt tile, drapery fabric, upholstery fabric, plastic laminate, and wall panels. These products were often inspired by contemporary American culture including the art community.

Role of Color

Color was a primary design element in post-war home interiors with recognition of their powerful psychological effects. The muted and composed interior design schemes characteristic of the 1930s gave way to bold innovative interior schemes of the late 1940s and 1950s. Colors used in the home were typically bright and saturated to enliven domestic life. The bright color schemes contrasted the dreary interwar years.

Drapery and upholstery fabric

Drapery and upholstery fabrics satisfied both functional and aesthetic requirements on the interiors of many post-war homes by providing privacy, insulation, and comfort. Various patterns were popular for drapery fabrics and upholstery fabrics and were often dictated by the room in which they were applied. More importantly, the fabrics finally symbolized America's modern day culture, but fabric evolution was slow.

A resistance to the modern aesthetic was widespread throughout the 1940s. Cluster patterns and tropical patterns were popular during the Great Depression.⁵⁶ Floral motifs were popularized during the prewar years and remained strong through the 1950s. (See Figure 5.3 and 5.4) Eventually, many fabric designs captured by the prewar consumer market were replaced by post-war fabric designs conducive and reflective of the new age.

During the 1940s regional imagery and figural motifs were used to respond to the war. Often the floral patterns depicted popular garden trends in the nation.⁵⁷ Figurative patterns were whimsical and representational with the later widely used in kitchens, nurseries, and adolescent rooms.⁵⁸ These patterns often illustrated myths, pop culture, and fantasy. Fabrics depicting travel, Mexico, and the colonization of the American west were also popular during the war. (See Figure 5.5 and 5.6)

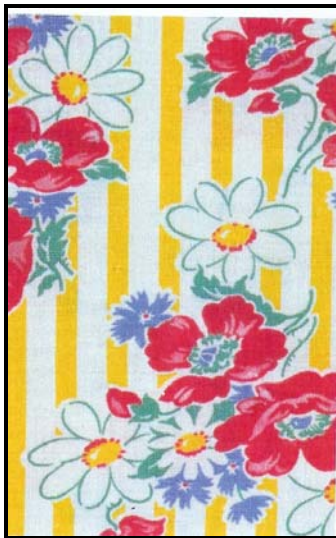


Figure 5.3. Floral sack cloth



Figure 5.4. Tropical print

⁵⁶ Gideon Bosker and Michele Mancini and John Gramstad. *Fabulous Fabrics of the 50s (and other terrific textiles of the 20s, 30s, and 40s)*. (San Francisco: Chronicle Books, 1992), 25.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, 15.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, 67.



Figure 5.5. Western print

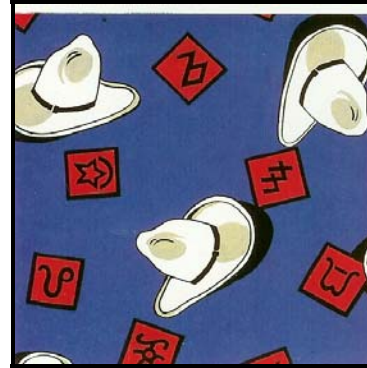


Figure 5.6. Western print

The flora and fauna patterns that dominated the market prior to the war declined in post-war textile production. Scientific, technologic, and medical advances inspired many modern textile designs. Amoeboid shapes, the kidney bean, boomerangs, airplanes, televisions, and the automobile were popular abstractions in fabrics throughout the post-war era. (See Figure 5.7)



Figure 5.7. Amoeboid shape

Textile designers experimented with fabric colors, designs, and materials in the late 1940s. Crossover fabrics became popular by satisfying two markets as they combined traditional motifs with abstracted motifs. The 1950s gave rise to fabric patterns with aggressive abstraction. Bright colors dominated the market selection of fabrics. Department stores sponsored exhibits to help spread the new modern spirit of textiles.⁵⁹ Bark cloth was one of the most popular fabrics used for modern window treatments. Bark cloth was the generic name given to cotton curtains that exhibited a nubby texture. The designs from this era “echo visionary aesthetic of some of the most progressive designers...of the 20th century modernism.”⁶⁰

Flooring

Several traditional floor covering options were available for post-war homes including hardwood floors, carpet and rugs, linoleum, and asphalt tile. Contemporary design solutions were incorporated with traditional floor coverings and resulted in new modern interiors. War technology and increased material production helped to increase the selections available to the post-war market.

One resilient floor covering, linoleum, became one of the most popular choices for post-war interior floors. Linoleum’s predecessor, oil cloth, consisted of fabric and several layers of varnish serving as a finish coat. The London World Exhibition perfected the product under the

⁵⁹ Ibid., 87.

⁶⁰ Ibid., 87.

name Kamptulicon.⁶¹ Frederick Walton eventually patented the product in 1863 and the American Linoleum Manufacturing Company was the sole exhibitor of the product at the Centennial Exposition in Philadelphia in 1876. Even though the production of linoleum during the war declined considerably due to the scarcity of raw materials required to make the finished product, including burlap, resins, cork and linseed oil, it returned to the market during the 1950s and proved to be an integral part of the modern interior design scheme.⁶²

Vertical and horizontal surface materials

The July 1946 *House and Garden* magazine edition acknowledged the importance of new technologies by boasting, “Modern manufacturing technology has greatly enlarged the architect’s and designer’s palette of materials which furnish the room background for decoration.”⁶³ Many materials that dominated the market prior to the war were perfected during the war and incorporated into post-war interiors as decorative surfaces.

Plywood was popular in a few American industries after World War I, but material improvements made it a primary asset to the post World War II economy. Plywood was not only used in architectural applications, but also for boatbuilding, aviation, and furniture. In post-war interior applications it was primarily used as a substrate for other finishes including plastic laminates and wood wall panels. In some cases though, plywood was used for its inherent

⁶¹ Hatje Cantz, *Linoleum: History, Design, Architecture 1882-2000*. (New York: Hatje Cantz Publishers, 2000), 34.

⁶² *Ibid.*, 51.

⁶³ *House and Garden*, July 1946, 68.

aesthetic qualities in exposed cabinet construction and wall panel applications. Plywood proved to be an excellent material due its strength, lightness, and durability.⁶⁴ Other properties increased its market viability such as strength to weight ratio, stability, resistance to splitting, impact resistance, thermal insulation, acoustic and fire retardant properties, and finishing properties.⁶⁵



There are three grades of Douglas fir plywood panels made especially for various phases of wall construction. FLYWALL is made especially for standard wallboard use; FLYPANEL is a premium panel used for quality interior work; FLYSCOD is a utility panel made for wall and roof sheathing.



Follow these Simple Suggestions in Planning Wall Designs with Large, Durable Plywood Panels!

No. 6 of a Series

*Vertical Treatment of Panels
For an Attractive Wall Design*

Walls of Douglas Fir Plywood...
*easy to plan,
easy to apply!*

There is no special or complex planning necessary in designing a wall treatment with Douglas fir plywood. Just follow a few basic suggestions—and the variation of finished design is almost endless.

One of many possibilities is illustrated here. In this case, the panels of Douglas fir plywood have been placed so that the vertical joints lend a pleasing design and at the same time give the basement playroom an illusion of extra height. As in all cases, the architect started with the openings and divided the plain wall spaces in an orderly pattern for the most pleasing effect. This particular basic design treatment is diagramed at the right.

Douglas fir plywood is an ideal material for walls —

DOUGLAS FIR PLYWOOD ASSOCIATION
Tacoma 2, Washington



strong, rigid, kick-proof and puncture-proof. No matter what design treatment is used, the large, light-weight panels go up quickly and easily. They can be worked by hand or with power tools and they hold nails or screws right at the edge without danger of splitting.

Remember — the variety of wall design treatments is limited only by the architectural plan and the ingenuity of the designer. For more detailed information about plywood for wall construction, write the Douglas Fir Plywood Association.

DOUGLAS FIR PLYWOOD
LARGE, LIGHT, STRONG,
Real Wood
PANELS

CAN PLYWOOD BE SPECIFIED NOW FOR POSTWAR USE?
The increased capacity of the industry will make MORE Douglas fir plywood available for civilian consumption THAN EVER BEFORE, as soon as the needs of the armed services are met. There will be no reconversion delays; the same types and grades of Douglas fir plywood that are now being made can flow immediately into peace-time building and construction.

16

Figure 5.8. Plywood advertisement.

⁶⁴ Louis Meyer, *Plywood: What it is-What it does*. (New York: McGraw-Hill Book Company, Inc., 1947), 1.

⁶⁵ *Ibid*, 41.

Plastic laminates were advertised in *Architectural Record* and *House and Garden* for post-war interiors. The development of plastic laminate in the early twentieth century continued to be specified for the nation's interiors throughout the mid-century. Plastic laminates were composed of layers of paper impregnated with thermosetting phenol formaldehyde and melamine formaldehyde resins.⁶⁶ Pressure and heat fuse the layers of paper and resins to form a nonporous durable surface. Plastic laminates were not significantly affected by oil, water, alcohol or heat up to 250 degrees.⁶⁷ Ideal applications for plastic laminates in the post-war interior were kitchen and bath cabinets and countertops.

Increased war demand forced many material-based industries to change production priorities and focus on wartime products. The Formica Corporation was one company who helped to meet the war demand. For instance, "The Navy and Signals Corps needed insulators for their new radios. Formica made them. Aircraft makers needed lightweight pulleys for control cables. Formica made them. Sales went from \$75,000 in 1917 to \$145,000 in 1918."⁶⁸ The increase in wartime product translated into new and better materials in post-war culture. "When the war ended in 1945, Formica was poised for major growth. A huge reservoir of demand existed for decorative laminates for kitchens bathrooms and furniture..."⁶⁹ Formica brand marketed their plastic laminate product in numerous architecture and design magazines of the post-war period.

⁶⁶ Ibid.,213.

⁶⁷ Ibid.,213.

⁶⁸ Available from: www.formica.com/history.jsp?page_id=2. Accessed online.

⁶⁹ Ibid, 4.

Domestic interior finishes of modern post-war homes illustrate the success of America's modern technology as it provided innovative and functional products at lower market rates. Interior finishes of the post World War II era captured the changing social, economic, and cultural spirit of American society through their clever manipulation of color, pattern, scale, subject content, and unique production techniques. Traditional materials continued to be specified by architects and designers of the time, but rich and varied contemporary finishes dominated the post-war modern market. These materials provided distinctive change for the appearance of domestic space. A majority of finishes used in modern homes not only expressed the sentiments of individuals, but would eventually become the signature styles of the post-war period.

CHAPTER SIX

PRESERVATION CHALLENGES AND STRATEGIES

Cultural resources may be cherished for their beauty or utility or a host of other reasons. But it is the ability to connect one generation to another that gives them their most valued attribute: an inherent capacity to mold and reinforce our identities as social creatures.⁷⁰

The house plans published in *Architectural Record* and *House and Garden* between 1945 and 1955 demonstrate the social, technological, and economic ideals impacting mid-century residential plan forms, furniture, and finishes. The concentrated efforts by the architecture and design industry to raise the nation's standard of living were revealed in custom-designed homes. Custom-designed modern homes for the well-to-do differed from the tracts of cookie-cutter homes filling American suburbs and, therefore, present a unique challenge in documenting, evaluating, and protecting. Traditional methods of resource protection must be strengthened and broadened in order to be useful in material resource documentation, evaluation, and protection.

Challenges of documentation, evaluation, and protection

What are the challenges of documenting, evaluating, and protecting post-war interiors? The private nature of interiors generates restrictive property owner rights, limited accessibility and visibility, and frequent changes from remodeling. In addition, as a recent-past resource,

⁷⁰ Available from: www.cr.nps.gov/history/online_books/nps28/28chap1.htm. Accessed online.

post-war interiors are subject to steady resistance from the preservation community further thwarting efforts in their preservation. Richard Longstreth, contributing author to *Forum Journal*, comments, “Preservationists have readily accepted the historical frame-works of the Civil Rights Movement and even the Cold War as a foundation for documenting, and in many cases preserving, sites. But, perhaps because of all the critical baggage from four-to-five decades ago, they have been much more reluctant to take a careful look at the post-war [resources] on its own terms.”⁷¹

Regulation of interiors

The private nature of interior spaces increases the difficulty of their regulation. Limited approaches to regulation include interior easements, interior landmark designation, or the use of an interior as an historic house museum. Interior easements provide voluntary legal agreements protecting the interior features of a space in perpetuity and ensuring protection of an interior even in the change of ownership. An easement also qualifies a resource for financial benefits. Primarily interior easements are limited to public spaces such as lobbies and atriums making the protection of residential spaces very difficult. The National Park Service explains the application of interior easements as follows, “Interior easements can be written to prevent alteration of interiors of buildings or structures. They can apply to an entire building or to particular elements, for example, providing that the detailing in a particular room not be altered without

⁷¹ Richard Longstreth, “The Extraordinary Post-war Suburb”. *Forum Journal* 15, no. 1 (2000). 1

permission, or prohibiting the removal of a staircase.”⁷² The National Park Service also lists several advantages over other tools for regulation and control including:

- They may be *assignable to other parties* - transferred from the original purchaser to another.
- They may *run with the land* - be binding on subsequent purchasers of the property affected.
- They may be acquired through gift or purchase. Donors of easements, and those who sell them for less than their appraised value, may be able to deduct the value of their donations from Federal and State income and estate taxes. In addition, the sale or donation of an easement may substantially reduce the fair market value of a property, thus allowing possible decreases in local property taxes and other Federal, State, and local taxes.
- Implementing an easement program is not a simple operation. The legal instruments that convey easements must be carefully drawn up, and easements require conscientious policing by their holders to insure that the property owners are complying with them. The following preliminary steps are important:
 - Investigation of relevant Federal and State laws and passage of enabling legislation, where necessary.
 - Meticulous drafting of the legal instrument creating the easement, accompanied by adequate documentation describing the exact qualities or conditions of the property to be preserved.
 - Careful identification of appropriate organizations to receive, hold, and police easements. Such organizations may be agencies of local government—for example, local preservation commissions or parks departments—or private organizations such as historical or archeological societies. Decisions about easement recipients should be explored with legal counsel, because in many jurisdictions, the protection afforded a property will depend on who holds the easement.
 - Legal counsel is vital in the development and administration of an easement program, because of the need for the documents conveying each easement to be sound and appropriate under Federal, State, and local law. The validity of the entire easement program will depend on its relationship to the existing framework of State property laws.
 - Despite its advantages, an easement program may not necessarily be the most effective tool for preservation nor the most financially expedient in the long run. Although purchase of an easement is often cheaper than acquiring the entire fee, in some cases, the value of the development rights of a property, for example, may constitute the major portion of a property's fair market value, so that the acquisition of an easement restricting

⁷² “Legal and Financial Tools used to Preserve and Enhance Historic Resources. Available from: <http://www.cr.nps.gov/nr/publications/bulletins/nrb24/appendix3.htm>. Accessed online.

these rights would be almost as expensive as purchasing the property itself and would require policing.⁷³

Custom-designed homes of the post-war period represent living resources owned and occupied by individuals limiting the application of interior easements to this resource-type. A collective approach must be introduced in order to capture the breadth of post-war interiors.

More narrow protection of non-traditional historic resources is interior landmark designation. Typically this is accomplished with,

...jurisdiction of the commission over interior spaces shall be limited to specific interior features of architectural, artistic or historical significance in publicly owned landmarks; and of privately owned historic landmarks for which consent for interior review has been given by the owner. Such consent of an owner for interior review shall bind future owners and/or successors in title, provided such consent has been filed in the office of the register of deeds of the county in which the property is located and indexed according to the name of the owner of the property in the grantee and grantor indexes. The landmark designation shall specify the interior features to be reviewed and the specific nature of the commission's jurisdiction over the interior.⁷⁴

Interior landmark designation also serves interior spaces open to the public and does not address its applicability to interiors.

The most common past approach to preserving interiors is the conversion of spaces into historic house museums. While house museums offer some benefits to the preservation of interiors, the management staffs and interpretive programs as well as funding issues have left many house museums in desperate need of reform. An article appeared in *Forum Journal* entitled "Historic House Museum Malaise: A Conference Considers What's Wrong" addressing

⁷³ Ibid., 2.

⁷⁴ Accessed from Forum Journal. (Dan Becker, Exec. Dir., RHDC Raleigh Historic Districts Commission)

some of the problems facing the future of historic house museums. The author commented, “...the quality and appeal of the traditional historic house interpretation does not successfully compete with other contemporary sources of educational leisure-time activities. Is it time for new models, new standards, or new approaches?”⁷⁵ The adaptation of a custom-designed post-war home into a house museum presents a few challenges. An interpretative program would be hard-pressed to offer a comprehensive overview explaining an entire genre of post-war homes within one setting. One post-war house museum would serve in some ways to undermine the beauty and complexity of homes. More importantly, any number of museums will grossly fall short of capturing the breadth of the movement.

Recent-past resources

Another challenge of preserving modern post-war homes is that they are recent past resources. The National Park Service campaigns for the inclusion of various recent past resources stating,

From futuristic coffee shops and soaring airport terminals to the homes of the postwar suburbs, 20th century architecture embodies the aspirations, priorities, challenges and successes of our recent history. They include the libraries and community centers constructed by New Deal agencies to contend with the Great Depression, factories where the World War II generation assembled tanks and planes, schools built for the postwar baby boom and glass-walled office parks that symbolized American business. Such properties reflect the varied lives that unfolded within them, and contribute to a diverse and dynamic 20th century landscape.⁷⁶

⁷⁵ Gerald George, “Historic House Museum Malaise: A Conference Considers What’s Wrong” *Forum Journal*, no.3 (2002).

⁷⁶ Available from: <http://www2.cr.nps.gov/tps/recentpast>. Accessed online.

Several concerted steps have been taken to educate preservationists and the general public about recent past resources. Both international and national conferences, held in the late twentieth century, opened the dialogue regarding Modern architecture and other cultural resources that exhibit the post-war time period. Papers from those conferences make up a majority of the contemporary literature on the subject. Despite the steps taken in the twentieth century, it is still evident in the first decade of the twenty-first century that Modern architecture is disregarded by many leaders charged with protecting America's cultural heritage.

In 1989, the Council of Europe sponsored the first international conference that focused on the recent past. The forum produced recommendations on how to identify, protect, conserve, restore, and promote Modern resources of the twentieth century. In the same year, Documentation and Conservation of Buildings, Sites, and Neighborhoods of the Modern Movement (DOCOMOMO) was established. DOCOMOMO harnessed international support for the protection of Modern buildings and proves to be influential today in protecting resources.

Another effort in informing the preservation community about recent past resources was a thematic issue on twentieth century resources protection and management by the CRM(Cultural Resources Management) It has been eleven years since *CRM* published their thematic issue. The issue argued for the protection of recent past resources and defined the resources that were part of the recent past era.

The International Council on Monuments and Sites (ICOMOS) in collaboration with UNESCO's World Heritage Center and the International Center for the study of preservation and the Restoration of Cultural property (ICCROM) sponsored a recent past forum in 1995 that reviewed potential criteria for listing twentieth century resources on the World Heritage List.

The first national conference to highlight recent past preservation issues was held in Chicago in 1995. The National Park Service along with various government entities and federal and state agencies sponsored the three day conference that brought together a team of preservation professionals consisting of scholars, practitioners, government representatives, and architects. The conference provided three avenues for awareness and education of twentieth century resource protection that included resource evaluation, preservation and reuse strategies, and materials conservation. The conference helped to heighten awareness among preservation professionals and the public in general. A summary of the discussions resulted in "Preserving the Recent Past", "Trends in Recognizing Places for Significance in the Recent Past," a publication that can be purchased from the National Park Service.

In light of the positive returns from the 1995 recent past conference, a second conference was hosted by the National Park Service in 2000 that provided detailed information on recent past resource protection. An international perspective on the recent past was gained by looking at the steps taken in Australia, Canada, Cuba, England, Israel, and Scotland. A variety of resource types were also discussed including Modern landscapes, post war suburbs, storefronts, and supermarkets.

All of the recent past forums held in the late twentieth century harnessed great public awareness and support for twentieth century resources. But despite the great strides, the preservation movement in America pushes against acceptance and protection of the recent past.

Preservation strategies

The following recommendations attempt to showcase an important mid-twentieth century cultural resource and explore ways to meet the preservation challenge posed by this resource-type. Significant collaborations between the preservation community, academia, the local and federal government, and the wider public in general will advance the effectiveness of a preservation plan for interiors.

Education and advocacy are key strategies in harnessing public awareness and participation in post-war interiors resource protection. While these strategies are essential to successful preservation plans, a reassessment of the underlying principles in the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 would encourage a broader interpretation of the legislation crucial to protecting cultural resources extending beyond the notion of 'historic'. Historic research analysis of the interiors of this time period would also benefit a preservation plan lending exposure to this narrowly accepted resource. Could the nation support a movement to recreate the custom-designed home of post-war years?

Education and advocacy

The foundation of the country's preservation movement is education and advocacy. Academia serves a central role in educating students on the value of post-war resources. Programs often disadvantage their students when they neglect to introduce this period in the country's history due to its ill-perceived aesthetics. If preservation students are educated about post-war resources and their value, they will be better prepared to face real world situations and

apply their knowledge. If the value of the resources is not part of a curriculum, then future leaders of the preservation community are severely ill-prepared to help protect the nation's resources.

National Historic Preservation Act

Historic preservation's effectiveness is closely tied to its legislation dating to 1966. "The difficulty, for some, of accepting, let alone liking, postwar work can be summarized by reference to the Preservation Act itself. In passing it, Congress declared in 1966 that current preservation programs were inadequate due to ever-increasing extensions of urban centers, highways, and residential, commercial, and industrial developments. In other words, the Act was inspired by a desire to protect our heritage from postwar development."⁷⁷ Currently, a reexamination of the regulations promulgated under the Act is being undertaken. The maturation of the Preservation Act would require accommodating change. "I would argue that it can do so only by accommodating change. This is not to say that the law changes with the times, but that changes in how we live and build can be seen through its underlying principles. By way of analogy, there occurs in the American Constitution no explicit right to privacy, but that right has been reasonably inferred from that document as technological advances over time have challenged privacy in ways the framers could hardly have imagined."⁷⁸

⁷⁷ Sandy Isenstadt, "Three problems in Preserving Post-war Landscape" *Forum Journal* 15, no.3 (2001) 4.

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, 4.

Historic research analysis

The body of literature addressing post-war interior preservation is slim. Further historic research of this time period would enhance the body of knowledge concerning post-war interiors and provide a valuable resource to preservationists and property owners.

Recreation of custom-designed homes

Urban and suburban sprawl has stamped our landscape with unsightly housing developments, oversized lots, and an increased square footage for living. It seems appropriate for a re-introduction of the small, post-war custom-designed home, capable of meeting the functional and aesthetic needs of a family. Post-war publications touted small, flexible, compact, and efficient house plans conscious of costs. Today's housing standard is far removed from post-war ideology embracing the economy of living.

Conclusion

Are custom-designed post-war domestic interiors a cultural resource worthy of preservation? Yes. The house plan forms, furniture, and finishes illustrated in post-war publications illustrate a recent-past material resource-type significant for its reflection of social, technologic, and economic ideals. The preservation challenges involved in preserving this resource-type include its private nature, limited accessibility and visibility, and lack of

appreciation and perceived value. Education, advocacy, and accommodating change are key components in preserving post-war interiors. After all it,

...is a resource that we cannot afford to squander. If we fail to address the issue, it will be tantamount to admitting that much of our residential fabric, no matter how historically significant and no matter how well built, is essentially disposable matter...What does this perpetual state of impermanence say about our cities and about us as a society? Are we capable of doing better? Can we conserve what our parents, grandparents, and even great-grandparents labored to create? Preservation has shown that we can, at a modest scale. Just like the house builders after World War II, we need to broaden our horizons and expand the scope of operation to have a really decisive impact on the way people live.⁷⁹

⁷⁹ Longstreth, "The Extraordinary Post-war Suburb", 4.

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