

SIDE NOTES

Into the future past

It was fully 20 years ago that the thought struck me: *Suburban ranch neighborhoods are now desirable*. I was taking a long walk in a leafy suburb between New York City and Princeton, N.J., a place of old farms that had been developed after the second war and through the 1960s. The sun-dappled streets, curved in the manner of Olmsted's and Vaux's parks, were embowered by tall trees on each side, which met overhead. Each green, roughly same-size lot was neatly kept, each house set back at a private and dignified distance. Rhododendrons had matured and naturalized. To my surprise, the mid-century houses my parents had disparaged (my mother preferred Colonials) were not all alike after all; cladding materials, entries, wings, and landscape varied. Consistent massing and heights gave the neighborhood an identity and feeling of serenity.

The October 1998 issue of *Old-House Journal* marked our 25th anniversary. In a birthday mood, we heralded the Ranch as a historic house style. The Arts & Crafts revival was in full swing and the Bungalow (1900–1925) would be the next decade's restoration darling. Outside of academia and a few pockets of enthusiasts, the old-house audience was vocal in its insistence that anything postwar was suspect.

This issue marks 45 years of OHJ. Among the tours we feature is a visit to a glass-walled, 1957 house in California. The accompanying style article provides a context for Mid-Century Modern houses, of which the Western Ranch and its variants is one type. My own feelings about all those ranches and Contemporaries of the Sixties have changed. I've been introduced to well-designed mid-century enclaves not only in New Jersey but also in Minneapolis, Des Moines, Palo Alto, and Seattle.

Imagine big windows, a now-familiar and livable modernism, and no clutter! Imagine having a private stone patio instead of a wood porch that always needs work. Imagine neighborhoods where that postwar optimism seems embodied still.

I think I am in love.




NEW CLASSICS

A new monograph showcasing the work of New York-based architecture firm John B. Murray is a refreshing reminder that classical architecture is alive and well. Their mastery of the vocabulary and sensitivity to proportion is evident in 15 residential projects that range from new country homes and a preserved barn to sensitive additions and prewar apartments in Manhattan. Collaboration with landscape designers, artisans, and builders assures "a simplicity of form and supreme craftsmanship" in work that interprets classical details.

Murray, recipient of multiple Stanford White and Palladio architecture awards, has worked with leading interior designers on these contemporary classics. Never antiquated or stodgy, the rooms are gracious, peaceful, and often playful.

Contemporary Classical Architecture: John B. Murray
by Elizabeth Brooke Murray
Monacelli Press, Sept. 2018
256 pp., \$65



TOP TO BOTTOM MCM tracts yield surprises: a 1951 Wright-designed house in Minneapolis. A mid-century Cliff May house in Columbus, Ohio, is a familiar type. Window wall and courtyard in Seattle. A sprawling 1952 Ranch in Des Moines.



COURTESY ZILLOW.COM, REALTOR.COM (AND FROM TOP): BRUCE MARTIN (PORTRAIT); FOTOLIA.COM/AZURE (FRAMES)