

THE IDENTIFICATION AND PRESERVATION OF 1950S RANCH HOUSE
INTERIORS

by

LAURA ANNE KVIKLYS

(Under the Direction of Wayde A. Brown)

ABSTRACT

The Ranch House is among the most ubiquitous residential housing types in the United States. It is currently receiving recognition from the preservation community as a valuable cultural resource. The Ranch House as a housing type has been evaluated and analyzed, but no study exists on the use of space or materials used in the interior. This thesis identifies the key defining elements of the 1950s Ranch House interior, the context and significance of the interior as a component of a newly identified resource, and the challenges associated with its preservation. Suggestions for the practical approach to the preservation of these specific interior spaces are also offered.

INDEX WORDS: Ranch House, 1950s, United States, Interior, Education,
Advocacy, Interior Materials, Documentation, Recent Past,
Modern, Historic Preservation, World War Two, Residential

THE IDENTIFICATION AND PRESERVATION OF 1950S RANCH HOUSE
INTERIORS

by

LAURA ANNE KVIKLYS

B.A., Hollins University, 2007

A Thesis Submitted to the Graduate Faculty of The University of Georgia in Partial
Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree

MASTERS OF HISTORIC PRESERVATION

ATHENS, GEORGIA

2011

© 2011

Laura Anne Kviklys

All Rights Reserved

THE IDENTIFICATION AND PRESERVATION OF 1950S RANCH HOUSE
INTERIORS

by

LAURA ANNE KVIKLYS

Major Professor:	Wayde A. Brown
Committee:	James K. Reap
	Melissa Roberts
	Heather Benham

Electronic Version Approved:

Maureen Grasso
Dean of the Graduate School
The University of Georgia
May 2011

DEDICATION

For Jack Grimes. They can't take your education away from you.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would not have been able to complete this thesis without the support and guidance of a number of people. First, my major professor Wayde Brown, has offered assistance through the entire harrowing process, and has not let me, despite my best efforts slide with anything below my ability. To my thesis reading committee, Professor James Reap, Melissa Roberts, and Heather Benham, I am grateful for your time and consideration. My friends and coworkers at the Center for Community Design and Preservation have provided a unique and grounding experience during the sleepless nights, frantic draft revisions, and countless hours of mid-century related babble. And my friends in Athens and *everywhere*, who have humored me with more conversations about Ranch Houses than any human being should be subjected to. My dear friend Ashley Baker Pruitt has been particularly helpful during this whole process, providing editorial, theoretical, personal advice, while being the yin to my neurotic yang. Finally, my family has provided unwavering and unyielding support, not only during this process, but always. It is as a clan we are strongest, thank you for making my achievements possible when I didn't think I could.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	v
LIST OF TABLES	viii
LIST OF FIGURES	ix
CHAPTER	
1 INTRODUCTION	1
Terminology.....	2
Existing Research on the Ranch House	3
Methodology	5
2 THE RANCH HOUSE AS A CULTURAL RESOURCE	10
Cliff May.....	10
The Great Depression and World War Two	11
Changes in Interior Planning	14
Frank Lloyd Wright and the Usonian House	15
The Ranch House as a Resource.....	16
3 CHARACTERISTICS OF THE RANCH HOUSE INTERIOR	18
Overall Interior Configuration	19
Public Spaces	22
Entrance Spaces	22

Living Room	25
Dining Room.....	29
Kitchen.....	32
Common Kitchen Types	33
Utilitarian Spaces	36
Private Spaces	37
Bedrooms and Bathrooms.....	37
Interior Materials and Other Key Elements	40
Relationship to Exterior Spaces	43
Carports.....	43
Fenestration.....	44
Case Study House	45
4 CONTEXT OF THE RANCH HOUSE INTERIOR	50
Focus on casualness	51
Individuality.....	53
Focus on Family.....	55
Flexibility.....	58
5 PRESERVATION CHALLENGES	59
The Recent Past.....	61
Recent Past Challenges Associated with the Ranch House Interior	61
Interiors	68
The Ephemeral Household.....	69
Regulating Interiors	71

Easements	72
6 RECOMMENDATIONS FOR RANCH HOUSE INTERIORS	74
Documentation	74
Survey	74
Manual For Ranch House Interiors	78
Education	81
Recent Past Organizations in the United States	82
7 CONCLUSION.....	85
BIBLIOGRAPHY	89
APPENDICES	
A LIST OF RANCH HOUSE PLAN BOOKS.....	96
B NATIONAL TRUST FOR HISTORIC PRESERVATION’S	
INSPECTING YOUR POST-WAR RANCH HOUSE.....	98

LIST OF TABLES

	Page
Table 3.1: Popular Locations for the Living Room	25
Table 3.2: Infrequency of Unpopular Living Room Locations	29

LIST OF FIGURES

	Page
Figure 1.1: Example of a 1950s Plan Book	5
Figure 1.2: Example of Floor Plan Presentation	6
Figure 1.3: House & Garden Magazine Cover	7
Figure 3.1: Isometric Rendering of a Linear Ranch House	18
Figure 3.2: Example of a Zoned Floor Plan.....	19
Figure 3.3: Open Floor Plan.....	20
Figure 3.4: Closed Floor Plan	21
Figure 3.5: Foyer Entry	22
Figure 3.6: Hall Entry	23
Figure 3.7: Living Room Entry.....	23
Figure 3.8: Vestibule Entry	24
Figure 3.9: Living Room ‘Front Left’	26
Figure 3.10: Living Room ‘Front Center’	27
Figure 3.11: Living Room ‘Front Right’	27
Figure 3.12: Living Room ‘Rear Center’	28
Figure 3.13: Integrated Living Room and Dining Room.....	31
Figure 3.14: Integrated Dining Area.....	31
Figure 3.15: Dinette in Kitchen	32
Figure 3.16: U-Shaped Kitchen	33

Figure 3.17: L-Shaped Kitchen.....	34
Figure 3.18: Comparison of an L-Shaped Kitchen and U-shaped Kitchen	34
Figure 3.19: Strip Kitchen.....	35
Figure 3.20: Pullman Kitchen	36
Figure 3.21: Master Bedroom	38
Figure 3.22: 1950s Bathroom Interior	39
Figure 3.23: 1950s Bathroom Interior	39
Figure 3.24: Existing Bathroom Interior.....	39
Figure 3.25: Case Study Bathroom.....	39
Figure 3.26: Advertisement for a Vinyl Kitchen	41
Figure 3.27: Advertisement for Wall to Wall Carpeting	42
Figure 3.28: Case Study House Bedroom Windows	45
Figure 3.29: Case Study House Bedroom Windows	45
Figure 3.30: Dining Alcove, Case Study House	46
Figure 3.31: Living Room Fenestration, Case Study House	47
Figure 3.32: Living Room Fenestration, Case Study House.....	47
Figure 3.33: Built in China Cabinet, Case Study House.....	48
Figure 3.34: Built in Desk and Bookcase, Case Study House	49

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

The Ranch House is possibly the most ubiquitous housing type of the twentieth century. From the earliest prototypes in the 1930s, Ranch Houses were built in large numbers to the 1970s. The building boom associated with the post-war World War Two period produced a record number of housing starts: over 1.65 million in 1955, and approximately 1.5 million for the remainder of the decade.¹ The Ranch House reached its peak in popularity in the 1950s, when it accounted for nine out of ten new houses built,² because it was properly suited to the domestic needs of the post war nuclear family. By the 1980s, an increase in land cost and a shift in demand toward larger houses on smaller lots led to the decline of the one-story Ranch House in favor of narrower, two-story homes.³

Mid-century Ranch Houses are again gaining popularity with the public. Their modest size and single-floor living are attractive to a new generation of potential home buyers; decades of neglect and insensitive alterations, however, compromise the number of extant intact 1950s Ranch Houses. Contemporary publications and periodicals tout the benefits of renovating mid-century houses, contributing to the future loss of historic material. Currently, no published academic sources have evaluated the significance of the

¹ Clifford Edward Clark, Jr, *The American Family Home, 1800-1960* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1986), 23-224.

² Witold Rybczynski, *Last Harvest: From Cornfield to New Town: Real Estate Development from George Washington to the Builders of the Twenty-First Century, and Why We Live in Houses Anyway* (New York: Scribner, 2008) 207.

³ *Ibid*, 209.

Ranch House interior, or identified its key defining elements. The 1950s Ranch House interior is a specific cultural resource which deserves examination as a major contributor to the overall significance of the 1950s Ranch House.

The Ranch House was the home of the American twentieth century.⁴ The house type was presented as an ‘Every man’s Home,’ one which could provide the American dream to countless middle class Americans. The evaluation of the interior as a primary source for the period will allow preservationists and historians to better comprehend the post-war era, and provide a more comprehensive model for the study of suburbanization and neighborhood growth in the twentieth century. This thesis identifies the key defining elements of the 1950s Ranch House interior, the context and significance of the interior as a component of a newly identified resource, and the challenges associated with its preservation.

Terminology

In architectural terms, ‘Ranch House’ refers to both a house type and a house style. No standard definition of the Ranch House exists, as it incorporated a number of styles and plan shapes into its design. The F.A. Reguarth Company of Dayton, Ohio described the typical Ranch House in 1951, noting that it “features long, low, rambling lines, generous use of glass, and practical planning for a maximum of efficiency and livability.”⁵ More Recently, Virginia and Lee McAlaster’s *A Field Guide to American*

⁴ Alan Hess, *The Ranch House* (New York: Harry N. Abrams, 2005), 12 .

⁵ The F.A. Reguarth Co. *Modern Ranch Homes: Designed for Town or Country Living*. (Dayton: National Plan Service, Inc, 1951), 1.

Houses identifies the Ranch House by its asymmetrical one-story façade and low pitched roof, often with wide overhanging eaves.⁶

The mid-century Ranch House presented an eclectic array of stylistic elements borrowed from formal architectural styles including: Colonial Revival, Spanish Colonial, Prairie Style, or conversely, a ‘Plain Style’ which abandoned all forms of architectural decoration. From this amalgamation of details and design, common themes emerged in the definition of a Ranch House. For the purpose of this thesis all terminology referring to a ‘Ranch House’ refers specifically to an asymmetrical, irregularly massed, one-story, single family detached home, with variations in window types, eave overhangs, and form.

Existing Research on the Ranch House

A number of books and scholarly works address the significance of the Ranch House in the larger context of American history. Alan Hess’ *The Ranch House*⁷ recounts the history of this house type, and highlights a number of significant contributing architects while providing an overarching social history of the post-war United States. Clifford Edward Clark Jr.’s *The American Family Home*⁸ provides an adequate examination of the post-war Ranch House in terms of American identity, and the role the Ranch House played in middle class family dynamics.

Preservation organizations and local governments nationwide have been examining the Ranch House as a potential historic resource since the early 2000s. The first significant Ranch House study occurred in Scottsdale, Arizona in 2004. The Historic Preservation Commission and the Historic Register Committee of Scottsdale surveyed

⁶ Virginia and Lee McAlaster. *A Field Guide to American Houses* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, Inc., 2003), 479.

⁷ Hess, *The Ranch House*.

⁸ Clark, *The American Family Home, 1800-1960*.

thirty seven neighborhoods consisting of homes built in the 1950s. The survey resulted in the publication, *Introduction to Postwar Modern Housing Architectural Styles*,⁹ an illustrated guide to the types and styles of Ranch Houses found in mid-century Scottsdale neighborhoods. This guide provides a description of basic Ranch House exterior characteristics, and identifies seventeen different Ranch styles.

More recently, a comprehensive study was undertaken in Georgia as a collaborative effort by the Georgia Transmission Corporation (GTC), the Georgia Department of Transportation (GDOT), and the Georgia Historic Preservation Division (HPD) to develop an “evaluative framework for the Ranch House, establishing a period of significance for the character-defining features of the Georgia Ranch House and its subtypes.”¹⁰ Published in 2010, *The Ranch House in Georgia: Guidelines for Evaluation* traces the history of the Ranch House in the United States, and provides an in-depth account of this resource’s development in Georgia. This report contains extensive evaluation and description of Ranch House types, covering variations in house shape, explanation and identification of architectural styles, and defining architectural elements of each subtype. The study is primarily for preservation survey professionals, and provides pictorial examples of each Ranch House type as well as guidelines for efficient and proper methods of Ranch House documentation. This work is by far the most comprehensive document pertaining to the practical preservation of Ranch Houses in the United States.

⁹ Debbie Abele. *Introduction to Postwar Modern Housing Architectural Styles*, 2004. Historic Preservation Commission, Scottsdale, Arizona; accessed 05 January 2011; available from <http://www.scottsdaleaz.gov/Assets/Public+Website/historiczoning/IntroPostwarHousingStyle.pdf>

¹⁰ Richard Cloues. *The Ranch House in Georgia: Guidelines for Evaluation* Historic Preservation Division; available at http://gashpo.org/assets/documents/Ranch_House_Evaluation_revSept2010.pdf (accessed 20 September 2010).

Although both of the studies examine the exterior details of mid-century Ranch Houses, neither addresses the interior plan in a significant manner. No mention of the interior exists in the Scottsdale study, and a cursory description of floor plans exists in the Georgia guidelines. The mid-century Ranch House interior has not been studied as an individual resource. As the Ranch House is considered a cultural resource by preservationists and many in the public, the interior deserves exploration to understand its role in the overall significance of this resource type.

Methodology

During the post-war period, publishing houses printed magazines and books of potential house floor plans to serve as guidance for prospective home builders.¹¹ A study was conducted of published Ranch House plan books from 1950 to 1959 to understand what was offered to the public as new home possibilities, common interior architectural traits through the decade, and any social themes expressed through idealized residential floor plans. (Figure

1.1) Floor plans from nineteen historic plan books were documented

and analyzed resulting in data from 467 individually proposed homes, as well as renderings of proposed interior spaces. [Appendix A.] Although a countless number of books were published each year during the 1950s, few still remain in circulation. No university in the United States owns an extensive collection of such plan books; therefore



Figure 1.1 Example of a 1950s plan book

¹¹ Hess, 51.

several were contacted to participate in interlibrary loan. The University of Georgia currently owns two books which met the base criteria for consideration, having a publication date between 1950 and 1959, and containing images, descriptions, and data of

Ranch House floor plans.

The presentation of data provided by the archival materials varied significantly. Architect Alwin Cassen's 1953 book, *Ranch Homes for Today*¹² served as an excellent example of information presentation; each plan contained a detailed description of the interior, full dimensions and square footage, a plan name and number, and a full architectural rendering of the Ranch House façade. Not all plan books were detailed or plan-oriented.

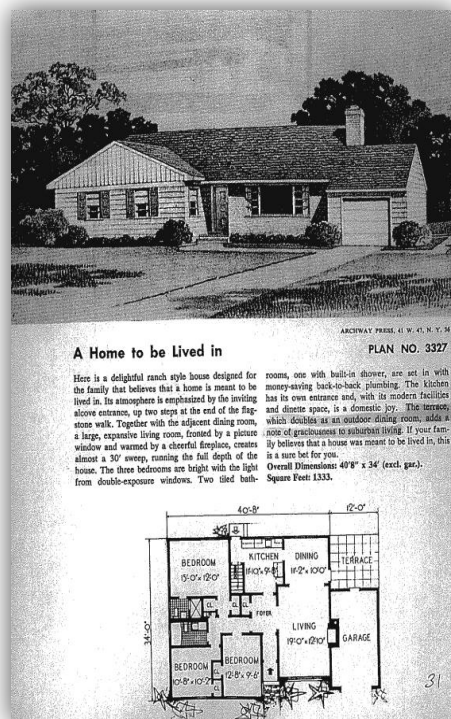


Figure 1.2 Example of plan presentation from *Ranch Homes for Today*

(Figure 1.2) The 1950 publication, *Inexpensive New Houses*¹³ contained extensive description

of its floor plans, but offered all area data in terms of cubic feet; all statistics had to be converted to be viable for consideration. A number of plan books, e.g., *Designs for Convenient Living*, 1959, presented Ranch Houses, but also presented plans for split level homes, Cape Cod cottages, and pre-fabricated vacation homes which limited the usable data in that particular resource.¹⁴

¹² Alwin Cassens, Jr. *Ranch Homes for Today*. (New York: Archway Press, Inc.), 1953.

¹³ Authentic Publications, Inc. *Inexpensive new houses, featuring 1 to 4 bedrooms, all the drawings necessary for the planning of your new house are included*. (New York: Authentic Publications Inc.), 1950.

¹⁴ Richard B Pollman. *Designs for Convenient Living: Book 27*. (Detroit: Home Planners, Inc), 1959.

Plan books were also examined for implicit data such as room placement, plan shape, dining areas, and outdoor living spaces. This data, paired with the statistics clearly presented in the books allowed for an interpretation and analysis of prospective Ranch House interiors presented for construction during the 1950s. The sample spanned the decade and incorporated examples from big builders, individual architects, and commercial plan companies to find a more complete example of homes offered to the public. These plan books presented an idealized version of the Ranch House interior, one which was altered to fit the needs of the individual home owner. Although plan books were used as a primary source for this thesis, the frequency of one floor plan over another cannot be determined by plan books alone. These books do not identify the popularity of designs or the number of homes built per plan; rather, they showcase what was available to potential home buyers, what was emphasized with the plan and similarities among plans over the decade.

Articles and advertisements from popular 1950s women's housekeeping, decorating, and leisure magazines supplemented the review of plan books to better understand what attributes of the Ranch House interior were emphasized in the popular media. These periodicals provided pictorial data such as images of existing Ranch House interiors, and interior materials which were promoted as 'desirable,' and 'correct' methods for living in a Ranch House. Many articles focused on contemporary housewives, their use of space



Figure 1.3 House & Garden Magazine
May 1955

within their Ranch House, work habits, family patterns, and her preference for particular color schemes and decorating motifs. By presenting trends in interior decoration and design, publishers created a template for other housewives to emulate. Etiquette books, and ‘guides to living’ were used to show what the expected gender norms and ideal methods of living were in the 1950s, and how the Ranch House interior was molded to fit these standards. Predictably, a romanticized ideology was often presented in these articles; however, they exhibited themes of an ideal American lifestyle which was mirrored in Ranch House architecture. Architectural and trade journals from the 1950s including *Progressive Architecture* and *The Journal of the American Institute of Architects*, were also examined in order to understand how the Ranch House was viewed by builders and contemporary architects.

A second element of the methodology was a case study of an existing architect designed 1950s Ranch House interior in order to evaluate material and plan retention. The 1952 house in Athens, Georgia was designed by C. Wilmer Heery, a renowned Georgia architect trained in the Beaux Arts tradition at the Georgia Institute of Technology in 1926.¹⁵ Heery’s son, George T. Heery, also studied at the Georgia Institute of Technology, but was trained in the more functionalist modern approach to design, graduating in 1951. Although no express documentation exists, it is believed the father and son team collaborated on this project, as the plans for the additions in 1956 are marked, ‘Heery and Heery,’ rather than solely ‘C. Wilmer Heery,’ as in the 1952 plans. The clients for this particular Ranch House were John and Janet Stegman and their three children. The existing materials and plan of the Stegman House aided the evaluation the

¹⁵ Robert, M Craig,. "George T. Heery (b. 1927)." *The New Georgia Encyclopedia*. Available from <http://www.georgiaencyclopedia.org/nge/ArticlePrintable.jsp?id=h-1079>. Internet; accessed 09 March 2011.

current owners face living in a mid-century resource, and sensitive additions and alterations.

Finally, renovation guides and articles from contemporary publications were used to determine the current climate for Ranch House interior design, and suggested alterations by modern designers. The homebuilding magazine, *Before & After*¹⁶ provided information regarding Do-It-Yourself renovations, where the Ranch House focused, *Atomic Ranch Magazine*¹⁷ showcased Ranch House interiors which have undergone extensive renovations, and those that remain historically intact.

The following chapters examine the 1950s Ranch House interior in physical description, its role in 1950s America, and the preservation issues associated with it. Chapter two provides a historiography of the Ranch House and the evolution of it as a cultural resource, Chapter three identifies key characteristics of the Ranch House interior through statistical analysis of 1950s floor plans. Chapter four places the Ranch House interior in the context of the 1950s, and how its interior plan and materials were a response to consumer demands. Chapter five looks at the unique preservation challenges associated with the 1950s Ranch House interior; Chapter six provides recommendations for Ranch House interior preservation. The final chapter provides recommendations for further research on Ranch House interiors, and a conclusion to the overall state of Ranch House interior preservation.

¹⁶ Brian Pontolilo, ed., *Before and After*, 2011.

¹⁷ Jim Brown and Michelle Gringeri-Brown, eds, *Atomic Ranch Magazine*, 2009-2011.

CHAPTER TWO

THE RANCH HOUSE AS A CULTURAL RESOURCE

The design of the 1950s mass produced Ranch House stemmed from the working-ranches, or haciendas, of the Spanish Colonial period in the American Southwest in the 1830s.¹⁸ Characteristics of these nineteenth century structures which were later mirrored by suburban Ranch Houses included: a low, long profile, wide eave overhangs, winged additions, and patios and courtyards. The design of Spanish colonial haciendas was a functional response to the harsh environment of the prairie and desert; the wide overhanging eaves protected adobe walls from the elements and provided shade for the inhabitants, while L- and U-shaped wings were added as families grew.¹⁹ These design elements which were practical for the American Southwest in the nineteenth century were adapted for the needs and desired aesthetics post-World War Two Ranch House homebuyer.

Cliff May

The working-ranch never completely disappeared as a housing type in the Southwest but did experience a marked decline in the 1870s when a series of droughts devastated livestock and agriculture forcing many into poverty.²⁰ The first notable example of a modern Ranch-style house in the twentieth century was designed by Cliff May in 1931. May, originally a band leader and furniture designer, grew up around the

¹⁸ Lester Walker, *American Homes: An Illustrated Encyclopedia of Domestic Architecture*, (New York: Black Dog & Leventhal Publishers,) 1996. 234

¹⁹ Michael Kevin Chapman, "The Ranch-Type House: Evolution, Evaluation, and Preservation," (MHP Thesis, University of Georgia, 2007,) 8-9

²⁰ Chapman, 10.

working-ranch houses of California and incorporated its design elements into his work.²¹ Designed for Colonel and Mrs. O’Leary of San Francisco, the one-story home was based on the traditional U-shaped hacienda of the Southwest, and had stucco-walls and a Spanish tile roof.²² The design also included a series of connected rooms surrounding an interior courtyard.

During the 1930s, May continued to experiment with the Ranch House design, building over fifty custom homes with irregular plans that sprawled over their sites in the San Diego area.²³ May also created one of the first subdivisions specifically designed for the Ranch House, ‘Riviera Ranch,’ in western Los Angeles in 1939. Riviera Ranch was designed around the landscape of Southern California on lots ranging from two-thirds of an acre to two and a half; here, May began to deviate from the U-shape of his original designs in favor for more linear conceptions which rambled over the lots.²⁴ May’s designs gained national attention during this period, notably from features in *Sunset* magazine, and were interpreted by his contemporaries including O’Neil Ford, David Williams, and William Wurster, each of whom contributed to the design type with their unique approach to modern plans and aesthetics.²⁵ Although the Ranch House design received acclaim in the 1930s, it was not an accessible housing type to the general public as these structures were built for specific, wealthy clients by commissioned architects.

The Great Depression and World War Two

The ‘Great Depression’ of 1930s had a significant impact on American home construction; between 1928 and 1933 there was a 95 percent drop in residential

²¹ Hess, 33.

²² Ibid, 33.

²³ Cloues, 10.

²⁴ Ibid, 11.

²⁵ Hess, 33-34.

building.²⁶ The housing market remained weak during the 1930s, and Americans typically preferred to spend their limited funds on small remodeling projects rather than new home construction.²⁷ This lack of new construction contributed to the housing shortage in the United States during World War Two.

The construction of new homes generally remained static during World War Two; a number of construction techniques discovered during this period, however, were used in the mass-produced tract housing of the 1950s. The rationing of materials and a lack of manpower contributed to the war time housing shortage, but a need for large scale housing projects in the vicinity of defense related factories existed. The lack of skilled laborers for construction purposes during the war encouraged the breakdown of the building process into simple tasks by unskilled laborers; this method contributed to the architecture of the homes by eliminating details in the plan that wasted time or materials.²⁸ Following the war developers used these methods to build enormous tracts of Ranch Houses.

In a period where a typical developer built between ten and twenty houses at a time, the need for mass-produced, single family homes outstripped the extant housing supply. Returning soldiers living in crowded inner-city housing wanted property of their own; demanding homes with space for raising families, and sprawling yards for recreational activities.²⁹ The high employment rates and great optimism of this period encouraged people to have more children and to upgrade their style of living.³⁰

²⁶ Kenneth T. Jackson. *Crabgrass Frontier: The Suburbanization of the United States*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1985, 193.

²⁷ Clark, 193.

²⁸ Hess, 47.

²⁹ Ibid. 51

³⁰ Clark 206

The United States government encouraged the construction of single family dwellings for, “lower income veterans and their families” by passing the Servicemen's Readjustment Act of 1944.³¹ Commonly known as the ‘G.I. Bill,’ this act provided low interest, zero down payment home loans for returning servicemen creating a demand for housing nationwide. Government support for first-time homebuyers, compounded with a strong economy, meant more Americans could afford to purchase their own homes.³² In the 1950s, a dramatic increase in the construction of single-family detached homes occurred, “approximately 15 million units, or one-fourth of the United States’ 1959 [housing] inventory, were built between April 1950 and December 1959.”³³ The most common type of house constructed during this period was the Ranch House.

One of the first developers to embrace the mechanization of home construction was William Levitt, who perfected his building techniques on military housing in Norfolk, Virginia during World War Two.³⁴ Built on the site of a former potato farm in Hempstead, New York immediately following the War, Levittown ultimately grew to encompass more than 17,400 separate houses and 82,000 residents.³⁵ This monumental undertaking required precise assembly line techniques; crews were trained to complete one of the twenty seven distinct steps, with the result of more than thirty houses completed each day at the height of construction.³⁶ Levitt’s construction methods were mimicked by other developers nationwide during the 1940s and 1950s; the mass

³¹ Barbara M Kelly, *Expanding the American Dream: Building & Rebuilding Levittown.*, (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1993), 11.

³² Clare J. Richfield. “The Suburban Ranch House in Post-World War II America: A Site of Contrast In an Era of Unease, Uncertainty, and Instability,” (BA Thesis, Barnard College, 2007), 7.

³³ United States Census of Housing: 1960 United States and Regions Volume IV Part 1B. Washington DC: Government Printing Office, 1960.

³⁴ Barbara Allen. “The Ranch Style House in America: A Cultural and Environmental Discourse,” *The Journal of Architectural Education*, Vol. 49, No. 3 (Feb., 1996,) 161.

³⁵ Jackson, 234.

³⁶ Ibid, 234.

production and simplicity of design of the Ranch House contributed to its affordability, and it represented the majority of new suburban architecture in the post war period.³⁷

Changes in Interior Planning

The evolution of the Ranch House is more significant than its stylistic characteristics and its developmental pattern. Often overlooked as a potential cultural resource, the interior of a residential structure can provide more information about a building's history and its change over time than an exterior style. The National Park Service's Preservation Brief 18, *Rehabilitating Interiors in Historic Buildings: Identifying and Preserving Character-Defining Elements*, acknowledges the significance of interior space, stating, "a floor plan, the arrangement of spaces and features and applied finishes may be individually or collectively important in defining the historic character of the building and the purpose for which it was constructed."³⁸ This statement is especially important in terms of the Ranch House; its exterior was promoted in design magazines and architectural journals, but articles pertaining to the interior, e.g., designs, decorative materials, solutions for living, etc., were far more numerous and wide reaching. Although the mid-century Ranch House borrowed a number of styles from earlier forms of residential architecture, it exhibited unique features in interior planning based on its asymmetrical massing and, in most cases, the openness of floor plan.

A housing type with similar interior planning as the 1950s Ranch House was the Queen Anne House. Both house types exhibited innovation in terms of production and interior planning, respective to their time periods. A distinct characteristic of the Ranch

³⁷ Cloues, 16.

³⁸ Department of the Interior, National Park Service, *Preservation Briefs 18: Rehabilitating Interiors in Historic Buildings, Identifying and Preserving Character-Defining Elements*, by H. Ward Jandl, Technical Preservation Services, accessed 1.1.2011 at <http://www.nps.gov/hps/tps/briefs/brief18.htm>

House was its irregular plan-form and massing on its site. Shedding the symmetrical floor plans which predated it, the Queen Anne house used technologies specific to its time to allow room placement to be somewhat sporadic and rambling. The Queen Anne House and the Ranch House share a rambling nature, but the Queen Anne House interior adheres to four distinct floor plan types, focused around the placement of the entry hall.³⁹ The Ranch House interior is revolutionary because, unlike the Queen Anne, the Ranch House has no definable floor plan type.

Frank Lloyd Wright and Usonian Houses

Created during the same period as Cliff May's Ranch House, internationally known architect Frank Lloyd Wright's Usonian houses contained planning elements which were echoed in mass produced Ranch Houses. First gaining national attention in 1938, Usonian houses adhered to the principle that interior space should flow continuously, rooms could unite in a more open nature while still maintaining their distinct function.⁴⁰ This ideal was presented in the 1950s Ranch House through the use of the open floor plan. Never before in residential architecture had this interior planning been produced on such a large scale, and accessible to so many home buyers. The interior of the Ranch House exhibited flexibility, livability, and casualness in its planning.⁴¹ Architects and builders employed a substantial range of variation in interior floor plans and design while maintaining a distinctive house type.

³⁹ U. Flemming. "More than the sum of its parts: the grammar of Queen Anne houses," *Environment and Planning B: Planning and Design*, Vol. 14, 1987, 327.

⁴⁰ Ibid, 20.

⁴¹ David Bricker, "Ranch Houses are Not All the Same," *Preserving the Recent Past 2*, (Washington, D.C.: Historic Preservation Education Foundation, National Parks Service, and Association for Preservation Technology International, 2000), <http://www.nps.gov/nr/publications/bulletins/suburbs/Bricker.pdf>

The Ranch House as a Resource

The Ranch House is gaining acceptance as a cultural resource in the preservation community. Preservation professionals are beginning to examine the Ranch House as an important twentieth century architectural resource; evaluating its cultural, social, and historic significance.

Ranch Houses are rarely nominated to the National Register of Historic Places individually unless that resource exhibits significance under multiple Criteria. A number of historic Ranch House districts have been created and nominated at the national level. An example is the Collier Heights neighborhood in Atlanta. The 1753 contributing resources of this district were built between 1941 and 1979, and are composed primarily of Ranch Houses.⁴² Listed on the National Register of Historic Places in 2009, the neighborhood exhibits significance under Criteria A, association with events that encompass a broad sweep of history, and Criteria C, that embody distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction. The massive scale of this district shows how the ubiquity of the Ranch House contributes its significance.

Ranch House districts often nominated to the National Register for Historic Places under the significance of, ‘community planning and development,’ and ‘social history.’ As a single Ranch House exemplifies the need for post war housing, the building boom and the evolution of suburbs, they, as a group of resources, demonstrate the development of an area, and a community’s response to rapid suburbanization. Generally, an assemblage of Ranch Houses depicts the social history of a group by demonstrating the economic prosperity in the post war period, changing ideas about the home, and the

⁴²Ray Luce. “Collier Heights Historic District.” National Register for Historic Places Nomination. Washington, D.C.: National Park Service, May, 15, 2009, 4.

rejection of conformity. Because the Ranch House is such an omnipresent resource, the areas of significance embodied by districts tend to transcend geographic regions and can be applied to a number of potential districts.

CHAPTER THREE

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE RANCH HOUSE INTERIOR

Although there is no exact statistic for the number of Ranch Houses built in the postwar period, their popularity is undeniable; over a million Ranch Houses were constructed in the United States each year between 1948 and 1955.⁴³ No standard floor plan was used; examples differed based on architects, developers, and homeowner preferences. However, a number of common elements existed among the floor plans published during the decade, which creates a template for the characteristics of a ‘typical’ Ranch House interior. Ranch Houses from this period vary in detail, style, and shape. As documented in *Guidelines for Evaluation: the Ranch House in Georgia*, Ranch Houses subtypes include: Compact, Linear, Linear-with-Clusters, Courtyard, Half-Courtyard, Bungalow, Rambling, and Alphabet.⁴⁴ The form of a typical Linear Ranch House would have a length-to-width of 2:1, with slight projections or



recesses, but an overall long, narrow linear form;⁴⁵ a Figure 3.1 Isometric rendering of a Linear Ranch, Cloues , 45.

Half Courtyard Ranch is a ‘T’ shape, formed by two intersecting wings of the house.⁴⁶ (Figure 3.1) Regardless of the exterior style and form, Ranch House interiors exhibited a remarkable number of similarities in spatial use and configuration.

⁴³ John A. Jakle, Robert W. Bastian and Douglas K. Meyer, *Common Houses in America's Small Towns: The Atlantic Seaboard to the Mississippi Valley* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1989), 184.

⁴⁴ Cloues, 44-51.

⁴⁵ Ibid, 45.

Overall Interior Configuration

The most crucial and common characteristic of the Ranch House interior was zoning of living spaces. Of the four hundred sixty seven floor plans sampled; all exhibited some form of spatial zoning. Zoning within the Ranch House interior placed rooms together based on function, whether public or private. (Figure 3.2) The public zone consisted of rooms devoted to entertaining, dining, cooking, and work which included the living room, kitchen, and dining area. Private rooms focused on personal development and privacy; which included the bedrooms and bathrooms.⁴⁶ Two forms of the Ranch House interior emerged in this period, the ‘open floor plan’ and the ‘closed floor plan.’ Instances of the ‘open floor plan’ exhibited more distinct use of zoning than the ‘closed plan,’ yet both emphasized the distinction between individual spaces and communal spaces

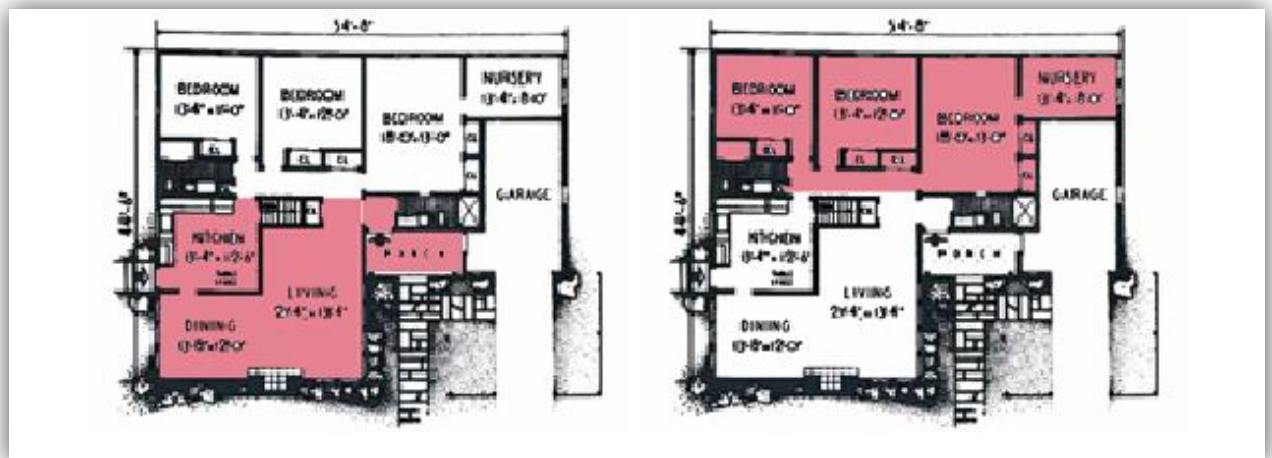


Figure 3.2 Zoned for Public and Private Uses. Plan 3336, Ranch Homes for Today. 1953.

Public Space

Private Space

⁴⁶ Ibid, 48.

⁴⁷ Ed. Staff, Lane Publishing Co. *New Homes for Western Living*. Menlo Park, California: Lane Publishing Co, 1956, 11.

The open floor plan in 1950s Ranch Houses was characterized by large common areas for group or familial activities with few wall partitions. Free flowing, unobstructed traffic patterns between the living areas, kitchen, and dining areas were significant indicators of the open floor plan. (Figure 3.3) Often the open floor plan employed half walls or a ‘pass-through’ to accentuate the openness between spaces. This floor plan emphasized separation between public and private spaces, with public spaces flowing into one another and private spaces closed as individual rooms. This openness created flexibility in room use, allowing activities in the public realm to move from space to space without hesitation.

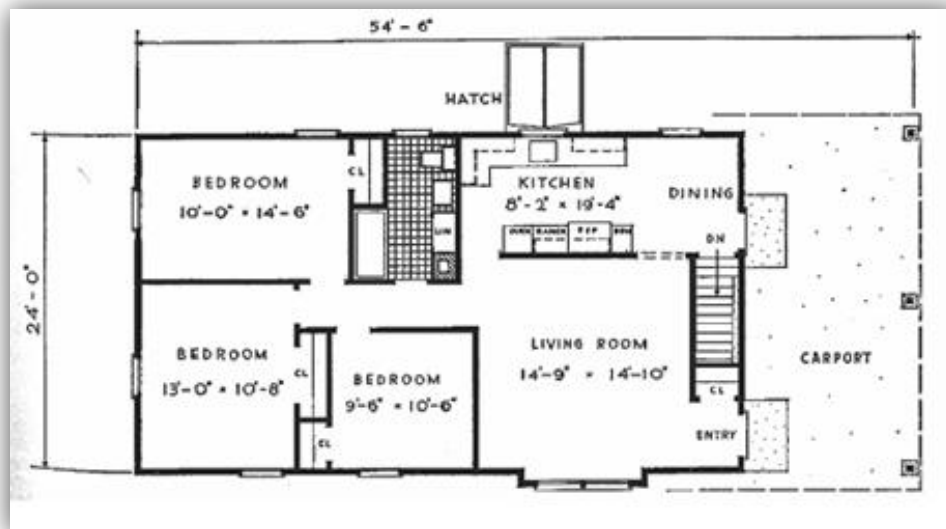


Figure 3.3 Open Floor Plan. Note the absence of walls from the entry to the kitchen, and the ‘pass-through’ between the living room and dining area. *Homes to Live In*, 1956, Design DA 263.

The second possible Ranch House interior offered to the public by architects and designers was the ‘closed floor plan.’ The closed floor plan can be identified by singularly enclosed spaces, each with its own purpose. (Figure 3.4) A greater sense of privacy is emphasized in the closed plan than the open plan, as all rooms are separated by

fixed wall partitions and provide a greater sense of enclosure.⁴⁸ This floor plan maintained a rigid traffic pattern between rooms, but still utilized zoning between public and private spaces through room placement.

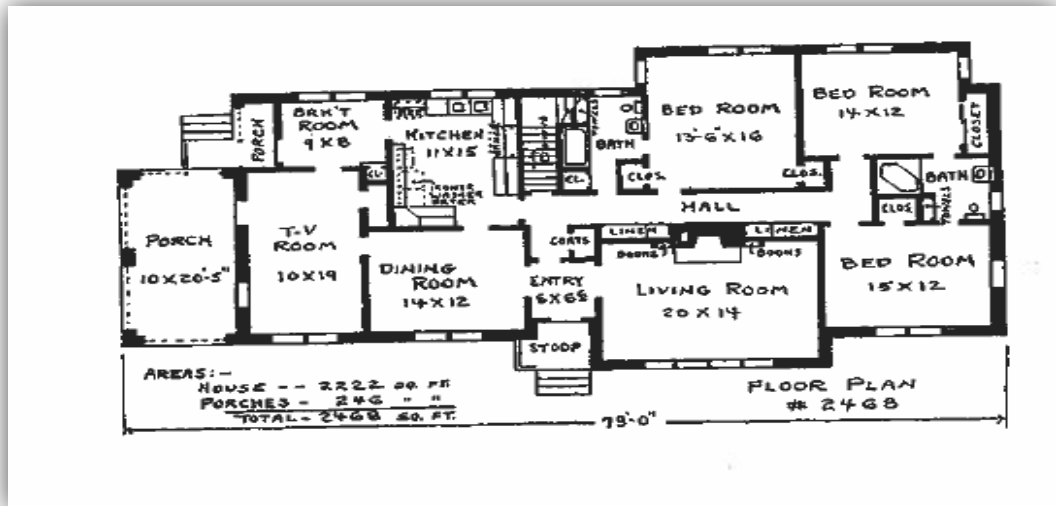


Figure 3.4 Closed Floor Plan. *Ranch and Colonial Homes*, 1954, Plan #2468.

Overwhelmingly the open floor plan was the more popular of the two in the Ranch Houses sampled. Sixty eight percent of sampled houses offered to the public used this form, showing the acceptance of the new interior type, and the demand for adaptable homes for growing families. The flexibility offered by the open floor plan was crucial to the livability of the Ranch House interior because size limitations of the Ranch House demanded multiple uses for each room. Based on the sample, the average size of the Ranch House interior grew from 1114 square feet in 1950 to 1272 square feet in 1955, to 1356 square feet in 1959.

⁴⁸ Cloues, 67.

Public Spaces

Entrance Spaces

Of the sampled houses, four distinct entrances into the Ranch House interior existed: foyer, hall, living room, and vestibule. For the purposes of the sample, a 'foyer' was defined as an entry into an antechamber; a small area, not completely partitioned on four sides by fixed walls, separating two significant public living spaces, i.e., the living room and dining room. (Figure 3.5) A 'hall' was defined as a corridor leading directly from the front door to another space, either an enclosed room or another hall. (Figure 3.6) The 'living room' entry was a front entrance which opened directly into the living room, (Figure 3.7) and a vestibule was an area enclosed on four sides by fixed walls with doorways leading to other spaces, directly off of the entry. (Figure 3.8)

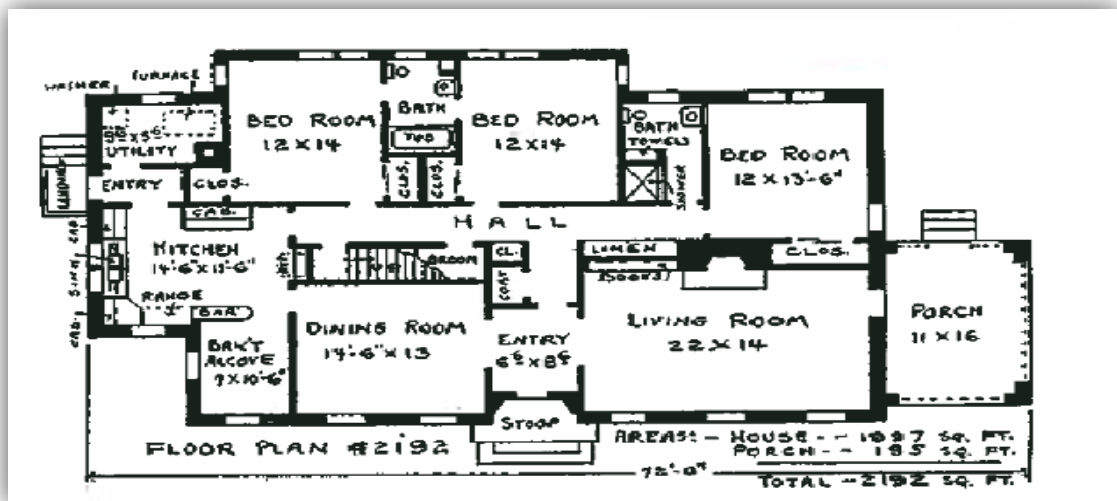


Figure 3.5 Foyer Entry. Plan # 2192, *Ranch and Colonial Homes*. 1954.

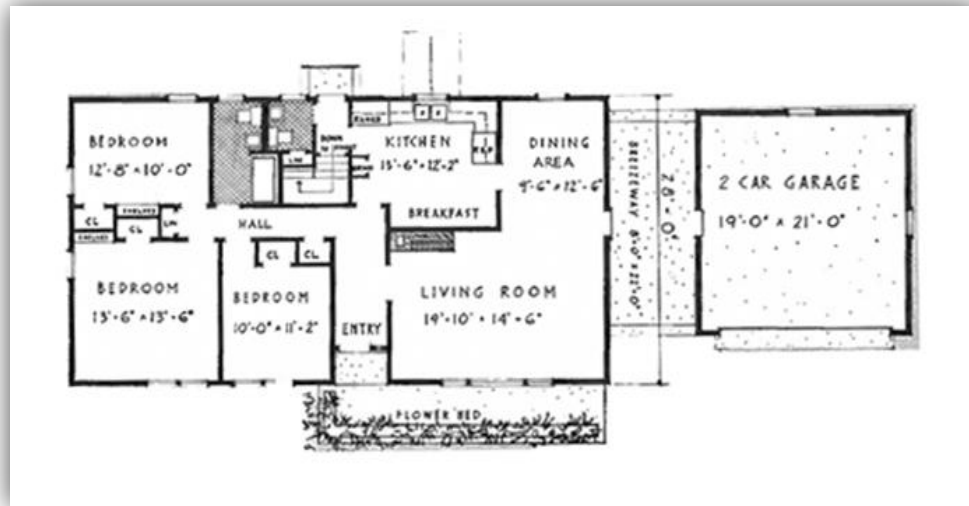


Figure 3.6 Hall Entry, Design DA 275. *Homes to Live in*, 1956.

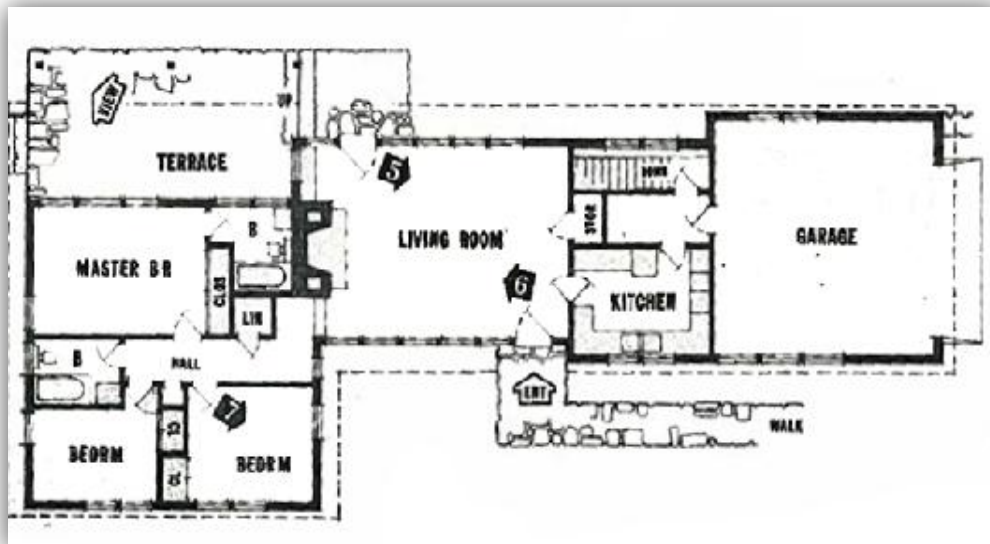


Figure 3.7 Living Room Entry, *Practical Houses for Contemporary Living*, 1953, p. 20

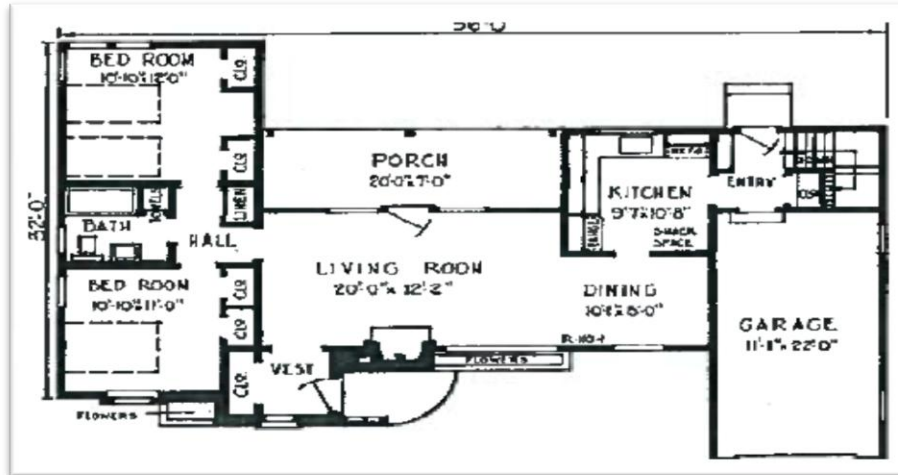


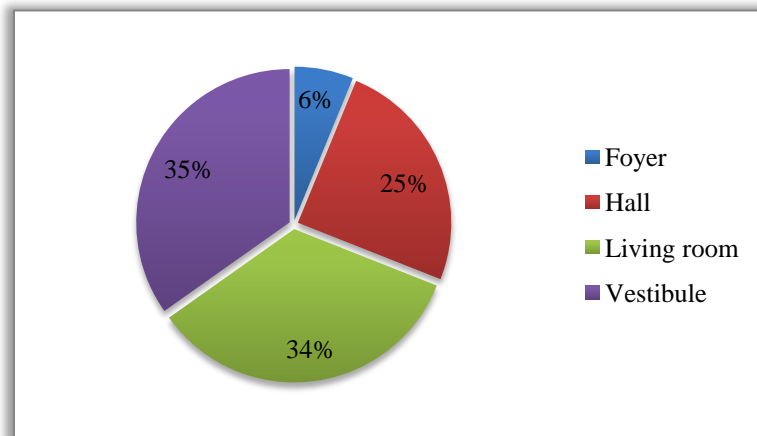
Figure 3.8 Vestibule Entry. Plan R-110. Modern Ranch Homes: Designed for Town or Country Living, 1951.

The sample indicated that entry into a vestibule was the preferred design in the 1950s. Slightly more frequent in house plans than direct entry into the living room, the vestibule comprised thirty five percent of plans surveyed whereas living room entry was thirty four percent. This data shows that, although the closed vestibule and the open entry into the living room are on opposite spectrums of accessibility in terms of entry into the home, they both experienced relative popularity and serve as an example of plan flexibility. A hall was the third most prevalent at twenty five percent of the total, and a foyer was the least, with six percent. This data is supported by a the Department of Housing and Urban Development's 1956 *Women's Congress on Housing* which found female home buyers wanted a modified or "screened-off area where guests and family could remove wet clothing and dripping umbrellas"⁴⁹ before entering the house. A

⁴⁹ Annabelle Heath. "What Mrs. America Wants in Tomorrow's Home." *Journal of the American Institute of Architects*, July, 1956, 31.

vestibule entrance was the result of a functional necessity for both housekeeping and living.

Table 3.1 Graph depicting the frequency of living room placement



Living Room

The living room in the 1950s Ranch House embodied a number of shapes and sizes as well as an extreme flexibility in use. No single example can fully define the ‘standard’ living room as its primary purpose was to encompass all activities for family use and guests which dictated its size, shape, and location. The living room was an area that could incorporate all functions of daily life; it was an area for leisure, for entertaining family and guest, for personal development, and for various work related activities. In her 1962 update of her 1955 study, *The Modern House: USA: Its Design and Decoration*, Kate Ellen Rogers, the first program chair of the Interior Design program at the University of Missouri claimed, “the living room is actually the heart of the home.”⁵⁰ The living room was the most important room in terms of placement in the Ranch House interior, because an improper location could result in awkward room arrangements and an

⁵⁰ Kate Ellen Rogers. *The Modern House: USA: Its Design and Decoration*. (New York: Harper & Row,) Publishers, 1962, 133.

interruption of traffic patterns, negating the benefits of single floor living. Regardless of its location or shape, the living room played an important role in the livability of the home, and because of its importance in design, flexibility, and use, often dictated the location of the other rooms of the home.

The sample of Ranch House interiors resulted in twelve separate possible locations for the living room. The asymmetry of the Ranch House in plan and form meant that there were many possible locations for the living room, but, because it was the most utilized and flexible space in the home, received the most attention in terms of placement. The living room was the most significant space in determining the success of the floor plan in terms of livability. No standard location for the living room existed, nor did any location receive an overwhelming majority in the sample.

A living room location in the ‘front left’ portion of the floor plan had the most frequent placement with 28.1% of all plans employing this location. The term ‘front left’ indicates the living room is in the portion of the house closest to the primary entry, on the left most quadrant of the home, with all rooms located to the right and to the rear of it. (Figure 3.9)

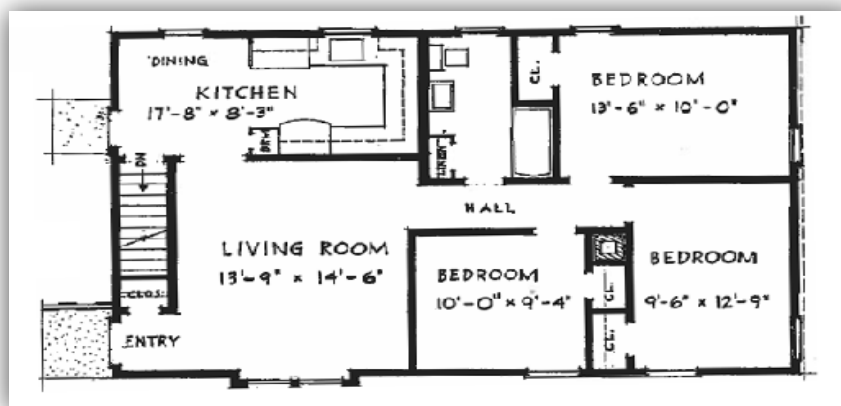


Figure 3.9 Living room ‘Front Left’. Design DA 257. Homes to Live in, 1954.

The next most frequent living room placement was in the ‘front center’ of the floor plan. The location of ‘front center’ meant the living room abutted the front façade of the house with rooms flanking the three remaining sides. (Figure 3.10) This placement was present in 26.3% of floor plans.

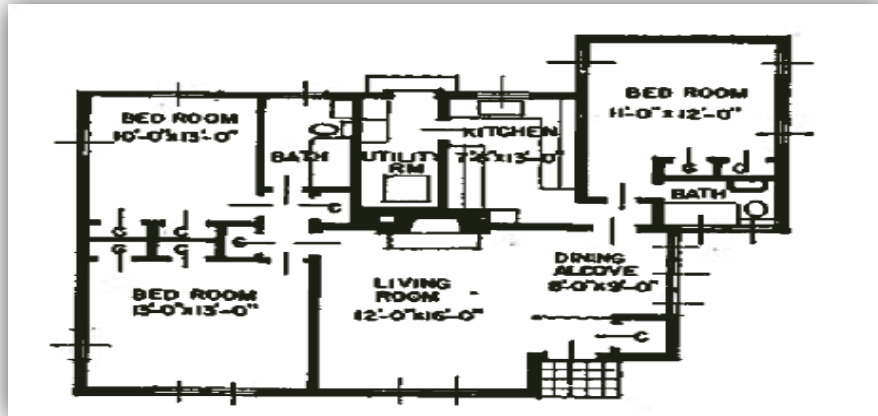


Figure 3.10 Living room ‘front center.’ *Inexpensive new houses*, 1950, pg 23.

22.6 % of Ranch Houses sampled had a Living Room in the ‘front right’ of the floor plan. ‘Front right’ denotes a Living Room adjacent to the front façade with no habitable spaces further right, and all living areas to the rear and left. (Figure 3.11)

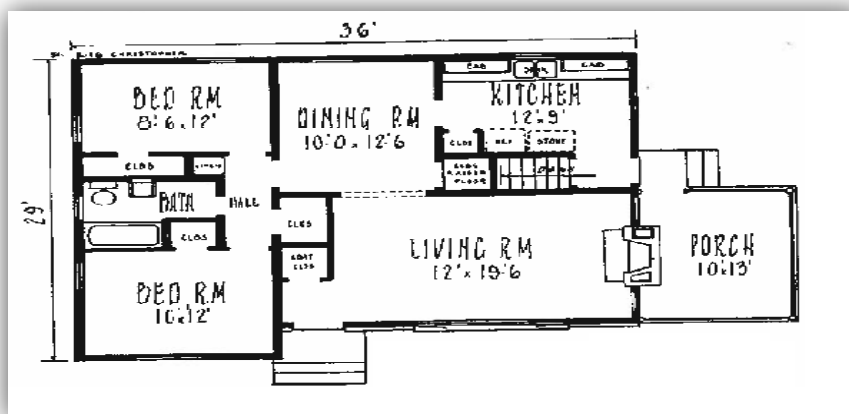


Figure 3.11 Living Room ‘front right’ location. The Christopher. *The Book of Ramble and Ranch-Type Homes*. 1951.

A living room located in the ‘rear center’ of a floor plan had rooms flanking either side to the left and right, and an area between it and the front façade. (Figure 3.12) This placement often indicated a tie-in to the rear exterior of the home though sliding doors or large glass windows, and was frequently referred to as a “garden type” in a number of plan books.⁵¹ The ‘rear center’ living room location was present in 7.8% of plans.

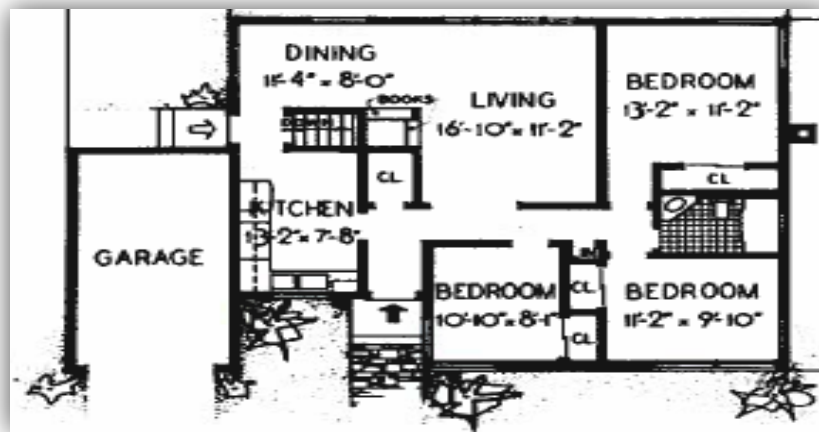
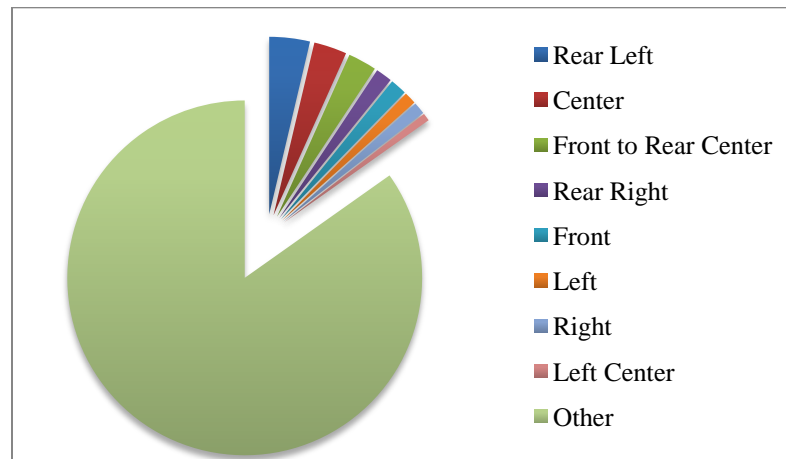


Figure 3.12 Living room in ‘rear center.’ Plan 3315. *Ranch Homes for Today*, 1953

The remaining Living Room locations: rear left (3.7%), center (3%), front to rear center (2.6%), rear right (1.5%), front (1.5%), left (1.1%) , right (1.1%), and left center (.7%), were present in floor plans, but so infrequently, they should not be considered when identifying a ‘typical’ Ranch House interior. (Figure 3.13) The location of the living room in the Ranch House was crucial to the effective traffic pattern of the home, and especially when paired with the dining room, constituted a large portion of the floor plan.

⁵¹ National Plan Service, Inc. *Eastern Home Style Trends*. Chicago: National Plan Service, Inc, 1955, 26.

Table 3.2 Graph depicting the infrequency of other living room locations



Dining Room

The wide use of the open floor plan in the 1950s Ranch House decreased the number of separate enclosed formal dining rooms over the decade. In lieu of a formal dining room, a ‘Dining Area’ could be integrated into the living room. The living room and dining room borrowed space from each other and accentuated the ‘openness’ of the home. Occasionally, iron trellises or half-walls were used to suggest room separation without actively enclosing the space. The integration of these two spaces often resulted in a unique ‘L’ shape for the dining and living areas, encompassing the majority of space in the public area of the home.

Integrating the dining room into the Living room was result of the informality associated with living in the 1950s and the unnecessary nature of a formal dining space. The Samuel Bergman Family of Glencoe, Illinois explained how the formal Dining Room of their home was typically used, in a 1950 *McCalls* interview:

The Dining Room *was* used because the children did their homework there, within easy reach of a parent if the long division wouldn't come out, but most meals were served and eaten in a pleasant corner of the kitchen.⁵²

Many homeowners in the 1950s found a formal dining room often unused, as the popularity of 'eat-in style' kitchens became dominant in house plans. A Ranch House owner, interviewed in 1950 claimed, "I'd never build another house with a regular dining room."⁵³

An integrated dining area also had financial benefits for the home owner. By minimizing the number of interior walls in a home, the open plan meant that the Ranch House was cheaper for consumers.⁵⁴ This is especially important in terms of the devaluation of a separate formal dining room, because as noted in *McCalls*, "few families can afford a separate dining room."⁵⁵ The inexpensive nature of the integrated dining room and the trend towards more casual dining and entertaining contributed to the decline of formal dining rooms.

Although the open plan often incorporated an integrated living room and dining room area, examples from the period exist where separate formal dining rooms exist. But, because of the overwhelming use of the open floor plan in 1950s interiors, a 'typical' Ranch House would not have a formal dining space, but would have an area for dining in the living room, and an area for family dining in the kitchen.

⁵² Samuel Bergman, quoted in Mary Davis Gillies, "The New Ways We Eat." *McCalls*, June, 1950, 28.

⁵³ Mrs. John Struggles, in Gillies, 28.

⁵⁴ Chapman, 12.

⁵⁵ Gillies, 111.

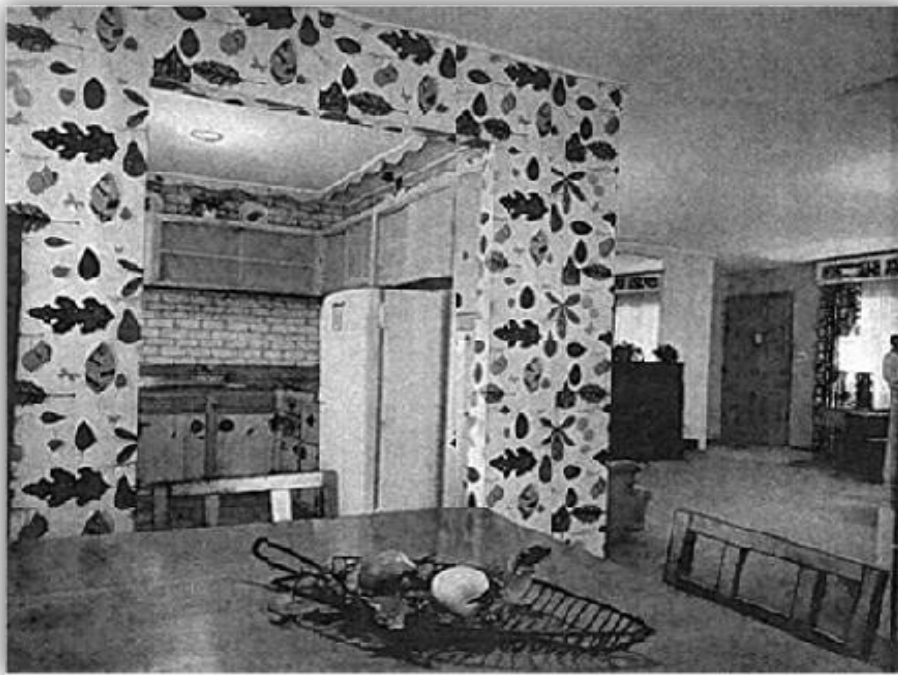


Figure 3.13 Integrated Dining Room and Living room. *Today's Woman Low Cost Homes*. 70



Figure 3.14 Integrated Dining Area. Note the Iron trellis indicating room separation. *Today's Woman Low Cost Homes*, 82.

Kitchen

The kitchen was another space in the Ranch House interior which received a great amount of scrutiny from perspective Ranch House buyers. Historically known as a utilitarian space, the kitchen of the 1950s Ranch House was blended into the main house as a response to social trends.⁵⁶ Over the decade, kitchens became less utilitarian and work focused, and more viewed as a place for family interaction and as part of the overall ‘Living and Dining’ area. The primary reason for this idea was the integration of an ‘eat-in’ area in the kitchen where families could dine informally. According to Atlanta architect Leila Ross Wilburn, these kitchen dining spaces could be used “for all but the most formal of meals.”⁵⁷ Of the sampled floor plans, 59% incorporated some type of dining area in the kitchen including: breakfast alcoves, breakfast nooks, dinettes, dining alcoves, snack bars, and snack spaces. (Figure 3.15)



Figure 3.15 Dinette in kitchen. *Today's Woman Low Cost Homes*. 54

⁵⁶ Hess, 57.

⁵⁷ Leila Ross Wilburn, *Ranch and Colonial Homes*, (Atlanta: Leila Ross Wilburn- Architect,) 195?, 10.

A multitude of kitchen arrangements were possible in the Ranch House interior. Shaped by the homeowner to fit his or her individual needs, the kitchen was an area where the design and layout was crucial to its efficiency and livability. As the kitchen was an important facet of the overall success of the Ranch House interior's plan, a number of kitchen 'types' were presented to buyers in an attempt to address any possible planning concerns.

Common Kitchen Types

The 'U-shaped' Kitchen had counters on three sides of the room with the sink placed at the bottom of the 'U' with the range and refrigerator on opposite sides.(Figure 3.16) The U-shaped Kitchen offered the most counter space of the common kitchens in the Ranch House interior.



Figure 3.16 . U-shaped kitchen. *Today's Woman Low Cost Homes* p 47.

The 'L-shaped' Kitchen was arranged in an 'L' shape with the range and refrigerator on one wall and the sink on the other, or the sink and range on one wall and

the refrigerator on the other. (Figure 3.17) This configuration allowed ample room for a dining area.



Figure 3.17 L-Shaped Kitchen. *Today's Woman, Low Cost Homes*, 50.

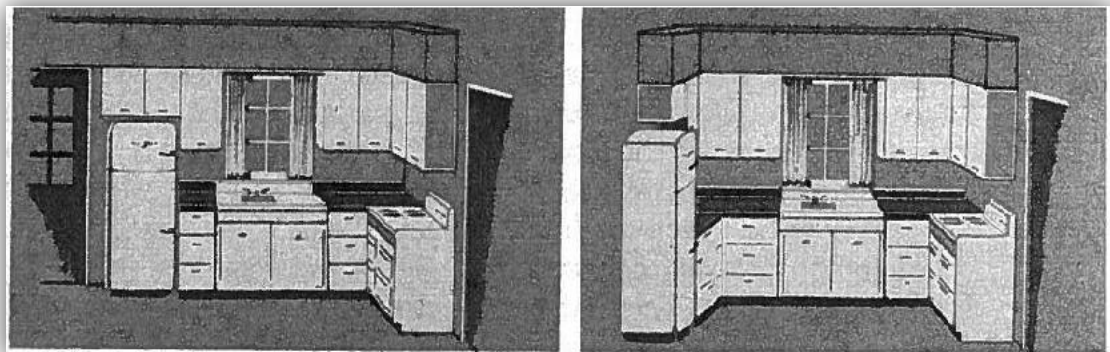


Figure 3.18. L-Kitchen versus the U- Kitchen. *Today's Woman, Low Cost Homes*, 105.

The Corridor or, 'Strip' Kitchen was arranged with all work areas: the sink, the stove and the refrigerator, arranged along two parallel walls. (Figure 3.19) The location of the work areas was often left to the discretion of the home buyer. The benefit of the

Corridor Kitchen was the open space on the two remaining walls was left for windows, door openings, or dining areas.

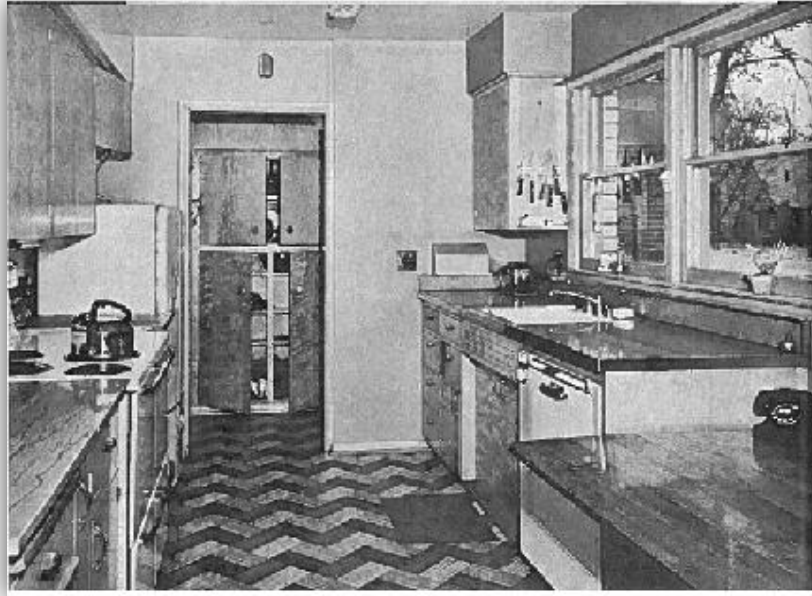


Figure 3.19. Strip Kitchen. *Low Cost Homes* p. 44.

The least efficient kitchen present in the Ranch House interior was the Pullman Kitchen.⁵⁸ In this arrangement, all work areas were aligned on one wall. The inefficiency of this model is based on the traffic pattern it creates; an individual has to take more steps to reach appliances and work spaces because of the linear configuration. (Figure 3.20) As it required the least amount of space, the Pullman Kitchen was utilized in homes which were limited in size.

⁵⁸ Eds, Arco handi-books for better living. *Today's woman low cost homes.* (New York: Arco Pub. Co.) 1954., 106.



Figure 3.20. Pullman Kitchen with dining area. *Low Cost Homes*, 26.

Utilitarian Spaces

Despite the trend towards more informal approaches to kitchens, utilitarian spaces were still a necessity in the Ranch House. These areas were often incorporated into, or adjacent to the kitchen. Utilitarian spaces included areas for laundry preparation, heating and cooling devices, and areas for other basic household activities. Of women surveyed in 1956, “the majority prefer the laundry near the kitchen, usually in a separate small utility room.”⁵⁹ The location of a utility space near the kitchen contributed overall household efficiency, because household tasks could be completed quicker in a more compact space.

Dependant on the architect or the homebuyer, utilitarian spaces could be located in other areas of the home. For Ranch Houses with basements, that area was often used for the utilitarian tasks, freeing space on the main floor. Although placement near the

⁵⁹ Heath, 31.

kitchen meant quicker access to the home's laundry facilities, Lane Publishing Company placed its laundry units in the "bedroom-bathroom wing, close to the source of most soiled linens."⁶⁰ Again, it was the desires of the home buyer which dictated room location based on individual preference.

Private Spaces

Bedrooms and Bathrooms

Removed from the communal living spaces, the bedroom in the 1950s Ranch House was a space for individual expression, development, and respite. The most common number of bedrooms in the Ranch House was three, providing adequate space for individual reflection. Kate Rogers outlined the necessity of private space for the healthy development of children and teenagers:

The older children demand privacy, a space for entertaining, and a share in the family car. The younger children are equally demanding: they want space for their toys, collections, friends and games.⁶¹

In addition to the placement of these rooms in the 'private' section of the home, privacy and individual development were expressed through built-in room accessories. Vanities and desks were often incorporated into the bedroom's architecture as a space saving technique, and provide individual space.

With the idealized nuclear family of the 1950s: a mother, father and 2.5 children; three bedrooms would provide enough space for both parents and the children without imposing on communal spaces. All floor plans sampled included one bedroom larger than the others, and by mid-decade, it was often referred to as the 'Master Bedroom.' The versatility of room use within the Ranch House interior was exhibited through the

⁶⁰ Editorial Staff of Lane Publishing Co. *New Homes for Western Living*. (Menlo Park, California: Lane Publishing Co.,) 1956, 11.

⁶¹ Rogers, 6.

bedrooms; many floor plans expressly dictated two rooms as ‘bedroom,’ with the third labeled as ‘Den or Bedroom.’ Regardless of its use as a bedroom or a den, this third room was in the private area of the house, separated from communal family activities.

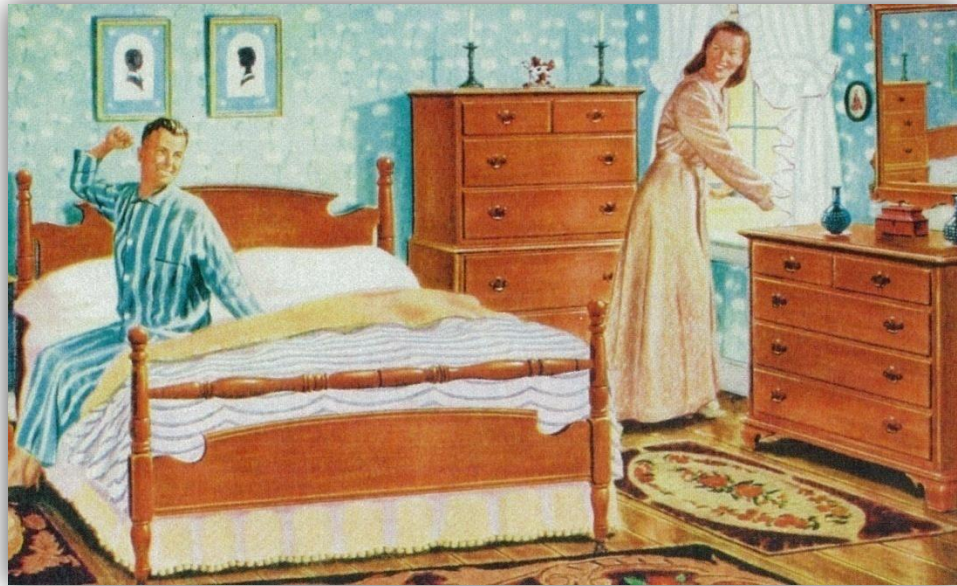


Figure 3.21. Artistic rendering of a Master Bedroom. *Atomic Home*, 134.

The Ranch House floor plans sampled indicated that 61% had one full bathroom. This full bath included, at a minimum, a shower/tub, toilet, and sink. If the Ranch House warranted a second bathroom, a separate ‘half-bath’ was used, usually consisting of a toilet and a sink. A ‘half-bath’ was present in 17% of sampled floor plans. 19% of sampled floor plans offered two full bathrooms. In the instance of two bathrooms, one was located adjacent to the Master Bedroom, while the other was located near the other bedrooms and living areas. Bathrooms varied in design and functionality; variance in bathroom design prevented one standard type of bathroom. (Figures 3.22-3.25)



Figures 3.22 & 3.23. Bathroom Interiors. *Today's Woman, Low Cost Homes*, Pg 45. & Pg. 38



Figures 3.24 & 3.25. Images of an existing full bath, Stegman House, Athens, Georgia.

Interior Materials and Other Key Elements

The Ranch House floor plan is the principle organizing device of the resource and provides a building block for the identification of the interior. However, the Ranch House interior is more than room location, zoning, and use. Interior details cannot be systematically identified like the floor plan because of their variation; rather, anecdotal identifications of popular materials from the period can be made through the analysis of artistic renderings of interiors, historic photographs and advertisements. No materials from the 1950s were created specifically for use in the Ranch House, but through pictorial and anecdotal evidence, commonly used materials can be determined.

The Ranch House gained popularity in a period when the building industry was experimenting with new materials. Traditional materials became expensive during the war years. New materials arose from the war effort, and plastics and aluminums were incorporated into building materials.⁶² Industrial materials including decorative laminates like Formica, melamine-coated paper like Arborite, and vinyl products (figure 3.26) were used in kitchens in bright colors and intricate patterns. Cabinetry and furnishing were often matched to these bright patterns. Bathrooms too often employed these materials, as well as the integration of hand lain tiles. Kitchens and bathrooms were showcases for brilliantly colored materials as author Whitney Matheson explains:

Before the war, most household bathrooms were white from ceiling to floor. In the atomic home, couples clamor for colored tile and purchase matching toilets, bathtubs, and sinks in pinks, blues, and greens.⁶³

⁶² Andre L. Jaumotte, and Phillippe F. Decelle. "A Style was Born: Design During the Fifties: Or the Triumph of Curvilinear Geomerty," *Leonardo*, Vol. 17, No. 3, 1984, 211.

⁶³ Whitney Matheson. *Atomic Home: A Guided Tour of the American Dream*, (Portland: Collectors Press,) 2004, 106.

The low production cost of these materials made them accessible to Ranch House owners. The prevalence of one over another in terms of brand, color, or material in the Ranch House interior is unknown; however, their colors and designs were integral to creating the ambiance of the overall Ranch House interior.

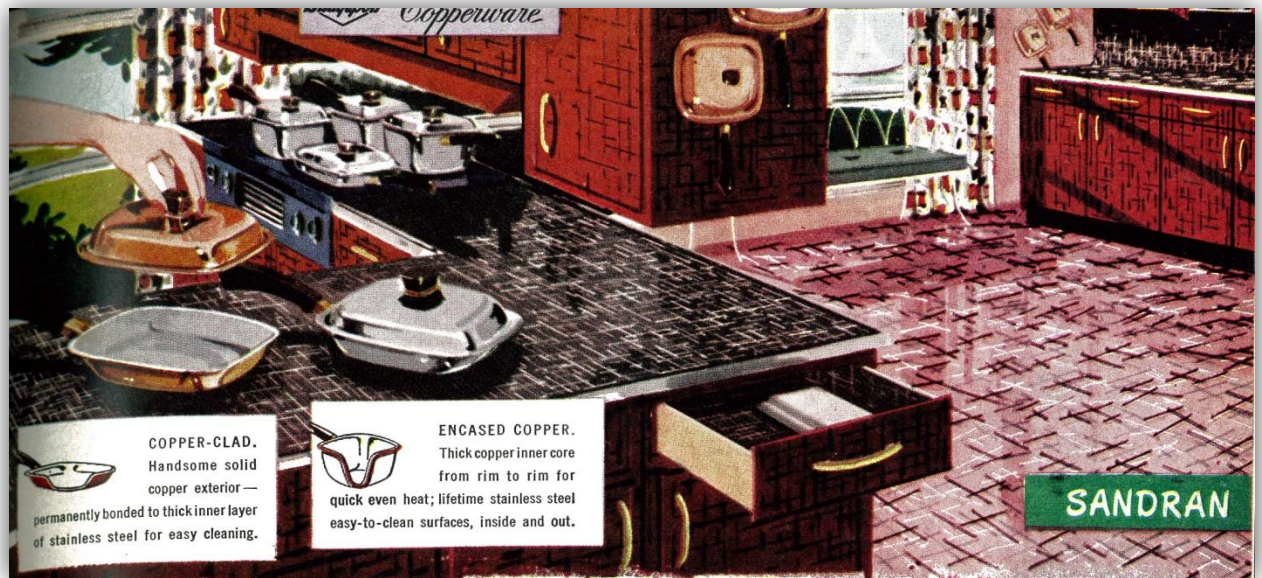


Figure 3.26 Sandran Advertisement for an all vinyl kitchen. *Good Housekeeping*, Sept. 1955, 40.

Living areas often used natural materials like wood paneling to replace paint and wall papers, to bring warmth into a home.⁶⁴ Wall-to-wall carpeting used in living areas was a relatively new feature of the mid-century home and was available in a number of textures and patterns. Many advertisements from the period showcased the versatility of carpeting in terms of color schemes and ease of maintenance. Often, these advertisements showed the carpet overlaid on top of existing hard wood floors, promoting the modern aesthetic and emphasizing comfort. (Figure 3.27)

⁶⁴ Bernard P. Spring. "Advances in House Design." *Design and the Production of Houses*. (New York: McGraw-Hill Book Company, Inc,) 1959, 65.

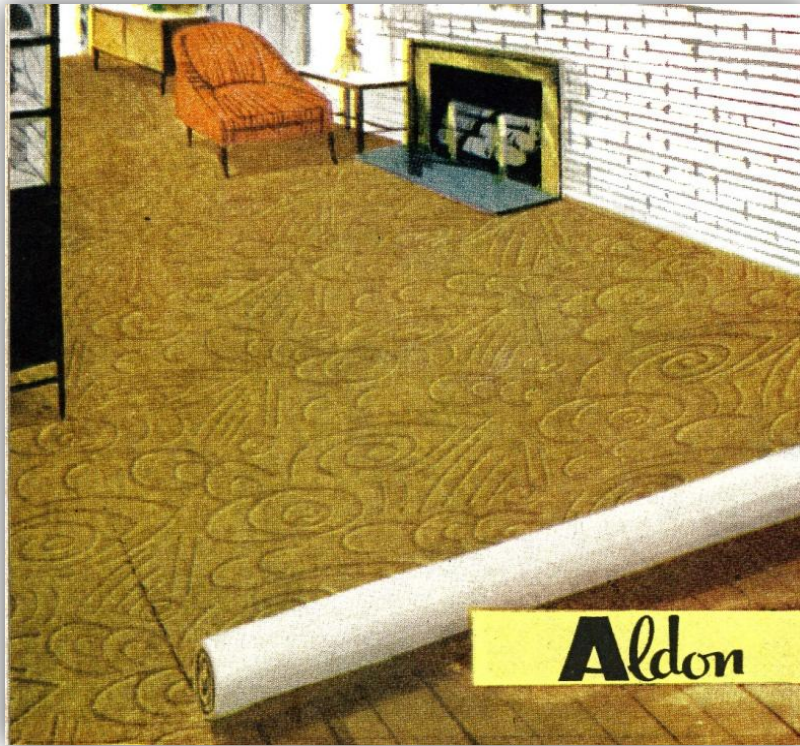


Figure 3.27 Aldon Advertisement for wall-to-wall carpeting. *Good Housekeeping*, Sept. 1955, 40.

The variation of materials available during the period means that no absolute types were used in specific Ranch House interiors. However, the affordability and availability of industrial materials made them well suited for incorporation in the Ranch House, as it was the most popular housing type in the 1950s.

One mechanism builders and architects employed to counteract the problems of storage space within the confined Ranch House interior were built-in cabinets and shelving. Innumerable examples of built-ins exist in floor plans descriptions from this period. Because of the limited living space of the Ranch House, built-ins were utilized to maximize the amount of storage space the house offered. Built-ins could be incorporated in any room, but the main focus for these features was in the living and dining areas.

Built-ins ranged in type including bookcases, desks, and china cabinets. Bookcases often flanked fireplaces for storage and decoration, and if not built directly into the wall, could serve as a partition between the integrated living room and dining room. China cabinets were planned in a similar manner, saving space when integrated into the home, or serving as a partition between zones.

Relationship to Exterior Spaces

A major theme in the Ranch House interior was the relationship of the home to its surrounding. To emphasize this relationship, architects and builders employed large expanses of glass and sliding glass doors in living areas to bring in the outdoors. Outdoor living was an important element to the Ranch House. Planned patios, terraces, and porches were present in 55% of floor plans; and many plans that did not expressly identify these elements, reserved areas for the future construction of these spaces. The patio of the Ranch House was meant to serve as an outdoor room, and provide residents a space for leisure activities. Alwin Cassen's Jr., architect for over 150 builders in the Long Island area in the 1950s and early 1960s claimed the patio was, "natural for intimate outdoor entertaining."⁶⁵ The patio was meant to be an extension of the home, and due to the limited space within the interior, provide an area for entertaining and extended living.

Carports

The integrated carport was another revolutionary element of the Ranch House interior. The rise in popularity of the automobile in the 1950s necessitated a location for them near the home. The integrated carport was not seen with such propensity on any form of American residential architecture prior to the Ranch House. Although, not all Ranch Houses had this feature. Its location, usually with direct access to the kitchen, was

⁶⁵ Alwin Cassens, Jr. *Ranch Homes for Today*. (New York: Archway Press, Inc.,) 1953, 25

another component of work space zoning and the integration of the exterior into the interior of the home.

The carport can be considered a component of the interior because of the number of instances of creating habitable spaces from them. Plan books offered suggestions for creating another room by enclosing the carport, or enlarging the living room, and creating additional bedrooms.⁶⁶ By enclosing the carport, Ranch House owners took advantage of the plan's flexibility, and manipulated it to serve his or her individual needs.

Fenestration

The fenestration of the 1950s Ranch House is a notable contributor to the overall exterior character. The use and design windows of the Ranch House are one of the criteria professional architectural surveyors document when looking at Ranch Houses. The location and size of windows allows the interior to be read from a distance; high windows near the roof line indicate a bedroom, while large fixed windows indicate living spaces. The fenestration plays a crucial role to the interior as well. Window placement and design dictated room layout, and contributed to the overall character of the interior.

Often used on the façade, picture windows were a popular feature for the 1950s Ranch House. The National Plan Service's *Eastern Home Style Trends* depicted the benefits of a large picture window because they, "let in plenty of light, and afford picturesque, intriguing views."⁶⁷ The large expanse of glass both on the façade of the home and through sliding glass doors on the rear contributed to the integration of the

⁶⁶ Avi Friedman, "The Evolution of Design Characteristics During the Post-Second World War Housing Boom: The U.S. Experience." *Journal of Design History*, Vol. 8. No.2 (1995), 142.

⁶⁷ National Plan Service, Inc. *Eastern Home Style Trends*. Chicago: National Plan Service, Inc, 1955, 7.

interior and the exterior, and allowed the small interior of the Ranch House to appear larger.

Window placement and design were particularly important in bedrooms. Here, windows were placed near the roof line to aid with ventilation. Variety existed in the placement of windows in the bedroom, but according to the sampled floor plans, a clerestory or highly placed windows was the trend. (Figures 3.28 & 3.29)



Figure 3.28 & 3.29. Examples of window placement in Ranch House bedrooms, Stegman House, Athens, Georgia.

Case Study House

Although custom designed, the Stegman House incorporated a number of interior elements identified as common to the 1950s Ranch House. This use of standard interior elements gives credibility to the Ranch House interior as a considerable contributor to the overall significance of the Ranch House because it shows a recognition by architects and builders of elements which are universal to the Ranch House interior.

The kitchen of the Stegman House is a Strip kitchen with an integrated utilitarian area comprised of a washer and dryer. An eat-in area with panel awning windows and manmade, hand laid tiles are separated from the food preparation center by hanging, ‘see-

thru' cabinets. (Figure 3.30) The see-thru cabinetry mirrors the openness of the rest of the interior.



Figure 3.30. Dining alcove and Kitchen pass-through, Stegman House, Athens, Georgia.

The house also employed a large variation of window types, successfully linking the interior to the site. The living room employed small pane fixed, louvered, picture windows, and fixed, irregularly shaped windows in the exposed gable. (Figures 3.31 & 3.32).



Figure 3.31. Fenestration in the rear living room. Note the use of multiple window forms, and the use of fixed glass in the gable. Stegman House Athens, Georgia.



Figure 3.32. Fixed pane and louvered windows in the living room, Stegman House, Athens, Georgia.

The use of unique built-ins in the dining area and in the bedrooms showcased the common problem with adequate storage spaces. This china cabinet was expressly drafted on the original blueprints. The fixed china cabinet had textured glass panes, and served as the unifying device separating the two living zones. (Figure 3.33)



Figure 3.33. Original Built-in china cabinet partitioning living spaces, note the original textured glass which adds interest to the piece, Stegman House, Athens, Georgia.

Built-ins were also present in one of the three bedrooms as a desk with shelves, and an integrated trundle bed. The built-in desk exemplified the need for personal, private space for the intention of individual respite and development. (Figure 3.34)



Figure 3.34. Built in desk and bookcase in a bedroom, Stegman House, Athens, Georgia.

The Stegman house has maintained most of its originals interior materials and character. The house has two compatible additions on both sides of the façade and both use windows and materials comparable to the rest of the home.

The variation in plan and materials used in the innumerable Ranch Houses built between 1950 and 1959 prevented one absolute single form of the Ranch House interior. Ranch House plans varied the location and number of rooms, the traffic patterns of interiors, and openness of the home. Based on the data provided by the sampled Ranch House interiors, the most common represented Ranch House had three bedrooms, one bathroom, and an open floor plan; the kitchen contained a dining area, the living room was integrated with dining room, and large amounts of glass brought the outdoors into the interior.

CHAPTER FOUR

CONTEXT OF THE RANCH HOUSE INTERIOR

The Ranch House is among the most successful forms of residential architecture in the United States. Common residential architecture reflects the values of average people and can be used to document trends in social change.⁶⁸ Thomas Hubka, Professor of Architecture at the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee noted that the Ranch House “represented an embodiment in physical form the traditional values of those middle-class Americans who freely chose it for a living environment, and for whom it represented the fulfillment of social ideals.”⁶⁹ The Ranch House interior showcased the change in perception of acceptable and desirable living standards in the 1950s. In comparison to previous forms of American housing, the minimalist qualities expressed by the interior of the Ranch House came to be associated with the image of efficient, sensible, modern living that was the overwhelming choice of Americans buying new homes after World War Two.⁷⁰

The Ranch House emerged during a significant period of change in the United States. Associate Professor of History at Plattsburgh State University of New York, Jesamyn Neuhaus identified the transitions many Americans were facing in the 1950s:

For average Americans, daily life was changing rapidly and in innumerable ways. Suburban living, the exponential rise in automobile ownership, the growth of “white collar” employment, racial tension and the beginning of the civil rights movement, and the spread of television were just some of the factors which

⁶⁸ Roger A Clouser, “The Ranch House in America” (Master of Arts, University of Kansas, 1984), 4.

⁶⁹ Thomas Hubka, “The American Ranch House: Traditional Design Method in Modern Popular Culture,” (*Traditional Dwelling and Settlement Review*, Vol. VII, No. I, 1995), 33.

⁷⁰ Hubka, 35.

contributed to the ways that daily life for Americans in the post-WWII was dramatically different from the previous generation.⁷¹

The Ranch House in this period was partly adopted because it represented this dramatic change in American living.

The design of the Ranch House interior expressed four cultural ideals presented to middle-class suburban Americans in the 1950s; a focus on casualness within the home, individuality expressed through residential architecture, a family-centric space, and flexibility in floor plan. Alwin Cassens Jr. created his designs expressly for “Mr. and Mrs. Average American,”⁷² in his 1953 plan book, *Ranch Homes for Today*. The Ranch House gained popularity during an era of home planning experimentation; a period where a generalized popular taste dictated home designs.⁷³ The configuration of the Ranch House reinforced a value system that was desirable to the market system for which it was produced.⁷⁴ The Ranch House became the representation of the casual and practical lifestyle, and was considered more than an architectural style; it embodied a new approach to living.⁷⁵

Focus on Casualness

A break with historically defined living standards and a focus on casualness within in the home is best represented in the Ranch House interior by the omission of formal rooms and the acceptance of the open floor plan. Nineteenth century homes had parlors devoted exclusively to receiving and entertaining guests, whereas the size of the average 1950s

⁷¹ Jesamyn Neuhaus. “The Way to A Man’s Heart: Gender Roles, Domestic Ideology, and Cookbooks in the 1950s,” *Journal of Social History*, Vol. 32, No. 3 (Spring, 1999), 537.

⁷² Cassens, 19.

⁷³ Mary Wright and Russel Wright. *Mary and Russel Wright’s Guide to Easier Living* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1951), 8.

⁷⁴ Kelly, Barbara M. *Expanding the American Dream: Building & Rebuilding Levittown*. (Albany: State University of New York Press), 1993, 7

⁷⁵ Gary G. Peterson. “Home off the Range: The Origins and Evolution of Ranch Style Architecture in the United States,” *Design Methods and Theories*, Vol 23, iss 3, 1989, 1054.

Ranch House prevented exclusivity in room function. Additionally, maintaining Victorian formality in the home was generally panned, and as acclaimed 1950s designer Russel Wright asserted, “something to be ashamed of.”⁷⁶ The emphasis on the relaxed appeal of the Ranch House in publications and plan books was a reaction against the rigidity of previous generations, and an embrace of the perceived informality of post-war America; the Ranch House was designed to facilitate a more comfortable existence.⁷⁷

The Ranch House was an integral component of the idealized method of living, as an author of a 1951 *House & Garden* article identified it as, “a way of life, part and parcel of the new informality.”⁷⁸ The emphasis on informality in the home necessitated more opportunities for casual entertaining and leisure activities. The integration of the outdoors into interior spaces through large windows and sliding glass doors furthered the illusion of informality by allowing the interior of the home to organically blend with nature. Many published floor plans explicitly identified spaces for outdoor patios, terraces, and decks, implying the period’s interest in outdoor activities. The appeal of the easy-going life style that was identified with the Ranch House’s origins on the West Coast perpetuated the connection between the home and the American enthusiasm for relaxed outdoor pastimes such as cooking and eating.⁷⁹ The casualness of outdoor entertaining transferred into the interior of the home as seen through the devaluation of the formal dining room.

The popularity of casual entertaining in the 1950s Ranch House can be documented by period articles promoting relaxed cocktail parties or barbeques in lieu of

⁷⁶ Ibid. 2.

⁷⁷ Clark, 216

⁷⁸ Scott Hyde. “A ranch house is a new way of life.” *House & Garden*, September 1951, 104.

⁷⁹ Clark, 211

stiff dinner parties or formal teas.⁸⁰ Without a formal dining space guests were free to socialize throughout the public areas of the home by not being relegated to a specific space. The interior of the Ranch House expressed informality in entertaining by incorporation of the kitchen into the larger living area which prevented the hostess from feeling isolated from her guests.⁸¹ Changes in mid-century ideas about hospitality and entertaining shaped the interior of the Ranch House by removing formal spaces with specific uses in favor of free-flowing, flexible public areas. The Ranch House, as explained by the editors of *Modern Ranch Homes: Designed for Town or Country Living*, embraced, “informal, gracious living,” as demonstrated through its floor plan.⁸²

Individuality

In an era that valued conformity on a political and social level, the Ranch House allowed owners to express their individuality through plan selection, material use, and decoration.⁸³ A significant change occurred in residential architecture in the 1950s; as the demand for housing increased, architects and developers shifted from custom designed homes toward easily mass-produced designs for clients whose specific individual characteristics were unknown.⁸⁴ Although some architectural critics condemned the Ranch House for its perceived uniformity,⁸⁵ Ranch Houses were often individualized for the particular buyer and adjusted to meet the owner’s specifications.

⁸⁰ Wright, 8.

⁸¹ Gillies, Mary Davis. “The New Ways We Eat.” *McCalls*, June 1950,

⁸² The F.A. Reguarth Co. *Modern Ranch Homes: Designed for Town or Country Living*. Dayton: National Plan Service, Inc, 1951.24.

⁸³ William H. Young and Nancy K. Young, *The 1950s :American Popular Culture Through History*, (Westport, Connecticut: Greenwood Press, 2008), xii

⁸⁴ Friedman, 144.

⁸⁵ Lawrence A Beneson, “The Standardization of Low-Cost Homes-I,” *The American Institute of Architects*, Vol. XIV, No. 2 (August, 1950), 62.

The number of floor plans available for construction during the 1950s presents the foundation for individual expression through residential architecture. By choosing one plan over another, a potential Ranch House buyer expressed uniqueness in preference and requirements. The floor plan chosen by a particular buyer could be altered by the builder; Cassens noted the Ranch House is, “the kind you’re glad to make your own.”⁸⁶ The architect’s acceptance of pending modifications to existing floor plans shows the propensity of clients to make their Ranch House reflective of their individual personalities. This customization of standard floor plans allowed Ranch House buyers to create the house of their dreams.⁸⁷

Ranch House owners exhibited their individuality by incorporating distinct features based on personal tastes. Some customized their homes by making major alterations such as porches or additions, while others individualized their houses through surface alterations including paint colors and interior decorations.⁸⁸ Builders and homeowners would sometimes customize these plans by using local construction materials to create a sense of individuality or variety in their appearance.”⁸⁹ Variations in interior and exterior elements meant that a housing form that was mass-produced could be altered to create a unique structure.

Housing developers and governmental entities used surveys to gauge consumer demands in order to create generalized housing options. In 1956, a major nationwide survey was conducted by the United States Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD), focusing on prospective female home buyers. This survey resulted

⁸⁶ Cassens, 5.

⁸⁷ Clark, 193

⁸⁸ Ibid, 229.

⁸⁹ Cloues, 22.

in a standard template for a mid-1950s Ranch House, where the ideal home was “a modern, six-room house selling for \$6,000.”⁹⁰ The survey participants asserted their need to shape the Ranch House interior on, “individual initiative and expression.”⁹¹ Another theme among the participants of the HUD survey was the “opportunity to shape the environment both interior and exterior in which they live and grow.”⁹² The participants show an understanding of the importance of personalized interior spaces, and wanted to assert their individuality within a seemingly conformist housing type.

Focus on Family

A component of the individuality expressed in the Ranch House interior was an emphasis on a family-centric home; one which was personalized for individual families. The 1950s in the United States was a time of intense emphasis on traditional values of home and family.⁹³ The Ranch House of the 1950s was enthusiastically promoted by popular home magazines as representing this ideal of the family. The character defining feature of single-story living resulted in less separation of family members, and the open floor plan was conducive to frequent family interactions.

Another common theme presented in 1950s periodicals and journals was an emphasis on the woman’s role in the home, usually depicted as wife and mother. The 1950s ideology of domesticity viewed the home as the center of a woman's existence; having children was touted as the highest form of happiness.⁹⁴ As women were usually

⁹⁰ Friedman. 133. Approximately \$47,500 in 2009 US Dollars.

⁹¹ Heath. 29.

⁹² Ibid, 33.

⁹³ Miller, Melody L., Phyllis Moen and Donna Dempster-McClain. “Motherhood, Multiple Roles, and Maternal Well-Being: Women of the 1950s” *Gender and Society*, Vol. 5, No. 4 (Dec., 1991), 566.

⁹⁴ Young, 8.

associated with the role of wife and mother, Ranch House floor plans and interior materials were shaped to increase her effectiveness as housekeeper and caregiver.

Industrial interior materials such as laminates, wood paneling, and plastics ensured quicker completion of household chores. As seen in a 1955 advertisement for *Plaskon*, synthetic materials were, “so easy to clean! Just whisk a damp cloth and Presto! They gleam!”⁹⁵ The incorporation of new technologies into the home, namely washers and dryers and automatic dishwashers, aimed to increase the woman’s efficiency in the home, and create more leisure time. The RCA Estate Range focused its advertisement directly at young women depicting a woman leisurely lounging on an outdoor patio chair in front of an automatic range, assuring the reader it creates, “more leisure time for you.”⁹⁶ These interior features served to expedite the mundane tasks associated with running a household, while promoting the casualness and leisure the overall Ranch House interior represented.

Architects and developers reinforced the notion of the woman’s omnipresence in the home with the language used to promote their home designs. Architect Lelia Ross Wilburn expressed the efficiency of her design by assuring women, “while doing chores the housewife will only be a few steps away from the front door.”⁹⁷ This assumption that women would be in the home to receive visitors and deliveries and the compassionate design to aid in her duties, shows how the Ranch House interior reinforced the 1950s ideal of traditional family and gender roles. The implication of the woman’s presence in the home was significant to the interior plan because it was based, in large part, on her ability to work in the home while simultaneously raising her children.

⁹⁵ Plaskon Advertisement, *Good Housekeeping*, March 1955, 181.

⁹⁶ RCA Estate Ranges, Advertisement, *Good Housekeeping*, April 1955, 143.

⁹⁷ Wilburn, 21.

The responsibility of the mother to be omnipresent in the house was resolved by the open floor plan; especially the integration of the kitchen into the public realm. The typical Ranch House plan, with all public rooms easily viewed from the kitchen, and large expanses of glass between the indoor and outdoor made possible the supervision of children while completing household work. This supervision and interaction would have been impossible if cooking and playing took place in separate areas.⁹⁸ The open floor plan also created a greater sense of family togetherness. Not only could a mother watch her children as she worked, but children were more present in all areas of the house. The focus on informality and casualness in living ideals allowed children to have greater rights to entirety of the house. No longer were spaces secluded only to adults, the most important spaces belonged to all.⁹⁹

The open floor plan did not always mean a constant barrage of family togetherness. Zoned living through separating public and private areas meant that parents could “banish children to the [outdoors], or retire themselves to the study.”¹⁰⁰ The changing definition of acceptable housing standards by the 1950s sought to encourage family togetherness, but recognized the necessity for “a separate play space or quiet study area.”¹⁰¹ As zoning is the most fundamental characteristic of the Ranch House interior in terms of planning and spatial organization, its use to control familial interaction illustrates how architecture responded to cultural specifications.

⁹⁸ Adams, Annmarie. “The Eichler Home: Intention and Experience in Postwar Suburbia.” *Perspectives in Vernacular Architecture*, Vol. 5, Gender, Class, and Shelter (1995), pp 164-78., 170.

⁹⁹ Miller, Laura J. “Family Togetherness and the Suburban Ideal.” *Sociological Forum* Vol. 10, No. 3 (Sep, 1995), 401-402.

¹⁰⁰ Twitchell and Rudolph, “Four houses.” *Progressive architecture* 31, (August 1950): 51-69. *Avery Index to Architectural Periodicals*, EBSCOhost (accessed March 09, 2011). 76.

¹⁰¹ Spring 650

Flexibility

The central role of children in the family combined with their changing needs as they grew prompted a need for flexibility in the Ranch House interior. From its infancy, Ranch House architecture was malleable and acceptable of change.¹⁰² Many designers and home owners felt that “housing should be designed to be built in stages, as the means and needs of the family grew.”¹⁰³ This is seen in multiple additions added to 1950s Ranches in subsequent decades; original buyers hoped that if their original house was not all they wanted “they would be able to make further modifications in the future that would make it more acceptable.”¹⁰⁴ Although homeowners changed the ways in which they used their interior spaces, and plan books touted the benefits of additions, they rarely if ever, expressed a need for disrupting the physical layout of the interior. The open floor plan itself expressed flexibility in room organization, use, and placement.

The Ranch House interior was more than an amalgamation of room placements and manmade materials. It physically expressed ideals emblematic to a period of sweeping social and economic change in America. The manifestation of cultural influences through architecture show that the Ranch House as a cultural resource is significant for more than its revolutionary architecture; it was the embodiment the post-war cultural standards in the United States.

¹⁰² Peterson, 1054.

¹⁰³ Clark 142.

¹⁰⁴ Ibid, 230

CHAPTER FIVE

PRESERVATION CHALLENGES

The Ranch House is once again gaining popularity with sections of the public as a desirable housing type. Potential home buyers vary their reasons for choosing a 1950s Ranch House in the twenty-first century. Like the generation that preceded it, many home buyers today look for interior features that were represented in the 1950s; namely flexibility in plan, simplicity, and single floor living. Based on anecdotal evidence from current home magazines and articles, the demographic for Ranch House buyers is wide ranging; some from the baby boom generation are buying their Ranch Homes from their parents, while younger, first time buyers are looking for inexpensive starter homes. Still, others are looking to recapture a form of nostalgic architecture and adapt it to their families. Regardless of the reason for purchase, the Ranch House interior is a major contributor to the successful sale of Ranch Houses nationwide.

The ‘baby boom’ generation has a different interpretation of the Ranch House than subsequent generations; some view it as a reminder of their childhood, while others appreciate the practicality of its single floor living. One Ranch House buyer, as documented in Elizabeth M. Johnson’s article, “Home on the Ranch,” purchased a 1950s home in New York in 2000. The middle-aged buyer cited the single-floor living as the main requisite for purchasing a Ranch House and exhibited no interest or knowledge of the significance of the interior as historic. The buyer did not care for the original interior and, like the majority of the other owners in the neighborhood, spent several years

remodeling.¹⁰⁵ This is an instance of a homebuyer purchasing a Ranch House strictly for livability at the expense of historic fabric.

Some Ranch House enthusiasts see the intrinsic value of intact Ranch House interiors, as chronicled by recent home buyer Carole Ross in *Atomic Ranch Magazine*:

It was important for us to find a house that was as close original condition as possible. We looked at lots of ranches, but most had been updated in ways that didn't go with their architecture. We saw kitchens with cheap, frilly looking cabinets, bathrooms with prefab vanities, plus painted paneling and front doors that belonged on Victorian-style homes. Too often, original character had been eliminated to the point where nothing much was left to work with. We just didn't want to redo a redo.¹⁰⁶

Here, the buyer valued the historic integrity of the Ranch House interior and used a purist approach in choosing her home. Rehabilitating a Ranch House interior to its original state was less appealing than finding an intact example, and like others who value historic features, chose to find a home which still maintained the original 1950s values expressed through interior details.

These examples of current Ranch House owners show the spectrum of knowledge about the Ranch House interior, and its value as a contributor to the significance of the home. Regardless of a home owner's understanding, the responsibility rests on with preservation professionals to educate the public about their resource and to provide accurate information regarding the history, significance, and acceptable changes to these irreplaceable resources.

The preservation challenges associated with the Ranch House interior are encompassed by two overarching common preservation issues: those associated with

¹⁰⁵ Elizabeth M. Johnson, "Home on the Ranch," *American Profile*, September 2, 2007, <http://www.americanprofile.com/article/23407.html>, (accessed January 26, 2011).

¹⁰⁶ Carole Ross, "Milwaukee time Capsule," *Atomic Ranch Magazine*, (Winter 2009), 47.

Recent Past resources, and the preservation of privately owned interiors. Because the Ranch House interior is a newly identified resource, the practical challenges and recommendations occur where these two topics overlap. In this overlap, a series of preservation challenges arise unique to 1950s Ranch Houses interiors.

The Recent Past

Preservationists usually define the ‘Recent Past’ as resources which were designed or constructed within the last fifty years. The building boom following World War Two, and subsequent development in the latter half of the twentieth century created an astronomical number of resource; estimates claim these structures comprise approximately seventy percent of the existing building stock.¹⁰⁷ The term “Recent Past” can refer to a number of types of resources. Residential and commercial buildings as well as mid-century office complexes or gas stations all fall under the umbrella term “Recent Past” if constructed within the time frame. The variety and number of resources which fit into this category create unique preservation threats for buildings from the post-war period including: a lack of public awareness, demolition, and insensitive alterations. The Ranch House is experiencing these threats as entire neighborhoods, on individual exteriors, and in interiors.

Recent Past Challenges Associated with the Ranch House Interior

The largest threat to the Ranch House interior in terms of Recent Past challenges is the overall lack of appreciation as a potential and significant cultural resource. This lack of appreciation stems from the misconception that they are too recently constructed to be considered ‘historic’, from changes in architectural styles and tastes over the last

¹⁰⁷ Jeanne Lambin. *Preserving Resources from the Recent Past*, Washington, D.C.: National trust for Historic Preservation, 2007,1.

fifty years, and from their ubiquitous nature which decreases individual value. Although these challenges can be associated with the majority of Recent Past resources, the Ranch House interior faces the same threats.

Practicing cultural resource professionals have historically relied on the passage of time to explain the significance of a resource, and to identify what elements are worthy of preservation.¹⁰⁸ Ranch House interiors from the 1950s are still seen by many preservationists and individuals as non-historic because they were built within the past few generations. Richard Striner, Associate Professor of History at Washington College, noted that the public has a, “resistance to the concept of viewing the everyday content of our own lives in historical terms.”¹⁰⁹ Since historic preservation as a practice in the United States was originally associated with high styles of architecture and grand imposing structures, many find it difficult to accept common Ranch Houses from his or her lifetime as a cultural resource. Most appreciated architectural styles have overt ornamentation and decoration; the simplicity of the post-war Ranch House conflicts with the idea of what historic architecture ‘should’ look like.¹¹⁰ This idea traverses generations as well, as Christine French, the Director of the National Trust for Historic Preservation Recent Past initiative, *TrustModern* identified, “persistent public reluctance to acknowledge buildings, landscapes, and structures from the previous generation as historic.”¹¹¹ A challenge for preservationists is to convince and educate the general

¹⁰⁸ Rebecca A Shiffer. “The Recent Past,” *Cultural Resource Management*, Vol 18. No 8 (No. 8, 1995) 3.

¹⁰⁹ Richard Striner, “Scholarship, Strategy, and Activism in Preserving the Recent Past,” *Forum Journal*, Vol. 10, No. 1(Fall 1995) <http://www.preservationnation.org/forum/resource-center/forum-library/members-only/scholarship-strategy-and-activism-in.html> (accessed 27 January 2011).

¹¹⁰ Lambin, 3.

¹¹¹ Christine Madrid French, “Introduction, Modernism + Recent Past,” *ForumJournal*, Vol. 24, No. 4 (Summer 2010), 5.

public that although the Ranch House is a more recent house type, they possess enough significance to be considered architectural history rather than nostalgia.

Changes in tastes and stylistic trends also contribute to the lack of appreciation for the Ranch House as a cultural resource. Buildings that do not fit the current norm for favored architectural style are often marginalized, ignored, or questioned.¹¹² This overall dismissal of the previous generation's architecture is dangerous in terms of twentieth-century residential architecture, because many examples experienced a period of acceptance, then rejection, followed by resurgence in popularity. In the 1950s, late Victorian homes were thought to be ostentatiously ornamental; countless examples were left to decay or were destroyed.¹¹³ By the 1970s, Victorian houses were en vogue while 1920s Craftsman bungalows were considered 'squat' and lacking in historic detail.¹¹⁴ This pattern indicates that Ranch Houses will experience a period of rejuvenated popularity, which necessitates the preservation of existing historic fabric. As many in the public still view Recent Past resources, mainly Ranch Houses, as 'ugly' or 'junk', preservationists need to be assertive in promoting this housing type as a viable cultural resource.

A contributing element to the popularity or value of turn-of-the-century architecture is its scarcity. The basic laws of supply and demand dictate that the fewer number of resources available, the higher the value placed upon them. In terms of architecture and history, this relates not only to housing costs, but as a primary source for research and interpretation; more information has to be derived from fewer examples.

¹¹² Ibid, 6.

¹¹³ Margaret Loftus, "Rescuing the Relics of Modern Times," *U.S. News and World Report*, June 2000. <http://www.eichlersocal.com/NewsandArticles/USNews.htm>, (accessed 29 January 2011.)

¹¹⁴ George Kramer. "Listening to Lily; Why We Should Preserve the Recent Past Now," *The Alliance Review*, (Jan/Feb 2004), 5.

The frequency of the Ranch House as a housing type decreases its value as a resource to the public because, unlike Victorian structures, seemingly innumerable examples exist and are not under immediate threat of complete eradication.

The pervasive nature of the Ranch House may lead some to believe that they will exist in perpetuity. In actuality, the threat of demolition of 1950s Ranch Houses is imminent; approximately 75,000 houses are razed each year to make room for larger houses.¹¹⁵ In 2004, The Brookings Institution, an independent research organization, undertook a study on housing in the United States. The result, *Towards a New Metropolis: the Opportunity to Rebuild America*, found that by 2030, half of all existing building stock will have been built after 2000.¹¹⁶ The study also concluded that the area with largest growth will be the residential sector, and that, “growth related and replacement development will be more than two-thirds of all development existing in 2000.”¹¹⁷ The public devaluation of Ranch Houses because of their ubiquitous nature and the general lack of appreciation of them as a resource lead some potential home buyers to purchase them with the sole intention of demolition.¹¹⁸ This, coupled with the predicted building boom of the next three decades, indicates that Ranch Houses will not maintain their current numbers, and lose value as a group of resources.

Unlike architectural forms which preceded it, the Ranch House is significant *because* it is everywhere. The spread of suburbanization in the post-war period is represented, to some extent, by this particular house type. Without entire neighborhoods

¹¹⁵ Patrik Jonsson. “McMansions migrate from ‘burb to city.” *The Christian Science Monitor*. 2 January 2007.

¹¹⁶ Arthur C. Nelson, “Towards a New Metropolis: The Opportunity to Rebuild America,” The Brookings Institution Metropolitan Policy Program, www.brookings.edu/metro/pubs/20041213_rebuildamerica.pdf, 2, (accessed 09 March 2011).

¹¹⁷ Ibid, 1-2.

¹¹⁸ Chapman, 89.

and districts, one of the major themes represented by the Ranch House would be lost. Proper presentation of the importance of the Ranch House as a potential resource to the public may ensure the preservation of large tracts of Ranch Houses because it is in context that they are most significant.

The public's lack of appreciation and misapprehension about the Ranch House as a cultural resource contributes to unsympathetic interior and exterior alterations. Misunderstanding about the importance of the interior in terms of Recent Past challenges stems from minimal accurate information regarding the historic character of Ranch House interiors, and innumerable renovation and remodeling texts promoting the benefits of altering existing floor plans and removing original materials.

The confusion regarding appropriate interior alterations and additions is aided by incorrect information presented by officials to the public. An instance of this is seen in the 2008 document, *A Pattern Book for West Des Moines Neighborhoods*. This document was compiled by architects and city planners in Des Moines, Iowa for the express purpose to "help local home owners who are thinking about updating or renovating their homes."¹¹⁹ The pattern book examines acceptable alterations in terms of proportion, style, and context with the West Des Moines neighborhood. Mid-century residential architecture is the focus of the document, including Cape Cods, Ranches, and Split-Levels; each with brief developmental history and descriptions of architectural characteristics.

¹¹⁹ A. Grant Nordby, ed. *A Pattern Book for West Des Moines Neighborhoods: Ideas for Renovating and Updating Your Home*, The City of West Des Moines, Iowa (November 19, 2008) available at: <http://www.wdm-ia.com/Index.aspx?page=117&recordid=147&returnURL=%2FIndex.aspx> (accessed 09 March 2011), p. 1.

The pattern book offers two suggestions for alterations for mid-century Ranch Houses: the incorporation of a “Pop Top” addition, and extensive interior renovations.¹²⁰ According to the pattern book, a ‘Pop Top’ addition includes adding a second story to an existing Ranch House and incorporating elements from Prairie and Craftsman Style architecture including a ‘waistband’ around the second story, and an extended porch from the front façade. The book also advocates dramatic interior remodeling following the trend of a more open plan than those of the 1950s; removing most interior walls, and incorporating additions on the front and side facades.¹²¹ These suggestions, as presented by professionals, are disconcerting because they advocate the removal of major identifying elements of the Ranch House, namely single floor living, and a plain, unimposing front façade.

The authors write, “the City of West Des Moines is interested in preserving its existing neighborhoods by encouraging homeowners to retain the integrity and character of their homes.”¹²² The officials do not fully comprehend the overall significance of West Des Moines’ mid-century resources, or the elements which contribute to the significance of these structures. By presenting what they consider appropriate alterations to mid-century Ranch Houses, they are in effect, contributing to the devaluation of these resources and going in direct opposition to preservation. If residents of West Des Moines, or other Ranch House owners nationwide, actively followed the advice presented in this pattern book, their resource would lose a significant amount of integrity, and could not be included as a contributing resource in an historic district. A better understanding of these

¹²⁰ Ibid, 31-33.

¹²¹ Ibid, 34-35.

¹²² Ibid, i.

resources, and proper education of officials and the public is needed to prevent incompatible alterations on a large scale.

More readily available resources that create a threat to Ranch House interior preservation are renovation publications. Published materials, including renovation books and interior design magazines, provide ideas for home owners looking to alter their interiors; often at the expense of existing historic fabric. These publications show an inconsideration towards historic Ranch House interiors, and a general unknowing about its significance to the overall integrity of the Ranch House. Heralded as “the remodeler’s dream” in architects M. Caren Connolly and Louis Wasserman’s *Updating Classic America: Ranches*, little regard is given to maintaining or preserving the interior in favor of excessive modification.¹²³ Another current example of the promotion of interior destruction is an article in the home magazine *Before & After*, entitled, “Personalizing an Everyday Ranch.” This article advocates the complete demolition of a Ranch House interior because, “demolition can work as a reorganizing tool.”¹²⁴ Articles of this nature are frequently published and, because of their omnipresence, can increase a credibility of interior alterations to the public. Preservationist however, can use these publications gauge the atmosphere of current interior design trends and attempt to predict future challenges associated with interior alterations in order to actively and accurately educate the public.

A challenge with additions and alterations arises in choosing the location for the new construction. Two significant characteristics of the Ranch House are its rambling nature, and the integration of the outdoors in the interior; selecting the incorrect location

¹²³ M.Caren Connolly, and, Louis Wasserman. *Updating Classic American Ranches: Design Ideas for Renovating, Remodeling, and Building New*. Newtown, Ct: The Taunton Press, 2003, 24.

¹²⁴ Nancy McCoy. “Personalizing an Everyday Ranch,” *Before & After*, Winter 2011, 109.

for an addition may disrupt the integrity of the entire structure. As the Ranch House is closely linked to its site, no universal mandate can be asserted to encompass all structures; additions and alterations have to be assessed on an individual basis. As seen in the Stegman case study house, not all additions to Ranch Houses are imposing or incompatible. Here, Heery & Heery chose to continue the elongated lines of the home by constructing additions with appropriate scale and massing on both sides of the façade. These additions are complementary to the existing historic structure, and maintain the integration of the exterior living space into the living room.

Interiors

As explicated in Chapter Three, the Ranch House interior was a complex organization of space and materials which was variable and often individualized to a particular home owner. Preserving interiors can be challenging for preservationists because as noted in the National Park Service's *Preservation Brief 18: Rehabilitating Interiors in Historic Buildings*, "virtually all rehabilitations of historic buildings involve some degree of interior alterations, even if the buildings are to be used for their original purpose."¹²⁵ The common acceptance of interior spaces as temporary and therefore expendable can create problems for preservationists because interiors are viewed with lesser importance than the exterior. This assumption is a fallacy because interior spaces can present a more accurate depiction of a building's development and history than exterior architectural features. The preservation challenges associated with residential Ranch House interiors include the ephemeral nature of the home and changes in

¹²⁵ H Ward Jandl, *Preservation Brief 18, Rehabilitating Interiors in Historic Buildings Identifying and Preserving Character-Defining Elements*, Technical Preservation Services, National Park Service, U.S. Department of the Interior, available from: <http://www.nps.gov/hps/tps/briefs/brief18.htm>, (accessed March 01, 2011).

individual tastes, the breakdown of original interior materials, and the inability to regulate interiors.

The Ephemeral Household

The home as an entity is meant to adapt over time to suit the needs of the inhabitant. Changes in familial demands and standards of living alter the overall perception of an acceptable home interior. This does not mean that existing historic interiors should be discounted as insignificant or destroyed; rather, they should be taken into careful consideration when planning for interior alterations, and sympathetically modified.

The interior of a home must be malleable to meet an owner's needs. The requirements of a family change as the demographic of the family itself changes. The life cycle of the average American family from mid-century can be viewed in four stages: the early years, the crowded years, the peak years, and the later years.¹²⁶ The 'early years' incorporate the period of a family before children; it is a time that a couple learns to plan and create the foundation for a future family. Following, the 'crowded years' occur when children arrive; this signifies an adjustment in the responsibilities of the parents, and places constraints on interior space and storage. The 'peak years' occur when the children are in school or are in adolescence, which changes the work load of the mother in the home, and stretches the home to its fullest extent. The home must accommodate children and their friends, as well as provide privacy for teenagers. This period ends when the children leave the home, prompting the 'later years,' where the household again numbers two.¹²⁷ The accommodation a home must provide to meet the demands of these unique

¹²⁶ Rogers, 5.

¹²⁷ Ibid, 5-7, and Clark Jr., 209-210.

phases necessitates flexibility within the structure, and fosters the fleeting nature of interiors.

The interior of a structure is frequently altered because of individual changes in tastes and stylistic trends. One Ranch House renovation book noted that, “any kitchen over seven years old is ripe for renovation.”¹²⁸ This proposed frequency of alterations means that a kitchen in a Ranch House built in 1950 could have as many as seven redesigns prior to meeting the age criteria for designation. These interior alterations can range from minor maintenance of existing features and space, to total reconfigurations. The cost of an alteration within an existing footprint of a Ranch House may be less burdensome for a home owner than a compatible addition.¹²⁹ The promotion of interior alterations by renovation publications speaks to the ignorance of the significance of Ranch House interiors. Changes by current and new home owners, however, may be necessary if the existing interior does not adequately support the family, but can be conducted in a matter that is compatible with the overall integrity of the resource.

A preservation challenge associated with both Recent Past resources and interiors is the loss of historic materials. The 1950s saw an increase in the number of manmade products used in the interiors of Ranch Houses as finishes and building materials. These were complex compositions that had not been used on a large scale prior to World War Two including, plywood, fiberglass, and plastics.¹³⁰ The large-scale industrial manufacturing processes and equipment used to make these materials are now obsolete or

¹²⁸ Connolly, 33.

¹²⁹ Ibid, 37.

¹³⁰ H. Ward Jandl. “Preserving the Recent Past: An Introduction.” *Cultural Resource Management* 18 (1995): 5.

non-existent, making mid-century materials virtually impossible to replicate.¹³¹ As they are difficult and expensive to reproduce and stylistic tastes change, some current Ranch House owners opt to replace historic interior elements with modern materials. The challenge of material loss in the 1950s Ranch House is particularly alarming because these materials cannot be recreated once removed.

Another challenge associated with material loss in the 1950s Ranch House is the lack of analysis; the materials in use have not been thoroughly studied for frequency or disintegration patterns. The difficulty in assessing the frequency of a particular material in the Ranch House interior stems from the variability of design based on individual family, and the abundance of options available during the time period. Presumably, the regularity of one material over another varied by developer and region. Additionally, some common materials such as vinyl asbestos tile (VAT) have been noted as dangerous; their chemical compositions have been linked to health problems.¹³² Despite the health risks, historic materials can be appropriately retained through standard conservation techniques such as encapsulation. As these materials are components of Recent Past resources, preservationists cannot be certain how they will preserve over time; therefore an accurate plan for preservation cannot be established. Preservationists run the risk of destroying materials if a thorough analysis and study are not completed before attempting conservation.

¹³¹ Shiffer, 3.

¹³² National Trust for Historic Preservation, "Your Post War House Inspection Checklist," http://www.preservationnation.org/issues/modernism-recent-past/additional-resources/Ranch-House-Inspection-Checklist_update_FORM_071808_v2.doc, (accessed 09 March 2011).

Regulating Interiors

Overwhelmingly, the most successful method for preserving a large number of Ranch Houses is through districting. Historic Preservation Commissions (HPC) assume the responsibility for enforcing exterior stylistic standards and preservation ordinances within historic districts. The power of the HPC does not usually extend into the interior of buildings in general, unless the local landmark law expressly authorizes interior designation.¹³³ The site must maintain “public openness,” where the public is customarily invited, and the interior space contains a special historic or aesthetic interest, or value which merits designation.¹³⁴ As preservation commissions are solely limited to designating publicly accessible areas, interiors of private residences are rarely, if ever, included in local nominations.

Easements

Although few legal resources are available to preservationists for interior conservation, one method they can employ is the acquisition of an interior easement. A conservation easement is a private legal right given by the owner of a property to a qualified nonprofit organization or governmental entity for the purpose of protecting that property’s preservation values. A conservation easement protects against changes to a property that would be inconsistent with preservation.¹³⁵ Easements are successful methods of ensuring the perpetuity of interiors; however, they may not be a realistic option for Ranch Houses.

¹³³ Richard Handler, “Another Glimpse at Interiors,” *The Alliance Review*, November-December 2010, 18.

¹³⁴ *Ibid*, 18.

¹³⁵ Norman Tyler, *Historic Preservation: An Introduction to its History, Principles, and Practice*, New York: W.&W. Norton & Company, 2000, 187.

Evaluating an organization that holds a number of interior easements can help determine the practicality of Ranch House interior easements. The Historic Charleston Foundation currently owns thirty-seven interior easements on properties in the city.¹³⁶ The resources vary in architectural style and area of significance, but the majority of them were constructed prior to the mid-nineteenth century. These structures are valued for their interior details, arrangement, and singularity.¹³⁷ As the Ranch House is a Recent Past resource and suffers from a lack of appreciation and ubiquity, the challenge of obtaining an easement arises because the general public does not value them as a significant cultural resource.

Easements are a theoretical possibility for Ranch House interiors. The incorrect assumption of non-historic materials and plans represented in the Ranch House interior, paired with this type's omnipresence indicates that easements would not be a practical method for immediate protection. The misconception that easements are meant for traditionally 'historic' properties paired with the overall apathy and disinterest in mid-century resources indicates further removal from the Recent Past is necessary before interior easements are a feasible possibility for Ranch House interior preservation.

¹³⁶ "List of Easements Held by HCF," Historic Charleston Foundation, http://www.historiccharleston.org/preservation/how_cov_easements_held.html (accessed March 09, 2011).

¹³⁷ "Protecting Historic Interiors," Historic Charleston Foundation, http://www.historiccharleston.org/preservation/why_interiors.html (accessed March 09, 2011).

CHAPTER SIX

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR RANCH HOUSE INTERIORS

The preservation challenges associated with the Ranch House interior are plentiful but are not without practical solutions. Because the Ranch House interior is a component of a newly identified cultural resource, current preservation methods need to be adjusted to account for its newness and ubiquity. If a simple, methodical approach to awareness building of this component is undertaken, the public will become conscious of the importance of these elements and preservationists can be proactive in their protection.

Documentation

The first task preservationists must undertake before they can attempt to preserve 1950s Ranch House interiors, or articulate their significance to the public is extensive documentation of existing examples. Documentation is the basis of all preservation activity; without an inventory and understanding of existing housing stock, plans for education or preservation cannot be created or implemented. As seen in Chapter Four, the interior of the 1950s Ranch House is integral to its overall significance and warrants documentation and analysis.

Survey

A comprehensive survey of intact 1950s Ranch House interiors needs to be conducted. Survey methodology exists for Ranch House exteriors, as seen in *The Ranch House in Georgia*, but no survey standards exist for the interior. Surveying interior spaces presents unique challenges; surveying the interior of a specific house type,

especially one as numerous as the Ranch House, creates additional difficulties for assessment.

Historically, architectural surveys were conducted for two primary reasons; for planning purposes and regulatory needs. From the planning perspective, the need to preserve noteworthy architectural relicts of the past necessitates a comprehensive inventory of historic properties in order to provide informed planning decisions. Regulatory requirements for architectural survey arise from the recognition that preservation of historic properties is worthy of government intervention.¹³⁸ Completed surveys can be used to identify buildings and districts for potential designation on the National Register for Historic Places, assist local government preservation decisions, and promote the research of a state's history and architecture.¹³⁹ A survey of Ranch House interiors would differ from traditional architectural surveys in method and challenges, and the completed document would serve as a tool for preservationists to assess the significance of the interior and create an interpretation plan for the public.

Traditionally, historic resource surveys are conducted by professionals working under prescribed survey methods. The techniques of survey vary dependent on the professional, but usually involve written documentation of the resource from the public right-of-way and corresponding photographs of the resource. The surveyor should take notation of any alterations to the original structure, as well as any pertinent information regarding the site. One major challenge in documenting Ranch House

¹³⁸ New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection, Historic Preservation Office. *Guidelines for Architectural Survey*, State of New Jersey, 1996. <http://www.nj.gov/dep/hpo/1identify/gaspart1.pdf> (accessed 09 March 2011).

¹³⁹ Georgia Department of Natural Resources, Historic Preservation Division. *Georgia Historic Resources Survey Manual*, June 2010, <http://www.gashpo.org/content/displaycontent.asp?txtDocument=288> (accessed 09 March 2011).

interiors is accessibility. Because surveyors cannot enter private property without owner consent, they are unable to document the floor plans and existing interior materials in mid-century Ranch Houses, nor are they able to assess any major interior alterations. As the interior is a significant contributor to the overall integrity of the 1950s Ranch House, the inability to record the interior means that traditional survey methods are ineffective for this particular resource.

Traditional methods used in surveying Ranch Houses are inherently inadequate for documenting this resource type. The Ranch House as a type is significant for more than the placement of walls or exterior details; it is also significant for what the interior spaces represented about the culture of the 1950s, and the homebuyers who purchased them. An example of the ineffectuality of current survey methods is seen through the evaluation of exterior additions and alterations. As outlined in *The Ranch House in Georgia*, the most common alterations that compromise the integrity of a mid-century Ranch House are: conversion of the garage into living space, enclosed carport, enclosed or altered porch, and painting over brick, stone and patterned brick.¹⁴⁰ As seen in Chapter Three, as early as the 1950s architects and developers promoted the development of the garage and carport into living space to meet consumer needs. If modern surveyors reject a Ranch House because of an enclosed space, they are devaluing the importance of interiors, and discounting the significance of the overall resource. Documenting all Ranch Houses with appropriate exterior alterations, i.e., modified garages or sympathetic additions, will allow preservationists and architectural historians to evaluate the evolution of the Ranch House as a type without discounting examples which may retain its overall historic integrity.

¹⁴⁰ Cloues, 94.

A new approach to interior documentation is needed to adequately document the interiors of 1950s Ranch Houses. One method preservationists can use to gain access to Ranch House interiors would be to utilize neighborhood associations and Ranch House owner-volunteers to document the structures in their area. An organization that has successfully employed volunteer surveyors to record mid-century resources is *Discover Dallas!* program of Texas. The *Discover Dallas!* program has successfully documented over 12,000 resources within the city limits, largely aided by volunteer efforts. *Discover Dallas!* provides, “a unique opportunity for residents and other interested people to identify and record the cultural, historical and architectural significance of their own neighborhoods.”¹⁴¹ By involving the residents of these neighborhoods in the research and survey process, preservationists have instilled community pride, interest, and awareness about mid-century resources in participating Dallas residents. This model could be easily adapted to include interior spaces, and could be attempted in any community with Ranch House neighborhoods.

Another organization that has achieved great success with volunteer based survey is the *SurveyLA* program in Los Angeles. This program aims to inventory the 880,000 individual parcels within Los Angeles city limits, identifying resources from 1685 to 1980.¹⁴² Although the majority of the surveys are conducted by consultant teams that meet professional qualification standards, this program employed the use of volunteers through its online application, *MYhistoricLA*.¹⁴³ This online resource identification form

¹⁴¹ ◇, “About,” Discover Dallas! Survey, http://www.preservationdallas.org/new_site/survey/about.php (accessed March 09, 2011).

¹⁴² < >, “Project Description,” Survey La: Los Angeles Historic Resources Survey, <http://www.preservation.lacity.org/survey/description> (accessed March 09, 2011).

¹⁴³ ◇, “Survey LA FAQs,” Survey La: Los Angeles Historic Resources Survey, <http://www.preservation.lacity.org/survey/faq> (accessed March 09, 2011).

allows individuals interested in documenting their property to enter their parcel information directly into the *SurveyLA* database. The information offered by residents will eventually be compiled into the city's historic resources into the Planning Department's GIS-based Zoning Information and Map Access System (ZIMAS) database. The incorporation of the internet provides an outlet for residents interested in documenting their structures, aids the survey effort by increasing the number of parcels surveyed, and increases the efficiency and speed of the overall program.

Using grassroots groups like neighborhood associations or individual volunteers to gather survey information is an ingenious method for massive data compilation. Using these models for interior documentation, preservationists will have normally unobtainable access into homes, and will be able to document the integrity and alteration of existing materials. The information provided by residents will also allow preservationists to understand what interior materials from the 1950s are still in use, which will provide a foundation for further research on mid-century materials. The enthusiasm offered by volunteers can also provide anecdotal evidence about a space that a traditional exterior survey would be unable to document. Having an online presence for the compilation of data will allow for a less expensive, more efficient stockpile of information and will significantly increase the volume of documented interiors.

Manual for Ranch House Interiors

The information obtained from an interior survey would aid in the creation of an interior guidelines manual for Ranch House owners. A well written pictorial guide incorporating the Secretary of Interior Standards for Rehabilitation which expresses the significance of mid-century Ranch House interiors and the proper methods for

restoration, conservation, and alterations can be created by a consultant or a neighborhood association. This document should be both published and accessible on the internet in order to reach as many potential Ranch House owners as possible. A major contributor to public's appreciation of the 1950s Ranch House interior will be awareness building of the resource and education which will allow them to make informed decisions about interior renovation.

The manual for Ranch House owners will need to incorporate a number of facets of the Ranch House. A narrative of the development of the Ranch House in conjunction with an overview of suburbanization and the culture of the 1950s in the United States will provide a context for the structure, and inform the homeowner of the importance of the Ranch House as a resource. This will serve to subjugate the Recent Past issue of 'lack of appreciation,' because the homeowner will be able to understand the Ranch House in personal terms.

Guidelines for 1950s Ranch House interiors will need to identify the defining characteristics of the typical resource, and provide examples of variances in design and materials used in the period. Information regarding materials available in the 1950s, acceptable replacements, and a bibliography of companies with the ability to produce compatible materials is necessary to educate the homeowners about the significance of remaining historic fabric, and historically acceptable replacements. This portion of the document would need to incorporate the Secretary of Interior Standards for Rehabilitation, specifically, "the historic character of a property shall be retained and preserved. The removal of historic materials or alteration of features and spaces that

characterize a property shall be avoided.”¹⁴⁴ By reiterating this point, the manual will reinforce the significance of materials to the character of the Ranch House interior, and introduce the public to the practice of accurate preservation.

Currently, the only existing publication which alludes to the Ranch House interior as an entity is the National Trust publication, *Your Post-War House Inspection Checklist* (Appendix B).¹⁴⁵ This document provides a homeowner with a checklist to gauge the constructional integrity of their home, but is not specific to the 1950s or Ranch Houses. The checklist maintains a timeline for the urgency of material replacement, but does not name specific materials or methods for conservation or substitution. The guidelines for Ranch House interiors would provide an in-depth examination of possible materials, and examples of sympathetic alterations, and maintenance techniques for existing historic fabric. A publication of this magnitude would be an invaluable resource for those interested in maintaining the character of their home.

The intent of this manual is not to regulate what changes an individual home owner can make in his or her home; rather, it is a tool for education about the Ranch House interior, what elements of the home contribute to its significance, and an introduction to the practice of correct preservation. By providing guidelines to the public, preservationists can outline appropriate methods for conservation and modification while educating the public to the overall potential significance of these resources.

¹⁴⁴ Standard # 2. “The Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation: Introduction to the Standards,” Standards, <http://www.nps.gov/hps/tps/tax/rhb/stand.htm> (accessed March 09, 2011).

¹⁴⁵ National Trust for Historic Preservation, “Your Post-War House Inspection List.”

Education

Education and awareness-building are going to be the most successful methods for preserving Ranch House interiors. By making the public aware of the Ranch House as a cultural resource and educating them to the significance of its interior, preservationists will have a greater opportunity to ebb the destruction of existing interiors. If properly educated, the owner of a 1950s Ranch House can actively choose to maintain interior characteristics, or to remove them if desired. But without proper understanding of Ranch House interiors, homeowners may make irreversible changes that could otherwise be avoided.

The general public is unaware of the contribution of the Ranch House interior to the integrity of the overall structure. Although preservationists have few resources that will absolutely preserve the 1950s Ranch House interior, educating the public about its importance and elements can imbue the responsibility of stewardship in the owner, and contribute to the value of the Ranch House as a cultural resource.

Education does not have to be relegated to printed materials. Awareness building can occur through traditional educational methods such as workshops, conferences, or tours. Creating a tour of 1950s Ranch House interiors puts this resource in relatable human terms. A tour of homes would present the elements of the interior, including materials, design, and floor plan, as well as exhibit the actual livability of the structure. As the Ranch House was meant to be ‘lived-in,’ tour goers observing real families in intact houses would be exposed to the benefits of Ranch House living, akin to living history. This observation would show the Ranch House interior in real terms, and if

supplemented with a guidelines manual or brief history of the home, present the Ranch House in more complete terms, as a tangible cultural resource.

Recent Past Organizations in the United States

An element of promoting the interior as a significant contributor the overall significance of the Ranch House to the public is circumventing the challenges associated with Recent Past structures. Proper education on a national level would contribute to the acceptance of this resource, and with this acceptance, prevent demolition and insensitive alterations. Organizations that focus on Recent Past resources and already have a national presence would provide an excellent opportunity for large scale awareness building.

A number of organizations currently exist which study Recent Past resources on a national and local level. These organizations aim to educate the public and aid in preservation efforts. One of the primary resources preservationists and individuals with an interest in the Recent Past can access is the Recent Past Preservation Network (RPPN). This network aims to promote, “preservation education, assistance, and activism through the medium of new technologies, and to encourage a contextual understanding of our modern built environment.”¹⁴⁶ The RPPN provides articles about a variety of Recent Past issues and has compiled an extensive bibliography entitled, *An Historical Bibliography of Architecture, Landscape Architecture, and Urbanism in the United States since World War II*, available for download for interested parties. The focus on preservation through technological components in this organization is especially important in dealing with the Recent Past because as the number of resources in peril

¹⁴⁶ Alan Higgins, “Mission Statement,” Recent Past Preservation Network, <http://www.recentpast.org/about/mission-statement> (accessed March 09, 2011).

increases daily, the exchange of information about these resources can occur almost immediately.

Another organization at the forefront of Recent Past movement in the United States is DOCOMOMO US(documentation and conservation of buildings, sites and neighborhoods of the modern movement).¹⁴⁷ DOCOMOMO US is the American chapter of this international organization and serves as an outlet for individuals, designers, and architects to exchange ideas and knowledge about resources from the modern period. This organization holds conferences, publishes articles, and provides information for the public interested in modern design, and concerned about the loss of Recent Past resources. DOCOMOMO US is a resource for individuals with an interest in twentieth century design and architecture.

The National Trust for Historic Preservation, the largest national preservation organization in the United States, runs a Modernism and Recent Past program out of its San Francisco field office. Named, *TrustModern*, the program aims change how Americans view, steward, and preserve the architectural and cultural heritage of the recent past.¹⁴⁸ The National Trust dedicated its Summer 2010 issue of the *ForumJournal* to Modernism and the Recent Past, which shows an acknowledgement of the significance of Recent Past resources, and hints at a shift in preservation efforts recognizing more universal banal structures. These national organizations are resources for Recent Past preservationists and individuals, but do not devote attention specifically to the Ranch

¹⁴⁷ ◇“About DOCOMOMO,” Do.Co.Mo.Mo._US, <http://www.docomomo-us.org/about> (accessed March 09, 2011).

¹⁴⁸ “Modernism the Recent Past,” National Trust for Historic Preservation, <http://www.preservationnation.org/issues/modernism-recent-past/> (accessed March 09, 2011).

House. They do however provide information about mid-century structures which can be used in Ranch House interior preservation.

These organizations are effective as a starting point for introducing the public to the significance of Recent Past resources, but because of their large scope, do not adequately represent the Ranch House or its components. The scale of the Ranch House as resource may warrant the creation of an organization which expressly focuses on mid-century residential architecture. Because countless resources become fifty years old each year, a central organization which provides information about materials and histories could be a viable resource for mid-century home owners contemplating renovation or general curiosity. An organization of this magnitude would be better able to advocate for Recent Past resources, specifically the Ranch House, because its extent of focus would be narrower than organizations currently in existence.

The Ranch House is underappreciated as a significant cultural resource in the United States. Through extensive documentation researchers and preservationists can better comprehend the Ranch House in its entirety, rather than as an architectural style or type. Guides for current and prospective home owners would ensure adequate education about the interior as a contributor to the Ranch House, and present the interior in relatable terms. Education and awareness building provide preservationists greatest opportunity to prevent demolition; proper knowledge on a substantial scale of the Ranch House and its interior can alleviate the challenges associated with the Recent Past and with interior preservation. Although preservationists cannot lawfully regulate private interiors, through education and awareness building they can instill accountability and stewardship in the public about their resource, while simultaneously suggesting preservation.

CHAPTER SEVEN

CONCLUSION

The revolutionary nature of the 1950s Ranch House interior warrants extensive documentation and evaluation if they are to be preserved. The incorporation of zoning and the open floor plan and the use of industrialized manmade materials together for the first time on such a massive scale speak to the uniqueness of the Ranch House as a substantial twentieth century resource. Many Americans appreciated what the Ranch House interior represented; it embodied the ideal American lifestyle which embraced casualness, family, and individuality.

The Ranch House interior currently faces challenges associated with Recent Past resources, and the organic changing nature of the household. Many in the general public have difficulty understanding the historic nature of the Ranch House because of its relative youth as a housing type, and the volume of examples which still exist. Additionally, as the Ranch House was built for specific families and their needs, the 1950s Ranch House, from an ideological perspective, cannot be expected to remain static if it does not meet the needs of the current owners. This, coupled with changing design and aesthetic tastes and the inability of preservationists to regulate privately owned interiors, the practical preservation of these spaces requires a methodical method of education and awareness building about the significance of these interiors to the public.

The Ranch House is an accepted cultural resource by practicing preservationists. The number of existing Ranch House districts in the United States indicates an emerging

acceptance by the public of this resource type. The Ranch House is a distinctive resource type, built in a specific period by mid-century construction methods, and is valuable because many examples remain in their original context. Ranch House districts intrinsically showcase the growth of the economy following World War Two, technological advances in construction methods, and the population explosion of the mid-century through the number of resources and the physical layout of these neighborhoods. A Ranch House district cannot be significant if the individual components were not themselves important.

The Ranch House as an individual cultural resource is significant for more than its physical attributes. It represented a period in American history which was laden with optimism, national pride, and family focus. The burgeoning economy meant that many Americans had the opportunity to create a space and an identity for their family through homeownership. Some homebuyers purchased the Ranch House expressly for its exterior character, but overall, the Ranch House was meant to be a home, and the interior exhibited planning based on a casual, family-centered life.

Examining the components of an individual Ranch House shows that a resource which has traditionally been undervalued, has significance on a multitude of levels. The Ranch House interior is an integral component of the overall significance of the Ranch House. The interior may not have enough significance to support itself as an individual resource, but its evolution and contribution to the success of the Ranch House at mid-century means it cannot be discarded in the overall evaluation of a property. The Ranch House interior is significant for what it physically represents; industrialized products and an open floor plan, and the ideology of the 1950s it symbolizes.

The interior of the 1950s Ranch House showed how average home owners actually lived in the post-war period. In an era that stressed conformity on a national level, the Ranch House provided homeowners the opportunity for individual expression and creation. Homeowners had the ability to shape their space to their preferred specifications and demands of their individual families. The importance of these interiors is not solely limited to their materials and ideological representations; they provide an invaluable primary source for scholars to understand and interpret an era.

The best method preservationists can employ for the protection of these components is massive public awareness building. Since there is little recourse for interior preservation in general, allowing the public to make informed decisions about their interiors can ensure the longevity of these components. Presenting accurate information and compatible alterations in a comprehensible manner on a large scale, via the internet or mass publication, may introduce homeowners to interior changes perhaps not before recognized. Educating the public to the significance of Ranch House interior spaces may make them relatable to the individual homeowner and perhaps prevent irreversible damage and alteration.

Comparing the Ranch House interior to other forms of living history can better prepare preservationists for public education. Richard Striner noted the overall public's embrasure of the past and tangible cultural icons:

When it comes to activities like classic car restoration or civil War reenactments, Americans are extremely interested in their history- to the principle of "historical authenticity" in their activities of reenactment of restoration. Preservationist in general should give more thought to the potential of this cultural phenomenon and to the opportunity that it offers us if we can direct it to the built environment.¹⁴⁹

¹⁴⁹ Striner, 3.

Striner's assessment is excellent for the future preservation and the Ranch House interior. If his evaluation is accurate, preservationists can focus on Americans' innate desire to preserve personal history, and by making the Ranch House relatable, hopefully aid in its preservation.

The threat to 1950s Ranch House interiors is imminent. As the first generation of Ranch House owners sell their homes, new families alter the interiors to fit their particular needs and style. An area for further study of these resources could analyze material use and conservation before alterations occur. As a multitude of material options existed in this era, documentation and examination of these materials for their longevity and deterioration rate will provide preservationists the best methods for their conservation. The Ranch House as a resource from the recent past provides another area for future study. The window for buildings to be considered Recent Past changes every year, and a detailed study of Ranch House interior from the 1960s and 1970s can prepare preservationists when these resources become considered historic.

Preservationists are at the threshold of a new era in their field. Ranch Houses are frequently devalued because of their ubiquity and relative recentness. But by careful examination and analysis of the Ranch House interior, preservationists have the ability to be active in their preservation rather than reactive to their destruction. Only through calculated attempts at educating the public to the significance to these resources will interiors be valued and preserved.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- ◇. “About.” Discover Dallas! Survey.
http://www.preservationdallas.org/new_site/survey/about.php (accessed March 09, 2011).
 - ◇. “About DOCOMOMO.” Do.Co.Mo.Mo._US. <http://www.docomomo-us.org/about> (accessed March 17, 2011).
 - ◇. “List of Easements Held by HCF.” Historic Charleston Foundation.
http://www.historiccharleston.org/preservation/how_cov_easements_held.html
(accessed March 09, 2011).
 - ◇. “Modernism the Recent Past.” National Trust for Historic Preservation.
<http://www.preservationnation.org/issues/modernism-recent-past/> (accessed March 09, 2011).
 - ◇. “Project Description.” Survey La: Los Angeles Historic Resources Survey.
<http://www.preservation.lacity.org/survey/description> (accessed March 09, 2011).
 - ◇. “Protecting Historic Interiors.” Historic Charleston Foundation.
http://www.historiccharleston.org/preservation/why_interiors.html (accessed March 09, 2011).
 - ◇. “Survey LA FAQs.” Survey La: Los Angeles Historic Resources Survey.
<http://www.preservation.lacity.org/survey/faq> (accessed March 09, 2011).
- Abele, Debbie. “Introduction to Postwar Modern Housing Architectural Styles, 2004”
Historic Preservation Commission, Scottsdale, Arizona
<http://www.scottsdaleaz.gov/Assets/Public+Website/historiczoning/IntroPostwarHousingStyle.pdf> (accessed 05 January 2011).
- Ames, David L., and Linda Flint McClelland. “Historic Residential Suburbs: Guidelines for Evaluation and Documentation for the National Register of Historic Places,” (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, Department of the Interior, National Park Service, 2002).
<http://www.cr.nps.gov/nr/publications/bulletins/suburbs/suburbs-start.htm>
(accessed March 09, 2011).

- Adams, Annmarie. "The Eichler Home: Intention and Experience in Postwar Suburbia." *Perspectives in Vernacular Architecture*, Vol. 5, Gender, Class, and Shelter (1995), pp 164-78.
- Allen, Barbara L. "The Ranch Style House in America: A Cultural and Environmental Discourse," *The Journal of Architectural Education*, Vol. 49, No. 3 (Feb., 1996,): 156-65.
- Archer, John. *Architecture and Suburbia: From English Villa to American Dream House, 1690-2000*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2005.
- Ballinger, Richard & Herman York. *The Illustrated Guide to Houses in North America*. New York: Hawthorne Books, 1971.
- Beneson, Lawrence A. "The Standardization of Low-Cost Homes- I." *The Journal of the American Institute of Architects*. Vol. XIV, No. 2 (August, 1950): 59-62.
- Bricker, David. "Ranch Houses are Not All the Same," *Preserving the Recent Past 2*, Washington, D.C.: Historic Preservation Education Foundation, National Parks Service, and Association for Preservation Technology International, 2000.
- Chapman, Michael Kevin. "The Ranch-Type House: Evolution, Evaluation, and Preservation." MHP thesis, University of Georgia, 2007.
- Clark, Clifford Edward Jr. *The American Family Home, 1800-1960*. Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1986.
- Cloues, Richard. *The Ranch House in Georgia: Guidelines for Evaluation* Historic Preservation Division; accessed 20 September 2010, available at http://gashpo.org/assets/documents/Ranch_House_Evaluation_revSept2010.pdf (accessed March, 07 2011).
- Clouser, Roger A. "The Ranch House in America." Master of Arts, University of Kansas, 1984.
- Connolly, M.Caren and Louis Wasserman. *Updating Classic American Ranches: Design Ideas for Renovating, Remodeling, and Building New*. Newtown, Ct: The Taunton Press, 2003
- Craig, Robert, M. "George T. Heery (b. 1927)." The New Georgia Encyclopedia. Available from <http://www.georgiaencyclopedia.org/nge/ArticlePrintable.jsp?id=h-1079>. Internet; accessed 09 March 2011.
- Dendy, William. *Modern Living Homes*. [U.S.?]: National Plan Service, 1958.

- Editors, Arco handi-books for better living,. *Today's woman low cost homes.*. New York: Arco Pub. Co, 1954.
- Flemming, U. "More than the sum of its parts: the grammar of Queen Anne houses," *Environment and Planning B: Planning and Design*. Volume 14, (1987): 323-350.
- Ford, Katherine Morrow, and Creighton, Thomas H. *The American House Today*. USA: Civic Printing Company, 1951.
- French, Christine Madirs. "Introduction, Modernism + recent Past," *ForumJournal*, Vol. 24, No. 4 (Summer 2010,) 5-8.
- Friedman, Avi. "The Evolution of Design Characteristics During the Post-Second World War Housing Boom: The U.S. Experience." *Journal of Design History*, Vol. 8. No.2 (1995) pp 131-146.
- Gans, Herbert J. *The Levittowners: Ways of Life & Politics in a New Suburban Community*. New York: Pantheon Books, 1967.
- Georgia Department of Natural Resources, Historic Preservation Division. *Georgia Historic Resources Survey Manual*, June 2010, <http://www.gashpo.org/content/displaycontent.asp?txtDocument=288> (accessed March 09, 2011).
- Gillies, Mary Davis. "The New Way We Eat." *McCalls*, (June, 1950), 26-28, 30-32, 111-113.
- Garson, Harry. "Kitchen in the Making." *Homes to Live In*. March 27, 1956.
- Gregory, Daniel P. *Cliff May and the Modern Ranch House*. New York: Rizzoli, 2008.
- Handler, Richard. "Another Glimpse at Interiors," *The Alliance Review*, (November-December 2010), 18-24.
- Harling, Robert, ed. *Book of Modern Houses and Conversions*. London: The Condé Nast Publications Ltd, 1966.
- Harris, Donna Ann. *New Solutions for House Museums*, Lanham: AltaMire Press, 2007.
- Heath, Annabelle. "What Mrs. America Wants in Tomorrow's Home." *Journal of the American Institute of Architects*, July, 1956, 28-34.
- Hess, Alan. *The Ranch House*, New York: Henry N. Abrams, 2004.

- Higgins, Alan. "Mission Statement." Recent Past Preservation Network.
<http://www.recentpast.org/about/mission-statement> (accessed March 09, 2011).
- Hubka, Thomas. "The American Ranch House: Traditional Design Method in Modern Popular Culture," (*TDSR*, Vol. VII, No. I, 1995), 33. 33-39
- Hunter, Christine. *Ranches, Roughhouses, and Railroad Flats; American Homes: How They Shaped Our Landscapes & Neighborhoods*. New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1999.
- Hyde, Scott "A ranch house is a new way of life." *House & Garden*, September 1951, 104-107.
- Jakle, John A., Robert W. Bastian, and Douglas K. Meyer. *Common Houses in America's Small Towns: The Atlantic Seaboard to the Mississippi Valley*. Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1989.
- Jandl, H. Ward. "Preserving the Recent Past: An Introduction." *Cultural Resource Management* 18 (1995): 5-6.
- _____. *Preservation Brief 18, Rehabilitating Interiors in Historic Buildings Identifying and Preserving Character-Defining Elements*, Technical Preservation Services, National Park Service, U.S. Department of the Interior, available from: <http://www.nps.gov/hps/tps/briefs/brief18.htm>, (accessed March 01, 2011).
- Jackson, Kenneth T. *Crabgrass Frontier: The Suburbanization of the United States*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1985.
- Jacobs, James A. "Social and Spatial Change in the Postwar Family Room." *Perspectives in Vernacular Architecture*, Vol. 13, No. 1 (2006), pp 76-85.
- Jaumotte, Andre L. and Decelle, Phillippe F. "A Style was Born: Design During the Fifties: Or the Triumph of Curvilinear Geometry," *Leonardo*, Vol. 17, No.3, 1984, 211-212.
- Johnson, Elizabeth M. "Home on the Ranch," *American Profile*, September 2, 2007, <http://www.americanprofile.com/article/23407.html>, (accessed January 26, 2011).
- Jonsson,Patrik. "McMansions migrate from 'burb to city." *The Christian Science Monitor*. 2 January 2007.
- Kelly, Barbara M. *Expanding the American Dream: Building & Rebuilding Levittown*. Albany: State University of New York Press, 1993.
- Kramer, George. "Listening to Lily; Why We Should Preserve the Recent Past Now," *The Alliance Review*,(Jan/Feb 2004), 4-6.

- Lambin, Jeanne. *Preserving Resources from the Recent Past*. Washington, D.C.: National Trust for Historic Preservation, 2007.
- Lewis, Pierce. "Common Houses, Cultural Spoor." *Landscape*, vol. 19, No. 2 (1975) p. 1-22.
- Loftus, Margaret. "Rescuing the Relics of Modern Times," *U.S. News and World Report*, June 2000. [http://www.eichlersocal.com/Newsand Articles/USNews.htm](http://www.eichlersocal.com/NewsandArticles/USNews.htm), (accessed January 29, 2011.)
- Luce, Ray. "Collier Heights Historic District." National Register for Historic Places Nomination. Washington, D.C.: National Park Service, May, 15, 2009.
- Matarrese, Lynne. *The History of Levittown, New York*. ? B & T Printers, 1997.
- Matheson, Whitney. *Atomic Home: A Guided Tour of the American Dream*. Portland: Collectors Press, 2004.
- Marsh, Margaret. *Suburban Lives*. New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1990.
- McAlaster, Virginia and Lee. *A Field Guide to American Houses*, New York: Alfred A, Knopf, Inc, 2003.
- McCoy, Nancy. "Personalizing an Everyday Ranch," *Before & After*, Winter 2011), 108-111.
- Meredith, Virginia. "Pleasures of the Patio." *Homes to Live In*, March 27, 1956.
- Miller, Laura J. "Family Togetherness and the Suburban Ideal." *Sociological Forum* Vol. 10, No. 3 (Sep, 1995), pp. 393-418.
- Miller, Melody L., Phyllis Moen and Donna Dempster-McClain. "Motherhood, Multiple Roles, and Maternal Well-Being: Women of the 1950s" *Gender and Society*, Vol. 5, No. 4 (Dec., 1991), pp. 565-582
- Moore, Charles W. Smith, Kathryn, & Becker, Peter. *Home Sweet Home: American Domestic Vernacular Architecture*. New York: Rizzoli, 1983.
- National Trust for Historic Preservation, "Your Post War House Inspection Checklist," http://www.preservationnation.org/issues/modernism-recent-past/additional-resources/Ranch-House-Inspection-Checklist_update_FORM_071808_v2.doc, (accessed 09 March 2011).
- Nelson, Arthur C. "Towards a New Metropolis: The Opportunity to Rebuild America." The Brookings Institution Metropolitan Policy Program.

www.brookings.edu/metro/pubs/20041213_rebuildamerica.pdf, (accessed 09 March 2011).

Neuhaus, Jessamyn. "The Way to A Man's Heart: Gender Roles, Domestic Ideology, and Cookbooks in the 1950s," *Journal of Social History*, Vol. 32, No. 3 (Spring, 1999), pp 529-555.

New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection, Historic Preservation Office. *Guidelines for Architectural Survey*, State of New Jersey, 1996.
<http://www.nj.gov/dep/hpo/1identify/gaspart1.pdf>

Nicolades, Becky M. and Wise, Andrew, eds. *The Suburb Reader*. New York: Routledge Taylor & Franas Group, 2006.

Nordby, A. Grant, ed. *A Pattern Book for West Des Moines Neighborhoods: Ideas for Renovating and Updating Your Home*, The City of West Des Moines, Iowa (November 19, 2008) available at: <http://www.wdm-ia.com/Index.aspx?page=117&recordid=147&returnURL=%2FIndex.aspx> (accessed 09 March 2011).

Peterson, Gary G. "Home off the Range: The Origins and Evolution of Ranch Style Architecture in the United States," *Design Methods and Theories*, Vol 23, iss 3, 1989, pp 1040-1059.

Richfield, Clare J. "The Suburban Ranch House in Post-World War II America: A Site of Contrast in an Era of Unease, Uncertainty, and Instability." B.A. thesis, Barnard College, 2007.

Rogers, Kate Ellen. *The Modern House: USA: Its Design and Decoration*. New York: Harper & Row, Publishers, 1962.

Ross, Carole. "Milwaukee Time Capsule," *Atomic Ranch Magazine*, (Winter 2009), 46-50.

Rybczynski, Witold. *Last Harvest Real Estate Development in America from George Washington to the Builders of the Twenty-First Century, and Why We Live in Houses Anyway: How a Cornfield Became New Daleville*. New York: Scribner, 2007.

Rybczynski, Witold. "The Ranch House Anomaly: How America fell in and out of love with them." *Slate*, April 17, 2007, <http://www.slate.com/id/2163970> (accessed 09 March 2011).

Samon, Katherine Ann. *Ranch House Style*. New York: Clarkson Potter Publishers, 2003.

- Shiffer, Rebecca A. "The Recent Past," *Cultural Resource Management*, Vol 18. No. 8, (1995) 3-4.
- Striner, Richard. "Scholarship, Strategy, and Activism in Preserving the Recent Past," *Forum Journal*, Vol. 10, No. 1(Fall 1995)
<http://www.preservationnation.org/forum/resource-center/forum-library/members-only/scholarship-strategy-and-activism-in.html> (accessed January 27, 2011).
- Spring, Bernard P. "Advances in House Design." *Design and the Production of Houses*. New York: McGraw-Hill Book Company, Inc, 1959.
- Teaford, Jon C. *The American Suburb: The Basics*. New York: Routledge Taylor & Francis Group, 2008.
- Twitchell and Randolph. "Four houses." *Progressive architecture* 31, (August 1950): 51-69. *Avery Index to Architectural Periodicals*, EBSCOhost (accessed March 09, 2011).
- Tyler, Norman. *Historic Preservation: An Introduction to its History, Principles, and Practice*, New York: W&W Norton & Company, 2000.
- Walker, Lester. *American Homes: An Illustrated Encyclopedia of Domestic Architecture*. New York: Black Dog & Leventhal Publishers, 1996.
- Wright, Mary, and Russel Wright. *Mary and Russel Wright's Guide to Easier Living*. New York: Simon and Schuster, 1951.
- Young, Nancy K. & Young, William, H. *The 1950s*. Westport, Connecticut: Greenwood Press, 2004.

APPENDIX A

LIST OF RANCH HOUSE PLAN BOOKS

Archway Press. *Best Homes: A Ranch Home for Relaxation; Charm Inspired Multi-Level*. New York: Archway Press, 1957.

Authentic Publications, Inc. *Inexpensive new houses, featuring 1 to 4 bedrooms, all the drawings necessary for the planning of your new house are included*. New York: Authentic Publications Inc., 1950.

Cassens, Alwin Jr. *Ranch Homes for Today*. New York: Archway Press, Inc., 1953.

Deutschlander, G.J. *The Book of Ramble and Ranch-Type Homes*. St. Paul, Minn.: Home Plan Book, Co, 1951.

Editors, *82 Distinctive Houses from Architectural Record*. USA: F.W. Dodge Corporations, 1952.

Editors Architectural Record. *Album of House Designs: Plans, Pictures, and Design Details*. New York: F.W. Dodge Corp, 1953.

Editorial Staff of Lane Publishing Co. *New Homes for Western Living*. Menlo Park, California: Lane Publishing Co., 1956.

Editorial Staff of Sunset Magazine and Books. *Western Ranch Houses by Cliff May*. Menlo Park, California: Lane Book Company, 1958.

Eisinger, Larry. *Low Cost Homes*. New York: Arco Publishing Co; Inc, 1957

The F.A. Reguarth Co. *Modern Ranch Homes: Designed for Town or Country Living*. Dayton: National Plan Service, Inc, 1951.

Graf, Jean. *Practical Houses for Contemporary Living*. New York: F.W. Dodge Corporation, 1953.

Gust Johnson Lumber Company. *New Modern Ranch Homes: For Town or Country Living!* United States: National Plan Service, Inc., 1956.

May, Cliff and Choate, Chris. *Cliff May Homes*. Los Angeles: Cliff May and Chris Choate, 1953.

National Plan Service, Inc. *Eastern Home Style Trends*. Chicago: National Plan Service, Inc, 1955.

Pollman, Richard B. *Designs for Convenient Living: Book 27*. Detroit: Home Planners, Inc, 1959.

Ratner, Harold, ed. *Homes to Live in*. New Haven: Orange Publications Inc, 1954.

Standard Homes Company. *Full-Value Homes: Standardized and Simplified for Economy Construction*. Lynchburg: Standard Homes Co, 1958.

Wilburn, Leila Ross. *Ranch and Colonial Homes*. Atlanta: Leila Ross Wilburn Architect, 195x.

York, Herman H. *House & Plans 1950: 55 new homes construction tested, for today's trend toward the ranch house and ease of living*. New York: Archway Press, Inc. 1950.

APPENDIX B

THE NATIONAL TRUST FOR HISTORIC PRESERVATION'S INSPECTING YOUR POST-WAR RANCH HOUSE



Inspecting Your Post-War House

How to use the checklist



You love your ranch house and want to keep it in good shape. The best means to accomplish that is through regular inspections and maintenance. What may seem like a small issue ("Oh, it's just a tiny little leak") can quickly become a serious and very costly problem if left unchecked for even one season. Spotting these problems early is the key to protecting your investment and keeping your house in great condition for decades to come.



This *Inspection Checklist* is intended to help you do just that. While each house is different, every house is composed of basically the same systems applied in the same manner: structural framing, roofing, foundation, exterior cladding, windows, etc. Some of the forms and materials might be a bit different in mid-century homes such as your ranch, but the basic systems and their function are largely the same as in any other house.



The *Checklist* is designed to help you gather critical pieces of information and evaluate each of these systems independently, identifying potential problems as you go. It may seem a bit daunting at first, but don't get discouraged. It's a fairly simple process -- the first page looks at the history of your ranch house and any alterations or repairs that may have inadvertently caused subsequent damage. The following pages walk you through a visual inspection of the systems. Just check off every condition that you see and note the location. You may want to grab a flashlight for checking crawlspaces and attics; a screwdriver or pen knife to probe masonry, wood, and other materials; and a camera to document conditions and locations. Try to be as thorough and methodical as possible when looking at each area of your home and garage, since each problem you catch now will represent a considerable savings of time and money down the road.



The conditions are divided into categories by their severity, so you will be able to differentiate which problems you need to address right away (**within 1-2 months**) and which ones are less critical or largely cosmetic (*address within 6-12 months*). This will help you set your budget and priorities for maintenance and repairs over the next year. As you make repairs, you can keep track of the information on the *Checklist* (type of repair, date, and who performed the repair) to create a permanent record of the work you've done on each system.



You also will be able to see which issues are potentially serious enough to require professional assistance. This inspection is a tool for homeowners that can be used for a preliminary inspection, **but it is not intended to replace an evaluation by a professional home inspector, architect, engineer, or contractor.** If you have any concerns about the severity of a condition you have identified, you should call in a professional to complete a more thorough investigation. *The National Trust for Historic Preservation is not responsible for, and expressly disclaims all liability for, damages of any kind arising out of use, reference to, or reliance on any information contained within this document.*

Your Post-War House Inspection Checklist

Page 2



___/___/20___ inspection date
_____ inspected by

location

Address _____

Neighborhood or Historic District (where applicable) _____

Name of current owner _____

history

Construction date (if known) 19 _____

Builder or subdivision (if known) _____

Original occupancy type ☐ rental ☐ single family ☐ multi-family

Current occupancy type ☐ rental ☐ single family ☐ multi-family

Changes in occupancy can result in alterations to both the interior and exterior that can be detrimental to the integrity of the house and its condition.

Original number of floors ☐ 1 ☐ 1-1/2 (split-level) ☐ 2 (full floors)

Basement ☐ full ☐ partial ☐ crawlspace only ☐ none (slab on grade)

Major alterations ☐ siding replaced/added ☐ masonry skin added
☐ roofing replaced ☐ windows replaced
☐ door(s) replaced ☐ openings infilled
☐ features (soffits, decorative details) removed or covered

Date of changes (if known) _____

Additions ☐ rear ☐ side ☐ front ☐ upper stor(y/ies) ☐ breezeway ☐ porch ☐ carport

Date of addition(s) (if known) _____

While additions can be a source of potential problems due to workmanship, they may be significant in their own right depending upon the date when they were added.

Your Post-War House Inspection Checklist

Page 3



condition

Roofing – the roof is your first line of defense against the elements and deserves a very close inspection of all its components. You may need to check structural elements and underlayment from the interior or attic, where it is accessible. Examining roofing materials after a rain storm can help identify leaks, wet spots, and low spots that hold water.

- Shingles/membrane**
- | | |
|---|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> portions missing | <input type="checkbox"/> moss or plant growth |
| <input type="checkbox"/> damaged/cracked/bubbling | <input type="checkbox"/> covered with multiple layers |
| <input type="checkbox"/> loose/missing flashing at valleys or intersection with walls | (2 or more) of new(er) material |
| address within 1-2 months | address within 2-6 months |

Notes:

- Gutters, downspouts, drains**
- | | |
|--|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> missing | <input type="checkbox"/> dented or crushed |
| <input type="checkbox"/> loose or detached sections | <input type="checkbox"/> corroded |
| <input type="checkbox"/> clogged with leaves/debris/plant growth | <input type="checkbox"/> not enough slope to keep water flowing |
| <input type="checkbox"/> downspouts empty near foundation | address within 2-6 months |
| address within 1-2 months | |

Notes:

Your Post-War House Inspection Checklist

Page 4



Chimneys

- ☐ leaning out of plumb
- ☐ chimney cap missing
- ☐ mortar cracked/missing
- ☐ flashing missing

address within 1-2 months

- ☐ spalling/damaged masonry
- ☐ chimney cap damaged
- ☐ efflorescence (salt or powder) on masonry
- ☐ flashing damaged or poorly installed
- ☐ visible moss/plant growth
- ☐ animal activity (nests, etc.)

address within 2-6 months

Notes:

Skylights

- ☐ visible internal leaking/staining
- ☐ cracked or damaged light
- ☐ broken/cracked/damaged perimeter seals
- ☐ missing/damaged flashing

address within 1-2 months

- ☐ removed or covered
- ☐ condensation (water droplets inside)

address within 2-6 months

Notes:

Soffits, fascia, eaves, and overhangs

- ☐ portions missing/removed
- ☐ visibly warped or sagging
- ☐ soft or powdery spots/infestation
- ☐ loose or corroded fasteners/nails

address within 1-2 months

- ☐ split/cracked materials
- ☐ peeling or bubbling paint or finishes
- ☐ visible moss/plant growth
- ☐ not visible/covered with new materials

address within 2-6 months

(section continues on following page)

Your Post-War House Inspection Checklist

Page 5



Notes:

- Underlayment** ☐ warped or buckled
- ☐ sagging/obvious low spots between rafters or framing
- ☐ visible staining, mold, or rot
address within 1-2 months

Notes:

- Roof Framing** ☐ sagging ridge line (peak) ☐ little or no insulation in rafters/attic
- ☐ split/cracked/twisted rafters or beams ☐ limited or no venting in attic (are gable, ridge or attic vents present and functional?)
- ☐ soft or powdery spots/infestation
- ☐ obvious corrosion/flaking/pitted metal (for steel framing or beams) ☐ evidence of animal or insect activity (rodents, birds, bats, wasps)
address within 2-6 months
- ☐ visible staining or rot
address within 1-2 months

Notes:

Your Post-War House Inspection Checklist

Page 6



Roofing repair record

repairs made:

date repaired:_____

repaired by:_____

Structure – houses of the period typically were constructed with wood framing, regardless of the exterior and interior finish material placed over them. If you suspect that you have an unusual framing system (steel, reinforced concrete, etc.), you may want to contact an architect, engineer, or contractor for assistance with your assessment.

☐ shifted or leaning walls (out of plumb)

☐ sloped, sagging, or loose floor joists

☐ split/cracked/twisted framing

☐ insect infestation (termites or ants)

address within 1-2 months

☐ visible staining or rot near roof or

foundation

address within 2-6 months

Notes:

Structure repair record

repairs made:

date repaired:_____

repaired by:_____

Your Post-War House Inspection Checklist

Page 7



Foundation – if you have a full or partial basement, check your foundation from both the inside and outside for evidence of moisture or damage.

- | | |
|---|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> shifting or settling walls or floor | <input type="checkbox"/> cracked or missing mortar |
| <input type="checkbox"/> bowing or bulges in walls | <input type="checkbox"/> efflorescence (salt or powder) on surface |
| <input type="checkbox"/> large cracks (1/4" or larger) that appear active | <input type="checkbox"/> small (1/8" or smaller) cracks |
| <input type="checkbox"/> standing water in basement or crawlspace | <input type="checkbox"/> limited or no venting of basement or crawlspace |
| <input type="checkbox"/> spalling (flaking) concrete | <input type="checkbox"/> missing or ineffective vapor barrier in crawlspace |
| <input type="checkbox"/> exposed/corroded reinforcing | <input type="checkbox"/> visible mold or staining on surface |
| <input type="checkbox"/> spalling or broken masonry | <input type="checkbox"/> obvious damp areas on walls/floor |
| | <input type="checkbox"/> peeling or damaged paint or finishes |

address within 1-2 months

address within 2-6 months

Notes:

Foundation repair record

repairs made:

date repaired: _____

repaired by: _____

Your Post-War House Inspection Checklist

Page 8



Siting of house on the lot – *siting of your house is key. If the ground slopes toward your foundation, water will continually be directed into your home. Proper grading and drainage are essential.*

- ☐ site slopes toward house
- ☐ water collects/ponds near foundation
- ☐ ground has settled near or around foundation

address within 1-2 months

Notes:

Siting repair record

repairs made:

date repaired: _____

repaired by: _____

Exterior siding material – *numerous siding materials were used to finish the exterior, including but not limited to wood, masonite, aluminum, and vinyl siding, as well as brick, thin stone veneers, and simulated stone (Perma-Stone, Formstone and others). Most function simply as a thin exterior protective skin fixed to an underlayment or directly to the structure.*

Siding

- | | |
|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> portions missing/removed | <input type="checkbox"/> warped/buckled/dented |
| <input type="checkbox"/> split or cracked | <input type="checkbox"/> peeling or bubbling paint or finishes |
| <input type="checkbox"/> soft/powdery spots or infestation | <input type="checkbox"/> moss or plant growth |
| <input type="checkbox"/> loose or corroded nails/fasteners | <input type="checkbox"/> faded or brittle |
| | <input type="checkbox"/> covered with new materials |

address within 1-2 months

address within 2-6 months

Your Post-War House Inspection Checklist

Page 9



Masonry

- ☐ portions missing/removed
- ☐ pulling away from substrate
- ☐ large cracks (1/4" or larger) that appear active
- ☐ spalling (flaking) or broken masonry

address within 1-2 months

- ☐ efflorescence (salt or powder) on surface
- ☐ efflorescence (salt or powder) on surface
- ☐ cracked/missing mortar
- ☐ obvious damp areas
- ☐ visible mold/moss/staining
- ☐ small (1/8" or less) cracks

address within 2-6 months

Notes:

Exterior siding repair record

repairs made:

date repaired: _____

repaired by: _____

Exterior or Interior Planters – these should be examined to determine if they are tied into the structure or finishes, and how and where they are draining.

- ☐ no foundation/inadequate foundation
- ☐ damaged/missing drain
- ☐ bowing or bulges in container walls
- ☐ missing or ineffective vapor barrier

address within 1-2 months

- ☐ damaged/cracked container
- ☐ efflorescence (salt or powder) on surface

address within 2-6 months

(section continues on following page)

Your Post-War House Inspection Checklist

Page 10



Notes:

Planter repair record

repairs made:

date repaired: _____

repaired by: _____

Exterior Doors - there are a wide range of door styles and materials from the period that contribute to the overall character of the house. Retaining and repairing your original doors is always preferable (and often more cost effective in the long-run) to removing and replacing them with newer materials of poorer quality.

- | | | |
|--|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> removed or missing | <input type="checkbox"/> sagging/out of plumb | <input type="checkbox"/> storm/screen door missing |
| <input type="checkbox"/> do not move freely/shut properly | <input type="checkbox"/> veneers cracked/split/curling | <input type="checkbox"/> storm/screen door |
| <input type="checkbox"/> missing or damaged flashing above | <input type="checkbox"/> staining/mold visible | damaged |
| <input type="checkbox"/> damage or rot on frame | <input type="checkbox"/> locks/hardware damaged | address within 6-12 months |
| <input type="checkbox"/> soft spots/rot in materials | <input type="checkbox"/> peeling or bubbling paint or finishes | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> broken or missing glass | address within 2-6 months | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> locks/hardware missing | | |

Notes:

NATIONAL TRUST FOR HISTORIC PRESERVATION

Your Post-War House Inspection Checklist

Page 11



Exterior door repair record

repairs made:

date repaired: _____

repaired by: _____

Garage Door - garage doors became a prominent feature of mid-century homes due to the omni-presence of the automobile and the popularity of the attached garage. Their distinctive styles, detailing, and colors can contribute to the overall character of your house.

- | | | |
|---|--|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> removed or missing | <input type="checkbox"/> sagging/out of plumb | <input type="checkbox"/> staining/mold visible |
| <input type="checkbox"/> lintel damaged or corroded | <input type="checkbox"/> track bent or damaged | <input type="checkbox"/> peeling or bubbling paint or |
| <input type="checkbox"/> missing/damaged flashing above | <input type="checkbox"/> sill missing/damaged | finishes |
| <input type="checkbox"/> track not anchored securely | <input type="checkbox"/> veneers cracked/split/curling | <input type="checkbox"/> faded or brittle |
| <input type="checkbox"/> door does not move freely in track | <input type="checkbox"/> locks/hardware damaged | finishes/materials |
| <input type="checkbox"/> damage or rot on frame | address within 2-6 months | address within 6-12 months |
| <input type="checkbox"/> soft spots/rot in materials | | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> broken or missing glass | | |

Notes:

(section continues on following page)

Your Post-War House Inspection Checklist

Page 12



Garage door repair record

repairs made:

date repaired: _____

repaired by: _____

Windows – several window types (double hung, single hung, casement, picture) and materials (wood, aluminum, steel) were available in the mid-twentieth century. Retaining and repairing original windows is always preferable (and often more cost effective in the long run) to removing and replacing them with new vinyl or wood windows of inferior quality.

- | | | |
|--|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> cracked/damaged lintels (above) | <input type="checkbox"/> painted shut | <input type="checkbox"/> staining/mold visible |
| <input type="checkbox"/> missing or damaged flashing above | <input type="checkbox"/> brittle/cracked/missing caulk or sealant | <input type="checkbox"/> peeling |
| <input type="checkbox"/> damage or rot on frame | <input type="checkbox"/> brittle or missing glazing putty | or bubbling paint or finishes |
| <input type="checkbox"/> damage or rot on sill | <input type="checkbox"/> locks/hardware damaged | <input type="checkbox"/> storm/screen missing |
| <input type="checkbox"/> do not move freely/shut properly | address within 2-6 months | <input type="checkbox"/> storm/screen damaged |
| <input type="checkbox"/> soft spots/rot in wood sash | | address within 6-12 months |
| <input type="checkbox"/> corrosion/deterioration of metal sash | | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> broken or missing glass | | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> locks/hardware missing | | |
| address within 1-2 months | | |

Notes:

(section continues on following page)

Your Post-War House Inspection Checklist

Page 13



Window repair record

Repairs made:

date repaired: _____

repaired by: _____

Interior finishes – damage on interior finishes often can signal larger problems that are occurring on the exterior. Inspect your interior carefully, working from room to room in a regular pattern from the ceiling to the walls and then the floor. Remember that ranch interiors often incorporated materials and features that were new to the residential market of the time (vinyl tile, Formica, etc.). Their colors and designs were integral to the overall character and appearance of the ranch-style house. These should be retained and repaired whenever possible, or replaced with matching or sympathetic reproduction materials, many of which are now readily available. Be sure to examine built-in furniture and features such as cabinets, shelving systems, and benches as well.

Be aware that many homes of this period used vinyl asbestos tile (VAT) as flooring, and it may have cracked or abraded over time. It can pose a health hazard if deteriorated to the point that the materials can become airborne, but you have the option of covering it or encapsulating it instead of complete removal and replacement. If you chose to remove it, please take care to work with a reputable contractor and follow all health and life safety codes.

- | | | |
|---|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> wet or bubbling plaster/drywall | <input type="checkbox"/> cracked, damaged or loose fixtures | <input type="checkbox"/> cracked, stained or damaged |
| <input type="checkbox"/> staining on plaster/drywall | (sinks, baths, toilets) | laminate surfaces |
| <input type="checkbox"/> loose/cracked plaster or drywall | <input type="checkbox"/> loose/missing caulk near fixtures | <input type="checkbox"/> wood veneers cracked, split, or curling |
| <input type="checkbox"/> cracked/broken/abraded | <input type="checkbox"/> leaking or faulty faucets | <input type="checkbox"/> cracked/damaged/worn linoleum |
| 9"x9" vinyl tile | <input type="checkbox"/> mold or staining on finishes | <input type="checkbox"/> faded or brittle finishes/materials |
| (tile and adhesive may contain asbestos) | | <input type="checkbox"/> stained or corroded metal finishes |
| <input type="checkbox"/> loose or damaged tile or grout | <input type="checkbox"/> loose or missing fasteners | <input type="checkbox"/> missing/cracked/broken light shades |
| in bath and kitchen | in trim or floors | (glass) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> moisture/mold/rot | <input type="checkbox"/> missing or insufficient ventilation | <input type="checkbox"/> peeling or bubbling paint or finishes |
| under countertops | in kitchen and bathrooms | address within 6-12 months |
| <input type="checkbox"/> moisture/mold/rot near | address within 2-6 months | |
| pipng or fixtures | | |
| (sink, toilet, bath) | | |
| address within 1-2 months | | |

(section continues on following page)

Your Post-War House Inspection Checklist

Page 14



Notes:

Interior finishes repair record

repairs made:

date repaired: _____

repaired by: _____

Fireplaces – fireplaces and their surrounds frequently serve as a central visual focus for the more formal interior spaces. Regular maintenance is important to efficient operation, and to avoid a fire hazard.

☐ damaged/cracked mortar or masonry

☐ cracked or damaged mantle

☐ flue doesn't draw properly (when was it last cleaned or serviced?)

☐ missing, cracked, or damaged mortar

☐ damper missing or damaged

☐ stained masonry

address within 1-2 months

address within 2-6 months

Notes:

(section continues on following page)

Your Post-War House Inspection Checklist

Page 15



Fireplace repair record

repairs made:

date repaired: _____

repaired by: _____

Utilities and systems

Electrical— faulty or leaking pipes and damaged wiring can be incredibly damaging and a potential health hazard. A preliminary inspection can highlight serious problems to be further investigated and repaired by professionals. Be sure to check if you have a low voltage system and relays (sometimes located in an attic space) before you begin any electrical work. If you start upgrading your system with new switches (120 volt), you may create new problems by overload the system, which can result in a potential fire hazard by overheating the relays.

- | | |
|--|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> inadequate electrical service (at least 100 amps) | <input type="checkbox"/> light switches/wall fixtures not operable or faulty |
| <input type="checkbox"/> no circuit breakers or fuses visible or accessible | <input type="checkbox"/> light switches/wall fixtures not operable or faulty |
| <input type="checkbox"/> incorrect size of fuses or breakers
(20 amps for new wiring, 15 amps for older) | <input type="checkbox"/> frayed connections/corrosion in switches
and outlets (look behind the cover plates) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> frayed insulation or exposed wiring visible | <input type="checkbox"/> outlets are not grounded (2-prong instead of 3-prong) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> outlets and receptacles near water sources
do not have ground fault interrupters (GFI)
address within 1-2 month | <input type="checkbox"/> phone jacks are 4-prong (adapters are available)
address within 2-6 months |

Notes:

Your Post-War House Inspection Checklist

Page 16



Heating/Cooling – to determine potential problems you must first know what type of system you have – steam heat, forced hot water, radiant heating, forced hot air, etc. As with electrical systems, an early assessment by you can help identify potential problems that are best examined and repaired by a professional.

- | | |
|--|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> leaking boiler or piping | <input type="checkbox"/> asbestos insulation present on boiler or piping |
| <input type="checkbox"/> stains or rot near piping and places
on floor or ceiling where piping penetrates | <input type="checkbox"/> clogged air filters |
| <input type="checkbox"/> corroded piping or boiler
address within 1-2 months | <input type="checkbox"/> obstructions near/around radiators/baseboard heaters |
| | <input type="checkbox"/> obstructions in front of/on top of vents/registers |
| | <input type="checkbox"/> belts on motors/fans are cracked or worn |
| | <input type="checkbox"/> ventilator covers missing or broken
address within 2-6 months |

Notes:

Utilities and systems repair record

repairs made:

date repaired: _____

repaired by: _____

Your Post-War House Inspection Checklist

Page 17



prioritize

If you have only checked a few items during your inspection, you are either a very fortunate homeowner or you have been doing a great job of repairing and maintaining your home. Congratulations! But if your inspection led you to check a considerable number of problems in several different systems, you're probably wondering where to even start with your repairs. You can't do everything in the next 1-2 months! Below are some general guidelines that can help you sort through the data you've just gathered and establish some priorities for the next 12 months.

level 1

Roofing, foundation, siting, structural, and utilities issues are generally the most critical because they have the greatest potential for negative impact on the long-term stability of the house and its other components. Any issues or problems that you have identified in the **address within 1-2 months** category in these systems should be handled immediately, since they may be the source of other types of (seemingly unrelated) damage you encountered during your inspection. For instance - the missing flashing where your roof joins a wall is actually allowing water inside the house to warp the roof underlayment, rot the framework inside the wall, and stain the plaster on the ceiling of the bedroom; or that standing water on the ground next to your foundation is coming through your foundation wall, causing the spalling concrete on the inside of your basement, and soaking the wood sills of your structure, which is now causing rot and attracting termites. **Remember that it may be necessary to contract for the services of professional consultants to fully investigate a problem and identify its root cause.**

Use the space below to list your highest priority items for these key systems.

<u>Roofing:</u>

<u>Siting:</u>

<u>Utilities/systems:</u>

<u>Structural:</u>

<u>Foundation:</u>

Your Post-War House Inspection Checklist

Page 18



level 2

Exterior siding, windows and doors are important pieces of your home's "exterior envelope," which is the skin that wraps the frame of your house. After your roof, these are the most important elements in protecting your home from the weather and they require regular maintenance to perform well. Due to heavy usage and their very nature as openings punched into a wall system, windows and doors take a considerable amount of abuse on a daily basis. As a result, they are a common site for damage from wear and tear, and also a potential location for moisture damage that can affect other materials and systems. Any issues or problems that you have identified in the **address within 1-2 months** category in these systems should be handled within that timeframe, if at all possible.

<u>Exterior siding:</u>

<u>Windows:</u>

<u>Doors:</u>

level 3

The remaining systems (planters, garage doors, interior finishes) are not as critical in fight against the elements, and repairs could be held off to a later date. Also in this category would be any repairs that are in the **address in the next 2-6 months** category for any of the systems. Although these are important problems that should be addressed, they are not as likely to result in damage to other elements if left unchecked for the short term.

•

Your Post-War House Inspection Checklist

Page 19



level 4

All issues listed in the category *address within the next 6-12 months* can be considered minor or largely cosmetic. They are not critical to the functionality of the house and its systems and can be delayed until more critical problems have been repaired. However, this is not to suggest that these items can simply be ignored. While they are small at the moment, they have the potential to become larger problems if left untreated. Maintaining your finishes in good repair, providing adequate storm protection, and investigating and eradicating mold or mildew on surfaces are all necessary and important basic maintenance that help provide protection for other materials and systems.

Tell Us How it Went!

We want to get your comments and feedback on the **Checklist**. Let us know how it worked for you and if you have any suggestions for ways to improve it. Send your comments to:

Chris Morris
Midwest Office
National Trust for Historic Preservation
53 West Jackson Blvd., Suite 350
Chicago, IL 60604
christina_morris@nthp.org