



# MID-CENTURY MODERN PERIOD

1940 - 1960S



The Mid-Century Modern period is one of great change in the architecture of California. It is also one that put California on the forefront of architecture in the country. As with the Pre-War period architecture took hold in California and spread to other parts of the country, rather than architecture spreading to California. Starting with Frank Lloyd Wright in 1920, some of the country's greatest architects came to California, which was booming, to practice architecture. R.M. Schindler, Richard Neutra, Lloyd Wright, John Lautner, Jock Peters, Cliff May, and William Krisel were all based in California.

Many of these styles represented what was unique to culture of California. The Googie style showcased Californian's love of the automobile and helped define the California "Car Culture". The California Ranch showcased the modern casual living that was California and expanded on the outdoor living that started with the Craftsman homes of the Pre-War period. Modernism impacted California and changed the way California developed.

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# MINIMAL TRADITIONAL ARCHITECTURE

1930S-1950S



## CHARACTER-DEFINING FEATURES

- Cross gable roof
- Front gable end
- Siding or brick were common exterior materials
- Small front porch
- Decorative details on windows, typically shutters

The Minimal Traditional style was a transitional style between the revival styles of the 1920s and 30s and the post-war tract homes. The Great Depression help spur the use of this style, since the Minimal traditional style is a compromised, more economical version of the various revival styles. The Minimal Traditional style reflected the traditional forms of other architectural styles without providing the decorative details of the original styles. This allowed the style to reference traditional styles without actually achieving them. Elements common to many styles, but belonging exclusively to none, are favored. These include gables, chimneys, and shutters. Houses of this style may be built of virtually any traditional material; brick and wood are common. Roofs always lack the eaves or overhangs found on more assertive styles. Most examples are one or 1 ½ stories in height.

## MASSING AND PLAN

- One story
- 1 ½ stories (the second story under the roofline) possible
- 2 story examples rare in California
- Buildings wide but not very deep
- Rectangular in plan

## FACADES

- Asymmetrical with a front facing gable
- Variety of exterior materials
- Siding, brick and stucco common, combined in different areas

## PAINT COLORS

- Light or white main body color
- Dark accent color

## ROOFS

- Cross gable roof
- One front facing gable end
- Gable sometimes used instead of cross gable
- Eaves shallow
- Eaves either exposed or boxed

## ARCHITECTURAL DETAILS

- Simple trim
- Shutters on front windows most decorative feature

## DOORS AND WINDOWS

- Double-hung, multi-pane, wood frame windows
- Simple wood doors, may include glass panels

## PORCHES

- Very small
- Covered with a low pitch shed roof

## FENCES AND WALLS

- Simple wood fences
- Fences separate front yard from side and rear yards
- Separates formal public view and private space
- Not in front yard.







# CALIFORNIA RANCH ARCHITECTURE

1935-PRESENT



The California Ranch style was created through an evolution of American architecture. The Craftsman and Prairie styles as well as elements of the period revival styles and modernism contributed to this evolution. This evolution in style combined with the emerging lifestyle changes of Americans after the Depression. These changes required a new architecture to address the way modern American lived. The California Ranch has also been pointed to as one of the things that contributed to the uncontrolled sprawl of the last half of the 20th Century, since the style required larger lots and was used in dominant style of home in new subdivisions across the country. This style, along with the Early Post War Tract home is also important for introducing an important new home feature to the average home buyer...the attached garage. No longer was the porch an important feature of the home. Instead it was replaced with the one-, and later, two-car garage with a wide driveway directly connecting house to street.

## CHARACTER-DEFINING FEATURES

- Orientation of house parallel to street frontage
- Low-pitched gable or hipped roofs
- Large roof overhangs
- Exposed rafters
- Attached garage
- Minimized front porch
- No porch stoop (slab foundation)
- Board and batten or clapboard siding or stucco
- Brick chimneys
- Picture and casement windows

## MASSING AND PLAN

- Wider street frontage
- One story
- Low pitched roofs
- Appearance of the house as a low wide structure
- Attached front garages

## FACADES

- Stucco
- Board and batten or clapboard siding to accent elements
- Brick chimneys

## PAINT COLORS

- 2 to 3 color schemes
- Muted tones
- Brighter color Trim
- Sometimes a third accent color was used.

## ROOFS

- Low-pitched
- Gable or hipped
- Gable roofs were more common.
- Large overhangs
- Exposed rafters common
- Boxed eaves could be used.

## ARCHITECTURAL DETAILS

- Simple trim
- Used to accent openings and building elements

## DOORS AND WINDOWS

- Plain, painted wood doors
- Aluminum frame windows (pre WWII examples used wood frames)
- Individual casement and sliding windows common
- Fixed glass, large picture windows also common

## PORCHES

- Front porches/entries were minimized
- Small covered entry common
- Entry not raised because of went to a slab foundation

## FENCES AND WALLS

- Simple wood fences
- Fences separate front yard from side and rear yards
- Separates formal public view and private space
- Not in front yard.





# MID-CENTURY MODERN ARCHITECTURE

1945 – 1960S



## CHARACTER-DEFINING FEATURES

- Clean Lines.
- One-story in height most common
- Floor to Ceiling Windows
- Sliding glass doors
- Flat roofs or low pitch roofs
- Occasionally a Butterfly Roof
- Canopies extending roofline to outdoor space

The Mid-Century Modern is the development of the 1920s International style. As the style developed it split into the the Corporate International style, and this Mid-Century Modern style. This style still was based on LeCorbusier's principles in his book "Towards a New Architecture", but starts to experiment with different shapes and materials. The angled, soaring roofs that developed during this period were adopted into the Googie style in the 1950s. The change from the international style is that materials were brought back into the design. They were no longer hidden, and natural materials were acceptable again. In addition, the interior was integrated with the exterior.

## MASSING AND PLAN

- L-shape or rectangular in plan
- One or two story in height.
- Split level design possible.

## FACADES

- Floor to ceiling windows act a glass walls
- Walls hide the front of the building, glass opens the building to the back.
- Brick, stone, or smooth plaster Finish stucco walls to compliment the glass.
- Carport more common than garage.

## PAINT COLORS

- Natural and Bright Colors
- White common with a bright accent color.

## ROOFS

- Three types of roofs: Flat, low pitched gable/cross gable, and butterfly roofs.
- Roll roofing most common.

## TRIM AND ARCHITECTURAL DETAILS

- This style building was very simple with no window or door trim (except the metal mullions of the window frames).

## DOORS AND WINDOWS

- Doors were typically simple wood doors, and could include glass panels. Windows were typically fixed glass single-paned windows with metal frames.

## PORCHES

- None, covered entry only, typically cantilevered.
- Can extend canopy in rear yard to connect spaces to house.

## FENCES AND WALLS

- Painted block walls common.
- May use block wall to conceal front entrance.







# EARLY POST-WAR TRACT ARCHITECTURE

1940S-1960S



## CHARACTER-DEFINING FEATURES

- Stucco exterior walls
- Low-pitched gable or hipped roofs
- Small porches, if any
- Front or side facing garages
- Very few exterior details
- Single story
- Attached, front facing garage

The Early Post-War Tract style has its roots in the International and Minimal Traditional styles of architecture, which were popular in the late 1930s and the early 1940s. It was also the precursor to the modern residential tract home of today. After World War II, the demand for housing was high and developers began creating tracts of homes with similar plans and elevations. This was the first time that housing was mass-produced. Southern California was at the center of this housing boom and has many early tract homes. The unique feature of this style home was that they were not unique. Prior to World War II, new subdivisions were either custom or semi-custom homes. This allowed homes to still retain their unique character. After World War II, pressure for housing pushed developers to offer limited options for house designs, making street after street of look-a-like houses. Unfortunately, the backlash of this practice has caused many of these homes to be altered over the years and made unique from their neighbors destroying their original appearance and architectural character. This style, along with the California Ranch is also important for introducing an important new home feature to the average home buyer...the attached garage. No longer was the porch an important feature of the home. Instead it was replaced with the one-, and later, two-car garage with a wide driveway directly connecting house to street.

## MASSING AND PLAN

- Predominantly one-story
- Two-story version rare, built late in style
- Front or side facing garages
- Side facing garage out in front of the house
- Small mass because of low roof pitch

## FACADES

- Stucco walls with some siding elements possible
- Lack of decorative elements

## PAINT COLORS

- Colors were vast and varied
- Pastel colors common

## ROOFS

- Low pitched
- Gable or hipped roofs

## ARCHITECTURAL DETAILS

- Very few exterior details
- Window trim and decorative features were rare
- Clapboard siding on lower half of the structure in prominent areas of the house the exception

## DOORS AND WINDOWS

- Single panel doors
- Aluminum sliding windows
- Single-hung or casement windows used in early examples because lack of metal windows
- No window trim.

## PORCHES

- Stoop common
- Early examples may have small porches
- Porches phased out

## FENCES AND WALLS

- Simple wood fences
- Fences separate front yard from side and rear yards
- Separates formal public view and private space
- Not in front yard.





# GOOGIE ARCHITECTURE

1950S



## CHARACTER-DEFINING FEATURES

- One-story in height
- Angled roofs
- Large overhangs
- Roofs that appear to float over building
- Large expressive signage

Often called coffee shop architecture, the Googie style became a dominant style for coffee shops, car washes, drive-ins, and other roadside architecture. The Googie style was flamboyant and expressive. It was the first architectural style that combined America's love of the automobile with the hope and promise of the future. It was space age architecture. It was suburbia. No place did Googie take a bigger hold than in Southern California. The style took elements out of the technological advancements of the time, including jet planes and spaceships. Googie illustrated this new age so well, that the original Tomorrowland at Disneyland was Googie. The original McDonald's and Bob's Big Boy restaurants were a classic example of Googie architecture.

The Googie style was used for commercial buildings primarily restaurants and other roadside architecture.



## MASSING AND PLAN

- One story in height.
- Rectangular or L-shaped in plan.
- Sharp angles, and shapes.
- Elements that were low and horizontal combined with soaring angled vertical elements.

## FACADES

- Exterior walls were stucco.
- Various elements would be mosaic tile, stone, or metal.
- Exposed decorative steel beams glass block, stainless steel, etc., would be used to accent the building forms.

## PAINT COLORS

- Colors varied building to building
- Corporate colors and signage.
- Colors were very bright, great deal of contrast between colors.

## ROOFS

- Large roof structures that appeared to float over the walls.
- Roof at angles to make them appear to take off.

## TRIM AND ARCHITECTURAL DETAILS

- Simple to non existent.
- Decorative features included exposed decorative steel beams and tile work.

## DOORS AND WINDOWS

- Simple doors, and could include glass.
- Doors could also be stained or painted.
- Large single pane picture windows.

## PORCHES

- None
- Entryway covered by roof

## FENCES AND WALLS

- None except to hide trash and equipment – integrated into building.

## SIGNAGE

- Signage part of design.
- Neon was king.
- Signs were bright and big.
- Sometimes, as in the case of Mc Donald's golden arches, the signs were actually part of the building.

