

III. RESIDENTIAL DEVELOPMENT IN LITTLE ROCK, 1945-1970

A. Introduction

The residential architecture of Little Rock in the post-World War II period has several primary property types as follows:

1. Single-Family Dwellings
2. Multi-Family Dwellings . Low Rise Apartments
3. Multi-Family Dwellings . High Rise Apartments
4. Residential Subdivisions

Between 1940 and 1970, 31,623 housing units were constructed in Little Rock according to the U.S. Housing Census. The great majority of these are single-family dwellings built in the suburban areas of the city west and south of the downtown area. In addition to the single-family dwellings, many multi-family units such as duplexes and apartments were constructed in the city to provide rental housing in low- and high-rise buildings. Low-rise buildings are generally defined as those which are four-stories or less while medium to high-rise buildings are five stories or more.

While many of these housing units were built on established streets or roads already platted and laid out by 1945, the great majority were built within formal subdivisions of the period. Many subdivisions were designed with standardized plan dwellings and with interconnected streets to create a unique and identifiable neighborhood. Because of the distinctiveness of suburban areas from this era, residential subdivisions compose their own property type when evaluating the growth and development of the city.

B. Single-Family Dwellings, 1945-1970

Architecture changed greatly after World War I as America became more urban than rural and technological advances brought new lifestyles. Unlike Victorian homes, most dwellings constructed in cities and small towns after 1920 featured a bathroom, central heating system, and electricity. New electrical devices such as refrigerators, washing machines and vacuum cleaners were available to the homeowner. Builders continued to design homes in traditional Tudor Revival and Colonial Revival styles but this decade witnessed the great popularity of the Craftsman style with its large porches and wide eaves.⁸⁰ Also called "Craftsman Bungalows," these brick and frame dwellings were widely built in Little Rock's neighborhoods which developed in the 1910s and 1920s.⁸¹

The stock market crash of 1929 drastically decreased residential construction across the country and led to a movement away from the Bungalow and Craftsman forms of the century's first two decades. The Bungalow and Craftsman dwellings gradually gave

⁸⁰ Clifford Edward Clark Jr., *The American Family Home, 1800-1960*. (Chapel Hill, North Carolina: University of North Carolina Press, 1986), 173.

⁸¹ Rachel Carley, *The Visual Dictionary of American Domestic Architecture*. (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 1994), 212.

way to new "modern" homes with cleaner lines. While the periods Art Deco and Art Moderne styles were limited for home construction, their emphasis on streamlining and sleek materials also resulted in designs with restrained ornamentation. In Little Rock, few dwellings were built in the Art Deco and Art Moderne styles during the 1930s. The most notable is the Werner Koop House completed in 1937 at 6 Ozark Point which is listed in the National Register of Historic Places (Figure 5).



Figure 5: The 1937 Art Moderne Werner Koop House at 6 Ozark Point is one of the few examples of this style built in Little Rock.

As part of this movement towards simpler lines and smaller floor plans, there was the emergence of the Minimal Traditional style home. This house form was based on the traditional shapes of the Colonial and Tudor Revival styles. These designs were modest with narrow eaves and ornamentation often limited to arched door openings or a mixture of materials such as weatherboard siding and brick on the main façade. The use of asbestos shingles as an exterior cladding material was also popular in these years. Many of these homes from the 1930s and early 1940s were small and measured 1,200 square feet or less in living space. Most had two bedrooms, a bathroom, kitchen, and living room. They might have an eat-in kitchen, a dining alcove, or a small dining room.

During World War II, materials were scarce and there was little new residential construction built in America except for defense-related housing. With the end of the war in 1945, there was a huge pent-up demand for homes. In response, builders and architects constructed small but efficient homes to meet this demand and experimented with methods of pre-fabricated materials. While the Minimal Traditional and Revival

styles were still utilized in the post-war years, more contemporary homes such as Ranch and Split-Level emerged as the dominant styles by the early 1950s. Ranch-style homes were first seen during the 1930s in California and these dwellings continued the horizontal forms of the Bungalow but with minimal detailing and an emphasis on private outdoor spaces. The small Usonian homes of Frank Lloyd Wright also influenced the Ranch style. Split-Level homes emerged in the late 1930s to provide for separate living and bedroom spaces on different floors. The Split-Level was also popular for sloping building sites since it provided a large amount of living space for the lot size.⁸² These common house forms . Minimal Traditional, Ranch and its variations, and Split- Level . make up the vast majority of the tens of thousands of single-family dwellings built in Little Rock from 1945 to 1970.

One of the responses to the housing shortage were companies which provided prefabricated plans and shipped the entire house and materials to the owner's lot for construction. Companies such as Sears, Montgomery Ward, Gordon Van Tine and Aladdin Homes had been in the house manufacturing business since the early 1900s and continued to send homes by train or truck throughout America into the 1950s. Mass produced, prefabricated homes were also manufactured by other companies during this period such as Gunnison Homes which built thousands of houses across the country.

Another prefabricated design was the Lustron home which was produced from 1947 to 1950 by the Lustron Corporation of Columbus, Ohio. This company's plant utilized steel and porcelain panels to build one-story, standardized plan houses. The houses are one-story in height, have large picture windows, incised porches supported by a steel post and steel roofs. The interiors have porcelain walls and concrete floors. The company was never able to manufacture enough houses to be profitable and the company was foreclosed on by the Reconstruction Finance Corporation (RFC) in 1950.⁸³ By the time the company closed it had produced 2,500 Lustrons which were sold across the country. While twelve are known to have been shipped to Arkansas only four are known to be extant. Two of these are in Little Rock; the Mary H. Matthews House at 5201 Maryland Avenue and the dwelling at 1302 Tyler Street (Figure 6). The Mary H. Matthews House (Figure 7) was listed in the National Register in 2014.

⁸² Nelson Burbank and Oscar Shaftel, *House Construction Details*. (New York: Simmons-Boardman Publishing Corporation. 1959), 7.

⁸³ Thomas T. Fetters, *The Lustron Home; The History of a Postwar Prefabricated Housing Experiment*, (North Carolina, London: McFarland & Company, Inc., 2002), 141.



Figure 6: Lustron House at 1302 Tyler Street in the Fair Park neighborhood.



Figure 7: National Register-listed Mary H. Matthews House at 5201 Maryland Avenue.

The houses which were built in Little Rock in the post-war years differed in many ways from those built in the early 20th century. House styles such as Craftsman, Tudor Revival and Colonial Revival gradually gave way to new "modern" homes characterized by limited embellishment, streamlined floor plans, and affordability. One result of this movement was the Minimal Traditional style, a stripped down version of the Colonial and Tudor Revival styles.⁸⁴ The Minimal Traditional-style dwelling is massed to have a small footprint and can have both symmetrical and asymmetrical façades. This house type is usually one- or one-and-one-half stories in height. It was popular during the 1930s into the 1950s. Interiors generally lacked the built-ins of previous Craftsman designs. Exteriors often were clad in asbestos siding, evidencing the use of new building materials. Introduced as early as the 1920s, asbestos shingle siding was created by incorporating the naturally occurring mineral asbestos with Portland cement. The resulting product was durable, easy to paint, cheap to manufacture and ideal for application on thousands of new-homes in suburbs across the country (Figures 8 and 9).



Figure 8: A row of identical plan Minimal Traditional-style dwellings in the 4700 block of W. 24th Street built in 1944-1945.

⁸⁴ McAlester, 589.



Figure 9: The Minimal Traditional dwelling at 1901 S. Taylor Street was built in 1948 and reflects the transition towards the Ranch style with its large picture window.

The Ranch dwelling, with a horizontal emphasis and sprawling linear plan took advantage of large suburban lots. Detailing was usually minimal with plain, wide eaves, picture windows, and minimal or absent porches on the main façade. These dwellings are usually one-story in height and have low-pitched roofs. Antecedents of this architecture range from Frank Lloyd Wright's open floor plans and low-profile designs to Marcel Breuer's glass walls set amidst the natural landscape.⁸⁵ Ranch-style houses may have exteriors of brick or stone veneer and/or wood siding and integral garages - another common trait of Ranch-style houses. Previously, detached garages occupied a large space at the rear or sides of a dwelling. Post-war suburban home plans featured attached garages or carports, freeing up the back yard for leisure patios, recreation, pools, and barbecues. Outdoor space of the post-war dwelling was also valued for family togetherness.

Ranch interiors also emphasized a new sense of family. Floor plans became more open compared to previous designs that tended to separate family members rather than bring them together. Formal dining rooms of the past became blended with kitchens. The extra space could then be allotted for a recreational room or an additional child's room. Laundry rooms were located adjacent to kitchen areas, streamlining domestic work. The rambling design appealed to Americans' new desire for open space. Ranch-style homes often feature a large picture window on the façade, usually located in the dwelling's main gathering room. The picture window opens the room to the front yard landscape,

⁸⁵ Mary Mix Foley, *The American House*. (New York: Harper Colophon Books, 1980), 260.

offering a substitute view that a front porch traditionally offered. People no longer passed time on the street-facing façade of their homes, instead spending indoor time in recreation rooms or outdoor family time in the spacious backyard or patios. The increasing availability of modern amenities . air-conditioning, electrical appliances, and television . influenced residential design of the period. The prominent front porch of previous architectural styles and forms disappeared or shrank dramatically.



Figure 10: The Graystone is an example of a Ranch style plan from the Aladdin Homes catalog of 1952.

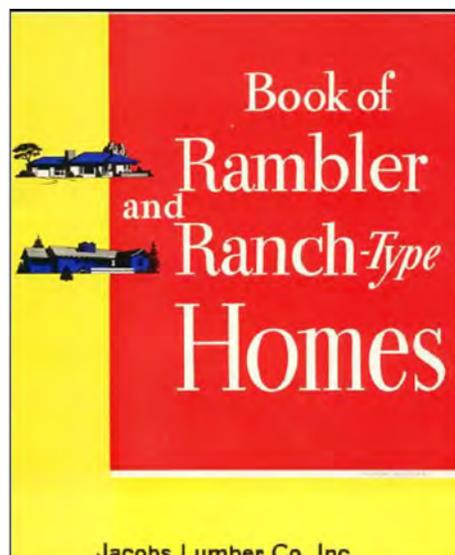


Figure 11: Many builders and lumber companies worked with architects to produce standardized plan catalogs such as this one from the Jacobs Lumber Company ca. 1950.

While there is a general agreement among architectural historians what a Ranch house is, there is less consensus on the terminology to describe its sub-types. A recent study in Georgia assessed the state's post-war housing and called the common one-story, hipped roof and side-gabled designs Linear Ranch Houses.⁸⁶ A survey of post-war houses in Boulder, Colorado calls these same designs Simple Ranch houses.⁸⁷ Other common terms for this one-story Ranch House are Massed Ranch, and Compact Ranch. These terms correspond with Virginia McAlester's description of these common, one-story designs as Minimal Ranch houses.⁸⁸ For the purposes of this study the term Linear Ranch is used to describe these modest Ranch style houses (Figures 12-20).

Character-defining elements of a Linear Ranch include a horizontal emphasis, a one-story, rectangular plan, a low-pitched hipped or gable roof, and large chimneys. Picture windows on the primary façade are also common elements. It is common for the Linear Ranch house to have a simple exterior of all brick veneer with little other detailing. Other common forms in Little Rock have skirt walls of brick veneer with wood siding above. This form generally has a front-to-side ratio of at least 2:1 (i.e., the front is at least twice as long as the sides). The Linear Ranch sub-type may be transverse, with its narrow side facing the street and its long elevation extending into the depth of the parcel. Often the long side will have a projecting bay containing a carport or garage with its entrance facing the street.

Larger Ranch style plans are called Composite, Massed, or Ramblers and these designs build off of the basic plan, adding to the façade a projecting wing with a cross gable roof to the main body of the dwelling. This Ranch sub-type often has more than one projecting bay on the main facade, giving the house an L or T plan. The linear rectangle, however, remains the predominate shape. The exterior may have siding and a brick or stone veneer skirt wall that adds a contrasting texture to vertical or horizontal wood siding, illustrating the use of mixed forms of exterior cladding (Figure 21-23).

Another subtype is the Colonial Ranch, with modest Colonial Revival elements on the façade. This style's precursor appeared during the early twentieth century during the Colonial Revival movement. The Colonial Ranch (Figures 24-25) appears in post-war suburban subdivisions in the mid-1950s, and it remained popular for several more decades. Also built during this period were designs which featured elements of German or Swiss Chalet designs and often referred to as Fairy Tale Ranch houses (Figure 26). Reflective of traditional forms from these countries, these Ranch houses feature scalloped fascia boards at the eaves, eave brackets, faux bird houses at gables and board and batten wood siding. These types of designs were identified in the Boulder

⁸⁶ Richard Clouse, *Ranch Houses in Georgia: A Guide to House Types (Subtypes)*, (Atlanta, Georgia: Department of Natural Resources, Historic Preservation Division, 2010), 11.

⁸⁷ Jennifer Bryant and Carrie Schomig, *Historic Context and Survey of Post-World War II Residential Architecture, Boulder, Colorado*, (Boulder, Colorado: City of Boulder, 2010), 140.

⁸⁸ McAlester, 600.

survey and two clusters of these types of Ranch houses have been noted in Little Rock.⁸⁹

In Little Rock one of the most common house designs of this period is a one-story, Linear Ranch plan with a hipped roof and exterior of brick veneer. A variation is a similar plan dwelling with a low brick skirt wall and wood or added synthetic siding above the brick. These houses often have attached carports or attached garage wings. Standardized plans of this house form were used in the majority of the city's subdivisions and especially in neighborhoods such as Broadmoor, Meadowcliff, and Briarwood. This house form was also built in some of the older neighborhoods of the city such as along the 1500 block of S. Pulaski Street (Figure 20).



Figure 12: Linear Ranch at 2 Eaton Drive built in 1957 in the Wakefield Village Subdivision.



Figure 13: Linear Ranch built in 1961 at 24 Windsor Drive in the Meadowcliff subdivision.

⁸⁹ Bryant and Schomig, 154.



Figure 14: Hipped roof example of a Linear Ranch dwelling at 6907 E. Wakefield Drive built in 1958 in the Wakefield Village subdivision.



Figure 15: One of the most common Ranch style house forms is this type of Linear design with a hipped roof, brick skirt wall and attached carport such as the house at 24 Lamont Drive built in 1957 in the Meadowbrook subdivision.



Figure 16: This brick veneer Linear Ranch house has an attached carport and was built in 1954 at 10 Berkshire Drive in the Broadmoor subdivision.



Figure 17: This same house form was used in the design of the dwelling at 1207 W. 28th Street when it was built in 1955 as the home of L.C. and Daisy Bates. Daisy Bates was a leader in the desegregation of Little Rock and this property is listed in the National Register and designated a National Historic Landmark.



Figure 18: A row of hipped roof Linear Ranch houses in the 6000 block of Sandpiper Drive in the Cardinal Heights subdivision.



Figure 19: Streetscape of hipped roof Linear Ranch houses built in the early 1960s in the 7000 block of Fairfield Drive in the Fairfield subdivision.



Figure 20: Streetscape of the 1500 block of S. Pulaski Street.

Another popular design in Little Rock's subdivisions is the Rambler Ranch house (also called "Composite" or "Massed-plan Ranch house"). These designs feature a projecting hipped or gable roof wing on the main façade. This wing may contain the dwelling's carport or garage. The linear rectangle remains the predominate shape but it can have one or more projecting wings depending on the size of the house and lot. The exteriors are generally of brick veneer or with brick skirt walls and wood or synthetic siding above.

The Ranch subtype known as "Colonial-Ranch" is reflected in a number of subdivisions such as Briarwood (Figures 24-25). This design is generally a Linear Ranch which has a gable roof or pedimented entry porch on the main façade with Doric or Tuscan columns. There may also be limited decoration such as dentils at the roofline. A small number of Ranch houses featuring German or "Swiss Chalet" designs were built in the Story Book Village and Glenwood Heights subdivisions (Figure 26).



Figure 21: Example of a simple Rambler Ranch house at 16 Dellwood Drive built in 1965 in the Eastwood Heights subdivision.



Figure 22: This hipped roof Rambler Ranch house was built in 1958 at 18 Wingate Drive in the Wingate subdivision.



Figure 23: This large Rambler Ranch house was built with an extended garage wing. It was constructed in 1956 at 29 Wingate Drive in the Wingate subdivision.



Figure 24: Example of a pedimented Colonial Ranch at 8 Sun Valley Road built in 1960 in the Briarwood subdivision.



Figure 25: Also in the Briarwood subdivision at 14 Bertwood is this dwelling with Tuscan porch columns built in 1959.



Figure 26: In the Glenwood Heights subdivision is this Swiss Chalet design built in 1960 at 7202 Evergreen Drive.

Concurrent with the Ranch house plans was the popularity of the Split-Level design. Split-Level houses (Figures 27-29) were built with two to three distinct levels connected by short staircases. This house form features massed components with varying stories such as bi-level and tri-level.⁹⁰ The main entrance on the façade often enters into a foyer with steps ascending and descending into different floors. Tri-level plans typically have stairs down to a garage and/or recreation room and then stairs up to bedrooms with the kitchen, dining room and living room on the main floor. The exterior may have mixed materials of stone veneer, brick, wood siding and asbestos shingles. The plan may be contained under one continuous roof or be contained under two separate roofs. Especially popular in the 1950s and 1960s these designs can be found in subdivisions such as Leawood and Brookfield.



Figure 27: Constructed in 1954, the dwelling at 504 N. Mellon Street in the Success subdivision is an example of a tri-level, Split-Level plan.

⁹⁰ McAlester, *A Field Guide to American Houses*, 614.



Figure 28: This tri-level, Split-Level house was built in 1960 at 15 Cinderella Circle in the Story Book Village subdivision and also reflects the Swiss Chalet influence.



Figure 29: Constructed in 1961, the dwelling at 7 Brookridge Cove in the Brookfield subdivision is an example of a tri-level, Split-Level plan.

Of particular significance in Little Rock are the dwellings known as %Mid-Century Modern.+These types of dwellings are also referred to as %Contemporary+by McAlester and other studies of post-war architecture.⁹¹ Mid-Century Modern has its roots from Germany's Bauhaus school of the 1920s. Ornamentation was considered a weakness to design, and practical use of space became an utmost concern for this emerging Modern movement. Architects such as Ludwig Mies van der Rohe, Walter Gropius, Marcel Breuer, and Le Corbusier pioneered an innovative perspective on architecture that began within the building, rather than outside. A building's exterior, they posited, should be determined by its functional interior purpose. The dimensions and spatial arrangement of interior rooms dictated the plan and exterior appearance.⁹²

Introducing modernism to the built U.S. landscape came largely from the immigration to America of Europe's foremost designers. With the approach of World War II, Mies van der Rohe, Gropius, and Breuer left Europe, finding greater freedom for their projects stateside. In the post-war economic boom, a prosperous middle class could afford to buy new homes, and architect George Nelson and editor Henry Wright published the forward-minded *Tomorrow's House – A Complete Guide for the Home Builder*. The book emphasized Americans' embrace of technology in the form of automobiles and home appliances in order to engender their shift in attitude towards contemporary home design. The emerging %contemporary+style incorporated the Art Moderne emphasis on streamlined geometric shapes with a sprawling floor plan introduced by the Ranch style.

In its simplest form, the influence of the Mid-Century Modern movement can be seen in one-story house plans that are streamlined versions of Wright's Usonian homes (Figure 30). Wright's Usonian concept was an attempt to create modest affordable homes using a variety of materials such as sheet metal and brick and stone veneers.⁹³ This type of house form utilized flat or slightly sloping gable roofs, narrow-height or clerestory windows on the main façade and attached carports and garages. In Little Rock, these designs were widely built in the Meadowbrook subdivision and in nearby neighborhoods. A standardized plan in Meadowbrook features wide eaves, an attached carport and small, sliding track windows below the roofline (Figure 31).

Architects such as Joseph Eichler, Donald Wexler and Richard Neutra of California promoted more expansive variations of this style and influenced builders and designers across the country. In these types of dwellings the open floor plan of the Ranch style was utilized within a more freestyle expression. Interesting angles deconstruct the traditional rectilinear plan, and changes in plane are accentuated with mixed materials. A number of these houses were designed with front facing gables and with large expanses of glass (Figure 32). Large fixed windows were utilized for a minimalist emphasis of a building's structure, however, their use became equated with Modernism, and therefore middle-class homeowners desired ample, large windows in their modern

⁹¹ McAlester, 630.

⁹² Carole Rifkind, *A Field Guide to Contemporary American Architecture*. (New York: Plume Publishing Co., 2001), 6-7.

⁹³ John Sergeant, *Frank Lloyd Wright's Usonian Houses*. (New York: Watson-Guption Publications, 1976), 16.

homes. Roofs of these dwellings are often flat or very low-pitched gable or shed profiles, sometime in unique rooflines that sweep dramatically or create multi-angle shapes, like a butterfly form. Roofing materials range from standard asphalt shingles to metal panels to rolled or stretched skin-like covers. Wide eaves and clerestory windows add emphasis to the roofline of Mid-Century Modern architecture. Subdivisions such as Broadmoor and Briarwood display a number of standardized plans of this type of Mid-Century design (Figures 34-35).

While many of Little Rock's dwellings built in Mid-Century Modern designs in the subdivisions came from pattern books or catalogs of the period, others were designed by local or regional architects. Architect designed Mid-Century Modern homes are generally larger than the typical standardized plan subdivision dwelling and are sited to take advantage of the topography of the lot. These types of homes often featured large expanses of glass, multiple roof forms, mixtures of exterior wall materials and asymmetrical plans and wings. In these dwellings stacked cut stone, concrete and random-course field stone are frequently used materials for exterior walls. Another common material in houses of the period was vertical wood siding as well as the more traditional horizontal weatherboard.



Figure 30: Reflecting the influence of the Usonian design houses is the dwelling at 36 Belmar Drive built in 1955 in the Meadowcliff subdivision.



Figure 31: Another variation of this Usonian design influenced house is this flat roofed dwelling at 35 Greenway Drive built in 1955 in the Meadowcliff subdivision.



Figure 32: Built in 1959, the dwelling at 7206 Apache Road was constructed in the Briarwood subdivision.



Figure 33: The dwelling at 1 Rolling Lane was built in 1960 in the Rolling Hills subdivision.



Figure 34: Built in 1955, the dwelling at 91 Belmont Drive was constructed in the Broadmoor subdivision.



Figure 35: Another standardized plan dwelling in the Broadmoor subdivision is the dwelling at 19 Glenmere Drive built in 1955.

In 1945, nine architects and architectural firms advertised in Little Rock's City Directory.⁹⁴ Some of these were sole practitioners with a few employees such as H. Ray Burks, Theodore Sanders and Thomas Harding Sr. Others were large established firms such as Wittenberg and Delony founded in 1919, Erhart and Eichenbaum created in 1931, Breugemann, Swaim and Allen founded in 1932, and Frank Ginocchio teamed with Edwin Cromwell in 1941. The number of practicing architects doubled over the next decade as Little Rock expanded its residential areas and new buildings were constructed downtown. By the early 1950s there were twenty-one architectural firms advertised in Little Rock's City Directory.⁹⁵

The University of Arkansas School of Architecture trained a number of architects who later practiced in Little Rock. The school opened in 1946 and had its first graduating class in 1951. Architect E. Fay Jones was one of the first graduates and his modernist approach was embraced by a number of students.⁹⁶ Many of these architects proved skillful in designing Mid-Century Modern homes not only for clients but also for their own family dwellings. At least six dwellings designed by architects as their own homes are known to exist in the city. An example of this type of architect designed Mid-Century Modern dwelling is the house at 4 Ranch Valley Road (Figure 36). Built as the

⁹⁴ *Little Rock City Directory, 1945.* (St. Louis: R.L. Polk Company) 972.

⁹⁵ *Little Rock City Directory, 1954.* (St. Louis: R.L. Polk Company, 1954), 84.

⁹⁶ Ethel Goodstein-Murphree, University of Arkansas School of Architecture. Telephone Interview, 14 July, 2017.

residence of architect Kenneth E.N. Cole, Jr., this house was completed in 1959. Cole was the son of contractor Kenneth Cole, Sr., who built numerous houses in the Hillcrest neighborhood. Cole, Jr., opened his firm in the early 1950s and he practiced architecture throughout this decade. The dwelling features a low-pitched gable roof which extends to cover a carport, a stone veneer exterior, and exposed purlins.

Architect Julian Davidson completed his own house in 1951 on a hill overlooking the State Capitol on S. Battery Street (Figures 37-38). Davidson was born in Little Rock in 1906 and graduated from the Architecture School at Washington University in 1928. He returned to Little Rock after school where he joined the architectural firm of Wittenberg and Delony. The firm later changed its name to Wittenberg, Delony and Davidson and Davidson practiced architecture with the firm throughout his career before retiring in 1972. The firm was responsible for designing many public buildings for the city government of Little Rock as well as several state office buildings. Davidson died at age ninety-one in 1997.⁹⁷

In 1951, Davidson designed his family's dwelling at 410 S. Battery Street on a hillside overlooking the State Capitol and Union Station. This Mid-Century Modern dwelling features a sloping roof, vertical board wood siding and an attached carport. The interior features a large sunken living room as well as a ceiling surface throughout the house of corrugated aluminum. This material continues past the wall of the house into the breezeway and carport. The house has been well preserved and contains offices of the Capitol Zoning Commission District. It was listed in the National Register for its architectural significance on March 10, 2014.

The dwelling at 7620 Harmon Drive in the Shamrock subdivision was built in 1960 as the home of architect Lugean Chilcote. Chilcote worked in the firm of Erhart and Eichenbaum and was eventually made a partner in the company.⁹⁸ His dwelling reflects the influence of architect Joseph Eichler with its front facing gable, exposed purlins, and combination of a brick skirt wall and vertical board siding (Figure 39). Fred Arnold was an architect who worked with Wittenberg, Delony and Davidson. He designed his dwelling at 10115 Rodney Parham Road in 1957 (Figure 40). Arnold's design features a flat roof, small porches supported by steel posts and large windows. In August of 2017 this dwelling was vacant and its lot was for sale for commercial development. Another notable home is that of architect Lynn Wassell at 31 River Valley Road (Figure 41). Wassell was a partner in the firm of Robinson & Wassell during the 1960s and this dwelling was built in 1966. The house has an exterior of vertical board siding and stone veneer and features an integral carport. The dwelling is supported by steel posts above a sloping hillside.

⁹⁷ Charles Witsell and Gordon Wittenberg. *Architects of Little Rock, 1833-1950*, (Fayetteville, Arkansas: University of Arkansas Press, 2014), 84.

⁹⁸ Witsell and Wittenberg, 97.



Figure 36: Mid-Century Modern dwelling at 4 Ranch Valley Road. This was built in 1959 in the Ranch Valley Subdivision as the home of architect Kenneth E.N. Cole, Jr.



Figure 37: Located at 410 S. Battery Street is the dwelling of Julian Davidson completed in 1951.



Figure 38: The interior of the Julian Davidson House retains its original lower level living room which is now used as meeting space.



Figure 39: Dwelling of architect Lugean Chilcote at 7620 Harmon Drive.



Figure 40: Dwelling of architect Fred Arnold at 10115 Rodney Parham Road.



Figure 41: The house at 31 River Valley Road was designed as the home of architect Lynn Wassell in 1966.

Two of the more notable Little Rock architects who designed dwellings in the Mid-century Modern style were Noland Blass, Jr., and Yandell Johnson. Noland Blass Jr. was the grandson of Gus Blass who founded one of the city's most prominent department stores in the city. Blass joined the firm of Erhart and Eichenbaum in 1946. By the mid-1960s Blass was a partner of the firm which by 1968 was known as Erhart, Eichenbaum, Rauch, Blass and Reddick.⁹⁹ Blass designed numerous downtown buildings and schools and was prominent in civic affairs.¹⁰⁰ He designed his own dwelling at 217 Normandy Road which was completed in 1952 (Figure 42). The house has a low-pitched gable roof, exposed purlins and a large garage bay. The main entrance is within a recessed bay which has a tile floor and floor to ceiling windows.

Blass is noted for designing a series of homes on property developed by Eugene Pfeifer on River Oaks Circle on a ridge overlooking the Arkansas River. Blass designed the house at 14 River Oaks Drive (Figure 43) for Pfeifer and his wife Fay in 1955 followed by the David and Maureen Grundfest House at 12 River Oaks Circle (Figures 44-45) in 1962. Blass also designed homes for Grundfest's children, David Grundfest Jr. and wife Julianne at 8 River Oaks Circle (Figure 46) in 1962 and Barbara Grundfest Baumann and her husband Stanley at 6 River Oaks Circle (Figures 47-48) which was remodeled into its present form in 1964.¹⁰¹ These dwellings share a number of similarities such as the use of asymmetrical plans and varying rooflines, expansive glass on the rooms facing the river, and interiors with large floor to ceiling heights and wood paneled walls in the living rooms. Blass was also the architect for the Sam and Shirley Strauss House built in 1964 in neighboring Cammack Village. This Mid-Century Modern dwelling was listed in the National Register in 2015 for its architectural significance.



Figure 42: Dwelling of architect Noland Blass Jr. at 217 Normandy Road.

⁹⁹ *Little Rock City Directory, 1968* (Dallas, Texas: R.L Polk Company, 1968), 69.

¹⁰⁰ Carolyn Gray LeMaster, *A Corner of the Tapestry, A History of the Jewish Experience in Arkansas, 1820s-1990s*. (Fayetteville, Arkansas: University of Arkansas press, 1994), 410.

¹⁰¹ Richard Williams, Larry Alman and Jan Alman, Personal Interviews, 25 July, 2017.



Figure 43: Eugene Pfeifer House at 14 River Oaks Circle built in 1955.



Figure 44: David Grundfest House at 12 River Oaks Circle built in 1962.



Figure 45: David Grundfest living room with brick chimney and original paneled walls.



Figure 46: Home of David Grundfest Jr. at 8 River Oaks Circle built in 1962.



Figure 47: Stanley and Barbara Baumann House at 6 River Oaks Circle built in 1964.

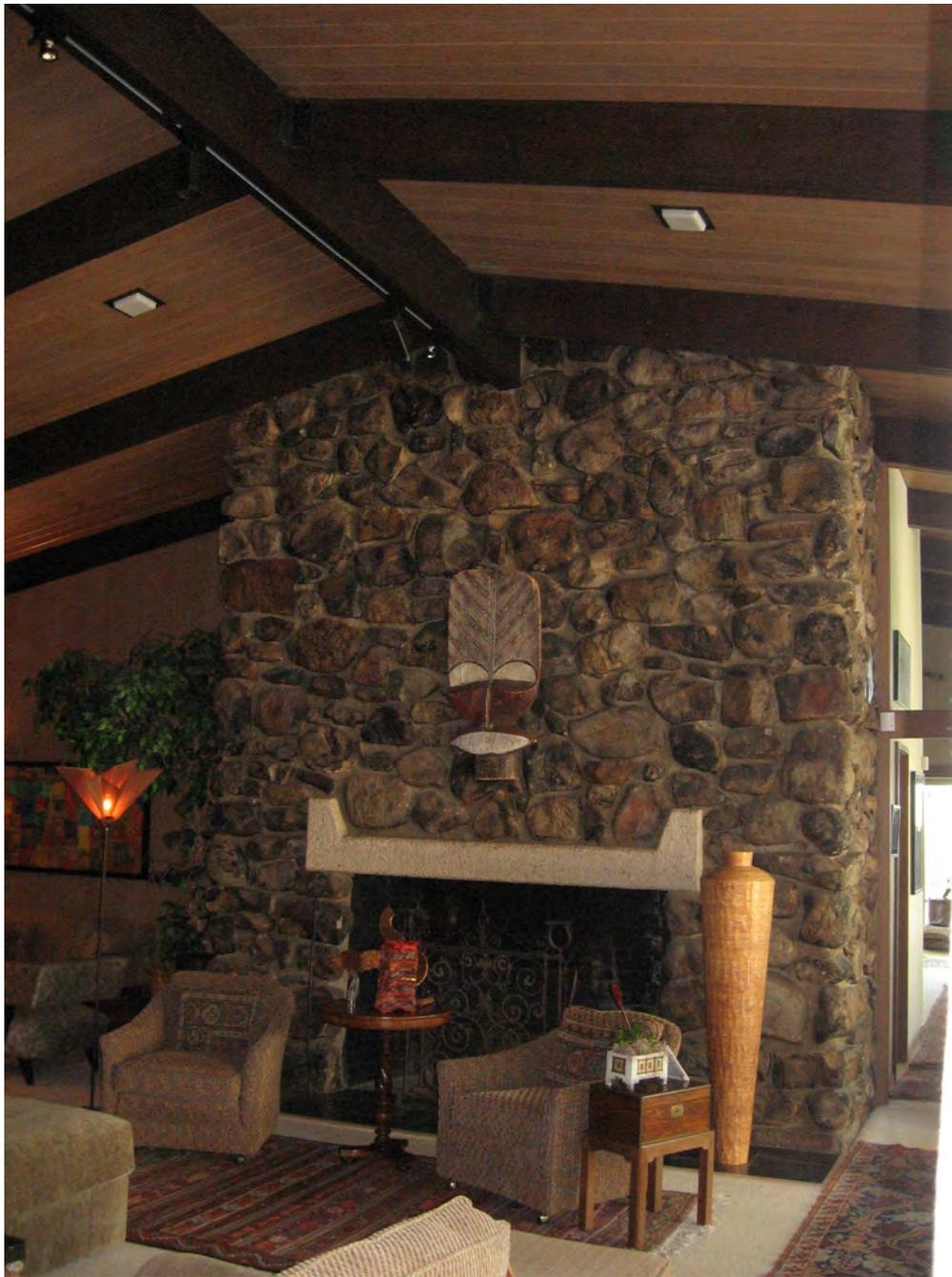


Figure 48: Living room of the Baumann House with the original stone chimney and exposed beam ceiling.

Another notable Little Rock architect of the period was J. Yandell Johnson, a native of St. Louis who earned his master's degree from Washington University, received the James Harrison Steadman Fellowship in 1936, and studied low-cost housing in Europe. In 1938 Johnson moved with his architect wife Mary to Jonesboro, Arkansas. After Johnson finished service in World War II, the couple launched an architectural practice in Little Rock in 1946, which is credited with 385 residential and commercial projects in Arkansas undertaken during the next several decades, including the National Old Line Insurance Company Building. Completed in 1954, the original section of this insurance building is noted as one of the most prominent examples of the International style in the city.¹⁰² In a 1950 *Arkansas Gazette* article, one of the Johnsons's residential projects, on Lakeview Road in Lakewood, was described as "probably the most ultra-modern four-room house ever to be built in the Greater Little Rock area, and expected to set a trend."¹⁰³ Mary defined Modernism as "a state of mind, not an architectural style, and the state of mind can be applied to any preferred type of building."¹⁰⁴ In 1967 Johnson closed his architectural firm, afterwards working for two other Arkansas firms until he retired in 1978.¹⁰⁵

Johnson designed residences throughout Arkansas and a complete listing of his commissions in Little Rock is still being assessed. His individual commissions reveal his Modern take on architecture, which sometimes translated into a more typical Ranch form. Johnson's residential designs often display cantilevered elements, which emphasize the horizontality of the dwelling, and he used windows of varying sizes and styles placed asymmetrically on the same elevation. His favored window type was the awning, appearing in pairs, multi-paned banks, window walls, and short single openings, or he would incorporate them into ribbons placed high on the elevation.¹⁰⁶ He also favored folded rooflines with monitors, and projecting eaves with close-set rafter tails that swept upward from shingled elevations. Johnson collaborated with Jack Bracey of Bralei Homes to design small, middle-class houses for the mid-1950s Meadowcliff Subdivision in Little Rock.¹⁰⁷ It is unclear if Johnson designed all the homes in the neighborhood or just a few. Meadowcliff does feature a mix of traditional small Ranch houses, with an occasional exaggerated folded-gable or shed-roof design with multi-paned picture windows that look much like Johnson's larger individual commissions.

E. Fay Jones was another prominent architect in Arkansas who designed houses in the Mid-Century Modern style throughout the state. Jones studied architecture at the University of Arkansas and later met architect Frank Lloyd Wright and studied under him for a period at Wright's studio, Taliesin in Wisconsin. Wright's designs influenced Jones and he introduced a similar compatibility with his residential designs and the landscape.

¹⁰² Witsell and Wittenberg, *Architects of Little Rock, 1833-1950*, 116.

¹⁰³ "Privacy Is Assured in New House," *Arkansas Gazette* (January 29, 1950).

¹⁰⁴ *Arkansas Gazette*, (01/07/1951) in Yandell Johnson papers, on file at Butler Center, Little Rock, AR, Series 1, Box 4, File 17.

¹⁰⁵ Witsell and Wittenberg, *Architects of Little Rock, 1833-1950*, 116.

¹⁰⁶ Hope, "Low, Light and Livable," 26.

¹⁰⁷ *Ibid.*

Jones opened his own architectural firm in 1953 in Fayetteville and also taught architecture at the University of Arkansas. Using native materials and expressing functionalism, Jones designed a number of notable residences. Many of his more significant dwellings are in Fayetteville but his design for Pine Knoll in Little Rock is also highly regarded. This dwelling reflects his philosophy to meld a dwelling's interior and exterior to inspire an appreciation for nature on the part of the resident and the viewer.¹⁰⁸ Constructed in 1964, this dwelling features a stone veneer exterior, wide eaves and large floor-to-ceiling windows (Figures 49-50).



Figure 49: View of Pine Knoll designed by E. Fay Jones and constructed in 1964.



Figure 50: Living room of Pine Knoll displaying its large expanses of windows and exposed ceiling beams.

¹⁰⁸ Dana Lawrence & Kara Ousterhaus, "Hantz House," National Register nomination on file at Arkansas Historic Preservation Program: Little Rock: AR, 2001; Department of Arkansas Heritage, *Outside the Pale: The Architecture of Fay Jones*, (Fayetteville, AR: The University of Arkansas Press, 1999), xi.

In addition to these architect-designed homes, Little Rock's suburbs contain other notable Mid-Century Modern dwellings from the 1940s to the 1960s. The dwelling at 27 River Ridge Road was designed by Lugean Chilcote and features an exterior of stone veneer, vertical board siding and floor-to-ceiling windows (Figure 51). Another notable design is the W-shaped dwelling at 52 Wingate Drive built in 1963 which features an exterior of stone veneer and vertical board siding. Fenestration is limited on the main elevation and the windows open onto rear private patios (Figure 52). Other noted Mid-Century Modern dwellings noted from this period include the house at 1 E. Palisades Drive (Figure 53) built in 1953, 2 Ranch Valley Road (Figure 54) built in 1957, and the dwelling at 33 E. Palisades Drive (Figure 55) built in 1962.

By 1968, the number of architects and architectural firms listed in the Little Rock City Directory was thirty-six and many of these continued on into later decades.¹⁰⁹ In 2014, the book *Architects of Little Rock, 1833-1950*, by architects Charles Witsell and Gordon Wittenberg was published which identified and described a number of the architects and firms in business to the mid-twentieth century. While many of the architects cited in this study are mentioned in this book, information on many of the architects and firms of the 1950s and 1960s continues to be researched.



Figure 51: Designed by architect Lugean Chilcote, this house at 27 River Ridge Road was built in 1966.

¹⁰⁹ *Little Rock City Directory, 1968* (Dallas, Texas: R.L Polk Company, 1968), 69.



Figure 52: Built in the shape of a “Y” this Mid-Century Modern dwelling was completed in 1963 at 52 Wingate Drive in the Wingate subdivision.



Figure 53: Dwelling at 1 E. Palisades Drive built in 1953.



Figure 54: Dwelling at 2 Ranch Valley Road built in 1957.



Figure 55: Dwelling at 33 E. Palisades Drive built in 1962.