

RANCH

The Ranch style emerged from the 1930s designs of Southern California architect Cliff May, who merged modernist ideas with traditional notions of the working ranches of the American West and in particular, the rustic adobe houses of California's Spanish- and Mexican-era *ranchos*. The resulting architectural style – characterized by its low horizontal massing, sprawling interior plan, and wood exterior detailing – embodied the mid-20th century ideal of “California living.” The Ranch style enjoyed enormous popularity throughout the United States from the 1940s to 1970s. It epitomized unpretentious architecture and dominated the suburbs of the post-World War II period. It was more conservative than other modern residential architecture of the period, often using decorative elements based on historical forms and capitalizing on the national fascination with the “Old West.” The underlying philosophy of the Ranch house was informality, outdoor living, gracious entertaining, and natural materials.

The most common style of Ranch house is the California Ranch. It is characterized by its one-story height; asymmetrical massing in L- or U-shaped plans; low-pitched hipped or gabled roofs with wide overhanging eaves; a variety of materials for exterior cladding, including plaster and board-and-batten; divided light wood sash windows, sometimes with diamond-shaped panes; and large picture windows. Decorative details commonly seen in California Ranch houses include scalloped bargeboards, false cupolas and dovescotes, shutters, and iron or wood porch supports. The California Ranch house accommodated America's adoption of the automobile as the primary means of transportation with a two-car garage that was a prominent architectural feature on the front of the house, and a sprawling layout on a large lot. Floor plans for the tracts of Ranch houses were usually designed to meet the FHA standards so that the developer could receive guaranteed loans.

Another variation on the Ranch house is the Modern Ranch, which was influenced by Mid-Century Modernism. Modern Ranches emphasized horizontal planes more than the California Ranch, and included modern instead of traditional stylistic details. Character-defining features included low-pitched hipped or flat roofs, prominent rectangular chimneys, recessed entryways, and wood or concrete block privacy screens. Other stylistic elements resulted in Asian variations. Character-defining features include:

- One-story
- Sprawling plan
- L- or U-shaped plan, often with radiating wings
- Low, horizontal massing with wide street façade
- Low-pitched hipped or gable roof with open overhanging eaves and wood shakes
- Plaster, wood lap, or board-and-batten siding, often with brick or stone accents
- Divided light wood sash windows (picture, double-hung sash, diamond-pane)
- Wide, covered front porch with wood posts
- Attached garage, sometimes linked with open-sided breezeway

- Details such as wood shutters, attic vents in gable ends, dovescotes, extended gables, or scalloped barge boards
- Modern Ranch sub-type may feature flat or low-pitched hipped roof with composition shingle or gravel roofing; metal framed windows; wood or concrete block privacy screens

Ranch House: Extant Examples



2393 Deodar Road (1955).



1120 Val Vista Street (1951).



370 E. La Verne Avenue (1961).



2351 Deodar Road (1955).