

Sunset Magazine
In Search of a House for Western Living

by
Robert Alexander Gonzalez
B. Arch., University of Texas
Austin, Texas
May 1990

SUBMITTED TO THE DEPARTMENT OF ARCHITECTURE
IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE
MASTER OF SCIENCE IN ARCHITECTURE STUDIES
AT THE
MASSACHUSETTS INSTITUTE OF TECHNOLOGY
JUNE 1993

© Robert Alexander Gonzalez 1993. All rights reserved.

The author hereby grants to M.I.T. permission
to reproduce and to distribute publicly copies
of this thesis document in whole or in part.

Signature of the author

Robert Alexander Gonzalez, Department of Architecture
May 7, 1993

Certified by

Royston Landau
Visiting Professor of the History of Architecture
Thesis Supervisor

Accepted by

Julian Beinart
Chairman, Departmental Committee on Graduate Students

MASSACHUSETTS INSTITUTE

MAY 02 1993

Sunset Magazine
In Search of a House for Western Living
by
Robert Alexander Gonzalez

Submitted to the Department of Architecture on May 7, 1993
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Degree of
Master of Science in Architectural Studies

ABSTRACT

This thesis inquires into Sunset's activity as a home magazine in the 1930s and 1940s. In viewing this period, this study draws from Sunset's entire history: from its inception in 1898 as a travel brochure for Southern Pacific Railroad, through a period as a literary magazine, through the late 1940s when it was already recognized as a leading western home magazine. In the 50th Anniversary issue, the editors reflected on the magazine's accomplishments and concluded that Sunset had been a "constructive and helpful influence in the development of Western homes and Western home life." This thesis investigates the extent of Sunset's interaction within this development.

Three separate enterprises that reveal the magazine's attempt to define domesticity for the 'westerner' will be outlined in this thesis. First, spanning Sunset's first fifty years, a construction of a concept called Western Living is revealed by following the development of the magazine's departments and subtitles. Second, focusing on a period that begins with the Great Depression and ends with the postwar migration to the suburbs, Sunset's involvement in a search for the appropriate 'western' home unfolds through a study of a series of articles. This endeavor deemed the Ranch Style house as the 'western' house, and with that, the magazine's Western Living construct was completed. Finally, a study of Sunset's exploration of the 'backyard' and the relationship between the house and the constrained and ubiquitous lot ends this investigation.

The author of this thesis presents the first comprehensive study of Sunset's mode of operation as a home magazine. It is the intent that this inquiry will initiate a discussion regarding the role of the popular home magazine as an operative variant of architectural discourse.

Thesis Supervisor: Royston Landau

Title: Visiting Professor of the History of Architecture

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Acknowledgments	4
Introduction	5
Chapter I THE CONCEPT OF WESTERN LIVING	8
Southern Pacific Railroad	11
Sunset Magazine Incorporated	24
Lane Publishing Company	35
Chapter II THE APPROPRIATE HOUSE	56
The Continuous House	56
The Cabin	60
Modernism	64
Sunset House	68
The Indigenous House	70
Blueprints of Tomorrow	74
The Ranch Style House	84
Chapter III THE SHAPING OF DOMESTIC SPACE	93
The Garden Shaped	93
The Suburban Lot Redefined	101
The Education of the Reader	105
Appendix I	118
Illustrations	123
Bibliography	125

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

*For my aunt Maria Esther Jarvis Ramirez
and the memory of my parents.*

With sincere gratitude to:

My thesis advisor Royston Landau, for his insistence on the scrutiny of the architectural text. His wisdom guided this inquiry.

Stanford Anderson, Head of the Department, for recommending that I look at Sunset magazine, and for his unabated encouragement and curiosity.

To Robert Campbell, whose ability to master both the popular and academic text inspires me.

This thesis would not have been possible without the guidance and teachings of my academic advisor William Porter. My greatest supporter and mentor Dr. Hanns-Bertold Dietz, Professor in the College of Fine Arts at the University of Texas, who followed my investigation from beginning to end and made many valuable suggestions. I also wish to thank Lawrence W. Speck, Daniel Leary, Pierce Lewis, Paul Groth, Lois Craig, Daniel P. Gregory of Sunset magazine, and the staff of Boston Public Library for their patience.

Those who have supported me most are, above all, my beloved family -- *especialmente mis hermanos y hermanas.*

My warmest thanks to my best friend for life, Stephen Redfield.

And those who have raised my spirit day to day: soul-mates/phone-mates Marlee Glodzik Dietz and Hiroko Warshauer; Susan Hollister, Chloe Papanastasiou, Wael Al-Masri, Julia Nugent, Kim Brown, *i finalment, la meva amiga Catalana* and coffee buddy, Annie Pedret.

INTRODUCTION

The first half of the twentieth century saw the American West evolve into a thriving frontier where pioneering became the mantra for life in a new world. Two migrations, characterized by their utilitarian outlook, bookend the frontier's development; first, seen in the idiom of progress and called Manifest Destiny, the great migration westward; and second, the "massive movement out of the central cities into the quasipastoral environment of suburbia."¹ Each act may be seen as an exodus from organized society toward the 'privileged edge'² where the new focus was on land: on the compelling landscape, on the development of the acre, and ultimately, on the suburban lot. But as land was injected with value, a fair equivalent was expected in return: maximum livability indoors and out. Inhabiting land became a serious campaign, and its promotion was left to the undertaking of popular print media. Sunset magazine was to play a central role in this enterprise.

¹ Leo Marx, "The American Ideology of Space," in Denatured Visions (New York: The Museum of Modern Art, New York): 72.

² a term referred to by Alex Krieger, from a talk given to the Michael Dennis design studio (April 16, 1993), Massachusetts Institute of Technology, Cambridge.

The first fifty years of Sunset's existence, between 1898 and 1948, were contemporaneous with this pioneering era. At the turn-of-the-century, as a traveling brochure for Southern Pacific Railroad, Sunset had enticed people by showcasing the "attractions and advantages of the Western Empire."³ Later, as a literary magazine, it served as a vehicle where the myth of the American West was perpetuated. Finally, in its third role as a home magazine, Sunset set out to define domesticity for a burgeoning population. By its 50th anniversary, Sunset had fulfilled its mission as an agent of public discourse. The magazine's tie to the West had served it as a grounding force that caused it to advance a steadily maturing agenda. It was a constant that persisted through numerous owners, and it was upheld by all the participants of the magazine's production: staff-writers, contributor-readers, scholars, and professionals. In light of its unique history, this thesis will ask the question: How did Sunset's involvement with the first migration influence its guidance of domesticity during the second migration?

Three chapters will follow Sunset's involvement in three separate enterprises. The first chapter looks at the development of a concept called Western Living which was Sunset's guide to life in the West. It was established under the third owner when Sunset was turned into a home magazine. However, a look at the magazine's prehistory reveals that its past, when it was a travel brochure and a literary magazine, influenced this latter development. The second and third chapters look at two ideas about western domesticity conducted by Sunset, during a period that begins with the Great Depression of the 1930's and ends with the second world war. The second chapter looks at Sunset, as a home magazine. At this time, Sunset undertakes the task of identifying the appropriate "western" home by conducting an open forum where an otherwise "academic" discussion was brought to the level of understanding of the average reader. The magazine also looked to the history of architecture to aid this inquiry. The third chapter looks at another

³ Sunset 4 (November 1899): 26.

enterprise whose time-frame overlaps the second chapter. Sunset inquires into the possible morphology of the house and garden in the confines of the ubiquitous suburban lot. In doing so, Sunset's articles take on a higher voice of instruction, and a side discussion of how the house and garden may be designed is presented. This chapter ends with a look at how the magazine undertook the task of educating the reader, something that may be seen as the culmination of Sunset's aim to instruct the reader in the shaping of his/her domestic environment.

This thesis does not attempt to measure the extent of Sunset's influence on society. Instead, the aim here is to identify moments in the magazine's history when a certain attitude about possessing and inhabiting the West can be detected as the driving force behind its attempt to define western domesticity. Since a comprehensive analysis of Sunset has not yet been undertaken, this author presents a first study of the magazine's development and mode of operation during its first 50 years. With this important first step, this thesis can then serve as a point of departure for a future investigation that looks more in depth at Sunset's influence on domesticity in America.

THE CONCEPT OF WESTERN LIVING

American Western culture was enthusiastically constructed by those who would profit most from its existence, and by those who were romanced by its way of life. With both reasons in mind, the various owners of Sunset participated in this culture-making enterprise. The culmination of this endeavor may be seen in the subtitle the magazine utilizes today, the easily overlooked phrase that accompanies the magazine's name on the cover: "The Magazine of Western Living". The tradition of supplementing the periodical's name with an explanatory statement, a technique used by many periodicals, was incorporated into the cover design during the magazine's formative years. The magazine's consistent attempt to clarify its role in the West, as seen below, gives us insight into the development of the concept of Western Living.

<u>Owners</u>	<u>Years</u>	<u>Subtitles</u>
Southern Pacific Railroad	1900-1905	The Magazine of the Border
	1909-1912	The Magazine of the Pacific and all the Far West
Sunset Magazine Inc.	1912-1921	The Pacific Monthly
	1921-1928	The West's Great National Magazine
	1928-1929	The Pacific Monthly
Lane Publishing Co.	1929	The Western Magazine for Western Families
	1929-1930	The Western Magazine of Good Ideas
	1933	In the Best Homes in the West
	1936-1937	What's New in Western Living
	1943-present	The Magazine of Western Living

When read as they appeared chronologically, the subtitles reflect two stages of development that reveal the grounding of Sunset's subject matter. Under the first two owners, the phrases reveal an exploration of the magazine's western identity when Sunset focused on the discovery and romanticization of the American West. At this time, a foundation was laid for the magazine's forthcoming role. Under the third owner, Sunset's prescription for life in the West was defined by the contents of the magazine's departments, and fit into the construct of the American Western culture that Sunset helped shape. Sunset's role as a vehicle for passing on knowledge needed by a society that was constantly moving and redefining itself is evinced by the development described above. The first stage reflects the migration to the West; the second reflects the migration to the suburbs. The discussion of Sunset's first fifty years will be further enlightened by a look at the context from which the magazine emerged, a period marked by a climate of national self-examination in the latter half of the nineteenth century.

The concern that Sunset had with its own identity, reflected in the first five subtitles, mirrored a similar concern that was occurring at the national level. Accessibility to and possession of the western frontier had dramatic effects on the image of the country. Journalism historian Frank Luther Mott explains that as "a higher value was placed upon the country's far western possessions," the Mexican War was more keenly justified because "the conquered territory [was] found to be 'literally made of gold',"⁴ and that "no sooner had gold been discovered in California than discussion of a transcontinental railway began in earnest."⁵ Cognizance of a new frontier altered the nations perception of itself. In colonial America, the frontier was identified by natural boundaries: "the 'fall

⁴ Frank Luther Mott, A History of American Magazines (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1938), 1:464.

⁵ Ibid.

line'; the Allegheny Mountains; the Mississippi; the Missouri where its direction approximates north and south; the line of the arid lands, approximately the 99th meridian; and the Rocky Mountains".⁶ But by 1893, the American historian, Frederick Jackson Turner began his famous speech to the American Historical Association in Chicago, "The superintendent of the census for 1890 reports . . . that the settlements of the West lie so scattered over the region that there can no longer be said to be a frontier line."⁷ By the turn-of-the-century, the country's evasive parameters had yielded a nation obsessed with the condition of its future, and eager to participate in the creation of its new image.

As the country's center of gravity underwent an unprecedented displacement, popular magazines and newspapers reflected the nation's psyche. Proper locutions that described the collective American identity became the fascination of many commentators and publishers. Mott writes of how the embarrassment felt by journalists over a suitable national name is chronicled in the pre-Civil War monthlies. Among the many suggestions were names such as "Fredon," as reported in the Monthly Analogy; "Columbia," which was favored by the Democratic Review; "Alleghan," "America," and numerous others.⁸ Similarly, identifying the country's regions had to be rethought. "The East, which had been accustomed to think of everything on the sunset side of Pittsburgh as "the West," was surprised to discover that there was a Middle West, now the center of the nation's agriculture and netted railroads; that the plains were being cleared of Indians and buffalo together; that the Rocky Mountains were no longer a barrier; and that the Pacific Coast was already a seat of a vital and challenging civilization."⁹

⁶ Frederick Jackson Turner, "The Significance of the Frontier in American History," Proceedings of the Forty-First Annual Meeting of the State Historical Society of Wisconsin (Madison, Wis., 1894): 79-112, quoted in Clyde A. Milner II, ed., Major Problems in the History of the American West (Lexington, Massachusetts: D. C. Heath and Company, 1989): 5.

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ Frank Luther Mott, A History of American Magazines (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1938), 1:464-5

⁹ Ibid., 3:49-50.

The extent of the country's western boundary was finally reached when California joined the Union in 1850, yet America's perception of itself continued to change as six more western states were admitted into the Union between 1885-1905. While newly formed impressions of the recently acquired territories settled into the nation's conscience, the myth of the "Far West" was perpetuated by both western and eastern magazines. But the transition from a "wild" and remote Far West to a venerable and attainable West was promoted by only a handful of western magazines, Sunset among the few.

Southern Pacific Railroad

Sunset magazine was inaugurated on May 1898 in San Francisco, as a promotional tool for Southern Pacific Company, which had become the largest private land owner in California in the late nineteenth century. This sudden land gain resulted in one of the largest real estate speculations in U.S. history. Consequently, the Passenger Department of Southern Pacific Company set out to promote a positive image of the West with an on-board (passenger train), 16-page pamphlet.¹⁰ (Fig. 1) It "was intended primarily for circulation in the East" when the creation of a new western image became a marketing priority for the railroad company that grew interested in improving and selling the railway right-of-ways.¹¹ Before statehood, California had acquired a questionable reputation for the lifestyles it hosted and for its 'insupportable arid climate,' and the East had to be sold a favorable portrayal of the West. Sunset had been named after Southern Pacific Railroad's *Sunset Limited*, established in 1894 as "Southern Pacific Company's fast vestibuled train, operating between New Orleans and San Francisco during the winter months for accommodation of tourist travel,"¹² Originally free, Sunset soon developed

¹⁰ Peirce Lewis, "The Making of Vernacular Taste: The Case of Sunset and Southern Living," (unpublished paper for Dumbarton Oaks): 12.

¹¹ Sunset 79 (May 1938): 19.

¹² Sunset 4 (November 1899), an advertisement.

into a black and white, illustrated booklet that sold for 5 cents. By 1899, the editors proclaimed a readership of over 15,000 people throughout the U.S. Sunset quickly joined the ranks of a small group of magazines that were devoted to the promotion of the West.

While most publication production occurred in the East, the West yielded a few popular magazines and newspapers. As the printing and engraving process improved, San Francisco became a significant publishing center in the post-Civil War period. One of the earliest magazines, the Overland Monthly (1868-1935), was considered to be California's most prominent because it was one of the few regional monthlies that attracted eastern attention.¹³ At the time of Sunset's inception, however, the chief Los Angeles monthly was Out West. Inaugurated in 1894 under the name Land of Sunshine: An Illustrated Monthly of Southern California, it changed its name to Out West in 1902, and eventually merged with Overland Monthly. Between 1906-1909, a serial history of California was featured in it.¹⁴ The northwestern states of Oregon and Washington were represented by other regional magazines. The most popular was The Pacific Monthly (1898-1911), published in Portland, Oregon. The magazine carried the subtitle, "An Official Travelers' Guide to Oregon and Washington," and focused on literature, the history of the Northwest, and politics. It later merged with Sunset.

The magazines of the West advertised the scenery, climate, and the opportunities of the West in their literature and histories. By contrast, Sunset's aim of selling real estate for the railroad company was forthright. In the first issue, it stated: "The presentation . . . of information concerning the great states of California, Oregon, Nevada, Texas, Louisiana, and the territories of Arizona and New Mexico - a rich and inexhaustible field

¹³ Frank Luther Mott, A History of American Magazines, (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1957), 4:105.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 106-8.

over which the dawn of future commercial and industrial importance is just breaking."¹⁵ In September 1899, the announcement was made that "with the August number, the pages of SUNSET were generously opened for approved display advertising of legitimate enterprises tending toward state development, and which participate[d] in the results obtained." One advertisement read:

"Homeseekers, Subdivisions of some of the richest and best watered lands of California are now being made. Ten, twenty and forty-acre tracts are offered at surprisingly low prices. Railway lands in Texas, New Mexico, Arizona and California are also in the market. If you are seeking a new home now is the time to come to California. See Agents of the Southern Pacific Co. about it."¹⁶

While the advertisement mentioned the states through which the "Sunset Limited" passed in its voyage from New Orleans to San Francisco, the focus was mainly on California. This became the norm, as California would become the mouthpiece for general development in the West. Sunset was stationed in San Francisco, which was one of the fastest growing cities in the U.S. Although Sunset's coverage of the West could yield more than just subscriptions and train tickets, Southern Pacific Railroad had even bigger intentions.

The West was portrayed on a scale larger than life. Sunset published what it called its creed, stating: "Publicity for the attractions and advantages of the Western Empire."¹⁷ To the credit of the editors, this ambitious tone soon transformed "Sunset" into an icon of the West, and a growing audience began to associate the magazine's name with an image of vast lands of opportunity. The tone of aggrandizement was equally reflected in the advertisement that presented the Pacific Railroad as "A Royal Train

¹⁵ Richards E. Bushnell, "Saga of Sunset: Granddaddy of Western Regionals," citing Sunset (May 1898) in Media History Digest 6 (Spring-Summer 1986): 28.

¹⁶ Sunset 6 (August 1900), an advertisement.

¹⁷ Sunset 4 (November 1899): 26.

Along a Royal Way . . . Famed the World Round." Here, the image of the West was intimately linked to the progress of the railway. Furthermore, the cover of Sunset reflected the worldly endeavors of the company with a woodcarving that alluded to the discovery of the New World. Flanked by a ship and an eagle, a transcontinental route that cross the Pacific and connected to the Asian continent was superimposed on the woodcarving with a cartographer's pen. (Fig. 2)

A growing focus on the land, flora and climate of the Pacific region began to saturate the magazines pages. Because this aspect of the West had not received fair coverage in the national periodicals, if not neglected altogether, the publishers began its promotion immediately. Sunset began to publish articles like "California is 'good medicine'." Color pages were introduced to feature native wildflowers. An advertisement boasted "The Greatest Orange Growing District on Earth," and was supported by data on another page showing a table of the Leading Products of Southern California - citrus ranked number one. Attempts to erase an image of an uncivilized land appeared in many forms. One real estate advertisement stated: "If you are looking for a home in California weigh well the distinction of cultivated land versus wild land." Sunset's popularity began to show a steady increase; the March 1900 issue boasted a readership of 60,000, a four-fold increase in one year. Slowly the magazine began to take on another role as a growing population began to show an interest in the representation of their homeland.

From the beginning, Sunset presented its contents under separate departments. The first departments reveal two areas of interest: the development of the frontier and the establishment of an informal and friendly relationship with the reader. Of the first type one finds the creation of sections whose names immediately reflect the nation's obsession with transportation, land and finance. "Railway Notes" centered on the step by step progress of America's burgeoning railway system. The details and photography printed

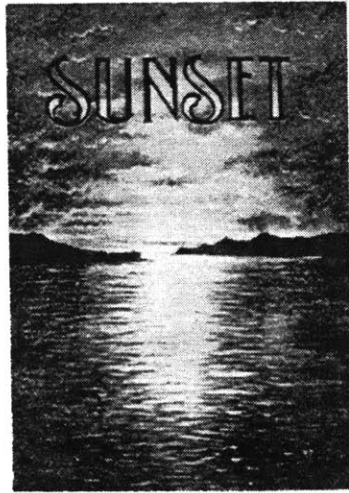


Fig. 1. The cover of Sunset's first issue, published May 1898.



Fig. 2. Sunset exhibiting a theme of "transatlantic discovery" on the cover, published April 1900.

demonstrate that people were truly fascinated with the American railroad for "its romance, its mechanics, and its economics."¹⁸ "Field Notes," reported by an alias called *The Surveyor* (probably the editor), commented on general issues concerning the development of the West. "The East knows of the West's progress and is watching eagerly," one story stated. "Current Coin" contained achievements of certain cities in California with regard to the building of reservoirs, the erection of civic buildings and the incorporation of major companies. Later, the dedication to progress and the general advancement of the West took the form of the "Development Section," which featured stories like "Tacoma Beautiful," "Fairmont Hotel," "The Movement for Good Roads," and "Making Stockton a Seaport". This section was basically a combination of Railway Notes, Field Notes and Current Coin, of the previous format. By 1900, Sunset introduced the "Publisher's Page" with the following announcement: "Sunset is making known each month some important feature of the west and southwest - chronicling the progress and development and picturing the scenery in California."¹⁹ These departments had a common interest in promoting a positive image of California and the Pacific region in general by emphasizing opportunity for development. Feature stories such as, "Impressions of California," in which educators of national and international reputation gave testimonies of California's overall strengths, and later, "Two Wise Critics of the Far East," and "Kind Words From Wise Critics,"²⁰ reassured the reader that the West's was worthy of investment.

Sunset's strong tie with the reader, something that might be considered the magic ingredient in its formula of operation, appeared in this early period with the following departments. "Your Opinion" initiated an open forum the magazine would later develop

¹⁸ Frank Luther Mott, A History of American Magazines. (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1957), 4:331.

¹⁹ Sunset 5 (January 1900): 113.

²⁰ Sunset 8(February 1902): 186.

into contests and other activities that promoted reader interaction.²¹ In this section, Sunset published the readers contributions without bias. "Rays" was a section of puns and riddles, perhaps included to break the serious marketing pitch. With these two departments, this informal quality set Sunset apart from the provincial, eastern monthlies.

The Magazine of the Border: 1900-1905

In May 1900, Sunset printed the phrase, "A Magazine of the Border" inside the magazine, and six months later it printed this phrase on the cover. (Fig. 3) With its first subtitle, the publishers augmented the iconography of the magazine's name to reinforce the magazine's marketing intentions. However, the editors announced that these changes were made to add to the "value and attractiveness of the magazine," and that "the changes [we]re in line with the accepted practices of the world's best magazines." But in departure from previous issues, the magazine cover did not reflect the new theme of "vast land", and the content did not change very much. Reference to the territory the magazine represented was expressed in broad terms compared to other magazines. For example, Overland Monthly, carried the subtitle, "A Magazine of California and the Pacific West." This risked a narrow readership, as it mentioned only one state. However, Sunset's greater aims were seen when it printed: "In the picturing of the nation's border lands that look toward the sunset sea - picturing by words and sketches, by plots and photographs of highest merit - the magazine has its field." This was Sunset's first time to state the magazine's aim. While it would experience a period of exploration for nearly three decades, its agenda was clear from the start.

The fact that the Sunset editors stated in 1902 that their magazine offered "the best in Literature and Magazine Art," tells us that they equivocated Sunset with other

²¹ Sunset 5 (January 1900): 113.



Fig. 3. *Sunset's* cover with the subtitle, "A Magazine of the Border," published in October 1902.



Fig. 4. The popularity of motoring as seen on *Sunset's* cover, published in February 1906.

popular magazines. By 1908, an advertisement for a deal where one could purchase Sunset and a combination of other magazines for a reduced price reveals the types of magazines the editors must have considered to be of interest to Sunset readers. The periodicals that were repeated most often were, in order: World Today, Suburban Life, Outdoors, Ainslee's, Outing, Woman's Home Companion and Country Life in America. An overview shows that the interests centered on the outdoors and suburban life, subjects that would later become the focus of Sunset. However, as Sunset was interested in "promoting the respectability of California by becoming respectable itself," it featured other subjects.²² Charles Sedgewick Allen (editor, 1901-1910) declared in 1902 that he would like to develop Sunset into "a combination of the Atlantic Monthly, Outing, and McClure's Magazines."²³ By 1903, Sunset magazine increased to 100 pages and had taken on a more serious, literary tone. It began to feature short stories by Jack London, Owen Wister, Stewart Edward White, Mary Austin, and others.²⁴ An aim for respectability led Sunset to publish more literature.

Between 1906 and 1909 Sunset dropped its subtitle, the longest period for it to do so. The May 1906 issue was on the presses at the time of the Great Earthquake of April 18, and the Sunset building was destroyed. In response, Sunset published an 8-page pamphlet on rough yellow paper, called the "Emergency Edition". (Fig. 5) The cover, by Maynard Dixon, was of San Francisco in flames, its misery portrayed by a nude woman with an expression of despair. However, the stories were up-lifting as they pointed to the many opportunities for a "New San Francisco." Part of the circulation list had been destroyed in the fire, and Sunset asked readers to write in and inform them of their subscriptions. In this issue, the editors claimed to have 400,000 readers worldwide, a

²² Peirce Lewis, "The Making of Vernacular Taste: The Case of Sunset and Southern Living," (unpublished paper for Dumbarton Oaks): 13.

²³ Ibid.

²⁴ Frank Luther Mott, A History of American Magazines (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1957), 4:105.




Fig. 5. Cover of *Sunset's* Emergency Edition following the San Francisco Earthquake, published in May 1906.

THE JUNE NUMBER OF

SUNSET

WILL CONTAIN SIX BIG FEATURES

- ☞ Luther Burbank and the Carnegie Institution.
- ☞ Portland's Rose Festival--Paving the City streets with rose petals.
- ☞ How Dr. Jordan would protect Sierra trout.



- ☞ Lin M'Lean, Owen Wister's stirring story of the cowmen of the West.
- ☞ California wildflowers, eight superb plates in two colors.
- ☞ Admiral Capps's defense of the Navy.

See Details \$2000 Prize Story Contest

Fig. 6. An advertisement in *Sunset* showing a growing interest in literature, published in June 1908.

figure Sunset did not attain until much later. The editors may have printed this number to encourage more subscriptions or as a typographical error.

The introduction of Sunset's first competition in June 1908, the "\$2,000 Prize Story Contest", began a tradition of contests that were to encourage the reader's interaction. (Fig. 6) A later example of this was the 1916 "Ad-Letter Contest" that aimed to "stimulate the interest of the Sunset Magazine readers . . . and to encourage a keener appreciation of the values of design and text." By treating the reader's suggestions as equal to professional or academic ideas, the editor's showed their willingness to incorporate the reader's contributions into the magazines content. With this, Sunset's role as a reflector of popular standards and goals took on a more literal meaning. The input of the reader was brought to a level of importance that paralleled the voice of the scholar and staff-writer.

The Magazine of the Pacific and of All the Far West: 1909-1912

Sunset introduced the next subtitle inside the October 1908 issue: "The Magazine of the Pacific and of all the Far West." (Fig. 7) With it, Sunset displayed the struggle it was facing in defining itself as strictly western. "Pacific" and "Far West" are words that today refer to the same part of the country, but they had different meanings to Americans at the turn-of-the-century. "Pacific" reminded Americans that its territories spanned from coast to coast, and of other territories it might one day possess. The utilization of the word "Pacific" might have also been the result of the publisher's desire to enter into the equally favorable territory of another magazine, The Pacific Monthly (1898-1911), of Portland, Oregon, which had covered the northwest audience. By contrast, "West" once referred to the midwestern states; and "Far West," synonymous with the "The Wild West," was loaded with colorful and adventure-ridden allegory, something which

potentially fostered speculation or distance. But "Far West" seemed appropriate for Sunset's increasing interest in mythifying the West with its literary content. A new editor, Charles K. Field (1911-1926) began to push Sunset in this direction.²⁵ Furthermore, the introduction of a cowboy and Indian, incorporated into the logo in 1909, set the theme for the literary content.

The Pacific Monthly: 1912-1921

In 1912, Southern Pacific Company purchased The Pacific Monthly of Oregon, and Sunset became Sunset, The Pacific Monthly. But "The Pacific Monthly" was to be treated as a subtitle on the cover design. (Fig. 8) In an article in the Media History Digest, Richards E. Bushnell comments that, with this purchase, Sunset became a pioneer in magazine mergers.²⁶ In an announcement made two years after the purchase, the editors explained that, "both magazines eventually attained national recognition in good measure but it developed that there was room for but one Pacific Coast magazine of national scope, and so neither was able to realize complete success."²⁷ With Sunset's new role as representative of the whole Pacific Coast, the magazine's agenda was beginning to supersede the railroad company's need for a promotional device. As such, Sunset's methodology should not be measured only for its ability to lure travelers West. The fact that it was entirely staff-run began to play a greater role in the direction of the magazine's agenda. In fact, critical distance from Southern Pacific had allowed the magazine to operate independently from the railroad company. It becomes apparent that another layer of discourse was emerging from the magazine. For example, story-telling contests would not really benefit the railroad company in any direct manner, but they were an important

²⁵ Richards E. Bushnell, "Saga of Sunset: Granddaddy of Western Regionals," Media History Digest 6 (Spring-Summer 1986): 28.

²⁶ Ibid.

²⁷ Sunset 33 (July 1914): 504C.

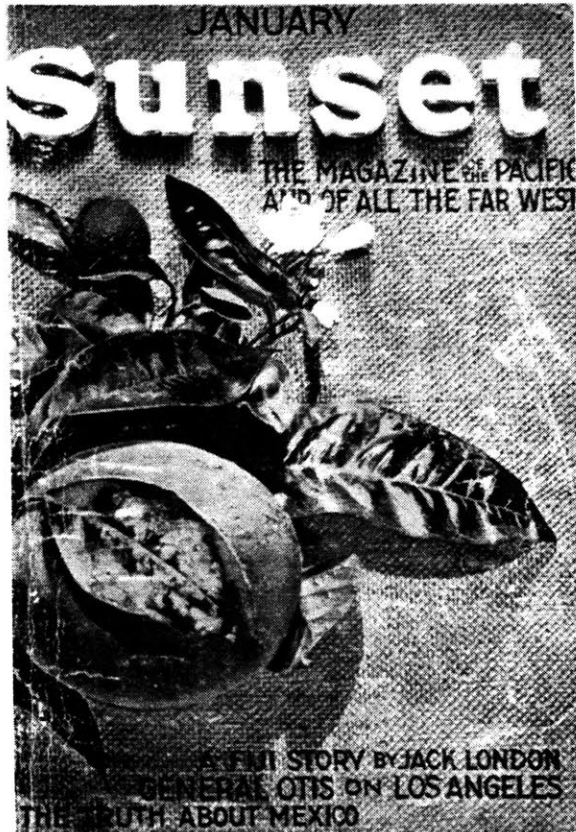


Fig. 7. *Sunset*'s cover with the subtitle, "The Magazine of the Pacific and of All the Far West," published in January 1910.

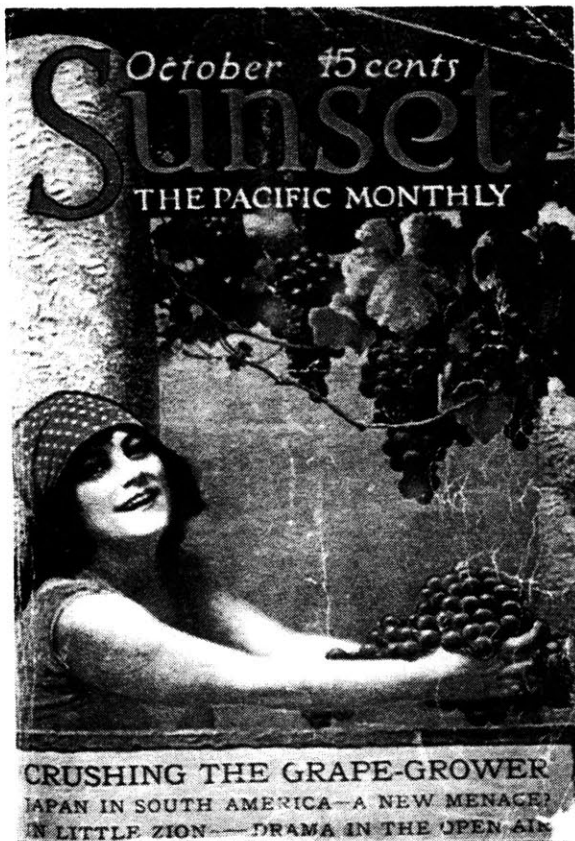


Fig. 8. *Sunset*'s cover with the subtitle, "The Pacific Monthly," published in October 1916.

part of Sunset's sincere interest in treating the reader as a participant of the whole enterprise of "discovering the West". The attitude towards the land that Sunset promoted should be seen in the same light. The average reader began to understand the western land as something that had been speculated and was ready to be purchased and inhabited. But most importantly, the reader was receiving a message that said that their own pioneering efforts could yield maximum results. Sunset presented the West as a *tabula rasa* that could be reshaped to one's needs, and to one's desire to prosper. In the future, when Sunset became a home magazine, this attitude passed on to the acres of ranch land and suburban lots; the benefits evolved into ideals such as views and outdoor livability.

Sunset Magazine Incorporated

Sunset's staff-written quality made a headway when Sunset, The Pacific Monthly was sold to the staff of the Passenger Department of Southern Pacific Railroad, incorporated under the name of Woodhead, Field & Company. The buyers were the magazine's business manager, associate editor and secretary; the stockholders were the advertising and circulating managers, associate editors, artists and contributors. The new owners explained:

"these people, loyal to the Magazine and firmly convinced that a remarkable opportunity has been presented to establish and continue publication which will be fully recognized and appreciated as peculiarly the Magazine of the Pacific Coast, have put their money into the venture and are joined, heart and soul and purse, in the endeavor to realize the vision presented in the acquisition of Sunset by independent ownership . . . The Sunset Country is a distinct section of America, now in process of final development. It has its own social, economic and financial problems. More distinctly than any other section of America it is a country by itself."²⁸

²⁸ Sunset 33 (July 1914): 504B

Under the direction of people that were intimately tied to the magazine, Sunset was to redirect its attention from the western land to a people it felt in need of special attention. A "country by itself" harkened back to the "Western Empire" theme, but now it was more believable, as the population had grown considerably. The staff-writer status of Sunset also fostered a favorable reaction from the reader as observed in "Your Opinion" -- the magazine was now perceived as written by "people like me". Sunset's new aim was to aid the actual westerner, and a shift in the magazine's subject matter was immediately noticed. While the period beginning 1916 has been criticized by journalist historian Frank Luther Mott in The History of American Magazines as a time of deterioration "at the expense of literature," this period was one of the richest in the magazine's development as seen in its new departments.²⁹ In fact, many letters from readers commended Sunset's new format. The June 1916 issue exhibited, for the first time on the cover of the magazine, a categorization of the contents inside. They were defined as: "A Review of Western Affairs: Finance-Home-Personalities-Motoring-Development." In a way, the term "Western Affairs" prefaced "Western Living"; both terms basically meant all things "western". However, the focus was still on the development of the West, but development in the interest of the westerner. The idea of "Western Affairs" reflected a department called "The Pulse of the Pacific," introduced in 1914, and was described as "commenting on the affairs of the Pacific Coast and the world it faces, reflecting its politics, its sociology, its economic, its art, its recreation - all its problems, aspirations, griefs and triumphs." In the Editorial Contents disclaimer it was stated: "Materials of special interest to Westerners is preferred". Sunset also began printing photographs of people. The contents page started featuring the contributors, artists and writers of Sunset. A new version of "Your Opinion" would also print photographs of people reading Sunset magazine.³⁰ Later, magazine historians and the editors of Sunset would claim that the

²⁹ Frank Luther Mott, A History of American Magazines (Cambridge: Harvard University Press), 4:106.

³⁰ Sunset 44 (January 1920): 15. , and Sunset 45 (November 1920): 14.

third owner had completely converted Sunset from a magazine about the West to a magazine for the West.

Of the new departments mentioned on the cover, "Home" and "Motoring" were to be the key components of Western Living developed under the third owner. "Motoring" had been popular since the automobile became available in the U.S. at the turn-of-the-century. "Motoring" would later turn into "Traveling." (Fig. 4) As early as December 1903, Sunset had published articles like "Motor Touring in California," which featured the famous Lippincott photograph called "On Glacier Point at Yosemite Valley" "Finance" and "Development" were eventually dropped as the West's progress became known throughout the nation. The July 1916 issue introduced the following departments: "Western Finance," "Interesting Westerners," "A Home in the West," "Sunset Service Bureau" (renamed), and "Readers, Gentle and Otherwise" (a new version of "Your Opinion"). As one can see, the areas of finance and services became more important. Classified advertisement was introduced at this time as well. Readers, Gentle and Otherwise showed that Sunset was loyal to its policy, that it would print all readers' comments without bias.

This period also marks the first time a department devoted to the home appeared in the magazine. The new series "A Home in the West" began with a story that set the tone of later articles on this topic. It was called "My Little House by the Road." Other articles of 1916 included titles such as: "A Sleeping Porch in Alaska" (May), "The Bungalow in Its Variety" (June), "The Efficient Kitchen" (August), "The Hour of 'Siesta' on the Western Ranch" (September), "Growing Trunks Form Summer House" (October). Food and garden articles would sometimes appear in this department, featuring distinctly western subjects, such as guava's, persimmons, and rock gardens. Contributions in "A

Home in the West" began to slow down when the U.S. entered World War I in 1917. (Fig. 9)

Sunset's commitment to the West was strengthened during and after the war, when national coverage began to increase in the magazine, and the cover designs began to express national themes. As a result, the magazine's role was brought into question by its readers. A letter printed in April 1917 stated: "As the name "Sunset" means western, I suggest you either go back to the old style or else change the name." The readers' discontent continued to grow, and another letter printed almost a year later stated: "As Eastern Magazines give us all we want of the East and society stories, I wish Sunset would go back to printing those good old stories of the West long ago. The cowboy and the Indian will soon follow the buffalo across the Great Divide and in a short time will only be a memory."³¹ The readers expressed that they missed Sunset's coverage of the western myth, something that had grown out of the literary portion of the magazine. An east-west distinction became clearer in the readers' letters as well. The March 1920 issue printed a letter stating: "Whenever I read Sunset, something makes me think of the 'effete East,' the contrast is striking," and "I have 'viewed with alarm' the gradually increasing tendency of the publication to assume an air which I term 'Bostonese,' and to seem to be getting away from the exclusive Western atmosphere, in its fiction especially."³² But national issues finally won over the magazine's editorial direction. The following letter may have motivated this change: "I have had a feeling all my life that California was so far removed from the great bulk of our country that is not in close touch with the Nation itself, and as a consequence its attachment to the Nation in a patriotic way is not as close and strong as it ought to be."³³ Sunset was to introduce another subtitle on the cover, one that attempted to reconcile its regional and national interest.

³¹ Sunset 40 (February 1918): 74.

³² Sunset 44 (March 1920): 13.

³³ Sunset 44 (February 1920): 15.

The West's Great National Magazine: 1921-1927

In April 1921, "The West's Great National Magazine," appeared on Sunset's cover, and national coverage gained its own department called "The West at Washington" (Significant News from the Nation's Capitol). But Sunset began to reflect the nation in another way -- through its evident financial hardship. The fact that the magazine now lacked the railroad's capital for support began to show.³⁴ Sunset's fiscal austerity was symbolically reflected on the cover of the Silver Anniversary Issue in June 1923, when the editor published a painting of a melancholic Native-American and called it the "Sunset Indian". The editors said the image typified the magazine; it harkened back to the Cherokees plight in the "Trail of Tears".³⁵ (Fig. 10) This difficult time also resulted in Sunset's new campaign to engage the readers in the magazine's promotion. One advertisement read: "Hundreds of ambitious men and women -- young and old --find it profitable and pleasant to represent Sunset in their communities."³⁶

More departments continued to emerge during this period of financial decline. In 1923, "The Western Housekeeper" was established, the same year that The Bureau of Home Economics was started by the national government. This section began to reflect issues of cleanliness and efficiency, especially in the kitchen -- a subject that had already been covered in other women's magazines such as Good Housekeeping, and Ladies' Home Journal. This department and another new one called, "Help Yourself to Beauty," showed Sunset's goal to become more helpful with hints and tips. An emergence of many articles that aimed to guide the readers through domestic projects attests to this instructional voice became the signature of the magazine; this editorial technique was intensified

³⁴ Richards E. Bushnell, "Saga of Sunset: Granddaddy of Western Regionals," Media History Digest 6 (Spring-Summer 1986): 29.

³⁵ Sunset 50 (May 1923): 2.

³⁶ Sunset 46 (April 1921): 8.

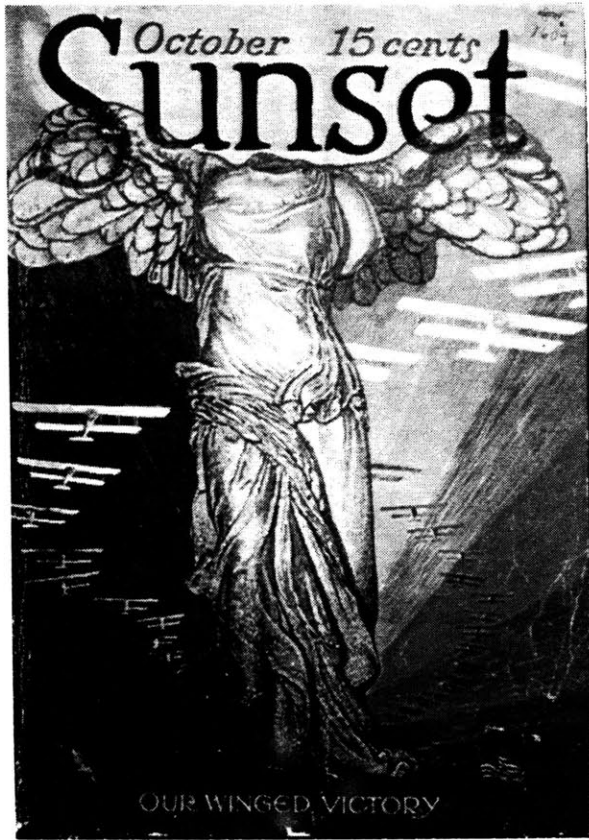


Fig. 9. Sunset's cover during World War I, published in October 1917.

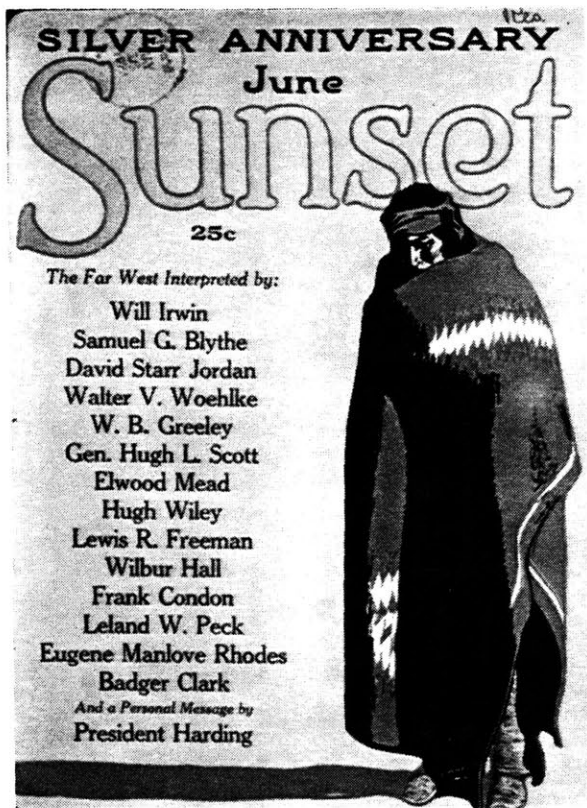


Fig. 10. Sunset's Silver Anniversary Issue showing a literary magazine, published in June 1923.

during the next world war. Another new department, "Western Homes and Gardens," marked the first time Sunset combined the home and the garden, however this had become a ubiquitous combination in other magazine's like, Better Homes & Garden and House and Garden.

As Sunset began to focus more and more on these departments, it began to resemble other home magazines. This seemed natural since the single-family house was receiving more national attention. The magazine's interest in the home reached its pinnacle in 1926, when Sunset introduced its "Western Home Design Contest". The competition was described as follows:

"The contest rules allow no professional architects to enter and contestants need only submit floor plans. No elaborate drawing is necessary. . . You have at the back of your mind somewhere your ideal house - almost everyone has. This contest is held to get those ideas out of people's minds and down on paper, to the end that interest in improving the design of the typically Western small house may be stimulated." ³⁷

This statement shows Sunset's interest in the reader's ideas, as opposed to the professional's. It encourages the reader to think about the house seriously and to allow it to materialize of paper. By doing this, Sunset was telling its reader that his/her ideas were important. This type of encouragement, and the aim to get its audience to design on paper, would later be repeated. This will be discussed in the third chapter.

House designs had become readily accessible from many sources, both private and national, and Sunset had decided to join in the quest for the perfect home. The year 1921 had introduced the Guidebook for Better Homes Campaign, initiated by the federal government. President Hoover backed the California Veterans' Farm and Home Purchase

³⁷ Sunset 58 (February 1927): 52-3.

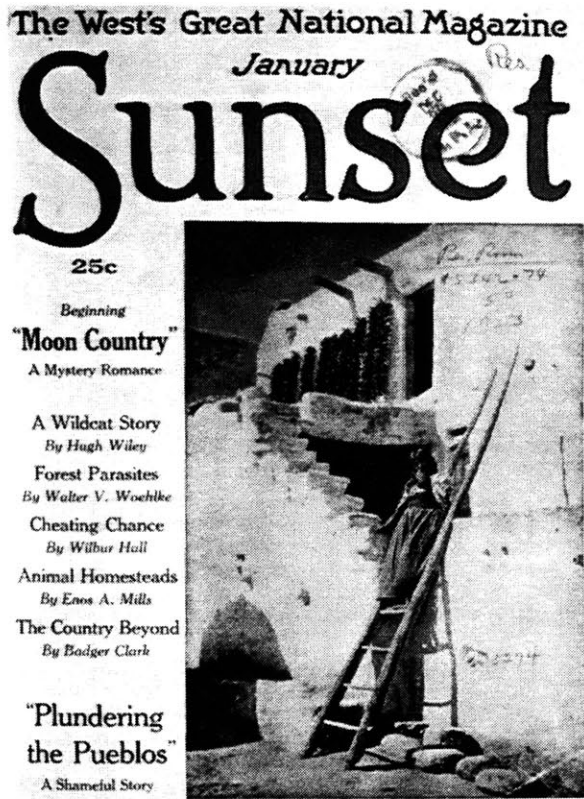


Fig. 11. *Sunset's* cover with the subtitle, "The West's Great National Magazine," published in January 1923.

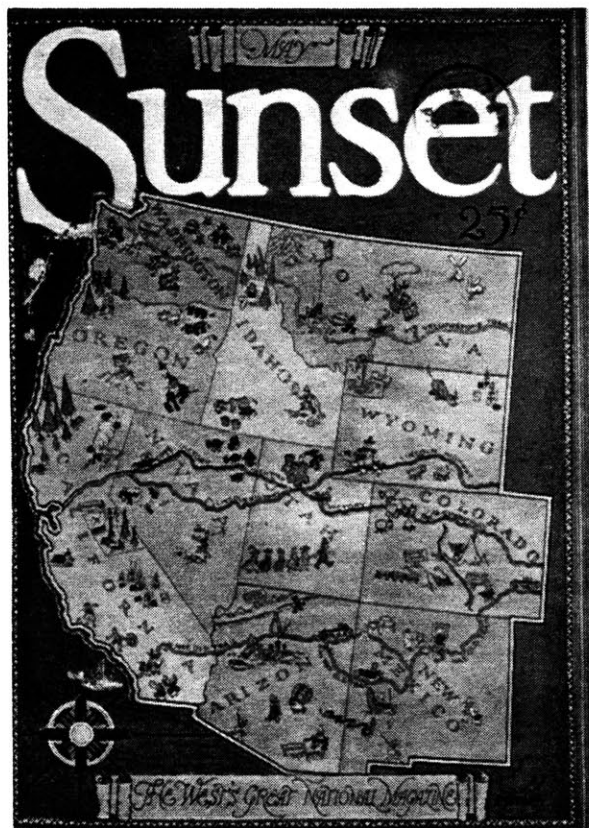


Fig. 12. *Sunset's* cover showing the 11 states it represents, published in May 1928.

Act of 1921. Later in 1923, Hoover had written a memorable foreword in the U.S. Department of Commerce publication, How To Own Your House.³⁸ As Sunset had not yet covered the subject of house design, the editors began to explore the readers interest with this competition. The winners of the competition were finally published in the June 1927 issue. While this type of competition was never attempted by the magazine again, Sunset would inaugurate the AIA Western Home Awards three decades later.

The promotion of a "typically Western small house" might have been a response to the plans-by-mail sold to the Architects Small House Service Bureau, founded in Minneapolis in 1921. Style was becoming an important issue, as planned residential communities had prompted the question of mass-produced redundancy. As this problem was intimately attached to the developers fast-tract intentions, the architect bureau had been set up to offer an alternative. The bureau's solution was to divide the country into regions and to address the stylistic interests of each one. The regional divisions of what might be called Sunset "territory" were two: Northern Pacific (Washington, Oregon, and Idaho), and Southern Pacific (California, Nevada, and Arizona). Lisa Schrenk mentions in Your Future Home: Architect Designed Houses of the Early 1920's, that the most popular plans across the country had been the Colonial Revival Style, New England Colonial, and Dutch Colonial. However, in 1924, it was reported that "sales [had] been distributed over the country almost equally with the exception of the strip along the Gulf Coast, the Pacific Coast, and the Rocky Mountain District."³⁹ As a need for a house style that reflected regional characteristics grew, Sunset may have attempted to join in the query with its "Western Home Design Contest." However, the "western" issue was to be explored with greater rigor at the beginning of the 1930's. This will be discussed in greater detail in the following chapter.

³⁸ Gwendolyn Wright, Building the Dream: A Social History of Housing in America (Cambridge: The MIT Press, 1981): 196.

³⁹ Lisa D. Schrenk, Your Future Home: Architect Designed Houses of the Early 1920's (Washington D.C.: The American Institute of Architects Press, 1992): xii.

Sunset's participation in the construction of American Western culture took other forms as well. In 1927, the manager published the "Western Quiz No. 1" which asked: "What do you know about the Far West?"⁴⁰ The questions centered on western topics that recalled the development of the frontier, such as: the Golden Gate bridge, Buffalo Bill, Jack London, and Yellowstone National Park. Sunset did not repeat this type of quiz until May 1935, with another one called "Wonders of the West".⁴¹ Sunset had been involved in western propaganda since its early years, including the selling of books of western themes⁴² and the production of movies about the West.⁴³

The Pacific Monthly: 1928-1929

Sunset reintroduced the subtitle, "The Pacific Monthly," during a short period of transition. In January 1929, a subtle change in the magazine's format was noticeable, a hint of what was to come. This issue featured a two-page spread that announced: "As requested by you, a new SUNSET MAGAZINE coming next month." It was here that the contents of the new magazine were to be outlined for the readers. The announcement continued:

"Sunset swings right into this changing spirit of the times. The new Sunset will be vitalized by a constant stream of new ideas in the art of living. It is keyed to the prime interests of life in the West - indoors and out. It is pitched in the modern tempo.

It's *your* Southern Pacific Railroads transcontinental "Sunset Route" editorial policy - as asked for in thousands of letters from readers over the past

⁴⁰ Sunset 58 (May 1927): 40.

⁴¹ Sunset 74 (May 1935): 8.

⁴² Sunset 4 (November 1899), an advertisement.

⁴³ Sunset 43 (October 1919): 4d.

year. Sunset heartily endorses these wants. They are intelligent. They are progressive. They are intensely human.

And so we know you will like the new spirit of Sunset. We think it will go far beyond any magazine printed in helping you get the most fun out of living in the West."⁴⁴

In this proclamation, the editors foretold the direction that Sunset's focus would take. The use of phrases like "the art of living," and "indoors and out" suggested an idiom of house design that was already found in most other home magazines. However, when the editor's stated "it's *your* Southern Pacific Railroads transcontinental 'Sunset Route' editorial policy," they reminded the reader of the magazine's roots, a distinction that would influence every subject it would undertake. They would do this again in 1938, in Sunset's 40th Anniversary issue which featured a railroad engine on the cover. The editor's were keen to announce that the upcoming change was a result of the reader's suggestions. While hindsight tells us that the magazine's next direction was strongly influenced by the third owners experience in the home magazine field, Sunset readers had exhibited sincere responses to the magazine's agenda in the past, and a focus on the house was growing.

At this point it is interesting to note how the first five subtitles, developed under the first two owners, reflect a switching back and forth from a general and safer reference ("Border," "Pacific," and "National") to a more limiting and vulnerable term ("West" and "Far West"). The fact that the second type was cautiously supplemented with the first type reveals an insecurity on the part of the publisher to commit to the "West" during this period between 1900 and 1929. It is not until the third ownership that an explicit reference to the West was made, a period when Sunset would function within the western construct it had helped shape. This can be seen in the evolution of the next five subtitles.

⁴⁴ Sunset 62 (January 1929), an advertisement.

A final crystallization will be witnessed under the auspices of the third owner. We shall see next that the final establishment of the concept of Western Living grows out of Sunset's history: out of its link to the railroad, to the migration westward, to the manner in which the western land and resources were advertised, and to its relationship Sunset had cultivated with its readers.

Lane Publishing Company

Financial instability through the 1920's had driven Sunset close to bankruptcy, but its close demise was thwarted when the magazine was sold for the second time.⁴⁵ Lawrence B. Lane, the third owner, secured Sunset's next role as a home magazine. With his advertisement experience from Better Homes and Gardens, he was able repackage the magazine's ideals of Western Living and market them to a growing mass of suburbanites. Sunset was already one of the most popular Western magazine at the time of Lanes purchase. But later, Lane's genuine knowledge of the advertisement market would elevate the magazine into a specialized representative of sub portions of the West. As Sunset joined the ranks of other home magazines, it became apparent that it was an anomaly. Sunset was to represent all aspects of domesticity that were of special interest to the West.

As mentioned earlier, there had been a dearth of publication production in the West at the turn-of-the century; this was still the case by the 1930's. Of a list of late nineteenth century professional journals, eleven short-lived, western magazines appear out of ninety-eight, mostly eastern magazines.⁴⁶ The professional journal from the West that had the longest and most memorable history was probably Arts & Architecture. In

⁴⁵ Richards E. Bushnell, "The Saga of Sunset: Granddaddy of Western Regionals," Media History Digest 6 (Spring-Summer 1986): 29.

⁴⁶ Michael Andrew Tomlan, "Popular and Professional American Architectural Literature in the Late Nineteenth Century" (Ph. D. diss., Cornell University, 1983): 476-480.

1911, Pacific Builder had turned into California Arts & Architecture, and later into Arts & Architecture.⁴⁷ This magazine was to become the professional counterpart of Sunset. However, Art & Architecture's commitment to the West became suspect when it dropped "California" from its name in 1943, under editor, John Etenza. But since the 1930's, the two magazines were very different. While Sunset was informal and interested in all aspects of the West, California Arts & Architecture was a "genteel regional publisher of homes, gardens and theater reviews."⁴⁸ To understand the intricacies of Sunset's method of operation, and its commitment to the West, it will be advantageous at times to compare Sunset to Arts & Architecture. This is especially so in the preceding chapter where both publications participated in a search for the postwar house, but took different approaches.

The unique qualities of Sunset, the home magazine, was also the result of its new format. Now a new type of editorial guided the reader through his/her experience of the magazine; this that strengthened the reader-editor relationship that had been cultivated for three decades. With the creation of two new sections, the feeling of a book that could be read from beginning to end was achieved. "Sunset Gold," found at the beginning, was poetic editorial that set the mood. At the end of the magazine, "Adios" bid the reader farewell. In "Sunset Gold," the editors attempted to shift the magazine's symbolic name from a representative of the West to a representative of the home. This was seen in the first editorial with the following words, "Sunset is a glorious time, and a glorious word, for 'sunset' means 'home.'⁴⁹ A painterly scene to support this new image was staged for the reader.

"The simple call of home, when the sun goes down, sends everyone
hurrying toward his own home as no entertainment in the world could cause

⁴⁷ Barbara Goldstein, ed., Arts & Architecture: The Etenza Years (Cambridge: The MIT Press, 1990): 12.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, 8.

⁴⁹ Sunset 62 (February 1929): 6.

people to hurry. Sunset hour is a high spot in each day's activities. All our effort and thought during the busy hours of office work or housework are, whether we are conscious of the fact or not, a preparation for the evening hours when we are all at home together again." 50

The evolution of Sunset from a general western magazine to a home magazine can be seen in the development of the magazine's subtitle during the Lane years. One sees that the focus goes from the family, to "good ideas", and finally to the "best homes". When the home is finally identified on the magazine's cover, the subtitle takes an all-encompassing tone with the term Western Living. The editors of Sunset wrote soon after Lane's purchase that the aim of the magazine was to "cover the whole range of home-life and family interests with timely and practical suggestions on gardening, building, home-decorating and furnishing, cooking and home management, traveling, enjoying outdoor life and a host of other subjects of equal interest to men and women."⁵¹ While magazine historians have noted that Lane's experience as an advertisement salesman for Better Homes & Garden led to his ability to transform Sunset., one must remember that the magazine's strong tie to the West was already present. The editors of Sunset later wrote that Lane had transformed the magazine from "a guide to land-seeking easterners" into a guide "for present-day western families."⁵² This claim must be reviewed with some speculation; Sunset had begun to address the needs of many westerners since the second ownership. A massive increase in the population of the West, and Sunset's growing interest in domestic issues were already on the way. The census figures showed that in 1930, there were 8,000,000 people living in the three coast states, an increase from less than 2,000,000 people in 1898, when the magazine began.⁵³ Lane was certainly responsible for the magazine's new image, something one immediately noticed by the

⁵⁰ Sunset 62 (February 1929): 6.

⁵¹ Sunset 62 (January 1929): 8-9.

⁵² Sunset 73 (November 1934): 60.

⁵³ Sunset 73 (November 1934): 60.

new cover designs and internal format. The editors stated: "Sunset is the magazine for people living in the west" in the editorial contents page. The idea that the magazine was for the westerner was emphasized again and again. Later the editors printed, "with the February 1929 issue new features were added, and SUNSET became the magazine *for* the West rather than *about* the West."⁵⁴

Lane inspired further departmental refinement. In the February 1929 issue, seven new areas were specified: "Outdoor Living," "Building a House," "Home Equipment," "Gardening," "Pacific Coasting" (stories), "The Kitchen Cabinet" (recipes), "Interior Decorating", and "Sunset Travel Service." In August 1929 the editors stated that Sunset was 1/3 outdoors, travel, and personalities, 1/3 gardening and landscaping, and 1/3 building, decorating, cooking, and home-making. They asked, "Which type of material do you find most interesting?"⁵⁵ A department called "Western Homes and Gardens" had been introduced in the transitional issue. While the name was discontinued, Sunset began to print home articles; the first article carried the following disclaimer: "In following the series of little visits to western homes, of which this story is the first, you will gather many ideas which your architect will be glad to incorporate into the plans for that new home you intend to build. No stock plans of houses are offered by SUNSET Magazine."⁵⁶ The articles featured stories with titles such as, "A Gray-Shingled Home in the West," "The House a Man Calls Home," "Are Your Children Part of Your Home?" and "Does Your Home Picture Your Personality?" These articles were very different than the home articles it published before World War I. The influence of Lane's Better Homes and Garden approach is seen here as attention was now brought to the architect and the owner, and to the style of the house. However, this later dissipates and the western home

⁵⁴ Sunset 63 (July 1929): 68.

⁵⁵ Sunset 63 (August 1929): 66.

⁵⁶ Sunset 62 (February 1929) 18.

becomes the focus of the magazine's next inquiry, a period that would last through the 30's and 40's.

Under Lane, the editors of Sunset carefully guided the readers through the magazines development, and they continued to claim that a majority of the changes came from the readers input. They wrote, "Together, we can make SUNSET truly the western magazine of good ideas - be we the editors cannot do it without your help."⁵⁷ In the "Adios" page of this issue, the editors wrote, "Your letters to SUNSET for the past few months have been saying that you are especially interested in home, garden, outdoor, and travel articles."

The Western Magazine for Western Families: Sept 1929 - Oct 1929

In her book Building the Dream, Gwendolyn Wright recalls how the late 1920's were influenced by a renewed focus on the close-knit family.⁵⁸ This was reflected in Sunset's next subtitle. "The Western Magazine for Western Families", a theme that was literally expressed on the cover of the magazine. (Fig. 13) The images of families working on their gardens and homes became a theme of future covers, but the subtitle did not last for more than two months. Later, when the magazine's cover began to exhibit the departments, such as: "Houseplans" (later, Building), "Interior Decorating," "Travel," and "Food," another part of Western Living was introduced. Food grew out of the kitchen-garden aspect of Sunset, however, as expected, it centered on featured cuisine that was unique to the West.

⁵⁷ Sunset 62 (March 1929): 70.

⁵⁸ Gwendolyn Wright, Bulding the Dream: A Social History of Housing in America (Cambridge: The MIT Press, 1981): 210.



Fig. 13. Sunset's cover with the subtitle, "The Western Magazine For Western Families," published in September 1929.

The Western Magazine of Good Ideas: 1929 - 1930

Sunset's next title reflects the magazine's interest in providing the reader with information that would make life in the West easier and better designed. In June 1929, the editors wrote in "Adios," "In fact, some of our readers speak of SUNSET as the "western magazine of good ideas." What do you think about it? Your letters are always appreciated."⁵⁹ Five months later, the magazine carried its next subtitle, "The Western Magazine of Good Ideas." New departments that provided more services, were introduced. "Sunset Travel Service" addressed questions concerning travel anywhere in the nation and world. "Sunset Homes Consultation Service," edited by architect William Garren, AIA, addressed all questions concerning homes. The questions covered a wide spectrum, such as basement leaks, cost of houses, and site selection. Later, the April 1936 issue introduced a new department called "¿Quien Sabe?" (who knows?), which published questions that Sunset could not answer; the editors agreed to forward any answers they received to the people asking the questions. Although this was a short-lived section, it reached the highest level of public service. As Sunset had been devoted to serving the reader, it asked for something in return. Sunset continued its campaign to get readers to aid the increase of the subscription rates; it printed an advertisement that encouraged one to "be neighborly" and "spread the word". Later it printed an ad that asked, "Do you know a Boy?" It offered boys the opportunity to earn spending money by soliciting subscriptions. This turned into the "Sunset Hustler Club" for young boys. By June 1930, the subscription rate had increased to 200,000 western homes.

In June 1930, the subtitle was dropped, but the magazine cover presented an alternate version of a subtitle; this was seen in a collage of images and short headings, such as "Western Homes," "Your Cabin," "Housekeeping Hunches," and "Western

⁵⁹ Sunset 62 (June 1929): 20.

The Western Magazine of Good Ideas: 1929 - 1930

Sunset's next title reflects the magazine's interest in providing the reader with information that would make life in the West easier and better designed. In June 1929, the editors wrote in "Adios," "In fact, some of our readers speak of SUNSET as the "western magazine of good ideas." What do you think about it? Your letters are always appreciated."⁵⁹ Five months later, the magazine carried its next subtitle, "The Western Magazine of Good Ideas." New departments that provided more services, were introduced. "Sunset Travel Service" addressed questions concerning travel anywhere in the nation and world. "Sunset Homes Consultation Service," edited by architect William Garren, AIA, addressed all questions concerning homes. The questions covered a wide spectrum, such as basement leaks, cost of houses, and site selection. Later, the April 1936 issue introduced a new department called "¿Quien Sabe?" (who knows?), which published questions that Sunset could not answer; the editors agreed to forward any answers they received to the people asking the questions. Although this was a short-lived section, it reached the highest level of public service. As Sunset had been devoted to serving the reader, it asked for something in return. Sunset continued its campaign to get readers to aid the increase of the subscription rates; it printed an advertisement that encouraged one to "be neighborly" and "spread the word". Later it printed an ad that asked, "Do you know a Boy?" It offered boys the opportunity to earn spending money by soliciting subscriptions. This turned into the "Sunset Hustler Club" for young boys. By June 1930, the subscription rate had increased to 200,000 western homes.

In June 1930, the subtitle was dropped, but the magazine cover presented an alternate version of a subtitle; this was seen in a collage of images and short headings, such as "Western Homes," "Your Cabin," "Housekeeping Hunches," and "Western

⁵⁹ Sunset 62 (June 1929): 20.

Garden". A memorable cover was the July 1930 issue which featured a courtyard house by architect, William Wurster. (Fig. 14) By November 1931, the editorial contents were divided into four areas of interest: "Western Gardening," "Western Building," "Western Housekeeping," and "Western Vacations." This was supplemented with an area called "Other All-West Features." In October 1930, the departments were reorganized into four areas: "Practical Western Gardening," "Practical Western Building," "Practical Western Travelers," and "Practical Western Housekeeping." The word "practical" reflected a new sense of frugality, brought on by the 1930 stock market crash. However, these exact titles were never used on the contents page.

In 1930, Sunset's need for a subtitle caused the editor's to initiate the "Sunset Slogan Contest". The winning slogan, "SUNSET-The Magazine of Homing and Roaming" was later published. Perhaps this was chosen because it expressed the two principal aspect of western living -- the indoors and the outdoors. With the words "homing" and "roaming," all the other departmental sections were represented. This slogan appeared a few months later on the cover of the February 1931 issue, but was never used on the cover again. The April 1931 cover featured an image that reflected the magazine's growing obsession with a need to identify its contents. It was called, "The Westerner's World." (Fig. 15) In the form of a bulls-eye, the image was of a circle with rings that seemed to indicate the hierarchy of Sunset's subjects of interest. At the center, the largest and most important, was "The Home". The subjects, as they moved outward in the bands were, in order, "The Garden," "The Outdoors," and "The Travel."

The January 1932 issue also reflected the Depression; it was called the "Thrift Number," and it had decreased to 50 pages. Six months later the editors announced in the "Adios" page that "the depression [was] making Sunset a better magazine, a more human

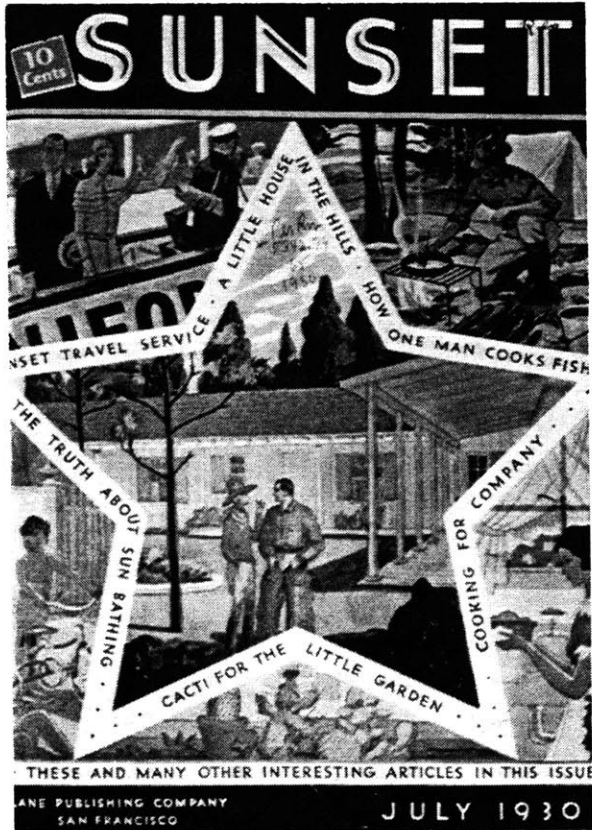


Fig. 14. *Sunset*'s cover showing a new collage format, published in July 1930. The courtyard house illustrated inside the star was by architect William Wurster.



Fig. 15. A cover published by *Sunset* in April 1931, called "The Westerner's World".

one."⁶⁰ The editors expressed that they were trying very hard to keep a high note of confidence and courage, and "a spirit of optimistic helpfulness-qualities both needed by both men and magazines in strenuous times like these." This desperate ambiance carried through on the same page with the announcement of another contest, called "Fixing Up the Old Homestead." At the end of the year, the editors asked readers to compare Sunset and eastern magazines, to "check them over carefully to see how few of the home and garden articles appear to have been written for western families."

In The Best Homes in the West: 1933

With the introduction of the next subtitle, "In the Best Homes in the West" on May 1933, the home was deemed as the focal point of the magazine; everything was to revolve around it. (Fig. 16) Even traveling was described as an experience that ended with the climax of returning home. The editors began to supplement the magazine with other phrases, such as "In the good homes West of the Great Divide, they read Sunset," and "Now is the time to build, remodel, or refurnish your home in the West. Sunset will help you," The magazine began to boast of its growing readership on the cover. It printed, "In the Pacific West - SUNSET has more subscribers than all national home and garden magazines combined," and "In the Pacific West - SUNSET has more subscribers than any other non-fiction magazine in existence." Sunset began to offer three books in exchange for subscriptions: Sunset All-Western Garden Guide, Sunset's Favorite Company Dinners, and Sunset All-Western Cook Book. The Sunset Book Department was initiated to handle this venture. For Sunset, book production meant repackaging articles from the magazine. This was to be repeated again with more volumes.

⁶⁰ Sunset 69 (July 1932): 34.

The March 1934 issue was a milestone as it presented the most thorough advancement of the magazine's departments, inclusive now of all aspects that were considered to be a part of Western Living: travel, food, garden, and home. The departments introduced were: "Western Travel and Outdoor Life," "Western Food and Housekeeping," "Western Gardening and Garden Planting," "Western Building, Modernizing, Decorating;" and "Inspirational, Editorial, Beauty & Health." The last department was later dropped. This accomplishment was complemented by the beginning of a trilogy that was to document the history of the early western magazines. By doing so, the editors linked their objective of informing the westerners life to a long tradition of "telling the story of the West". As part of an enterprise that only a few western magazines had participated, Sunset reinforced the special nature of its contents.

What's New In Western Living: 1936-37

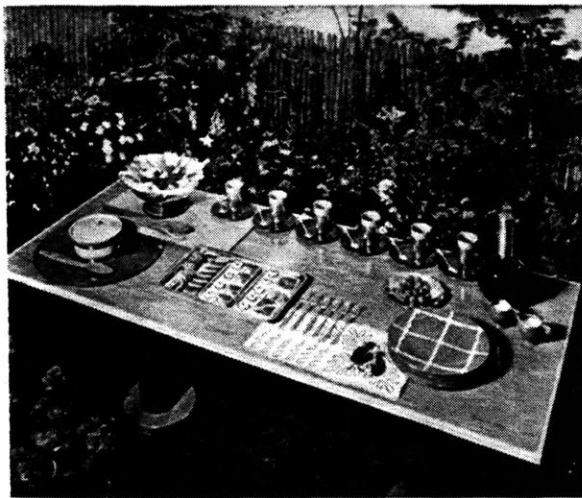
The transition from "home" to the broader concept of Western Living was made with the next subtitle called, "What's New In Western Living," first displayed in the February 1936 issue. (Fig. 17) It marked a point of transition in Sunset's growing coverage of domestic issues. In a way, the phrase would prove to be ideal, as it was all-encompassing and could represent any topic easily. However, with this subtitle ones sees that "What's New" referred to issues of "building, modernizing, and decorating." The cover design began to express this with photographs of interiors, buildings and backyards. One began to see the frequent appearance of the works of architect, William Wurster and landscape architect, Thomas Church. Sunset began to feature other architects such as Richard Neutra,⁶¹ and R. M. Schindler.⁶² But one immediately noticed that Sunset took a different position about how it treated the architect. Unlike other magazines, it proved to favor the lessons to be learned over the famed personality of the

⁶¹ Sunset 78 (February 1937): 14.

⁶² Sunset 79 (September 1937): 22.



Fig. 16. *Sunset's* cover with the subtitle, "In The Best Homes In The West," published in November 1933.



THIS MODERN GARDEN TABLE is a beautiful and practical one for your garden. The table is made of a light-colored material and is very easy to move. It is a perfect addition to your garden and will be a great help to you. The table is made of a light-colored material and is very easy to move. It is a perfect addition to your garden and will be a great help to you. The table is made of a light-colored material and is very easy to move. It is a perfect addition to your garden and will be a great help to you.

Fig. 17. *Sunset's* cover with the subtitle, "What's New In Western Living," published in July 1936.

designer or owner. This attitude may have been attributed to the fact that Sunset was staff-written again. The editors themselves would boast about the relevance of the in-house writers. Later they would write that "nearly half of the material in every issue came directly from reader-contributors," which they described as "reader intimacy".⁶³ "Ideas from 250,000 Western Families on How to Bring More Living into the Home" would later appear on a 1942 cover.

Within the magazine, new type of articles showed that the concept of Western Living yielded the blurring of the edges of otherwise separate departments. "Room Recipes," provided more decorating ideas in a 'culinary style' -- a little of this, a little of that. Decorating and living room ideas produced a new outlook on the backyard. One saw the emergence of a "Sunset backyard" culture. This movement was brought on by cover features such as "The New Cue for the Barbecue," "This Modern Garden Table," "Build A Barbecue Bar," (with working drawings inside),"Garden Shrine", and "Formistic Garden" But the new subtitle not only represented Sunset as a guide of the latest styles; it also asked a question. Inside the magazine, the editorial page printed the same subtitle, and began to inquire into the "modern" style, not yet covered by Sunset. The cover designs of the 1940's began to present many captions, as no subtitle was utilized. The captions usually began with "Western Living", and they included phrases like: "The House That Pays For Itself," "Patios," "Barbecues," "Chefs of the West".

Sunset's commitment to the West was reflected in its subscription policies, something it could do as 93% of its readers lived in Washington, Oregon, and California.⁶⁴ In the July 1940 issue, "The Magazine of Western Living Read In More Than a Quarter of a Million Western Homes," was stated on the cover. In the January 1942 issue it was announced that subscription rates in California, Oregon, Washington,

⁶³ Sunset 80 (February 1938): 27.

⁶⁴ Sunset 80 (February 1938): 27.

Arizona, Idaho, Nevada and Utah were \$1.00 for two years, while the price increased to \$1.00 per year for other areas in the U.S. and its territories, Canada, and Mexico. During the war, the editors announced that Sunset, like other magazines, was restricted in the amount of paper it could use for printing, and that as a result, some subscriptions would have to be dropped. These measures would apply to all subscribers who lived outside of the seven Western States.⁶⁵

Sunset became selectively western for marketing reasons as well. The January 1942 issue also began sub-regional editorial zoning to attract regional advertising.⁶⁶ The editors made this new method of zoning clear by describing that, as a result of new printing methods, three separate magazines were produced for every issue. One version was written for and distributed in Southern California and Arizona, another for Central California, and another for the Northwest.⁶⁷ Sunset would later introduce the fourth zone called the Desert edition, covering Arizona, New Mexico, and the eastern part of California's Mojave Desert, in 1963. Sunset could be even more effective now, as its subjects became localized. The threefold resources for the material printed was said to come from the readers' generous contributions, who frequently sent "snapshots, reports, [and] diagrams".⁶⁸

⁶⁵ Sunset 90 (April 1943): 1.

⁶⁶ Richards E. Buschnell, "Saga of Sunset: Granddaddy of Western Regionals," Media History Digest 6 (Spring-Summer 1986): 30.

⁶⁷ Sunset 91 (August 1943): 7.

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*

Sunset's interest in covering all aspects of Western Living was expressed in the nine books it advertised in 1942.⁶⁹ The titles included:

Visual Garden Manual

Complete Garden Book

Barbecue Book

Flower Arrangement Book

Household Book

Host and Hostess Book

Cabin Plan Book

Famous Recipes by Famous People

Kitchen Cabinet Cook Book

The dissemination of so many subjects by Sunset, appearing mostly in a how-to rhetoric, must have been received as: "if you can follow these recipes, you can build that foundation for your cabin." The level at which the reader was expected to operate was unconventionally high. There was a sincere belief that the average reader was capable of making decisions with proper aesthetic judgment. If this was a problem, Sunset would teach them how. However, this movement was short of sounding like a survival guide. By 1942, Sunset had begun to reflect the severity of World War II on its cover. Departments, old and new were saturated with a survival theme. Gardens became "Victory Gardens," and a department called "Victory Ideas" was introduced as "Tips from Washington, D.C., and *Sunset* Readers on Making Your Home a *Victory Home*."⁷⁰ And so, the fusion of home design and survival took on a highly utilitarian tone.

Sunset's success as a popular magazine during the 1940's has been noted by the Magazine Circulation and Rate Trends: 1940-1965, produced by the Association of National Advertisers. This is seen in a report on five home magazines in 1965, carried out to help potential advertisers "to evaluate objectively a large number of leading publications."⁷¹ The magazines studied included: American Home, Better Homes &

⁶⁹ Sunset 88 (June 1942), an advertisement.

⁷⁰ Sunset 89 (October 1942): 30.

⁷¹ A.N.A. Magazine Committee, Magazine and Circulation Trends: 1940-1971, (New York: Association of National Advertisers, 1972): 5.

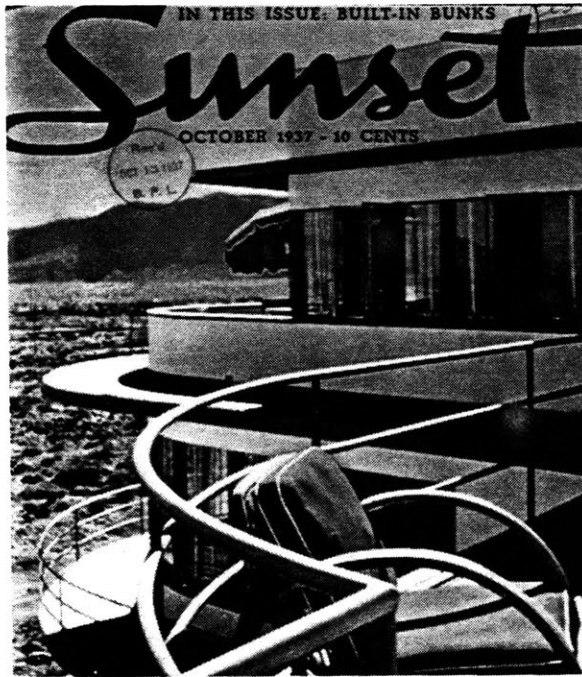
Gardens, House Beautiful, House & Garden, and Sunset, the only regional magazine on the list. From this study, one can quickly see that between 1940 to 1960, Sunset retained a higher net paid circulation than House & Garden, and followed closely behind House Beautiful. However, these figures reveal another interesting aspect of Sunset. As the magazine represented a smaller number of states, recalling the statistics noted earlier,⁷² its readership was consistently different than that of the national magazines throughout the 1940's. Basically, a high subscription rate within a smaller regional population meant a greater penetration of the market. Throughout the 1940's, 80% of Sunset's net sales were by subscription, as opposed to newsstand. Sunset's newsstand sales were consistently below 20%, the lowest of all the home magazines in this study. This suggests that Sunset was received consistently in the home, as opposed to purchased intermittently from the newsstand.

The Magazine of Western Living: 1943-present

Sunset began to call itself "The Magazine of Western Living" inside the June 1940 issue, and during the war, it printed this subtitle on the cover. (Fig. 19) This last period of development may be seen as a time of further departmental refinement. It seems the term 'Western Living' had become as familiar a term as 'Sunset'. In fact, it appears in Arts & Architecture in the March 1942 issue, in an article called "Western Living: Five Modern Houses Under \$7,500." This article announced an exhibit at the San Francisco Museum of Art, and featured: John Ekin Diwiddie, Albert Henry Hill, Harvey Parke Clark, William Wilson Wurster, Richard J. Neutra, and Harwell Hamilton Harris. Frank Lloyd Wright was also mentioned, but his work was not featured.⁷³

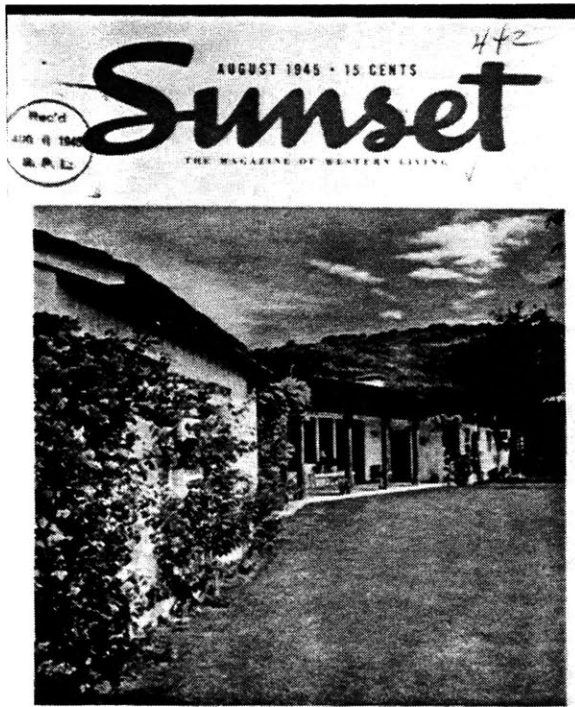
⁷² see "What's New in Western Living", p. 44-5.

⁷³ Arts & Architecture 59 (March 1942): 24.



TOP OF THE DESERT. Choose the perfect house built for the Western surroundings of Palm Springs, Calif. The features and photographs reveal why this is the place to live. See the photographs and articles which are one of the highlights. More about the new page 26. Also about modern outdoor photography. See page 26.

Fig. 18. A Sunset cover featuring a 'ship-like' modern house, published in October 1937.



The beauty background of the ranch house, its rambling, close-to-the-ground appearance are enough for its existence. But more important than any romantic vision is the ability of the ranch house to accommodate a new and original type of Western living. For details on C. T. Bennett ranch house, see page 19.

Fig. 19. Sunset's cover with the subtitle, "The Magazine of Western Living," published in August 1945. This cover featured a house by architect William Wurster.

The May 1948 issue marked the 50th Anniversary of Sunset Magazine. It was the only time the editors explained the components of Western Living. They defined them by expressing a uniqueness they emphasized by comparing them to a "national pattern" of life:

Western climate called for changes in gardening methods. The possibilities in outdoor living, the many scenic views forced changes in architectural thinking. Western travel and recreation were as much a part of everyday living as the garden. Many Western foods and many dishes peculiar to the West were not discussed in any published material."⁷⁴

With this, the four aspects of Western Living were formally announced as gardening, building, travel and recreation, and food. (Fig. 20) But the presentation of these subjects superseded mere categorization. In their description, the editors envisioned the four subjects as intimately linked to each other; the common denominator was the western landscape and climate.

The development of Western Living may be seen as a direct result of the three roles that Sunset undertook in its first fifty years: the traveling brochure, the literary magazine, and the home magazine. This chapter has shown how Sunset's method of operation was unique, as it related to the development of American Western culture and the concept of Western Living. The second term may be seen as Sunset's personal interpretation of the first. While it is evident that Sunset participated in this endeavor by operating under different roles, the editors stated themselves in the 50th anniversary announcement, the other aspects that may have contributed to their claimed success. First it was said that Sunset "supplement[ed] other magazines -- compete[d] with none". The fact that Sunset was a regional magazine meant that it could focus with more

⁷⁴ Sunset 100 (May 1948): 24.

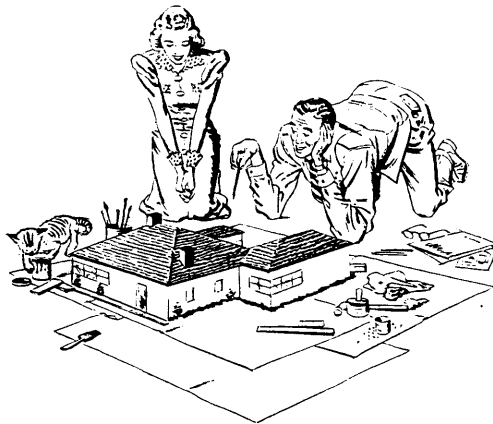
WESTERN LIVING



HOME AGAIN — THE GRANDEST
SPOT IN OUR WHOLE VACATION!



2 - TABLESPOONS -- EGG - YOLK
2 - TABLESPOONS - DRY - WHITE - WINE
SALT - AND - PEPPER - TO - TASTE SALT -
AND - PEPPER SALT AND
AND - PEPPER SALT AND



IF WE CHANGE THE BEDROOM TO A
GARAGE AND BUILD A ROOM ABOVE
FOR MOTHER YES SIR! WE CAN



DON'T STAND THERE AND LAUGH
AT ME PLANTS NEED A DIET
JUST LIKE HUMANS. VITAMINS
VITAMINS, AREN'T THEY?

Fig. 20. An illustration that depicts Western Living as represented by the four departments in the magazine: travel, food, home-building, and gardening.

concentration on certain aspects of the West. The second quality of Sunset that the editor's mentioned was that it was a staff-written publication, and it had almost always been one, as was exhibited in this chapter. With these two mentions, the secret to the magazine's formula to serve uniquely as a vehicle through which a western agenda could be delivered was seen. A deeper excavation into a time of intense editorial activity will now explore the inner workings of this method of operation.

THE APPROPRIATE HOUSE

Sunset's editorial policies in its departments of Travel, Garden, and Food had early on introduced subjects of unquestionably western character. In contrast, the question of what type of house would qualify as "western" was only sporadically considered. Not until the period between the Great Depression of 1930 and the end of World War II did Sunset actively engage in a search for an appropriate type of house for the West, a search that paralleled the final stages in the development of its Western Living construct. The result was a set of building principles inherent in the qualities of the ranch house. When in May 1948, the editors of the 50th Anniversary issue reflected on the magazine's accomplishments, they concluded that Sunset had been a "constructive and helpful influence in the development of Western homes and Western home life."¹ The present chapter will explore the major stages of this development and try to illuminate the reasons behind the magazine's agenda.

The Continuous House

It has been suggested that a distinct utilitarian outlook was an integral part of the pioneering of the West.² The type of attitude toward home and land that Sunset promoted during the first decades of the twentieth century was still a reflection of this outlook. In the January 1914 issue, for example, the magazine published an article called "The Continuous House," in which the author, inventor Edgar Chambless, presented the

¹ Sunset 100 (May 1948): 25.

² Leo Marx, "The American Ideology of Space," in Denatured Visions (New York: The Museum of Modern Art, New York): 62 passim.

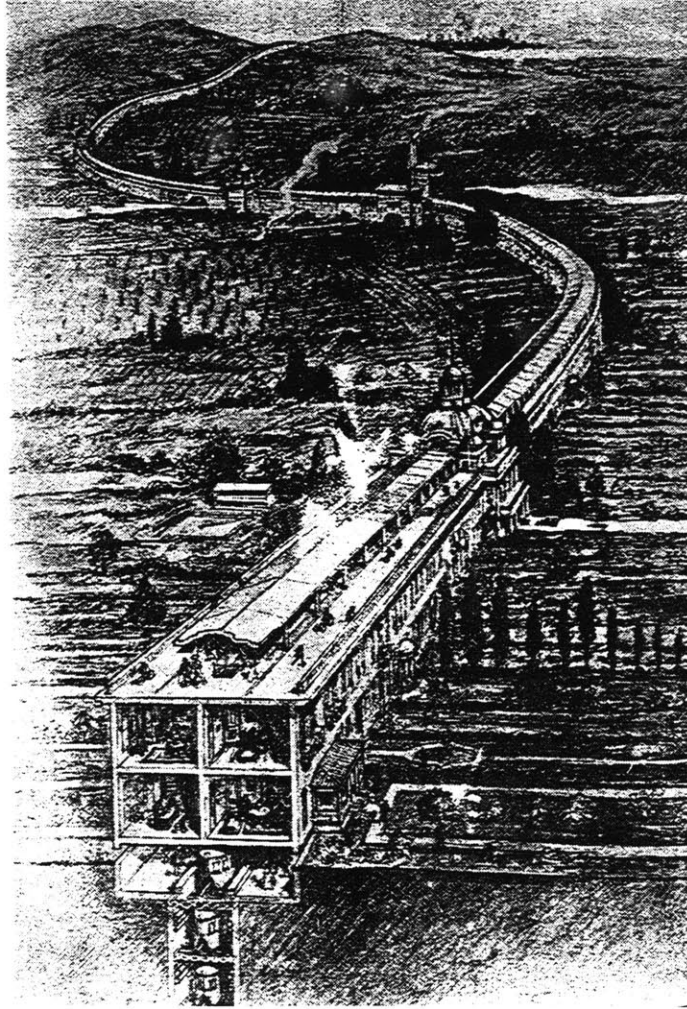


Fig. 21. Roadtown by inventor Edgar Chambless, published in Sunset in January 1914.

utopian idea of a roadtown, "a line of city projected through the country... in the form of a continuous house." Its basement would serve as a "means of transporting passengers, freight, parcels and all utilities which can be carried by pipe or wire," while the rooftop would become a road for "light running motor vehicles" and --most importantly -- an open-air promenade. (Fig. 21) The morphology of this structure, in which the dwellings are details of a larger gesture, resembles not only the image of a train crossing the landscape that can be viewed by the passengers, but also that of a modern superhighway. Chambless imagined this building type when he saw the Los Angeles land "bare within a stone's throw of the most expensive land of the city." While this utopian vision reflected the seemingly accepted act of injecting value to land -- an intrinsic part of Manifest Destiny (see page 5) -- one sees parallel to this motivation, a desire to remain in agreement with the land. Furthermore, he regarded his 'roadtown,' which he described as being neither a town nor a rural community but both, as the solution to "the paradoxical struggle of men to find dwellings accessible to the public mart and yet isolated and hidden for the home nest."³ In this sense, Chambless utopian idea forms a bridge between the spirit of the first migration and the second, the migration to the quasi-pastoral setting of suburbia and to the countryside that would follow.

In 1916 Sunset initiated its first Home department. It was called "The Home in the West." (Fig. 22) Already its very first article, "My Little House by the Road," reflected the kind of disposition that tried to link land value as an intrinsic part of Manifest Destiny with the idea of land as a valued source for contemplative pleasure or happiness,⁴ a concept that Sunset would soon promulgate in its prescription for domesticity. The following excerpt from this article captures this new spirit, and its antagonism toward the traditional type of land speculation common at that time in the West.

³ Sunset 32 (Januray 1914): 11.

⁴ late nineteenth definition of "utilitarian," found in, Raymond Williams, Keywords: A Vocabulary of Culture and Society (New York: Oxford University Press, 1976): 328.

"We also discovered that there is no middle ground with the average real estate man. Everything is strictly utilitarian or the extreme opposite. When we mentioned stations and trains we were introduced to small, dingy, box-like houses, tightly wedged between other houses of the same design, with all natural beauty around the premises carefully eliminated. And when we hinted at a view . . . our attention would then be artfully diverted to the "wonderful outlook". Of course the price ascended with the elevation."⁵

At first Sunset's notion of integrating home and land had a very narrow focus. The article cited above, for example, simply suggested that an outdoor bed could also serve as a hammock by day. Other essays that followed dealt with issues such as "A Sleeping Porch in Alaska" or "The Hour of 'Siesta' of the Western Ranch," which explained uses of the *corredor*. Soon, however, the scope of interest broadened to include more important aspects of domestic qualities of the West: Informality of living spaces, unity of living patterns and house form, as well as the question of piece-meal construction. A May 1917 article, "Their 'Very Own' Home," for example, took home building a step further by explaining and documenting the complete process, floor plan and all, and making it a you-can-do-it-yourself project. "To Mary, housebuilding proved to be only dressmaking on a larger scale," the author confidently concluded.⁶ The goal of all the themes was to convince the home builder to strive for maximum livability and to get the most out of his or her land. Sunset's continuous commitment to this concept is illustrated by the following excerpt from an editorial published in the February 1929 issue, shortly before the magazine embarked on its quest for the appropriate house:

"The other day one of our subscribers came in to get acquainted. "I like the new SUNSET immensely," remarked Mr. Wilkinson in the course of conversation, "but don't you feel that you are shooting a little over the heads of some of us when you suggest the building of elaborate patios and the buying of expensive shrubbery and high-priced garden equipment?"

⁵ Sunset 35 (January 1916): 48.

⁶ Sunset 37 (May 1917): 43.

Then the altercation began. "How big is your lot?" "25 X 80." "How much of it is used for a garden?" "I should say a plot of about 25 X 30." "How much did you pay for your lot?" "Two thousand cold, hard dollars." "All right, then, we argued, "your garden is worth a dollar a square foot. Unless it produces a maximum of beauty, health and satisfaction you are not getting the best returns on your money. What false economy to buy plants that refuse to bloom, grass seed full of weeds, and cheap shrubbery to plant on valuable ground!"

"By George! I never thought of it in that way before," said Wilkinson as he left the office grinning. Half way down the hall he stopped. "Maybe some of you investment sharks can tell me where to invest in choice iris." We did."⁷

The Cabin

During the 1920s, suburbs began to grow at twice the rate of city centers, and by 1930 had reached a population of seventeen million.⁸ It was then that westerners started to speak about a "vacation" or "second" home, and Sunset picked up on the trend. In 1926, curiosity about its readers' perception of a "western home" led Sunset to initiate a "Western Design Contest". However, during the early 1930's, when Sunset decided to cover home-building in a more consistent fashion, it did not follow up on its inquiry. Instead, the editors looked to their travel and recreation departments for inspiration. The type of building which Sunset decided to place its focus on was the cabin, a structure intrinsically associated with outdoor living, camping, and traveling, and an integral part of the construct of "Western Living."

The first article to explore the cabin topic seems to have been "Summer Homes for All," which appeared in the February 1930 issue. Written by mining and civil engineer Louis A. Sanchez, it advertised that the National Forest Service had set aside land for

⁷ Sunset 62 (February 1929): 66.

⁸ Gwendolyn Wright, Building the Dream: A Social History of Housing in America (Cambridge: The MIT Press, 1981): 195.

subdivisions of one-acre lots and less, and that these lots could be leased indefinitely with the "proviso that permanent improvements costing at least \$250.00 be constructed." Sanchez proclaimed, "the government has made it possible for all... to own just the particular lovely spot that [our] heart's desire at a cost that any of us may afford."⁹ The article included a map showing the eleven states "where Sunset readers" lived in relation to the National Forests that offered land for summer homes to be built. Although the government's aim had been to lessen the housing shortage caused by the Great Depression, its action to promote home building on federal land also led to a growing interest in visiting the National Forests and in camping there.

In the April 1930 issue, Sunset continued its cabin theme with "The History of Our Cabin in the Hills," a story about an average middle-class American family that set out to construct their own cabin in the woods. In tone and spirit the article harked back to "Their 'Very Own' Home" of 1917, but it also reflected the "simpler and truer" building theme that naturalist and Berkeley poet Charles Keeler had advocated in his 1904-book, The Simple Home. Greater simplicity and a return to nature was also a concern of California architect Bernard Maybeck, whom Sunset had featured in a June-1923 article called "The Maybeck One-Room House." It propagated a scheme that incorporated "house and garden into one home entity, concentrating the expense of the house, measured in terms of time and effort as well as money, upon one large room, beautiful living-room, supplemented by several utility rooms, so small and insignificant as far as space goes that they do not justify the name of room." It was envisioned as a place in which "the children of the house will scarcely know the inside from the garden without. It will all be home."¹⁰ In the June 1930 issue, an editorial summed up the trend predicting:

⁹ Sunset 64 (February 1930): 9.

¹⁰ Sunset 51 (July 1923): 20.

"We are on the verge of a new movement back toward country living. We are picking up our comfortable suburban homes and setting them down in more spacious grounds, still within reach of the city by train or automobile. A new type of country home this is, where comfort and informality reign."¹¹

The editors traced the development of domestic conditions from log cabins scattered through the wilderness, through "real" houses with gas and electricity, to city apartment buildings, and finally ending with the massive migration to the suburbs -- "to get away from the huddled nearness of the city." During 1931 and 1932 Sunset continued its cabin campaign by offering its readers -- through the mail -- "western house plans," by soliciting reader responses, by featuring "Two Vacation Cabins,"¹² and printing cabin plans in the magazine. It also published articles such as "A Cottage in the West," "The All Year Vacation Cabin," and "Sixteen Cabin Ideas"¹³ (Fig. 23) that include plans, perspectives, interior elevations and specifications. This activity was followed up by another venture involving the promotion of the cabin idea: the publication of an architectural pattern book.

The concept of Sunset's first pattern book, The Sunset Camp and Cabin Book,¹⁴ was significantly different from that of the traditional pattern book. The introduction, "Summer Homes For All," by Louis A. Sanchez, published earlier in the magazine, immediately exposed that the book was composed of excerpts from the magazine. Aside from twenty cabin plans, it featured rustic furniture, recipes, camping equipment, as well as "grub lists," and even included information on fishing and care of fish and game. The sixty-four-page book actually was three books in one, designed to teach the reader how to "build and possess" their vacation dream house. It has to be stressed that certain

¹¹ Sunset 64 (June 1930): 6.

¹² Sunset 66 (February 1931): 19.

¹³ Sunset 68 (February 1932): 9.

¹⁴ Sunset Magazine, The Sunset Camp and Cabin Plan Book (San Francisco: Lane Publishing Co., 1935): 4.



The Home in the West

CONDUCTED BY LIZZIAN PERGUNDON

My Little House by the Road

Let me live in my house by the side of the road and be a friend to man.—Tom Walker Pines.

WHEN we the and I, went to examine the a small plot of land, a number of other men, some of my particular note to be a tract of land, very open to the wind, "how the eye of man go by," had had the most effect of indifference, and we were interested only in the spot of one step long, and relative. "Mindful of them," we were informed that "throughout the entire tract," and "with some of the best," was "a magnificent white log building," the "house," which we had built in the fort, "shipped in on the land in complete and built a balance between the two, and intended to be a real attractive sight."

We were informed that there is no building ground with the average available. Everything is really under the control of the company. When we discovered that the land was not intended to be small, they, but the house, which we had built, other houses of the same design, with all



A little work on the hill now waiting on the coming sun.

...the house, which we had built in the fort, "shipped in on the land in complete and built a balance between the two, and intended to be a real attractive sight."

We were informed that there is no building ground with the average available. Everything is really under the control of the company. When we discovered that the land was not intended to be small, they, but the house, which we had built, other houses of the same design, with all

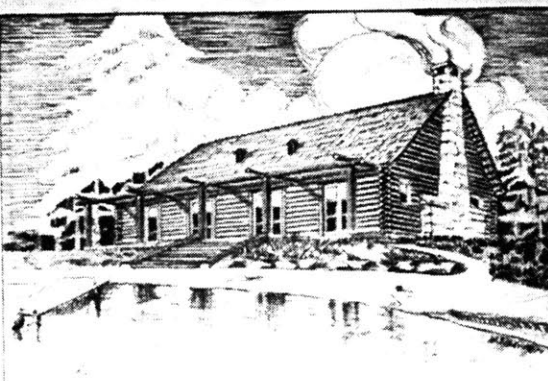


The house had served as a hammock for her.



One corner of the building built into the tree.

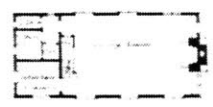
Fig. 22. "My Little House by the Road," published in January 1916. The photograph on the bottom right was accompanied by the caption: "The outdoor bed serves as a hammock by day."



Like a God


THE ALL YEAR VACATION CABIN

The Cabin of Vacation



The plan of the cabin is shown in the diagram. It is a simple, rectangular structure with a chimney on the right side. The rooms are arranged to provide a comfortable living space for a family.

This is a plan of a vacation cabin, built in the mountains of California. It is a simple, rectangular structure with a chimney on the right side. The rooms are arranged to provide a comfortable living space for a family.



The chimney is built of stone and is a beautiful feature of the cabin. It is built in the style of a traditional mountain cabin.

Designed by William J. Garrison AIA
Architect

These Sunset Homes Are Available

Fig. 23. An example of cabin plans available by mail. This advertisement was published in May 1931.

characteristics of the publication had been part of the magazine's editorial policies for many years. Already in its May 1903 issue, Sunset had published an article, "Housekeeping in the Summer Camp," that had advised "its readers what clothes (ample!) and food (likewise -- even with desiccated food) to take on a high country tramp."¹⁵ All in all it was just another manifestation of the concept of Western Living that had been the focus of the magazine for most of its existence. Sunset's interest in the cabin finally led to the introduction in February 1934 of a new department called "Sunset Camp and Cabin," just about the time when the "cabin fever" began to die down. The department, therefore, was short-lived.

Modernism

With the demise of the cabin rage, Sunset began to focus on the single-family house. This change of emphasis introduced questions of style that had not been dealt with before. A cabin, after all, is always built in the "rustic manner." When Sunset published its Book of Western House Plans, it was advertised (July 1932) as containing plans for "100 attractive bungalows and two-story houses (many of Spanish design) especially suited for building in the Pacific West."¹⁶ The "Spanish design" mentioned in the advertisement had been in vogue on the West Coast since the 1920s. As Gwendolyn Wright has stated, "the Spanish Colonial revival was one of the favored styles for southern California architects and developers," and the "Monterey ranch house, opening onto a patio, with a secondary balcony across its entire width, formed the basis for vernacular revival in northern California."¹⁷ Sunset, however, had never concerned itself with these styles to any great length. As a matter of fact, style had always been treated in general terms. A

¹⁵ Paul C. Johnson, ed., The Early Sunset Magazine: 1898-1928 (San Francisco: The California Historical Society, 1973): 12.

¹⁶ Sunset 69 (July 1932): 33.

¹⁷ Gwendolyn Wright, Building the Dream: A Social History of Housing in America (Cambridge: The MIT Press, 1981): 202-204.

passage found in "A Suburban House for Sunset Land," published in the September 1933 issue, is typical: "The elevations must be of a style that is historically correct to Sunset Land."¹⁸ What the author considered to be "historically correct" was not explained. In an article called "Sunset Homes of Tomorrow," published in November 1935, the author criticized the lack of style that plagued the suburbs, but again the reference remained non-specific.¹⁹ However, issues of style or making a commitment to a specific style could not be avoided for ever. The appearance of modernism in architecture could not be completely ignored.

Surprisingly enough, Sunset had introduced its readers to the European movement of modernism as early as August 1915, when it published an article called "California's First Cubist House." The article featured the Banning Residence by architect Irving J. Gill whose design was described as being "the beginning of a realization of our perennial vision -- a truly American style of Architecture."²⁰ Sunset's basic editorial policies, however, directed as they were toward Western tradition, did not favor embracing the full range modernist aesthetics. In 1935 Sunset informed its readers that while America was "going modern," the home should not become a "modernistic machine for living" or anything like the "sunflower house which is motor driven, and revolves so that the living room is always toward the sun." "Modern" was understood in terms of "improved building materials," and "in the sense of simplified, direct expression of present day life in America."²¹

With this interpretation of modernism, Sunset had extracted the one aspect of the modernistic style that fit its Western Living construct, namely "simplicity," both in

¹⁸ Sunset 71 (September 1933): 9.

¹⁹ Sunset 75 (November 1935): 9.

²⁰ Sunset 35 (August 1915): 20.

²¹ Sunset 75 (November 1935): 32.

building and living as appropriate for the West. By focusing on the simplicity of modern designs by architects like Neutra, Schindler, and Wurster, the magazine aimed at reconciling the modernism-traditionalism conflict in which it had been embroiled. In the February 1937 issue, an article titled "The Beauty of Simplicity" described William Wurster's Neff residence as "western, modern, simple, and fine."²² Other modern houses featured in the series "What's New in Western Living," which was introduced in 1936, were the Pope residence by Wurster (on the cover) and the Kaun beach house by Schindler,²³ Wurster's Le Hane residence -- characterized as "gently modern" with a gallery that resembled the cloister of colonnades of old Spanish buildings²⁴ -- and his Mendenhall residence.²⁵

To explore the question of the "modern house" -- or perhaps to settle it -- Sunset decided to conduct a reader survey. In the October 1938 issue, it presented an article suggestively titled "Here's Your Chance to Talk Back." (Fig. 25) It featured a double-page spread with two birds-eye perspectives of a modern "open-plan house described as having "no particular style." The readers were told: "Cast your vote on the ballot below. Sunset wants to know exactly what you think of it -- and why."²⁶ The January 1939 issue then reported the results under the heading "How Sunset Readers Voted on this House."²⁷ Among the tabulations of the reader responses, these responses pertained to the issue of style:

56% liked the outside appearance of the house
(In response to the question: "Do you prefer some established style?
____ Monterey Modern ____ Spanish ____ English ____ Cape Cod"
The styles chosen were Monterey Modern, Spanish, and Cape Cod.)
60% liked the idea of no separate dining room
(This was a feature of the 'open plan' modern house.)

²² Sunset 78 (February 1937):12.

²³ Sunset 78 (March 1937): 20.

²⁴ Sunset 79 (September 1937): 20.

²⁵ Sunset 82 (June 1939): 52.

²⁶ Sunset 81 (October 1938): 20.

²⁷ Sunset 82 (January 1939): 36.

Dear Sunset—



THREE few words mean so much. They represent the confidence and belief the West has in *Sunset* Magazine. Last year more than 40,000 readers wrote whole columns! Waste letters asking for help and guidance on problems of building or remodeling or decorating or travel or gardening. Letters, containing copies of the many authoritative books and folders distributed by *Sunset*, Letters coming along great ideas for editorial content.

You need thousands of other contributors to our partners with *Sunset*. Partners in building the most useful, the most practical magazine the West has ever seen.

As a result of the partnership, *Sunset* is different from other magazines. It's different because it is based on combining the knowledge and experience of a staff of experienced editors with an inexhaustible source of ideas and information from 400,000 Western families who are subscribers.

Sunset is a magazine that actually shows you "how to" do things. And the secret of this is that the editors have a living picture of what you and 400,000 other Western families are thinking and doing. No wonder that in the West folks read by *Sunset*, find by it, garden by it and travel with it!

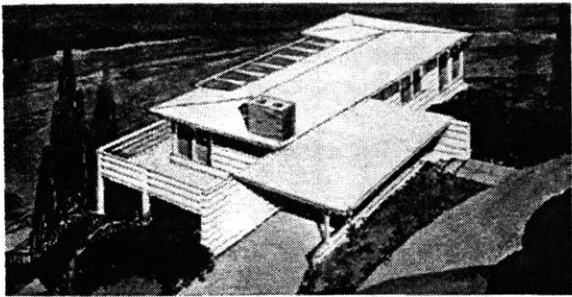
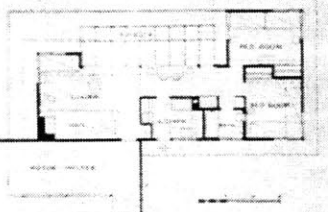
A Monthly Message to Members of the SUNSET Family from the Publisher

FEBRUARY 1939 51

Fig. 24. *Sunset* readers were always encouraged to contribute ideas to the magazine, as captured by this advertisement, published in February 1939.

Here's your chance to talk back—

THE secret of this magazine is that you talk back. You talk back to the editors. You talk back to the designers. You talk back to the architects. You talk back to the engineers. You talk back to the planners. You talk back to the builders. You talk back to the owners. You talk back to the tenants. You talk back to the neighbors. You talk back to the world.

Fill out and mail

Fig. 25. *Sunset* asked readers to respond to the design of this house.

The tabulation of the votes included a break down by regions: Washington, Oregon, Northern California, the Interior Valleys, Southern California and "Others" [opinions from outside the Pacific Coast states]. It was noted that Oregon readers showed the most pronounced difference from the majority vote. They tended to prefer the Colonial style, disliked the open-plan house, and demanded a separate dining room. While the votes coming from "Others" also indicated different points of view, those cast by readers from Northern California coincided with the opinions of the majority.

Sunset House

In its search for the appropriate western house, Sunset quickly ventured into another inquiry of reader preferences. This time the survey concentrated on its female readers, the home-makers. Under the title "Here's a New Way to Plan a Home," the February 1939 issue introduced a project, originally initiated by the Berkeley Women's City Club, that was intended to lead to the design of a house on the basis of a list of "must haves" and "don't wants" supplied by "300 home-minded Western women."²⁸ (Fig. 27) It was hoped, of course, that they would come up with something distinctly western. Sunset enlisted architect Clarence W. W. Mayhew and the Berkeley Women's City club to plan their "Sunset House," which then was to be featured as a part of a great Exposition Model Homes Tour. The project demonstrated the preferences of mass opinion. "The architect suggested Plan No. 1," Sunset revealed, but "300 women requested Plan No. 2." However, if the magazine's editors had hoped that their Sunset House, in which "every detail was planned for practical, efficient, comfortable living *under Western conditions*,"²⁹ would represent the "perfect house for modern Western Living," they

²⁸ Sunset 82 (February 1939): 20.

²⁹ Sunset 82 (May 1939):21



Fig. 26. What's New In Western Living was introduced with a house by architect Richard Neutra in the February 1937 issue.

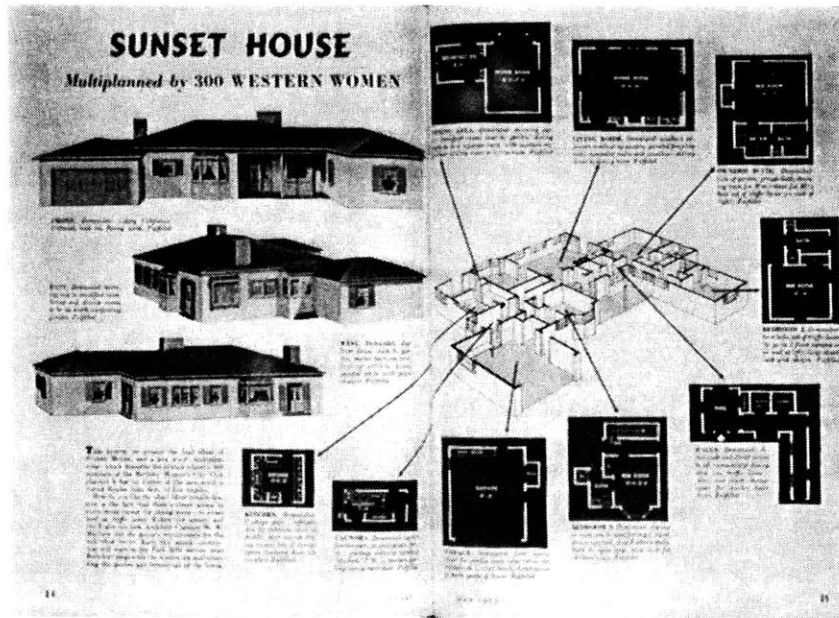


Fig. 27. The Sunset House is explained to the readers in the May 1939 issue.

were mistaken. Already in 1940, Sunset itself described the Sunset House "traditional in spirit" and "formal with Colonial charm."³⁰

The Indigenous House

Reflecting upon Sunset's search for the appropriate western house up to this point makes two things clear: first, western designers did not necessarily create a western design, and second, readers' preferences as a whole were not necessarily locked to one particular style of house or another. As a home magazine that was pledged to represent the spirit of the West, however, Sunset remained dedicated to continue its search. While professional magazines, such as The Architect and Engineer and California Arts & Architecture, concentrated on architects and their design solutions, Sunset featured "woody houses... under the title "More Sources of Western Living."³¹ It was in this series that the editors of Sunset found a topic of discussion that would finally lead them to their appropriate western home -- the Ranch house.

"Sources in Western Living" was introduced in February 1941 and lasted over five issues. The first house to be reviewed was -- prophetically enough -- a California ranch house located in a Spanish land grant area near Monterey, California, and dating back to the 1860s. Its characteristics were described as "Old Californian Ranch house to the last oak pin; built of redwood board and often in the adobe 'long-house' style."³² A main concern of the article was to convince its readers that the "California style" was not a preconceived notion of the early settlers, but an "honest result" of proper materials and labor at hand. And these were attributes that Sunset considered to be indigenous to the West. Although, as Sunset explained, some traditions had been brought to the new

³⁰ Sunset 84 (May 1940): 38.

³¹ David Gephart, "Introduction: The Bay Area Tradition," Bay Area Houses (New York: Oxford University Press, 1976): 7.

³² Sunset 86 (February 1941): 12.

frontier, they eventually died out or changed because of the climate. For example, the rainy season discouraged the Mexican flat roof, and the steep roofs of the New Englanders were not only hard to build, but also wasteful and unnecessary in the usually mild climate. The best solution, therefore, was the gently sloped roof. Lack of frost convinced the settlers from the east that basements were not needed. Other significant western characteristics emerged as a result of both convenience and necessity. 1) Whitewash became popular because it was cheap and practical, 2) wide eaves and a design that allowed for cross-circulation of air offered greater comfort in the sub-tropical climate, therefore 3) long low verandahs stretching the extent of the house were built and became the common facade. In many cases the verandah became the corridor that allowed access to rooms through separate doors from the outside. Porches, too, offered protection from the sun, and they were cheaper to build than interior hallways. Finally, the characteristically long and shallow houses were said to be the result of short milled lumber. According to the writers of *Sunset*, this was the historical basis of the California Ranch House. Later on, in its pattern books, *Sunset* would present even more detailed information concerning the development of this indigenous house type.

The February 1941 article also addressed the question why this old, historic type of house could still be appreciated in the 1940's. Among the reasons given were that the low, sloping roof blended well with the landscape, and that the verandahs offered a fine opportunity for outdoor living. Especially verandahs located in the back of the house were appreciated for reasons of privacy, "for the invitation of private living." This latter aspect would then become an important element in *Sunset's* garden articles of the 1940's. Another point made was that the modern ranch-type house, due to central heating could spread across the lot and was no longer confined "to hug a central fireplace." In addition, it was the aesthetics of simplicity, which *Sunset* had embraced that played an important role. One noted that the pioneer builder of "this house near Placerville had neither time

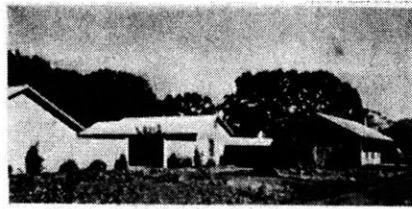
nor material for conscious style, yet his honest approach resulted in simple, pleasing form." The crux of the matter was that "as a century rolls by, roof lines become surer, eaves a little wider, but the straightforward simplicity of the early form still fits comfortably into the Western scene."

Finding manifestations of historic western building within contemporary designs formed the basis that united all five issues of Sunset's "Sources of Western Living" series. Although its second article (March 1941) focused on an early California building, a barn from the 1860s found near Meones in Calaveras County, it then noted traces of the early style in contemporary buildings like the Eastman residence by Gardner Dailey, and the Wood residence by Wurster. (Fig. 28) In April 1941, the author of "The Story of the Coupled Column, Earmark of California Homes of the 60s and 70s"³³ pointed out that the architectural feature of the coupled or doubled column, which had come to California by way of New England and New Orleans, can also be found in Wurster's design of the Butler residence. In the June 1941 issue, which concentrated on farm buildings in Oregon, the Rose Farm near Oregon City was brought into comparison with the Sutor residence by architect Pietro Belluschi. (Fig. 29) The conclusion was that "the uncompromising honesty which distinguished early farm buildings [can also be] found in the house."

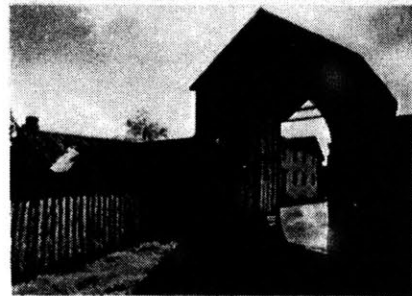
It was in the May 1941 issue of "Sources of Western Living" that Sunset had returned to the idea of promoting the ranch-style house by publishing an article called "Timeless: The California Ranch House Will Never Be Dated."³⁴ Its author posed the question "What is a California ranch house?" and then stated that little or nothing had been written on the topic, and a definition of style was lacking. You will find it defined not in books," he told the readers, "but on rolling hill where it lives today -- not as a style

³³ Sunset 86 (April 1941): 17.

³⁴ Sunset 86 (May 1941): 20.



MODERN COMPOUND provides privacy and shelter for outdoor living in the Woods Court, Calif. Home of the H. Allen House, designed by architect William W. Wurster



EARLY CALIFORNIA ranches often had central open compounds in the center of their groups of buildings for both protection and convenience. Note arched gateway of wood

More Sources in WESTERN LIVING

MADEIRA BY HAND and the same skill of the nearest builder had a lot to do with the form of early California buildings. Consequently, though the pioneers brought architectural traditions with them, these were necessarily changed to fit the conditions which they found.

In a new land, houses were related to their simplest forms. There, as more materials and more money became available, these first shelters became patterns for still different houses. Spanish and Mexican styles, first built of adobe, were later changed to fit the use of wood as it became cheaper and more available. In spite of limited materials and skill, the results of this conflict between architectural tradition and the actual conditions of living were often very beautiful.

An example is the 60-year-old ranch built near Mokelumne in Calaveras County, and shown at above right. The builder had few choices because the task of raising a straight road was perhaps too difficult for a local carpenter; so he left an opening for cross ventilation. Ranch local timber probably dictated the use of board and batten, rather than horizontal lapping. The finished barn, designed strictly to suit circumstances, is graceful and pleasant.

Fig. 28. "More Sources in Western Living" presents a comparison between the Woods Residence by architect William Wurster (top) and an early California ranch (bottom).

stone columns, and other absurdities into their houses and commercial buildings.

While houses were becoming the extravagant and self-conscious symbols of personal wealth, barns and stables, receiving less attention, benefited the lasting benefit of simple and functional design. In the History of Oregon Architecture Exhibit held at the Portland Art Museum this year, explains to the study in pictures of Oregon, barns, Herbert (Oregon) road.

"The most authentic regional architecture of Oregon is to be found in the many superb barns in nearly every section of the state. These are truly functional in form, their shape being determined by the particular purpose they serve. They harmonize in color and shape with the site. Modern architects have learned much from their study of such folk architecture as this."

Folks architects all over America are "learning much" from another part of Northwest building—the skill and satisfying ways in which native woods are used in modern homes. The simplicity, beauty and variety of pine, fir, cedar, and other woods has challenged the imagination of Northwest home builders. Shown on this page is one example, though far from the only one, of this important regional contribution.

These modern houses, built for fit time, place, and family, are good examples of buildings which consider first what is best done in and around the building, rather than what someone else built elsewhere under very different conditions, a long time ago.

While barns were becoming ornate symbols of wealth and power, barns such as this were built for a job. Goodwood is one forgotten; today it is the barns we carefully study

The same uncompromising beauty which distinguished early farm buildings is found in this house for J. F. Sutor, near Portland, designed by architect Pietro Belluschi

Fig. 29. A comparison is made between the utilitarian barn (top) and the Sutor Residence by architect Pietro Belluschi (bottom).

repeating stale superficials but as a home for moderns." The author explained, "since the ranch style house was never a style, but a solution to the problems not everywhere the same, there were many variations." Following the trend of the series, he not only discusses the Castro adobe house in San Juan, built in 1830, but also a contemporary example -- the Doudell residence by architect Mario Corbett.

Blueprints of Tomorrow

Professional journals in the United States had featured articles that inquired into the nature of the "postwar house" as early as 1941. The number of articles increased with the severity of the war. By 1945 there was a surge of competitions for "the small house of the future" or the "post war house of tomorrow," sponsored by manufacturing companies and plan-by-mail enterprises. Sunset entered this national inquiry in 1943 and began to feature more articles that explored "the modern house," as something synonymous with the "postwar house." This dated back to July 1940, when the editors printed in the contents page an unknown word and its definition:

"TELESIS: tel' e-sis, *n.* Progress intelligently planned and directed; the attainment of desired ends by the application of intelligent and human efforts to the means."³⁵

It was said that TELESIS was the name of an organization comprised of professionals in related fields of architecture: City and regional planning, landscape architecture, and industrial design. While the members of TELESIS were not disclosed, an article in The New Pencil Points, printed in July 1942, linked the group to two offshoots of C.I.A.M: C.I.R.P.A.C. (*Comite International pour la Realisation des Problemes Architecturaux Contemporains*) and national organizations like M.A.R.S. (Modern Architectural

³⁵ Sunset 85 (July 1940): 11.

Research Group) in England.³⁶ Apparently, this group had been formulated to deal specifically with the cities and communities of the San Francisco Bay Region; it was an American counterpart of the other groups. The article explained that "Telesis was studying Western people and their environment -- places for work, places for living, places for play -- and practical ways in which poor conditions can be improved." The editors stated that they had asked TELESIS to tackle the problems that would confront Sunset readers. A new department called "Space for Living" was formed and its first article, called "The ABC's of Open Planning," offered the following message:

"Until the present time you have lived in shut up boxes which were tight because heating was a problem and glass came in small pieces but NOW you can have openness because central heating and glass that is in large sheets. The "ribbon window" increases your sense of space; conventional windows turned sideways increase your light as well as view. You can control the sunlight with roof overhangs which will cut out the hot summer sun and let in low winter sun. You do not *have* to live out-of-doors and yet you do not *have* to be shut up. You can have *both* with curtains or screens. You do not have to have two rooms; you do not have to have one room: you can have *both* with FLEXIBILITY."³⁷

Two other articles by TELESIS appeared in the same issue. "Choosing Your Neighborhood," presented six variables of a well-designed subdivision. They included: 1) Shape and size of lot, 2) Character of street, 3) Shape of block, 4) Topography and view, 5) Schools, stores and parks, and 6) Zoning and a master plan. A good and bad example was offered in each case. "Building Materials: New Developments Make Selection Today Unlimited" featured eight materials the group considered to be on the edge of innovation [due to new synthetic materials], and therefore demanded special attention. They were: adobe, plywood, wood, shingles, fibreboard, tile, concrete and metal. The TELESIS instructional approach was to become the standard for future articles by Sunset. In the

³⁶ The New Pencil Points 32 (July 1942): 45-8. (also see California Arts & Architecture 57 (September 1940): 20-1.

³⁷ Sunset 85 (July 1940): 12-3.

article presented by the editor's of Sunset, "What's in a House?" in the June 1941 issue. Three functional aspects of a "modern house": *protection, privacy and sanitation*, were set against traditional values, namely "style." Recognition of the reader's probable response led the editors to explain further:

"At first glance some of today's homes may look strange to our unaccustomed eyes. But we, perhaps, ask more of a house than our fathers did. And we have new ideas, materials, tools to serve us. We're left only with the question of formalities. Shall we sniff and sneer and postpone acquaintance? Or shall we say, as we might to an interesting new neighbor, "We'd like to know more about you. What do you do?".³⁸

Discussion regarding the form of the "modern house," in regard to issues of "protection, privacy, and sanitation," would cease when "prefabrication" became the unanimous focus of many professional magazine's. Already, on the West coast, California Arts & Architecture had initiated a competition called "Blueprint For War Housing: One Suggested Solution for America's Present Needs for Worker's Housing." While this was not an inquiry into the postwar house -- he envisioned clients were "The American War Workers" -- a focus on achieving bomb and fire resistance without the use of steel, introduced the issue of prefabrication.³⁹ While a concentration on the "demands for labor and materials" guided California Arts & Architecture's editorial direction, Sunset would be led by another theme, intrinsic to its construct of Western Living.

In March 1943, the editors of Sunset initiated their contribution to the postwar inquiry, with a new series called "Blueprints of Tomorrow." The magazine's search for the appropriate western house guided their study from the outset, as was expected:

³⁸ Sunset 86 (June 11941): 20-1.

³⁹ California Arts & Architecture 59 (May 1942): 18.

"This is the first in a series of articles on the Western Home of the Future. In each article a Western architect will present a typical home of today designed by him, and discuss with you some phase of the House of Tomorrow."⁴⁰

An article by architect Mario Corbett began this inquiry, but surprisingly enough, the dream house that he was to present was vastly different than the Doudell residence he had presented in "Sources of Western Living" three years prior to this printing. An immense change in Corbett's style of architecture, as seen in this proposal, reveals that many architects had been convinced that prefabrication was the solution to postwar housing. The editor's of Sunset mentioned that Corbett would discuss "a system for flexibility in construction and design which encompass[d] all the advantages of cost-saving prefabrication but avoid[ed] its penalty of rigid, machine-stamped pattern".⁴¹ (Fig. 31) From the outset, two gains were attributed to prefabrication: flexibility and cost-savings. Corbett reassured that prefabrication would not discourage individuality, but rather, make it "less of a luxury". He claimed that one could build with 50 prefabricated parts more cheaply than with 1,000 pieces of lumber, and in the end, achieve a home that was more flexible. "Particular patterns of a particular family" were guaranteed. Once again, the female readers were targeted. "See how simple it is for Mother to drive right to the kitchen door with her parcels," the author stated. The list of advantages was endless: Maximum storage, no termite problems due to new materials, easier bathrooms to maintain as one could "look forward to selecting the whole thing in one piece." All in all the curious sales-pitch that accompanied prefabrication was suspect, and soon its novelty would dissipate from the pages of Sunset.

A frank rebuttal to Corbett's proposition was offered in the April 1943 issue as the title suggested: "Architect Pietro Belluschi challenges our readiness for better architecture."⁴²

⁴⁰ Sunset 90 (March 1943): 10.

⁴¹ Ibid..

⁴² Sunset 90 (April 1943): 10.

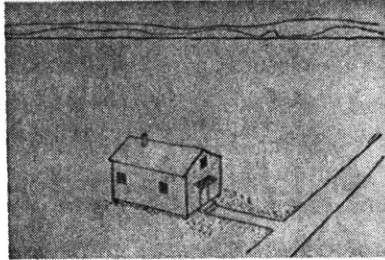
Now taking the architects side, the editors of Sunset stated that Belluschi preferred "to point out the crudeness of our wants compared to our technological capacities and to remind us that, after all, glass, plastics, light, metals, plywood, are tools in our hands, not finished prefabricated sections of happiness." A timely essay by the architect himself followed and a more "human" tone that had been left out of the discourse on prefabrication was immediately recognized.

"I deeply believe that all our technical improvements and all our efficiency and all our machines will bring us no nearer to a civilized society as a whole, unless a parallel effort is made to really educate the mass individual and to improve the whole system of human values and relationships. Recurrent wars testify to that belief. It would be easy to put the blame for lack of spiritual awareness on many causes -- we could even blame our schools for neglecting to turn our young students into sensitive people."⁴³

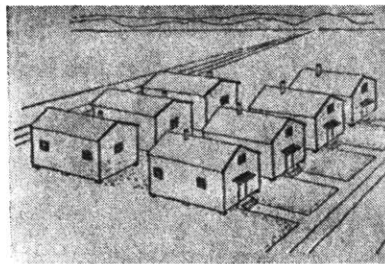
Belluschi stressed that, above all, the education of the mass populace was imperative. He suggested that a "cooperative effort" was urgently needed to circumvent the increasing "overcrowding and deprivation of living space". (Fig. 30) "Any set of 'blue prints for tomorrow' must include the replanning and rehabilitating of our social structure first. Improved cities and neighborhoods will follow naturally." With this, Belluschi redirected the "postwar" discussion from one which focused on materials, to one which looked to the 'average' homeowners future.

"In my opinion the house for which we should strain our energies, and into which we should place the seed of our hopes for the future, is a house which to the average individual will reflect a desire to live fully and with

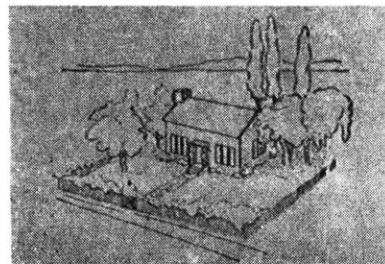
⁴³ Sunset 90 (April 1943): 10.



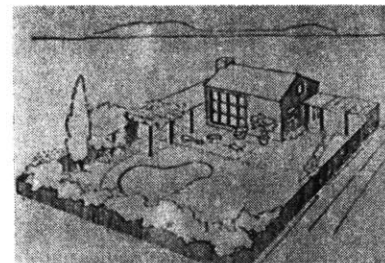
"It is easy enough to give a man a minimum dwelling unit, and it is clear that there is space enough for everybody. With our improved techniques we can put up a house like this in a few hours."



"But if a man isn't careful (or his local planning board farsighted), the speculators will build a lot of minimum shelters all around him, and he will soon find himself living in a vicious little slum."



"Another man can take the same unit and make himself a 'dream house.' Space, privacy, and growing things make the difference; architectural changes are unimportant in obtaining the result."



"The exceptional man can take the same minimum unit, and, aided by his architect, achieve a successful house. It will be a home that is in a satisfactory relationship with space around it."

Fig. 30. Illustrations and thoughts by Pietro Belluschi for the series "Blueprints for Tomorrow," published in April 1943.

understanding, a house which will invite and inspire a its owner to live in awareness and communion with his surroundings, that will make his a wiser human being and a better neighbor."

In reaction to prefabrication, he retreated to a familiar discussion [for the Sunset reader] that looked to architectural traditions and the relationship of building to land. "One tree in its proper place, or a convincing use of local materials," he championed, is far more important than "prefabricated toilets and kitchens."

In May 1943, the third article of this series featured the architect Harwell Hamilton Harris.⁴⁴ His design of the Birther residence also reinforced the belief that prefabrication would not end the war nor solve the problems of postwar Depression. Harris adamantly stated that he refused to present a "minimal design". His version of the postwar house -- a generous plan -- featured maximum livability with its numerous patios for outdoor living. A complex program included exercise, radio therapy, massage and sun bathing. But what deemed this house appropriate for postwar living, was its "segmentation" feature. The house would grow over time and function "as an element of flexibility". Harris would appear a second time in "Blueprints of Tomorrow" in the July 1943 issue, to discuss the potential use of adobe in postwar home-building.⁴⁵

In November 1943, the eighth article in the series featured architect Richard Neutra in an article named after his theory of home-design, "Index of Livability."⁴⁶ (Fig. 32) Penned as a housewife writing to another housewife, the first explained to the second how Neutra's innovative theory of livability, which stressed "getting every inch out of your living space," changed her life. Phrases like "hours of living," "illusion of space,"

⁴⁴ Sunset 90 (May 1943): 12.

⁴⁵ Sunset 91 (July 1943): 10.

⁴⁶ Sunset 91 (November 1943): 14.

and "balance of nerves" struck the tone of modernism, but there were unconventional construction techniques attached to the building. As an editorial technique, this method of presentation, unfolded Neutra's theory to a popular audience. Furthermore, Sunset's promotion of maximum livability resounded in his essay. The tenth article in this series featured the flip-side to Neutra's theory for maximum livability indoors. The importance of outdoor living was presented by architect John R. Sproule in the February 1944 issue.⁴⁷

While the influence of "Blueprints of Tomorrow" deserves further investigation, its most obvious success was to bring an otherwise, "academic" discussion, into the popular community. The extent of the role of this series will be further discussed in Chapter III, in the section called "The Education of the Reader," where the last three articles of this series will be discussed. It seems that Sunset's search for the postwar house inspired another home magazine to launch a competition inquiring into the postwar house. Adapting Sunset's title, House & Garden began a competition called "Blueprints for Tomorrow". (Fig. 34) But one may posit that the ramifications of Sunset's inquiry did not stop here. It was not until 1945 that Arts & Architecture, began its search for the postwar house, the famous Case Study Program. Under the auspices of editor John Entenza, Arts & Architecture had shown an interest in prefabrication -- it was heavily supported by manufacturers and plan-by-mail companies who advertised in the magazine. (Fig. 33) Their interest in the postwar house was also apparent as was seen in the 1944 advertisement "Your Design for a small post-war home may win this \$2500.00 Contest," sponsored by the United States Plywood Corporation.⁴⁸ The July 1944 of Arts & Architecture had featured articles such as "What Prefabrication is Not," "The Architects of Prefabrication," and "Emergency Prefabrication." Entenza's honest interest has recently been expressed in the essay "Case Study Trouve" by Thomas S. Hines, which

⁴⁷ Sunset 92 (February 1944): 14.

⁴⁸ Arts & Architecture 61 (September 1944): 3.

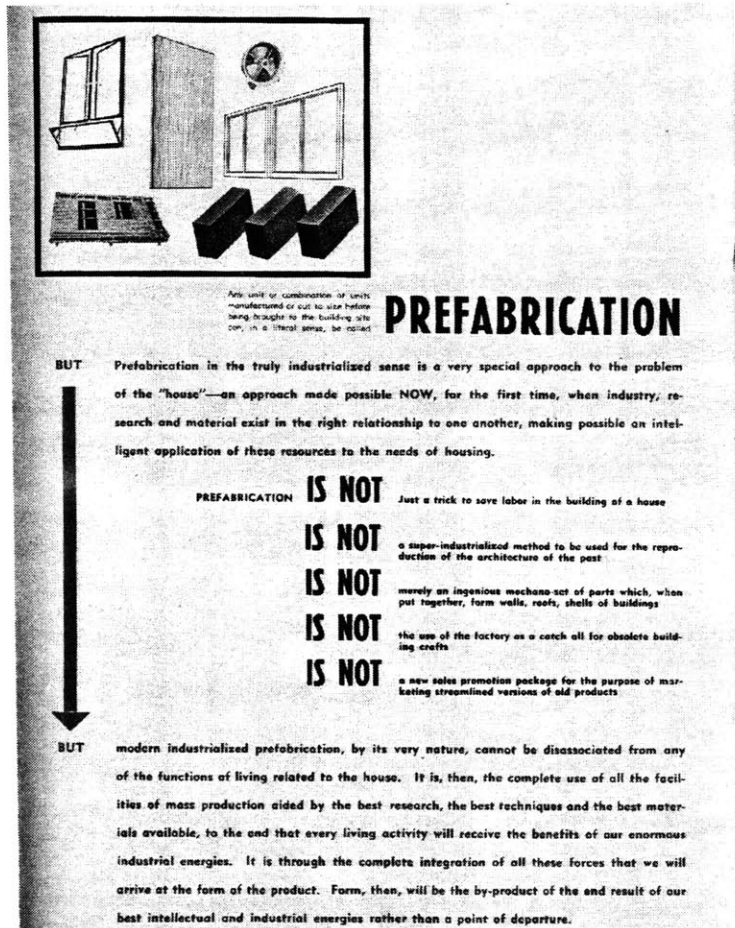
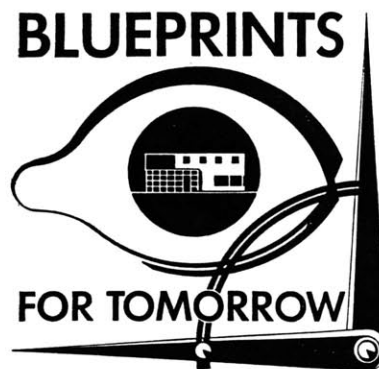


Fig. 33. An inset from the article "What Prefabrication is Not," published in the July 1944 issue of Arts & Architecture.



IF YOU PLAN TO BUILD, PLAN NOW

Fig. 34. The logo for the "Blueprints for Tomorrow" competition sponsored by House & Garden.

stated: "much of the point of Entenza's crusade was to provide a cluster of models for a postwar housing market, that, if not guided, was certain to explode with potentially damaging and insidious architectural effects."⁴⁹

The Ranch Style House

The ranch style house slowly emerged as the viable candidate for the appropriate western house, from a series of articles printed in 1944-5, and as it had already been discussed in "Sources in Western Living." A variety of terms had been used to describe it in Sunset since the late 1930's. One house had been called "of California Ranch House design" in 1938⁵⁰; the Gregory Residence by architect William Wurster, a house that would become the model for the ranch house, had been called a "country-style" house the previous year.⁵¹ But by the mid-1940s, Sunset would deliver a clear and straightforward, packaged account of what the ranch house was. Designer Cliff May, who came in contact with Sunset in 1936 and who built his first ranch house the following year,⁵² would become the magazine's signature of approval in the promotion of this building type. But before this was possible, a formal introduction of the ranch style house appeared in the magazine in the form of articles that asked the readers 'second-guessed' questions. However, these articles may be seen as both an exploration for the reader and the magazine itself.

The article that began this next inquiry was called "What is a Western Ranch House?" published in the February 1944 issue.⁵³ In answering "many requests for the plans of the Western ranch house," the editors of Sunset stated that it was impossible because there

⁴⁹ Thomas S. Hines, "Case Study Trouve," in Blueprints For Modern Living: History and Legacy of the Case Study Houses (Cambridge: The MIT Press, 1989): 84.

⁵⁰ Sunset 80 (January 1938): 19.

⁵¹ Sunset 78 (April 1937): 20.

⁵² Paul C. Johnson, ed., Western Ranch Houses by Cliff May (Menlo Park: Lane Publishing Co., 1958): 7.

⁵³ Sunset 92 (February 1944): 12-3.

was "no one Western ranch house. There are no 'authentic reproductions'." The reasons given harkened back to the first article from Sources in Western Living.⁵⁴ The ranch house was a result of a special context that included a distinct way of life and climate. This explanation was accompanied by some sketches that attempted to trace the evolution of native Western architecture, they were the first attempt an historical study that Sunset would later look into more thoroughly.

In a way, the tone of this article was provoking as it attempted to satisfy the curiosity of the reader with a description of a house type whose many positive qualities were flaunted but whose accessibility seemed reserved for the 'western' few. The article was curiously divided into four sections: The People, Climate, Sun, Time, and Glass; the primary elements of a house type. It became apparent that from the outset, this house-type was aimed at the prospective home-builder. This was seen when the article was supplemented by renderings of a contemporary example. Three illustrations focused on 'outdoor living', which was presented as an integral part of the house type. The 4-foot overhangs provided shade, and glass made "the garden and the Western rolling hills an extension of the living room." While this set the tone of a home that would become one of the most popular postwar house types, one would later realize that the final image of the ranch house that Sunset would present, was still under construction. This was seen with the identification of another version of the ranch house, its style called Monterey Colonial. This term referred to a modified "formal, closed-in-two-story house from the East" that was also a common western house type by the turn-of-the-century. Sunset would later drop this house type and choose to represent the low and rambling one story type instead.

Further inquiry into the possibilities of this western house type was followed up by an article in the May 1944 issue that asked the question: "Is Ranch House the Name for

⁵⁴ Sunset 86 (February 1941): 12.

it?"⁵⁵ Another aspect of the ranch house, a more complicated one, was revealed in this article. The variety of material and floor plan choices proclaimed as inherent to this ranch house tradition led the author to write: "Can any 'style' be that flexible? If we called the Western Ranch house an 'idea' rather than a 'style,' we would understand it better. The ranch house has lived through the years because it is an idea based on a way of living rather than a fixed form." With this, the clarity of reason for the choice of the ranch house as the preferred building type unfolded. As an idea that concentrated on a lifestyle, this house type fit into the concept of Western Living. Flexibility within the constraints of tradition would sit well with Sunset, as it was interested in presenting as a part of its construct for life in the West, a house type that was unquestionably western, but allowed for personalization by the individual home-builder. The opportunities of the ranch house were expressed in a timely manner as well when the author wrote: "The Blueprints of Tomorrow are sure to draw heavily on the ranch house idea. It can absorb new materials, new conveniences, new concepts of flexibility without losing its romantic identity." The appropriateness of the house type as a postwar model would be the focus of the third article of this type.

In June 1944, Sunset printed "What's the Future of the Ranch House?" (Fig. 35) It appeared that the designer Cliff May was introduced on the occasion of the readers responses. The author stated, "It is true that the so-called ranch style is flexible enough to be able to absorb the new building materials and new ideas as they are offered, why not show us exactly how this can be done, ask insistent readers."⁵⁶ Two houses designed by May were introduced with the disclaimer, "although built before the war, they contain many ideas that are now on the controversial lists of many postwar planners. Regardless of the type of home you are planning, you will find a careful analysis of the ranch house

⁵⁵ Sunset 92. (May 1944): 10-3.

⁵⁶ Sunset 92 (June 1944): 10-4.

very much worthwhile." The presentation of the ranch house by May was meant to attract the attention the eager home-builder that wanted it all. The enormous sprawl of the home created separate zones on the land it sat: the motor court, the private patio, the sun terrace-future swimming pool area, the entrance. (Fig. 35) Special attention was brought to the kitchen, where a thorough discussion of the deep freeze unit and the inter-room communication system was presented. The fact that such a large home could easily integrate the domestic innovations seemed to be another reason for the author, for the ranch house to sustain in the postwar era.

The need to present the ranch house as a building type that met the postwar challenge led to two subsequent articles. The first was called, "The Changeable, Flexible Ranch House," published in the July 1944 issue. (Fig. 36) This article featured another May design, as an example of how the ranch house was "particularly adaptable to the growing and changing of individual Western families. It can be expanded and contracted with the greatest of ease."⁵⁷ The second article of this type was called "The Adaptable Ranch House," published in the April 1945 issue. Adaptability was defined as the opportunity to change the size of the ranch house as needed. This was made clear by the presentation of two aspects of the ranch house, its absence of style and simplicity. It was stated by the author that "the reason for the deterioration in value of the "style" houses has been that their design had more to do with the appearance than with living needs." As the ranch house was not contingent on the strict order of a style, one could alter the house as needed. Simplicity, in the words of the author, transferred to cost. It was stated that, "The \$5,000 and the \$15,000 house are basically the same -- size rather than embellishment is increased." Simplicity meant that the house was not over designed -- it

⁵⁷ Sunset 93 (July 1944): 10-3.

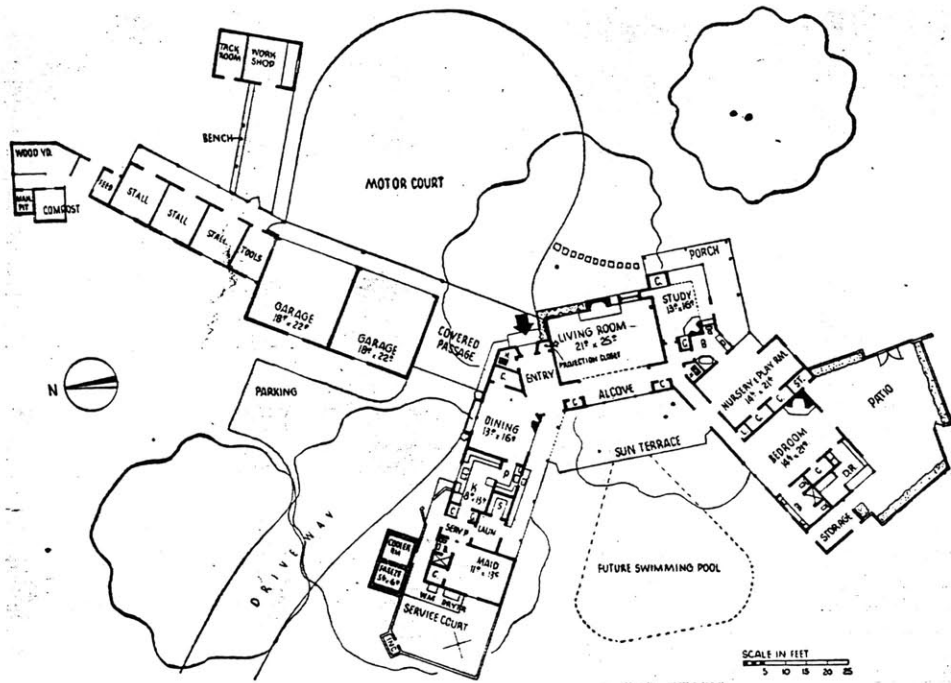


Fig. 35. The first plan of a Cliff May ranch house to appear in *Sunset*, published in June 1944.

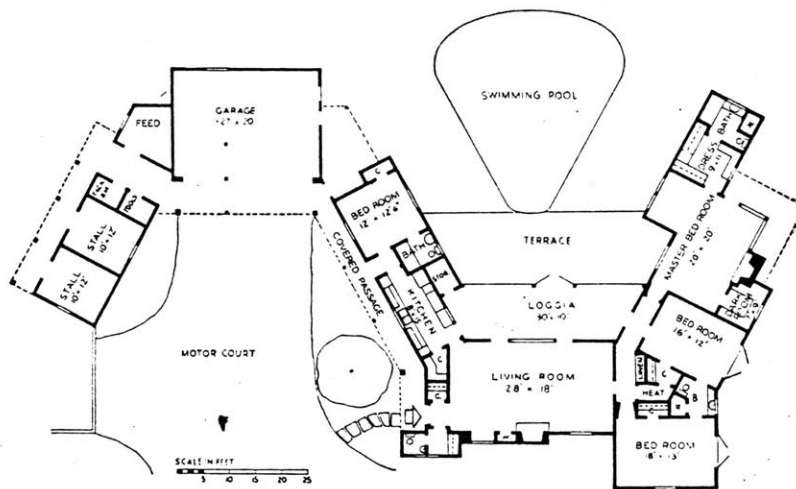


Fig. 36. From "The Changeable, Flexible Ranch House," published in *Sunset* in July 1944.

met its purpose with a minimal set of moves. If one could invest, the house would increase in size."⁵⁸

As the ranch house had been already explained, Sunset concentrated on reinforcing its pertinence to the West. In June 1945, the magazine published "Ranch House History," and "Ranch House Simplicity". This issue also showed a glimpse of the ranch style culture that came out of the propaganda. It showed "Ranch-Style" decorations for parties, and a "Ranch Chair". In August 1945, the cover featured a Ranch House and stated, "The historic background of the ranch house, its rambling, close-to-the-ground appearance are reasons enough for its existence. But, more important than any romantic reason is the ability of the ranch house to accommodate a desirable, informal type of Western living. Inside the article, "Typical Ranch House?" was featured. An article called "Western Ranch House Porches" was printed in the February 1946 issue. "Ranch Houses in the City" was printed in the same issue.

In 1946, the book called Sunset Western Ranch Houses was published. It was a 160 page book that contained 43 ranch houses, floors and landscaping plans, detailed interior and exterior sketches, and photographs. (Fig. 37-42) This book was to sell "an unprecedented 50,000 copies, and effectively codified essential ranch style house characteristics."⁵⁹ The Ranch House was fated for success. Gwendolyn Wright describes its attributes in her book Building the Dream: A Social History of Housing in American:

"The popular ranch style combined the low-pitched roofs, deep eaves, and strong horizontal lines of Wright's early prairie houses with more traditional elements like clapboards, shutters, and a wide front porch. The word "ranch" evoked a rambling dwelling to most post-war buyers, which perhaps explains the

⁵⁸ Sunset 94 (April 1945): 10-3.

⁵⁹ Daniel P. Gregory, "Visions and Subdivisions: Sunset and the California Ranch House," in Architecture California 13 (February 1991): 33.

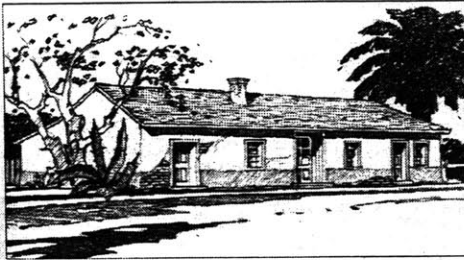
History of the ranch house

THE HISTORY of the Western ranch house is the personal history of many families—those of the soldier of Spain, the Spanish Don, the Mexican politician, the deserter from a British brig-of-war, the mercantile from Boston, the fur trader, the American soldier, the adventurer, the pioneer. Each brought to the West his own mental blueprint of a home; each had his influence on the development of the Western architectural pattern.

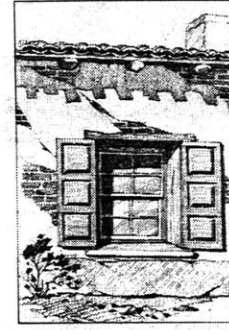
These blueprints were not followed to the letter. The Western sun and the Western terrain stimulated some changes in them. The availability of a few building materials and the lack of others with which to build undoubtedly simplified many former complex designs. But the greatest and most lasting influence on the blueprint brought into California was the way of living developed by the Spanish colonists. A few hundred people found themselves separated from the rest of the world in a new and gentle place. Almost immediately they established a pattern of living to fit that place. It is easy to

understand the willingness with which the first Americans allowed Spanish California to have its way with them when you read historian Hubert Howe Bancroft's appraisal of its people: "The Californians ever aspire to gallantry... They had received but little training, scarcely any education, yet they possessed virtues worthy of record. They were kind-hearted and liberal; a person could travel from San Diego to Sonoma without a coin in his pocket, and never want for a roof to cover him, a bed to sleep on, food to eat, and ever tobacco to smoke... Any stranger traveling through the country could stop at any one of the missions as long as he pleased. When ready to leave, all he had to do was tell the padre, and his horses would be ready, with a guide, and also provisions for the road; generally a chicken or two, a boiled tongue, a loaf of bread, boiled eggs, a bottle of wine, a bottle of brandy; and the traveler was at no expense whatever...."

"One who has become rich by his industry is neither admired nor envied by anyone. Theft is



Of all the houses Machado built in San Diego (1830-33) this was the first to have a shingle roof.

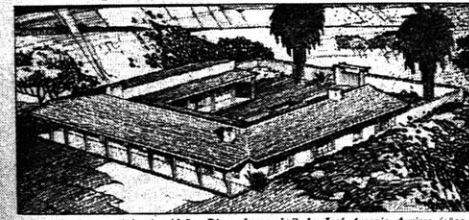


The adobe walls were more than 20 inches thick in José Antonio Estruñido's house, San Diego.

marrned them off successfully. Obtaining a sizeable piece of land in town, he decided to build five houses for himself and his daughters.

A number of things influenced the pattern of Machado's building. He had watched several

masons under construction. The Carrillo adobe was begun in 1810, the Estruñido adobe and Bardiñi adobe were built in 1824, the Lopez and Cruz adobes were about to get under way. One of Machado's daughters had married John C. Stewart, a shipmate of Richard Henry Dana



One of the largest adobes in old San Diego. It was built by José Antonio Aguirre (1825-30).

13

Fig. 37. From the Western Ranch Houses. Mid-nineteenth century architectural precedents.



Fig. 38. From the second pattern book published by Sunset, called A Sunset Book: Western Ranch Houses by Cliff May. This painting was accompanied by the following text:

"Everyone danced, from the patriarch to the 6-year old. This romantic painting by Alexander Harmer, executed in 1900, gives a glimpse of the carefree, sociable life that took place in the patios and corridors of the early ranch houses. The greater part of the family life went on here. Nobody stayed within the walls."

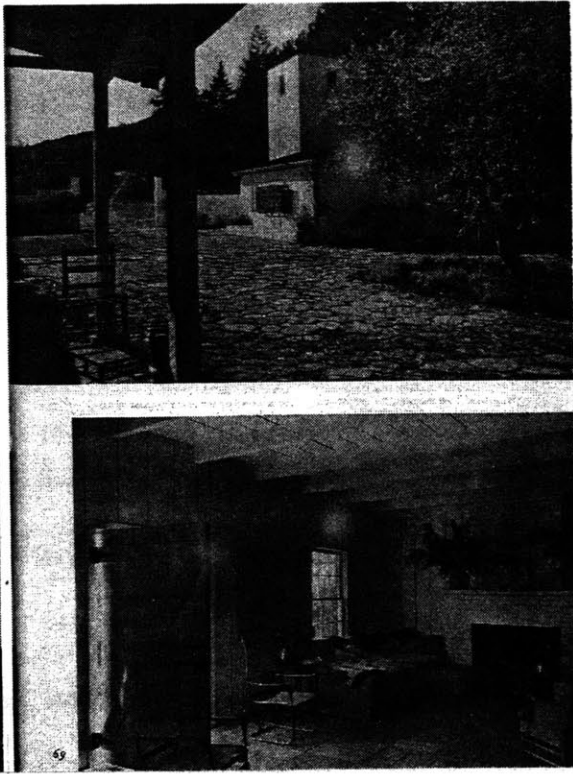
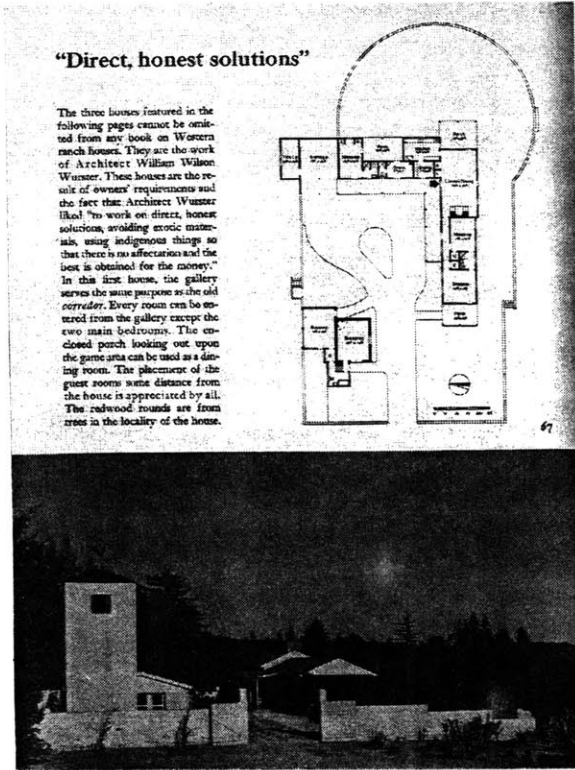


Fig. 39. The Gregory residence by Wurster as an example of ranch house simplicity.

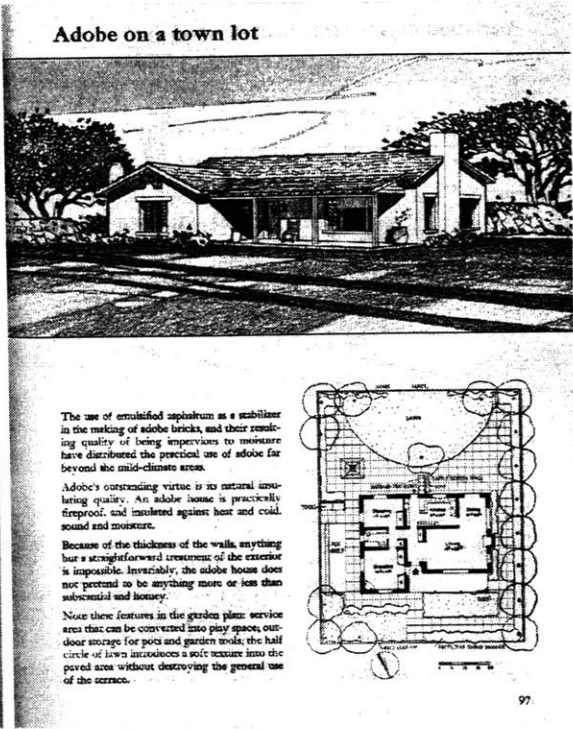
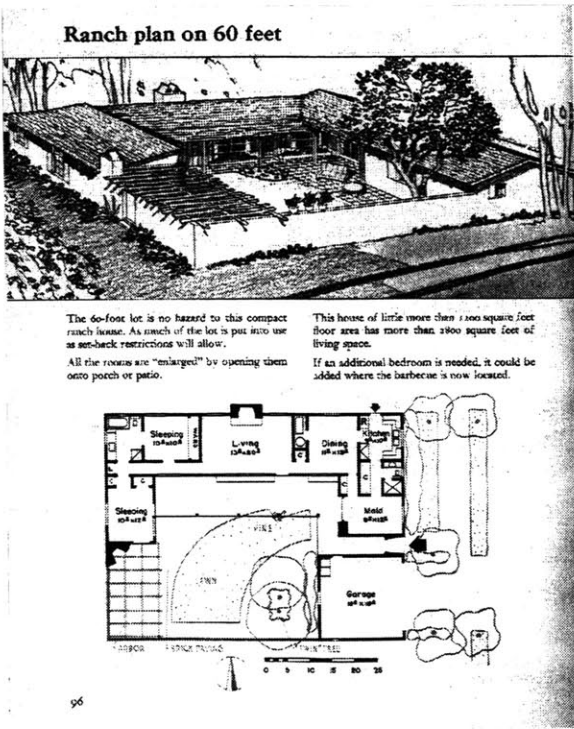
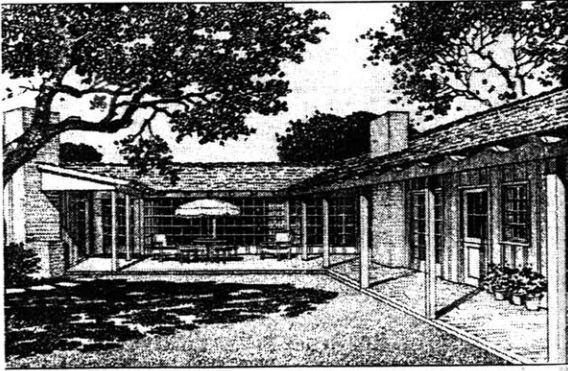


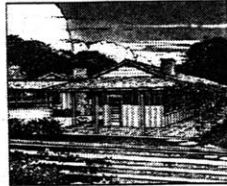
Fig. 40. The suburban lot as the context for the ranch house.

It's easy to expand the ranch house



The ease with which the ranch house can be enlarged is universally accepted as an advantageous factor of the ranch house form. It is probably true that almost any plan can be enlarged without undue expense if the future addition is planned at the time of first construction. However, the rambling nature of the ranch house permits inexpensive additions without careful pre-planning for the addition. If, for example, the usual wall-to-wall addition of the bedroom wing would sink out lights or call for an expensive hallway in the ordinary house plan, the addition could be made to the ranch house by adding the room or wing as an independent unit and connecting it with the original house by a covered passage. In many of the ranch houses of today, the old covered passage or outdoor hallway has been transformed into a gallery or glassed-in passageway.

68



The house shown here has grown by addition. The new bedroom wing is connected by a hallway that also serves as a glassed-in porch. Note how the additions form a well-protected patio.

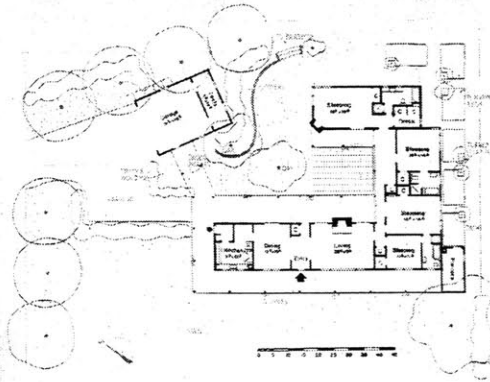
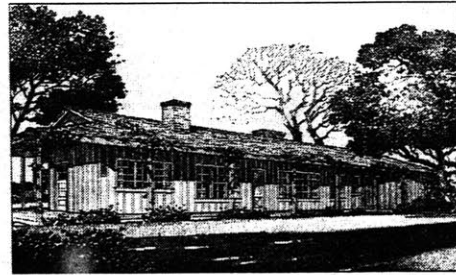


Fig. 41. The piecemeal quality of the ranch house suggests the possibility for incremental growth.

Possibilities of the ranch house

Will the new materials, new techniques in lighting and heating, need for greater flexibility in the use of space, the increasing use of glass, and other technological advancements, bring about radical changes in the ranch house? Will the development of new machines within the ranch house give it a machine-like atmosphere?

The best answers to such questions are in the preceding pages of this book. Ranch houses have been able to absorb everything our machines have produced without losing character.

Whenever the creation of a house was approached with simple directness, without striving for effect, rather to prove its historical past or to demonstrate the creative imagination of the designer, the result is a livable house, without a date line.

Another answer to the future direction of the ranch house can be found in the home featured in the following pages.

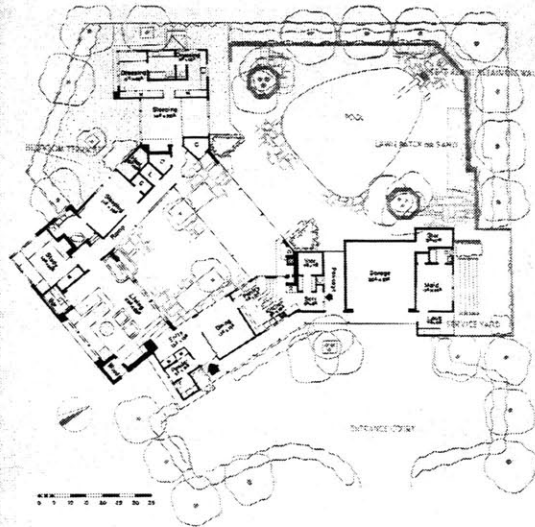
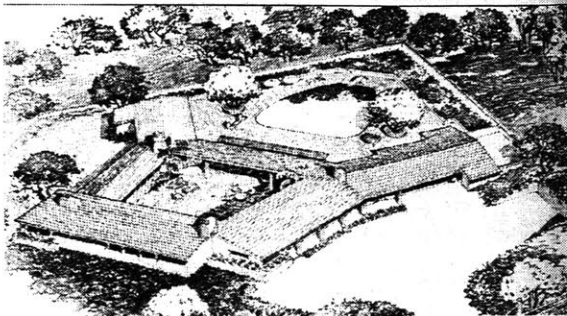
In this house, designer Cliff May brings his ranch-house thinking up to date. In this project, his background serves him well. His personal

heritage is rooted deep in California history. The *ranchito* is no trick word in his vocabulary. The names of the Spanish dogs are alive in his mother's memory. To visit her home is to step back through the years into the pleasant, gracious ways of Spanish California.

Cliff May has been able to see the ranch house as an idea in a way of living and therefore has felt no need to preserve its little surface labels. Respectful of the reasons for the old forms rather than the forms themselves, sensitive to the desires of people who seek ranch-house living, he has been quick to change whenever new materials or new construction methods suggested a better way of living.

This model house, therefore, is more than the usual simple house. It is the expression of a man deeply interested in exploring the full possibilities of ranch-house living. To check the plan and visit the house through a few illustrations will give you many ideas for your own home.

The house is to be built in a narrow valley. The view from the house is to the hills above it.



The entire unit is self-contained; all activities take place in and immediately around the house. The outdoor areas are so intimately joined with the house that they must be considered as extensions of the rooms of the house.

The patio, 28 by 30 feet, must be considered as

a room of the house. The covered porch, or loggia, 16 by 10 feet, takes care of outdoor living on occasions when the patio is inadequate.

Note how the site has been divided to take care of the various needs of the family. Motor court provides ample room for guest parking. Service

151

Fig. 42. The ranch house meets postwar demands.

great popularity of the design. In reality, most ranch-style houses had less square footage than the average house of the 1920's; but housewives saw an end their countless trips up and down stairs, and husbands liked the look of spaciousness, with fewer walls between rooms and a view of the backyard."⁶⁰

California had received great attention from the media, and this increased the Ranch houses popularity. "The Readers' Guide lists four times as many references to California domestic architecture as to that of any other state."⁶¹ Californians were building, as the census reported, an increase in dwellings of 57.2 percent between 1940 and 1950.⁶² As Hines recalls, "May's houses were extremely well-published in the immediate post-war years, although it was not so much architecture as attitude that was being extolled."⁶³ Hines goes on to say of the ranch house that their "modernness was not insistent," that they were flexible, informal, and represented the melding of the modern and traditional." While the popularity slowly wore off, an Western Living has persisted in many ways. One might regard that AIA Western Home Awards, inaugurated in 1957, and still in existence, as the legacy of the ranch house. (see Appendix D). The following is a list of the first jurors of 1957.

Thomas Church	Landscape Architect
Gardener Dailey	Architect
Charles Eames	Designer
Harwell Hamilton Harris	Architect
Carl Koch	Architect
George Pardee	Builder
Proctor Mellquist	Editor, <u>Sunset Magazine</u>

⁶⁰ Gwendolyn Wright Building the Dream: A Social History of Housing in America (Cambridge, The MIT Press, 1981): 251.

⁶¹ Thomas S. Hines, "The Search for the Postwar House," in Blueprints For Modern Living: History and Legacy of the Case Study Houses (Cambridge: The MIT Press, 1989): 172.

⁶² *Ibid.*, 176.

⁶³ *Ibid.*

THE SHAPING OF DOMESTIC SPACE

Inherent in the Ranch Style house was an outlook towards the domestic environment which Sunset considered part of its Western Living construct -- a generous plan spread out to dramatize views and create areas for outdoor living. Parallel to Sunset's exploration of this building type was another that perhaps did not receive as much attention. Beginning in the late 1930's, one sees the emergence of articles that look towards achieving the ideal relationship between land and home in the constraining and ubiquitous context of the suburban lot. While the development of the ranch style house concentrated on a house type, the inquiry followed in this chapter looks at how the shaping of one's domestic space, the land in this case, was in agreement with the construct of Western Living. As such, a theme of 'outdoor living,' will be studied in this chapter by paying close attention to a series of articles that focused on the garden and on the relationship between house and lot. Finally, because a highly instructional tone characterized this enterprise, a look at the education of the reader will attempt to summarize the extent of Sunset's method of operation.

The Garden Shaped

In his book, Borderland: Origins of the American Suburb: 1820-1939, John Stilgoe presents a review that looks at how popular magazine's have guided suburbanites in the shaping of "home and grounds" since the turn-of-the-century. In the end, he concludes that the magazines message seemed to be: "surely the man and woman who

shape their house and grounds might acquire a deeper love of structure and space."¹ But Stilgoe's review is telling of what prompted these magazine's to campaign for the transformation of the borderland. He mentioned one journalist who wrote that "the wonderful exercise provided by gardening" was like "the current allegiance to athleticism."² Another wrote that women could "strengthen their marriages and inspire their children by tackling projects with their husbands."³ An overriding concentration on the family and a person's well-being (physical and mental) seems to suggest that another force was in operation - one that looks towards values of family and morality. Already, this differs from Sunset's message of pioneering the land to attain maximum livability. Furthermore, Stilgoe's description of this movement as 'patriotic' does not fit a scene where people migrating westward were anxious to leave an establishment and create their own. Sunset's promotion of informality and the integration of the home and land seems to be in conflict with Stilgoe's cursory observation. Perhaps, this is the case because Stilgoe looked at eastern magazines. It is not unlikely that Sunset's distinct western agenda influenced its message towards the shaping of "home and grounds". This may be better understood with a theme that appeared in Sunset's articles, which may be referred to as 'outdoor living.'

To a certain extent, the outside (garden/backyard) and inside (interior of the house) were treated equally in Sunset's articles.; the aim was to use both places for living. A contrasting scenario to this would be a home as the main focus and an exterior (its landscape) serving merely as a setting. Further clarity is brought to this distinction if one looks at the function of an architectural element -- the 'picture window.' This is seen in the following observation by Fred E. H. Schroeder in his book Outlaw Aesthetics: Arts and the Public Mind:

¹ John R. Stilgoe, Borderland: Origins of The American Suburb, 1820-1939 (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1988): 267.

² Ibid.

³ Ibid.

"The unsophisticated people of America perversely took the glass and incorporated it into the democratic yard, where the house is the picture, not the yard. The window, with evergreen bushes beneath it, is often decorated with a lamp centered inside, or a large picture, mirror or whatnot [sic] shelf hung on the opposite wall so that the passerby can be treated to a doubly picturesque scene: the house and its plantings, the window and its contents. What the insider sees, peering around the lampshade, is the passerby."⁴

By contrast, the 'picture window' Sunset would promote resembled in function the type Schroeder commended: a window that framed the controlled vista. Sunset's pattern book, Sunset Western Ranch Houses, discussed the 'picture window' in the chapters, "The House Spreads Out to Get a View" and "Glass, Solid Walls, Oak Trees"; even the titles reflect this idea. The sprawling form of the ranch house and cognizance of the shady trees outside were important elements of the whole design. But in the case of the suburban lot, land did not run to infinity as it did in the acre -- it stopped at the fence. The idea that the inside and outside were equal would cause Sunset to look at the shaping of the 'grounds' more seriously. In fact, this attitude towards the land, fused with a desire for maximum livability, would yield a creative approach to landscaping, that envisioned the garden as an outdoor living room, hence the theme of 'outdoor living.' When Schroeder later commented that "there are exceptions, of course, not only in designer-planned yards, but in those of many design-conscious persons,"⁵ Sunset's instructional articles come to mind.

In a way, the western 'backyard' was the counterpart of the eastern 'basement.' By the 1920's, Americans living in suburbs had placed more importance on the personalization of their domestic environment. Gwendolyn Wright recalls this period as a time when, in

⁴ Fred E. H. Schroeder, Outlaw Aesthetics: Arts and the Public Mind (Bowling Green, Ohio: Bowling Green University Popular Press, 1977): 106.

⁵ Ibid.

an attempt to solve a housing problem, a surge of planned communities were introduced. She writes that "in the process, two conflicting characteristics --personalized design and uniform planning -- were hastily welded together."⁶ The most obvious means of personalization, the style of one's house, was not always alterable. And so, the backyard and the basement could be approached as a *tabula rasa*, where maximum livability was played out. This reflected a tradition of the American house, where the front was formal and public, and the back was informal and private, as seen in the canonic example, the Winslow residence by Frank Lloyd Wright. And so, Americans were to shape their domestic space in private. By the late 1920's, a renewed focus on the close-knot family -- and by heating manufacturers --encouraged the conversion of the basement into a recreational family room. The basement served as the suitable place to act out one's personalization needs well into the 1950's, as Witold Rybczynski has noted in his book Looking Around. He wrote: "It was in the basement that the apparent conventionality of suburban living was suspended and the personal idiosyncrasies of the family let loose -- in private. Here was the den, playroom, family room, or rec room, often decorated with an individual exuberance that would not have been out of place during the Gilded Age. [It is]an unfinished space, concealed from public view, and whose arrangement was left to the inclinations of the homeowners."⁷ As the basement was not part of the western house type, the need to personalize one's home was realized in the backyard. And so, the backyard became an important component of Western Living, beginning in the late 1930s.

Two articles that were showcased on the cover of Sunset, initiated the new focus on the backyard: "Build a Barbecue Bar," published in August 1937 (Fig. 43) and "Garden Shrine" published in September 1936. From the outset, attention to the backyard would

⁶ Gwendolyn Wright, Building the Dream: A Social History of Housing in America (Cambridge: The MIT Press, 1981): 193.

⁷ Witold Rybczynski, Looking Around: A Journey Through Architecture (New York: Viking Penguin, 1992): 6.

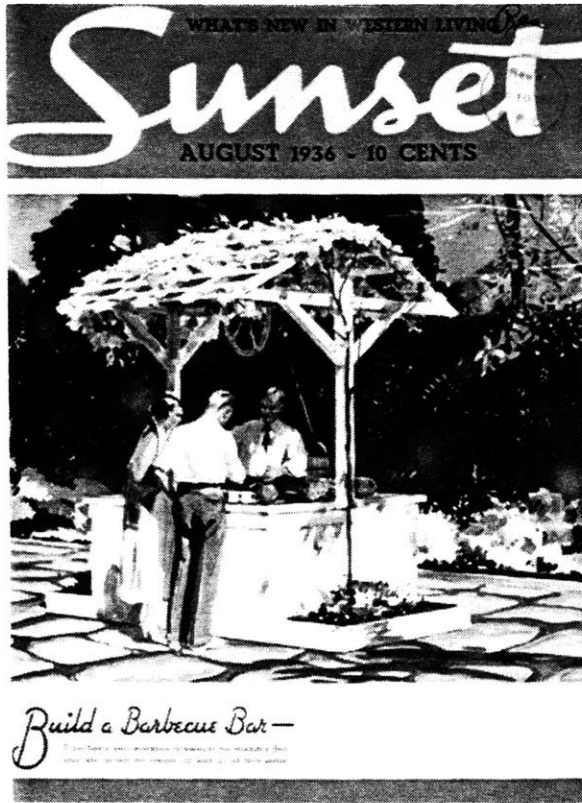


Fig. 43. Barbecuing introduced as a central part of Outdoor Living.

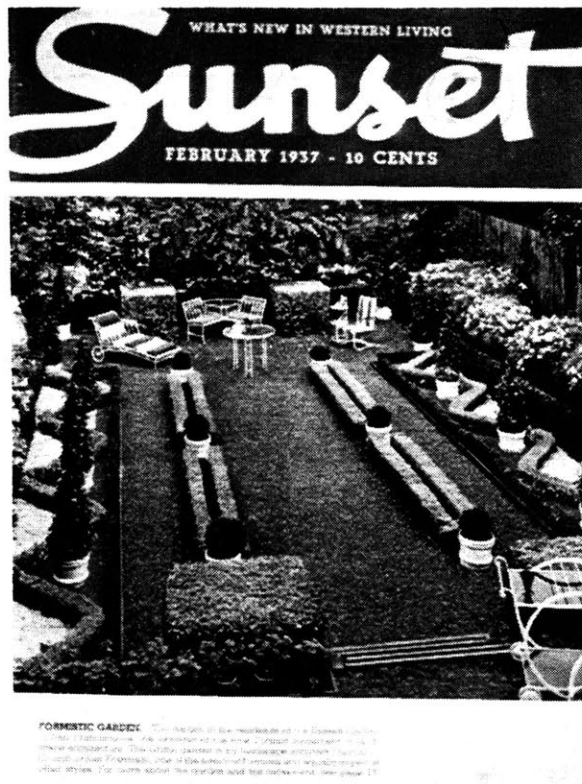


Fig. 44. Thomas Church and the "Formistic Garden" introduced on Sunset's cover.

entail a combination of living and dining features. Sunset would frequently feature a photograph of a garden table or a barbecue pit on its cover. A wave of garden activity would soon emerge, especially as it was promoted by Lovell and Hall's 1937-1942 Index to Handicrafts, Modelmaking and Workshop Projects. This book listed "sixteen recipes for garden sticks in addition to 103 garden ornaments -- plus various arbors, birdhouses, trellises, weathervanes and windmill models - many of the indexed references being to patterns in industrial education magazines."⁸ Sunset's presentation of the garden during these years has been remembered by many as eccentric. In "The Democratic Yard and Garden," Fred Schroeder calls the Japanese-inspired gardens promoted by Sunset "a contrived phenomenon of the mid-twentieth century,"⁹ But beyond the superficiality of these first articles, the theme of 'outdoor living' was to remain.

The San Francisco landscape architect Thomas Church was introduced in the February 1937 issue, with a cover piece called, "Formistic Garden." (Fig. 44) Church had studied at the University of California at Berkeley and the Harvard Graduate School of Design, where he had received beaux arts training. Inside, the Formist movement was introduced as "an important piece of progress . . . particularly adaptable to the West." The article continued to describe that "in the formist movement, the main things are form and color, with color somewhat secondary -- it's a garden that's beautiful even when nothing is blooming. The form is determined by practicality (the garden is meant to be lived in like a room) and derived from geometry. Colors are selected as carefully as an interior decorator selects his." The article went further to discuss how, due to the gardens ability to solve problems of compactness, the Formist garden would be appropriate for the city citizen as well as the owner of "All Outdoors." This article also featured other 'formistic' examples such as a naturalistic garden and modern house combination found in the

⁸ Fred E. H. Schroeder, Outlaw Aesthetics: Arts and the Public Mind (Bowling Green, Ohio: Bowling Green University Popular Press, 1977): 119.

⁹ *Ibid.*, 101.

Hofmann's residence designed by Richard Neutra.¹⁰ Church would appear regularly through the 1940's, and he would become an important contributor to Sunset's pattern books.

Church's approach to garden design began a surge of articles that looked at the possibilities of shaping one's backyard. In July 1940, one appeared in the "Space for Living" series conducted by TELESIS, called "Landscaping for Use" in 1940. (Fig. 45)" While the theory behind the design approach found in this article was not wholeheartedly 'formalist,' it taught the reader that there were many ways to shape one's garden. Many articles, usually found in the garden department, continued to center on this idea. Soon, the threshold between the garden outside, and the living space inside was brought to question. The July 1941 issue featured on its cover "How to find an extra vacation in your own back yard." The article inside, called "Indoors but Outdoors: More living on a 50-ft. lot," proposed smooth transitions from indoors to outdoors. (Fig. 46) The use of large plate glass, and angled wall planes that were supposed to give the house a "what's-around-the-corner feeling," were design techniques the author explained with plans, perspectives, and aerial views of sliced axonometrics. The author even recommended furniture for 'outdoor living rooms,' which included durable and pleasing rattan lamps, occasional tables with magazine racks, mildew-proof and water-repellent floor coverings, and even a portable pianos. These types of articles continued, such as "Try the Easy Way," published in the June 1946 issue. It presented a before and after case where Church showed how the relationship between the living room and the garden could be improved with landscaping techniques. In the May 1947 issue, a photograph of the Wildman garden designed by Church was accompanied by the following description: "When gardens become outdoor living rooms, many so-called landscaping problems are actually problems in room decoration." Sunset would explain landscaping techniques in a

¹⁰ Sunset 78 (February 1937): 20.

home-decorating language. Later, Church's book Gardens Are For People, published in 1955, an exceptional attempt to educate the popular masses on garden design, would complement Sunset's pattern books.

The Suburban Lot Redefined

An interest in maximum livability had also prompted Sunset to inquire into the use of the whole suburban lot. Sunset printed a series of articles that questioned the dimensions and setback ordinances that came with the suburban lot. Already a concern towards the appropriate proximity between lots had appeared in Sunset's articles. The February 1943 issue had featured an article called "Elbow Room" that illustrated a row of houses tightly spaced. (Fig. 47) Sunset presented its recommendation for the appropriate spacing by crossing out every other house. The author stated:

"Let's hope that after the war we shall be talking more in terms of acres as building sites than we do now. Perhaps the transportation of the future will permit us to find open space without the old penalties of commuting. Living in homes crowded wall to wall must be considered one of the sacrifices of war rather than one of the developments to come from it."¹¹

The second of four illustrations presented by Belluschi in the 1943 "Blueprints of Tomorrow" series had expressed a similar concern.¹² (Fig. 30) "No More Mass Housing. As Soon as Critical Materials are Eased... Individual Homes Again!"¹³ (Fig. 48) later appeared in an advertisement in August 1945. These and more articles soon prompted Sunset writers to inquire into the suburban lot with more interest.

¹¹ Sunset 90 (January 1943): 11.

¹² Sunset 90 (April 1943): 10.

¹³ Sunset 95 (August 1945), an advertisement.



LET'S KEEP ELBOW ROOM

Fig. 47. The appropriate proximity between houses is expressed for planting needs. It is said that: *"the acred elbow room of the Smith Ranch, near Santa Cruz, provides, generously, vegetables, plums, peaches, cherries, grapes, lemons, oranges, pears, figs, apples, and apricots."*

NO MORE MASS HOUSING

AS SOON AS CRITICAL MATERIALS ARE EASED...

INDIVIDUAL HOMES AGAIN!

Write for your catalog ITS FREE!

The STEVENSON COMPANY, Inc.
 720 Madison St., Seattle, Wash.

Dear Sir: Please send me, free, your booklet "It's a Good Idea" with illustrated suggestions for the 1955-1956 modifications to your 1954-1955 home. Also THE STEVENSON COMPANY is a leader in the field of kitchen, bathroom, and bedroom.

I am interested in your products and would like to receive your catalog I would like to see your catalog I would like to see your catalog

Name _____
 Address _____
 City _____ State _____

Fig. 48. An advertisement for a kitchen and bathroom laminate company joins the campaign for individual homes.

"Choosing Your Neighborhood" was the first article to look into the suburban lot in depth. It appeared in the July 1940 issue and was presented by TELESIS. (Fig. 49) Following a familiar instructional method, this article exhibited a variety of lot sizes and lot-to-street relationships, with 'good' and 'bad' characteristics noted for the reader. Important variants to *Western Living* were highlighted, such as views and exposure to the sun. In January 1945, another article that inquired into the suburban lot was published in Sunset, however, this one looked at the lot and its implications on 'outdoor living'. Its suggestive title, "How Much of your Lot Belongs to the Public?" challenged the conventions of setback laws.¹⁴ (Fig. 50) The author complained that these laws required too much area -- the front yard -- to go to waste. Of course, the real concern was that the backyard was not big enough. He suggested pushing the house to the very front of the lot, therefore leaving a small front yard and a bigger backyard. Sunset readers were encouraged to approach zoning officials with this suggestion. A sketch of a preferred setback law appeared for the reader; the proportional relationship between 'public' and 'outdoor living' was supported by another sketch that showed a landscaping proposal for the backyard. However, the exploration of the suburban lot's conventional use did not stop here.

In May 1947, Sunset featured an article called, "They live all over the Lot." It stated: "Once you let *Western Living* break out of the box house it's hard to stop it from flowing all over the lot."¹⁵ (Fig. 51) This was the ideal scenario for *Western Living* in a tight suburban lot. The proposal displayed five separate structures pushed to the perimeter of the lot, the center was left for a variety of outdoor recreation and living uses. A few more articles that explored the relationship of the house and the lot appeared in Sunset throughout the late 1940's. In the April 1948 issue, "For Better Use of House and Lot" presented the idea of maximum use of land by writing that "when a house fits the living

¹⁴ Sunset 94 (January 1945): 10-1.

¹⁵ Sunset 98 (April 1947): 54.

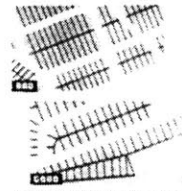
Choosing Your Neighborhood

By Frances A. Cook of *Telesis*

Remember, plans for home site should not only show the layout of the neighborhood but also show the design of the neighborhood in which they place their home? The primary objective of the architect is to make a plan that fits the physical layout of the site and the neighborhood.

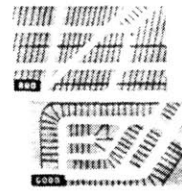
A careful study of the neighborhood is the first step in the selection of a site. The architect should study the neighborhood in which they place their home. The neighborhood in which they place their home should be a neighborhood in which they place their home.

1 - SHAPE AND SIZE OF LOT



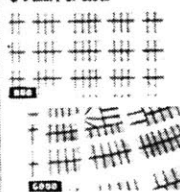
A long narrow lot is wasteful, difficult and costly to develop. For a maximum use of the lot, a proportion of 100 ft wide by 100 ft deep is ideal. A small lot is not a good lot as a maximum will give better lot for more than enough material.

2 - CHARACTER OF STREET



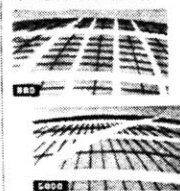
In the lot use a quiet street. If it is a busy street, the design should be such that the house is not directly on the street. Main thoroughfares should be on the side of the lot. A quiet street is a street that gives a sense of security.

3 - SHAPE OF BLOCK



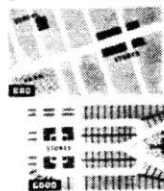
There is a long block with a central street. This is a good design because it gives a sense of security and a sense of community.

4 - TOPOGRAPHY AND VIEW



The most difficult and costly lot to build on is the one that slopes across the width rather than from front to back. For safety, convenience and appearance, the street should follow the contour rather than one straight up the hill so that your view is protected for sit-back protection.

5 - SCHOOLS, STORES AND PARKS



Every neighborhood should have its own shopping center conveniently located within walking distance and with no more than a few minutes drive to school. Every lot of housing for a family should have a view of a park or a school.

6 - ZONING AND A MASTER PLAN



When buying a neighborhood that is being protected by a good zoning plan and a master plan, the use of zoning and a master plan should never affect the value and quality of your home. Likewise, any new zoning should have a master plan providing for the safe and stable development of the community.

A master plan for the area should be already made or at least be under way by an active planning commission, either city or county before you purchase. The master plan should include a growing plan, a general land use plan, a recreation plan, and certainly a plan for future streets and highways. With a carefully prepared and executed plan for the growth of the community, the neighborhood in which you build will always be assured protection from deterioration and obsolescence.

It cannot be overemphasized that the selection of the neighborhood in which you build or buy is a very important decision before a final decision.

Fig. 49. TELESIS asks: "how many persons think of the design of the neighborhood in which they place their home?"

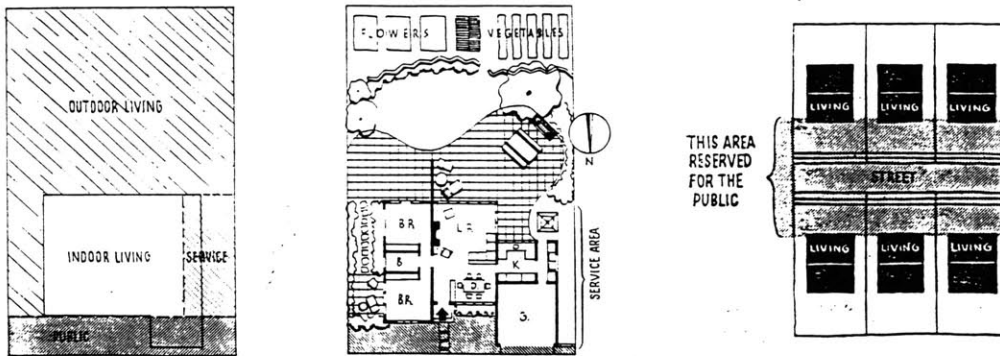


Fig. 50. From "How Much of Your Lot Belongs to the Public?"

habits of a family, its size make little difference."¹⁶ Its message was clear: as the ranch house sprawled, so should the home in the lot. The proposed scheme that accompanied this story was presented in the 'before' and 'after' scenario:

"Before. Plot plan left house isolated on lot. After. All the site is used now. The large lawn has been separated into areas of various family activities. Every room of the house has a view of the garden."¹⁷

The crux of this solution was remarkable. In the half-acre scenario, the ranch house would spread to dramatize the view; in the suburban lot, the house was broken into parts and pushed to the perimeter of the lot forming an ambiguous courtyard -- the captured land in the middle was left for viewing and for 'outdoor living.' (Fig. 52) This was the ultimate way of injecting "value into the land." For many reasons, this idea was destined to be short-lived. It was unrealistic when it came to setback laws. Though these explorations would be stymied by the reality of planned suburbs, and ultimately, standards in building, the reader was led through a design investigation that aimed to question any convention that conflicted with Western Living.

The Education of the Reader

Sunset's ability to develop a department to better serve its readers had been seen in the past. And so, "Sunset Service Bureau" of 1916 evolved into the "New Home Building Service of Western Families" in 1930. The reason being that attention had shifted from the general development of the West to the increasing need for new homes in the early years of the Depression. Sunset had proven an ability to direct its editorial focus to meet

¹⁶ Sunset 100 (April 1948): 28-9.

¹⁷ Sunset 100 (April 1948): 29.

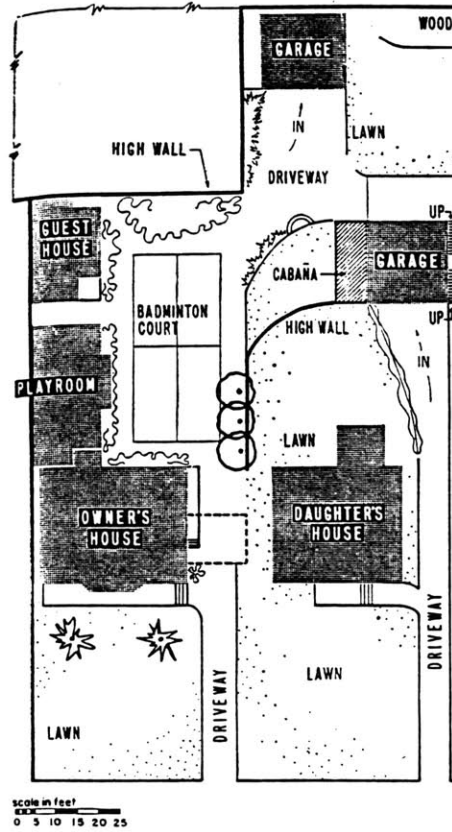


Fig. 51. From "They Live All Over The Lot".

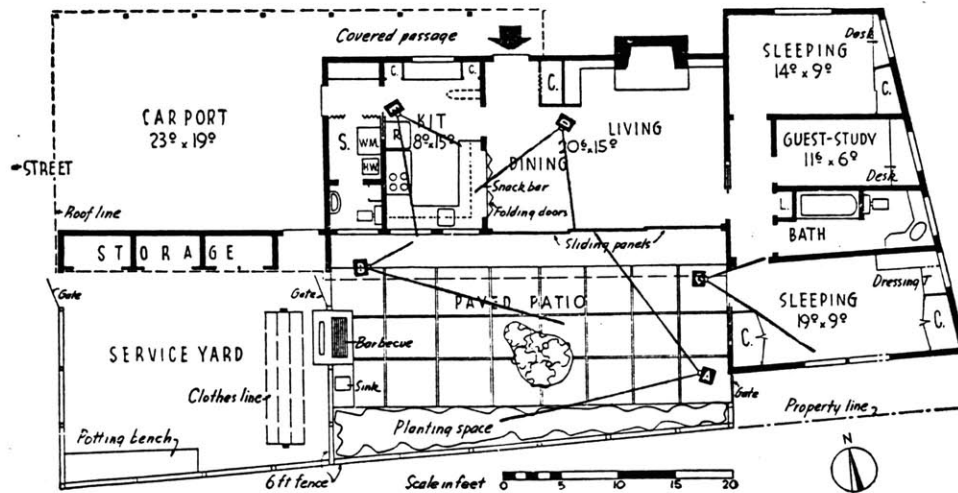


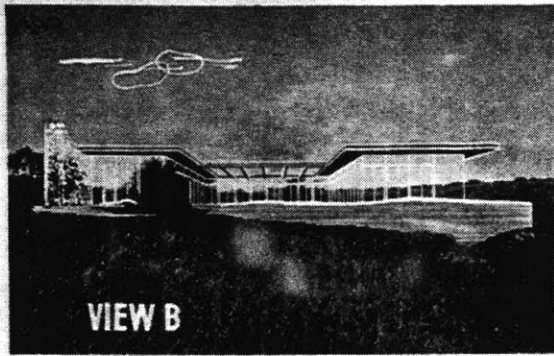
Fig. 52. From "Small House Opens Up To Get More Living Space". The author stated: "the difference in cost between the box house... and a house of the type pictured here is surprisingly little."

the demands of its audience. One also saw that the consistency of a 'how-to' and 'you-can-do-it' rhetoric also kept an understanding between Sunset and the readers. Basically, that the readers were willing to try almost anything the magazine would initiate. With this in mind, another development was seen in Sunset after World War II. This would culminate the reader-editor dialogue that Sunset had cultivated for nearly half a century.

The last articles of the "Blueprints of Tomorrow" series were representative of the final development of Sunset's commitment to instruct the reader in the area of home planning and design. The ninth in the series, "How to Get Ready for Your House of Tomorrow," by Mario Corbett, aimed to aid the impatient postwar home planner. (Fig. 53) With its cartoons of home-owners initiating a building process, it suggested and taught the reader to participate in the groundbreaking of the land. This entailed, among other things, building a barbecue, planting trees, surveying the land, and finally, making "a reasonably accurate contour map" of the home site. The irrigation of a pond was also offered as another way to prepare the site for home-building after the war. "Home Engineering" was the proper locution for this activity; its definition was illustrated by sketches of family members participating in every activity. The eleventh article in the "Blueprints for Tomorrow" series called "How To Plan Your House of Tomorrow," began to list certain aspects of home-life that the home-builder should consider. In many ways, Sunset was asking the readers to prepare their own list of 'must haves' and 'don't wants'. Number twelve in the series, "How To Look at a House," continued the education process with more planning principles.

The education process that the Sunset reader experienced had been increasing in sophistication. It developed with a series of articles centering on problem-solving and principles of planning. Themes of 'add-ons' evolved into 'built-ins,' and then the 'before-and-after' testimonies appeared. By the early 1940's, Sunset was focusing on the

YOUR HOUSE OF TOMORROW



Here, however, you will find them in good place. All important rooms of the house open to the light for we want every

Monday people become serious business and more zealous for their own betterment. The first thing was to live with the best, and associated with it, make the dimensions of the study study down every man. The same they knew they would want to live with in all manner. When we started finally to plan the house itself, the same just naturally began to grow and take shape out of the kind of life the Romans knew they would want to live here; they had thought a lot about that. It was all in the past.



The actual building cost was, but that is not of the advantage. We feel that there are many details - linen closet, storage space, kitchen arrangements, sleeping and bath, open-plan are made to make by definite intention and a lot of time spent thoughtfully walking around the house in their minds, as it

was. Moreover, too, the question of which the house is to be built and the equipment that is to go into it make these new ideas on the subject something to consider seriously, such things as to what will be written into the program, then after the war as they get to the market with us there too.



All the material there with it that there is a definite number plan, which integrates house and garden and land. And there is also a way to do the most plan of those in which to do it.

The very best part of the material in the bathroom, which has, as you can see, becomes a part of the house. This is important, because it is to be the center for all the work, and the Romans and their friends intend to work in good proportion and use of fun, in the tradition of government of Rome.

There will be a lot of things that will be done, but it is to be done. The program that has to be worked out, studied and checked. The program shown on the plan is to be worked out, shown possible, leaving out one of the things that the program of house building is a particular kind of attention, even in the least detail and detail. The of wall, bathroom or bath, there is a room in the house that the Romans will find an excellent, really, the program.



There is a lot of things that will be done, but it is to be done. The program that has to be worked out, studied and checked. The program shown on the plan is to be worked out, shown possible, leaving out one of the things that the program of house building is a particular kind of attention, even in the least detail and detail. The of wall, bathroom or bath, there is a room in the house that the Romans will find an excellent, really, the program.

That a landscape and, money when, should and Rome already planned for.

Fig. 53. From "Blueprints of Tomorrow," published in the December 1943 issue.

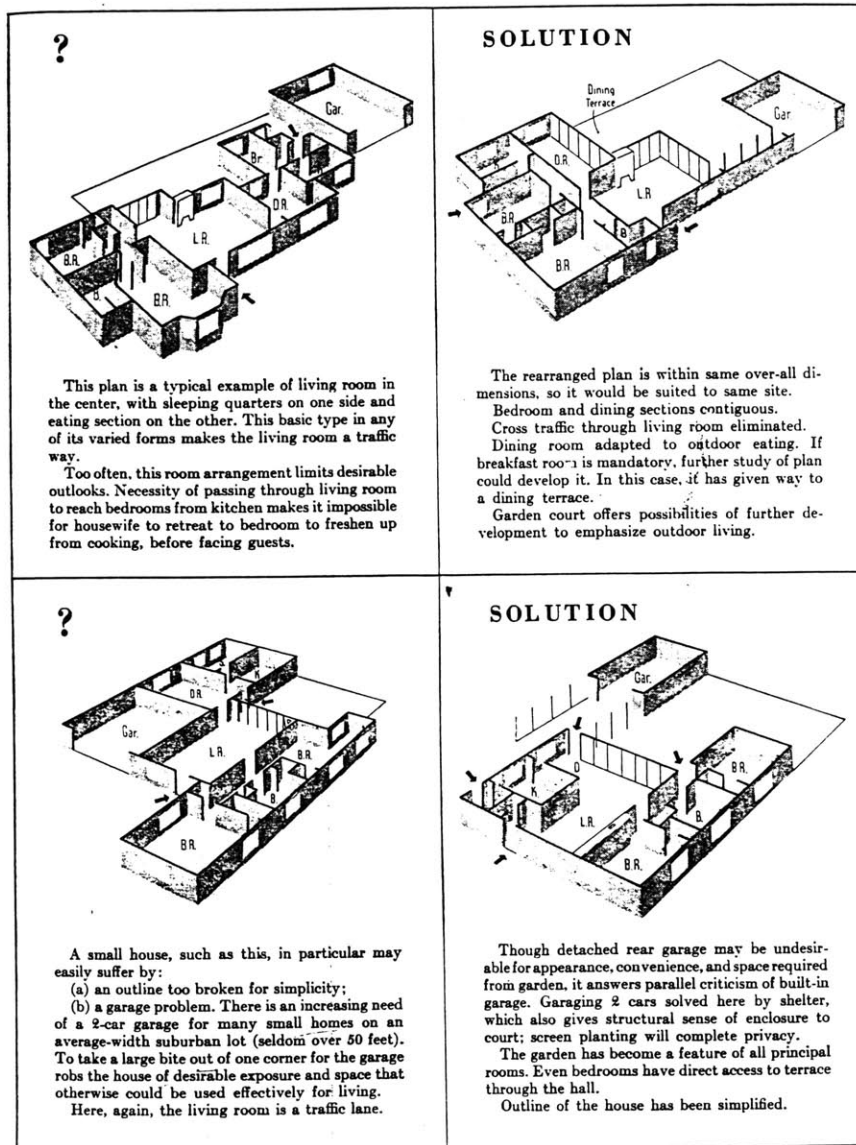
intricacies of home-design, aspects that went beyond the neat additions and plausible renovations. One began to see articles like "Plan Problems: Studies in Easier Living -- Outdoor Rooms: Increasing the Living Areas," which appeared in 1940.¹⁸ (Fig. 54) This article presented a complex situation of traffic flow and function problems of a single family home that, when resolved, would yield a better rapport between indoor living and outdoor living. In this particular case, one sees that the problem-solution case, presented with an axonometric, was not an image that was meant to provide any visual stimulus -- it was only meant to instruct.

Another type of article that appeared from time to time, that also brought another dimension to home-planning, was that which focused on the incremental growth of the house. Already in September 1937, *Sunset* had published an article called "Growing Home" (Fig. 55) The point that was made was that a home did not have to be a finished product when it was built. Although this was surely common knowledge, many readers must have dealt with 'add-ons,' what was fundamentally important here, was that it was presented as a sophisticated design process. In many ways, it exhibited ingenuity, cleverness, and a sense of a promising future. This design process was usually billed as something that would follow a growing income. More articles that presented this theme would follow. In August 1938, *Sunset* featured an article called, "A House That Grows & Grows: From Little to Big House in 5 Easy Stages." The house is the Lowe House in Altadena, California, the first commission by architect Harwell Hamilton Harris. Although the house was actually built complete as a whole in one step, it was featured as a design that could evolve with time. Later, the December 1945 issue presented the "Expandable House," which was pre-planned to grow, step by step. A similar quality had been seen in the Ranch Style house, in the article "The Changeable, Flexible Ranch House," published in 1944.

¹⁸ *Sunset* 84 (April 1940): 35.

OUTDOOR ROOMS

Increasing the *Living Areas*



APRIL 1940

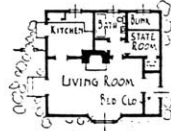
35

Fig. 54. Sunset readers are taught to maximize "outdoor living" through proper space planning.

GROWING HOME



IN THE BEGINNING. One way to solve the housing problem is to build a house that grows with your family and your income. Above, the first unit in such a house. It can be built for approximately \$1500



The same house—"grown up." The garage wing, with breakfast nook and covered passage, can be added for about \$500; the bedroom wing (with basement below) for about \$1000



A House That Grows

(Sketches and plans above)

New ideas for inexpensive homes are popping in many parts of the West. Last month (page 30) we showed 3 "Package Houses" from Los Angeles. For this month, an idea comes from the Northwest. It's the "Growing Home," designed by architect Howard H. Riley of Seattle for the West Coast Lumbermen's Assn.

The practical thing about the Growing Home is that it can be built in units.

The initial unit, in itself, is suitable for a summer camp, a weekend cottage,

or as a year 'round home for a young couple starting off on a limited budget. Later on it's easy to add the other units. The plans above show how simply it can be done.

Officials of the West Coast Lumbermen's Assn. estimate that this unit can be built for a basic cost of \$1500, in Seattle, though this figure may vary in other sections.

By special arrangement, *Sunset* readers may obtain blueprints and specifications from the West Coast Lumbermen's Assn., 364 Stuart Building, Seattle. For the initial unit, the cost is \$5; for the 2 additional units, add \$2.50. Mention *Sunset* when you write.

SUNSET

Fig. 55. A weekend cottage turns into a two-bedroom home.

The editor's of Sunset finally expressed their intentions in printing articles of this type. In 1946, "There is No Time to Build a House, but . . .," stated "This is also the time to put into practice the lessons learned by those who have found the true meaning of Western Living." The articles would continue to become more instructional by showing people how to design with photographs of models and guides to drawing. In 1947, "Room vs. Space" instructed the reader through photographs of a plan and a model. (Fig. 56) A model which was not complete -- it crumbled away towards the middle -- exhibited that it was in a 'working' state. That one could visualize walls and floors, but that they were not permanent, and could change if necessary. At times, the instructions were very ambitious. This was seen with articles such as "To Every Man and Woman Who Has Ever Drawn a Floor Plan,"¹⁹ and "Models Help You Solve Your Planning Problems".²⁰ (Fig. 57) One of the last articles of this type to be published asked the reader to draw complex forms. "Yes . . . You Can Landscape Your Own Home if You're Not Afraid To Draw a Line or Two,"²¹ encouraged the reader to test his or her limits. (Fig. 58)

¹⁹ *Sunset* 100 (April 1948): 20.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, 24.

²¹ *Ibid.*, 26-7.

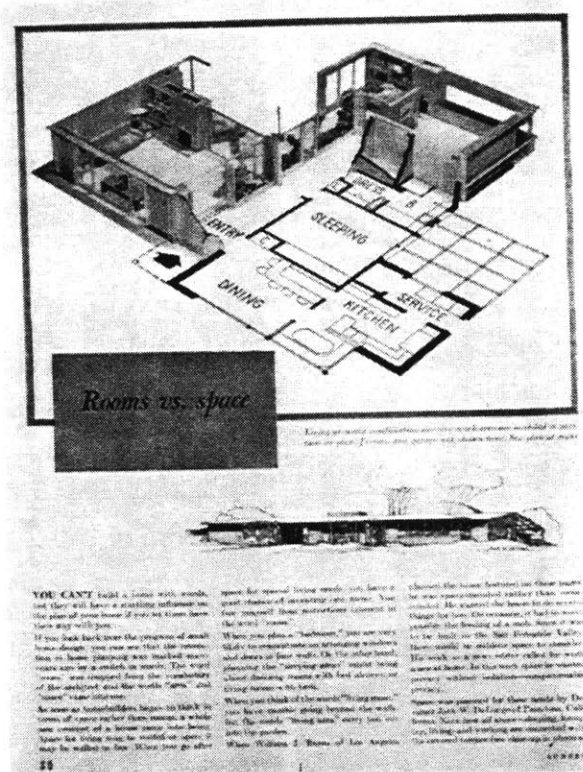


Fig. 56. Space-planning involves three-dimensional investigations.

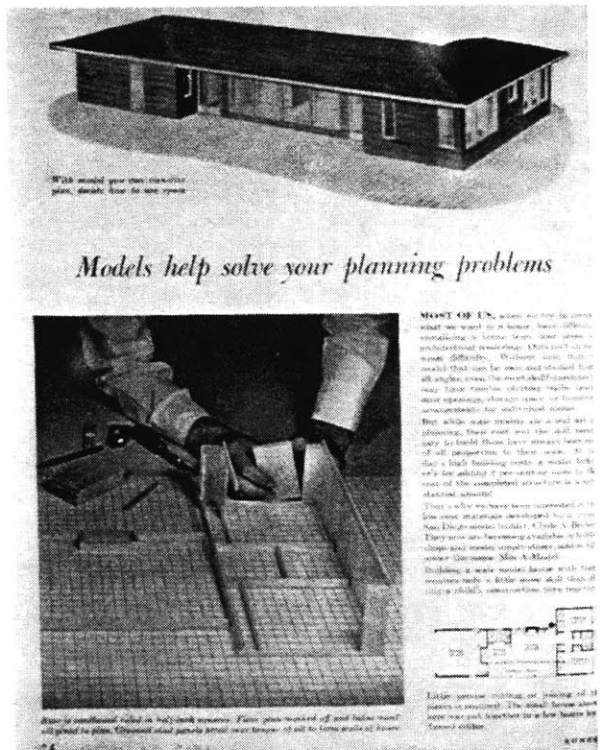


Fig. 57. "The small house shown here was put together in a few hours by a Sunset editor".

Garden Number 1

ORGANIZATION

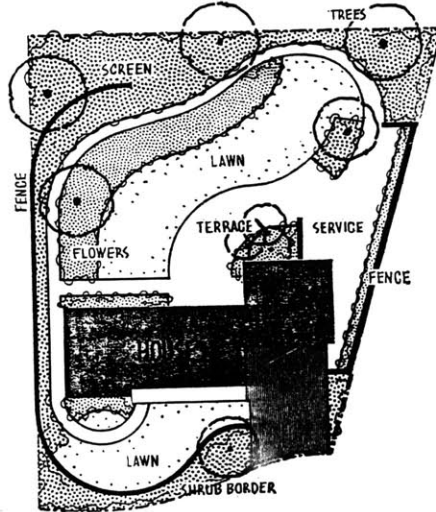
Concentrated planting area offers opportunity for diversified plantings. Garden for cut flowers, space for vegetables, shrubs, vines, and trees can be organized.

ENCLOSURE

Fence relates front garden to back garden, gives privacy to front; only partial enclosing to the rear. Such partial fences give needed privacy even before plantings are established. They also prevent a boxed-in feeling.

PAVING

Main terrace includes service yard, space for clothes reel, space for children's all-weather play surface, space for storage or wood, etc. Garden path gives opportunity to move around area in any kind of weather. Makes for easier gardening. Path ties together front and rear, same as fence.

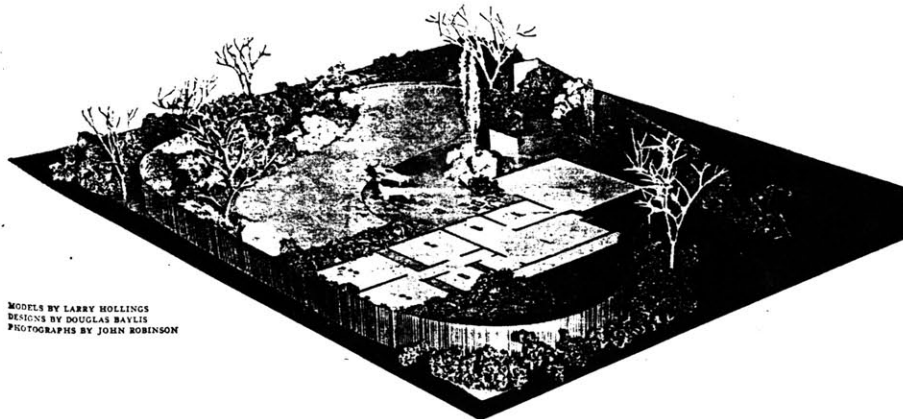
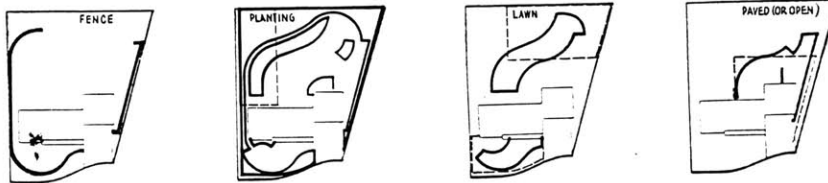


Large, free curves make good lines . . . but stay away from wiggly "naturalistic" shapes. Plan to keep your garden under control

26

SUNSET

Exciting shapes come from organized thinking plus a free pencil



MODELS BY LARRY HOLLINGS
DESIGNS BY DOUGLAS BAYLIS
PHOTOGRAPHS BY JOHN ROBINSON

MAY 1948

27

Fig. 58. "Yes... you can landscape your own home... if you're not afraid to draw a line or two".

*

By the 1950s, activity in Sunset's home department decreased in intensity -- the magazine would never again investigate a house type as it had during the 1930s and 1940s. In retrospect, Sunset had accomplished more than it set out to, for even outside the western states it served, the Ranch Style house had become one of the most popular postwar houses. In the context of this thesis, an analysis of the magazine itself revealed two characteristics of Sunset's method of operation: a steadily maturing agenda led by a Western Living construct and a developing editor-reader dialogue. One may also posit from this study that the magazine was responsible as an agent of public discourse. It was shaped by its community and it shaped its community in return. However, while prescriptive in its intent to characterize an ideal for living, and 'thinking' in the West, other aspects set Sunset apart from the typical popular home magazine. Sunset's ability to hold an otherwise 'academic' discussion regarding the postwar house and the open-forum rhetoric it cultivated for nearly half a century were significant factors in its search for the western house. But qualifying the success of the magazine entails another type of investigation as well, one that measures Sunset's role as an operative variant of architectural discourse in a larger context.

A study of Sunset in relation to other home and professional magazines widens the spectrum of this inquiry and points to a discussion regarding the potential influence of the home magazine as an interface between the architectural community and society. For example, in the introduction to Blueprints for Modern Living, a book that reflected on the Case Study Program conducted by Arts & Architecture, Elizabeth T. Smith asked "why several of the most inspired Case Study designs were never realized, and why the program did not venture more fully -- or successfully -- into multiple housing."²² Already

²² Elizabeth T. Smith, "Introduction," Blueprints For Modern Living: History and Legacy of the Case Study Houses (Cambridge: The MIT Press, 1989): 13.

this thesis revealed that a discussion of prefabrication had been conducted for the reader by Sunset in its "Blueprints of Tomorrow" series two years prior to the Case Study Program. But Sunset's inquiry looked toward reconciling traditional and modern building methods, and the fact that the magazine saturated a larger audience, suggests that Sunset's agenda was heard.

On the other hand, a further investigation of Sunset's inner workings may reveal aspects of the magazine's mode of operation that were not revealed by this inquiry. The principal players -- editors, writers, contributors -- must be looked at. For example, who generated the "you-can-have-complete-control-of-your-home-design" theme? Who selected the architects that appeared consistently throughout the 1930s and 1940s, architects like Wurster and Belluschi? The similarities between Sunset's format and that of other professional and academic texts also deserve attention. A study of Sunset as it relates to the present also forces us to look beyond the ubiquitous Ranch Style house and the backyard culture it influenced and look toward larger issues, such as the American perception of domesticity. What effect did Sunset have on the homebuilders' understanding of how they can shape their own homes? And pertinent to the architectural community, what are the implications of this in regard to the role of the architect?

As Sunset's 100th anniversary nears, it becomes clear that an assessment of its historical activity is of timely importance. The home magazine has traditionally received little historiographic attention. Although the climate today is different from that of the Great Depression and World War II periods, the single-family house is under scrutiny once again. A further study of Sunset's method of operation as it compared to other home and professional magazines may begin to establish a framework for discussing the home magazine's role in the architectural community.

APPENDIX I

AIA Western Home Awards Jurors: 1957-1993²³

1957	Thomas Church	Landscape Architect
	Gardner Dailey	Architect
	Charles Eames	Designer
	Harwell Hamilton Harris	Architect
	Carl Koch	Architect
	George Pardee	Builder
	Proctor Mellquist	Editor, <u>Sunset</u> Magazine
1959	Vladimir Ossipoff	Architect
	Hugh A. Stubbins	Architect
	Neil A. Conner	Architect
	Alexander Girard	Architect-designer
	Thomas Church	Landscape architect
	Paul Hayden Kirk	Architect
	Proctor Mellquist	Editor, <u>Sunset</u> Magazine
1961	Robert Alexander	Architect
	Fred Bassetti	Architect
	Thomas Church	Landscape architect
	Henry Dreyfuss	Designer
	John Carl Warnecke	Architect
	Minoru Yamasaki	Architect
	Proctor Mellquist	Editor, <u>Sunset</u> Magazine

²³ from the files of Daniel P. Gregory, senior writer, Sunset magazine.

1963	Harris Armstrong	Architect
	Edward L. Barnes	Architect
	Lawrence Halprin	Landscape architect
	Dorothy W. Liebes	Designer
	Victor Steinbrueck	Architect
	Calvin C. Straub	Architect
	Proctor Mellquist	Editor, <u>Sunset</u> Magazine
1965	Henrik Bull	Architect
	Thomas Church	Landscape architect
	Edward Killingsworth	Architect
	Peter Blake	Architect and editor
	Robin Boyd	Architect
	Proctor Mellquist	Editor, <u>Sunset</u> Magazine
1967	Kevin Roche	Architect
	John Burchard	Educator
	Donn Emmons	Architect
	Fumihiko Maki	Architect
	A. O. Baumgardner	Architect
	Robert Royston	Landscape Architect
	Proctor Mellquist	Editor, <u>Sunset</u> Magazine
1969	Charles W. Moore	Architect
	A. Quincy Jones	Architect
	Hector Mestre	Architect
	John Morse	Architect
	Ezra Stoller	Photographer
	Peter Walker	Landscape architect
	Proctor Mellquist	Editor, <u>Sunset</u> Magazine

1971	Hugh Hardy	Architect
	Thomas Church	Landscape architect
	Arthure Charles Erickson	Architect
	Bennie M. Gonzales	Architect
	Raymond Kappe	Architect
	Barbara Stauffacher Solomon	Graphics designer
	Proctor Mellquist	Editor, <u>Sunset</u> Magazine
1973	Cliff May	Designer
	John Andrews	Architect
	Eudorah Moore	Curator of Design
	David A. McKinley, Jr.	Architect
	Donlyn Lyndon	Architect
	Edward L. Williams	Landscape architect
	David Hartley	Building Editor, <u>Sunset</u> Magazine
1975	Joseph Esherick	Architect
	Deborah Sussman	Designer
	Thomas R. Vreeland, Jr.	Architect
	Paul Rudolph	Architect
	Alan Liddle	Architect
	Lee Sharfman	Landscape architect
	Nancy Davidson	Building Editor, <u>Sunset</u> Magazine
1977	Pietro Belluschi	Architect
	John Andrews	Architect
	Ellen Perry Berkeley	Architectural critic
	Henrik Bull	Architect
	Lawrence Halprin	Landscape architect
	Charles W. Moore	Architect
	Nancy Davidson	Building Editor, <u>Sunset</u> Magazine

1979	Judith Chafee	Architect
	Angela Danadjieva	Architect
	Peter Dominick	Architect
	John Dreyfus	Architectural critic
	James Oliver	Architect
	Paul Thoryk	Architect
	Nancy Davidson	Building Editor, <u>Sunset</u> Magazine
1981	Susan Bragstad	Architect
	Angela Danadjieva	Architect
	Frank O. Gehry	Architect
	Wendell Lovett	Architect
	Esther McCoy	Architectural historian
	Stanley Tigerman	Architect
	Richard B. Morrall	Building Editor, <u>Sunset</u> Magazine
1983	Arne Bystrom	Architect
	Hugh Newell Jacobson	Architect
	Sally B. Woodbridge	Architectural historian
	William Turnbull, Jr.	Architect
	Antoine Predock	Architect
	Rob Wellington Quigley	Architect
	Richard B. Morrall	Building Editor, <u>Sunset</u> Magazine
1985	Tina Beebe	Interior designer
	William P. Bruder	Architect
	Conrad Buff III	Architect
	Richard Cardwell	Architect
	E. Fay Jones	Architect
	Daniel Solomon	Architect

1987	Pamela Burton	Landscape architect
	Rodney Friedman	Architect
	Ron Goldman	Architect
	Glenn Murcutt	Architect
	Edward B. Sawyer, Jr.	Architect
	Gordon Walker	Architect
	Richard B. Morrall	Building Editor, <u>Sunset Magazine</u>
1989	Frank Anton	Publisher, <u>Builder Magazine</u>
	Alfred Newman Beadle	Architect
	James Cutler	Architect
	Graham Gund	Architect
	Gere Kavanaugh	Designer
	Barton Phelps	Architect
	Richard B. Morrall	Building Editor, <u>Sunset Magazine</u>
1991	Steven D. Ehrlich	
	Barbara Goldstein	
	Bobbie Sue Hood	
	Robert Hull	
	Edward M. Jones	
	Mark Simon	
1993	Robert Campbell	<u>Boston Globe</u>
	Daniel P. Gregory	Senior Writer, <u>Sunset Magazine</u>
	Linda Jewell	Landscape architect
	William Leddy	Architect
	Charles Robert Schiffner	Architect
	Edward Weinstein	Architect
	Buzz Yudell	Architect

ILLUSTRATIONS

Figure

1. Sunset 80 (May 1938): 3, (BPL).
2. Sunset 4 (April 1900), cover, (BPL).
3. Sunset 9 (October 1902), cover, (BPL).
4. Sunset 16 (February 1906), cover, (BPL).
5. Sunset 17 (May 1906), cover, (BPL).
6. Sunset 21 (June 1908)
7. Sunset 24 (January 1910), cover, (BPL).
8. Sunset 37 (October 1916), cover, (BPL).
9. Sunset 39 (October 1917), cover, (BPL).
10. Sunset 50 (June 1923), cover, (BPL).
11. Sunset 50 (January 1923), cover, (BPL).
12. Sunset 60 (May 1928), cover, (BPL).
13. Sunset 63 (September 1929), cover, (BPL).
14. Sunset 65 (July 1930), cover, (BPL).
15. Sunset 66 (April 1931), cover, (BPL).
16. Sunset 71 (November 1933), cover, (BPL).
17. Sunset 77 (July 1936), cover, (BPL).
18. Sunset 79 (October 1937), cover, (BPL).
19. Sunset 95 (August 1945), cover, (BPL).
20. Sunset 85 (January 1940): 20.
21. Sunset 32 (January 1914): 20.
22. Sunset 36 (January 1916): 48, (BPL).
23. Sunset 66 (May 1931): 19, (BPL).
24. Sunset 82 (February 1939): 51, (BPL).
25. Sunset 81 (October 1938): 20, (BPL).
26. Sunset 78 (February 1937): 13, (BPL).
27. Sunset 82 (May 1939): 34-5, (BPL).
28. Sunset 86 (March 1941): 14, (BPL).
29. Sunset 86 (June 1941): 19, (BPL).
30. Sunset 90 (April 1943): 10-1 (BPL).
31. Sunset 90 (March 1943): 12 (BPL).

32. Sunset 91 (November 1943): 14, (BPL).
33. Arts & Architecture 61 (July 1944): 29.
34. House & Garden 86 (December 1944): 75.
35. Sunset 92 (June 1944): 11.
36. Sunset 93 (July 1944): 11.
37. Sunset Western Ranch Houses, 11-3.
38. Western Ranch Houses by Cliff May, 11.
39. Sunset Western Ranch Houses, 140-1.
40. Sunset Western Ranch Houses, 96-7.
41. Sunset Western Ranch Houses, 68-9.
42. Sunset Western Ranch Houses, 150-1.
43. Sunset 77 (August 1936), cover, (BPL).
44. Sunset 78 (February 1937), cover, (BPL).
45. Sunset 85 (July 1940): 14-5, (BPL).
46. Sunset 87 (July 1941): 18, (BPL).
47. Sunset 90 (January 1943): 11.
48. Sunset 95 (August 1945): 20, (BPL).
49. Sunset 85 (July 1940):16, (BPL).
50. Sunset 94 (January 1945): 10-3.
51. Sunset 98 (May 1947): 55.
52. Sunset 99 (August 1947): 20.
53. Sunset 91 (December 1943): 13, (BPL).
54. Sunset 84 (April 1940): 35.
55. Sunset 79 (September 1937): 20.
56. Sunset 98 (February 1947): 30, (BPL).
57. Sunset 100 (April 1948): 24, (BPL).
58. Sunset 100 (April 1948): 26-7.

(BPL) Courtesy of the Trustees of the Public Library of the City of Boston
 Photography by John F. Cook, Massachusetts Institute of Technology

All other illustrations were photoduplicated by the author of this thesis.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Magazine Committee, Magazine and Circulation Trends: 1940-1971, New York: Association of National Advertisers, 1972.

Bushnell, Richards E. "Saga of *Sunset*: Granddaddy of Western Regionals," Media History Digest, Spring-Summer, Vol. 6, no. 2, 1986.

California Arts & Architecture, September 1940.

Church, Thomas. Gardens Are For People. second edition, New York: McGraw-Hill Company, 1955.

Gephard, David. "Introduction: The Bay Area Tradition," Bay Area Houses. New York: Oxford University Press, 1976.

Goldstein, Barbara, ed., Arts & Architecture: The Entenza Years. Cambridge, The MIT Press, 1990.

Gregory, Daniel P. "Visions and Subdivisions: *Sunset* and the California Ranch House," Architecture California.

Hine, Thomas. "The Search For the Postwar House," in Blueprints For Modern Living: History and Legacy of the Case Study Houses. Cambridge: The MIT Press, 1989.

Johnson, Paul C., ed., The Early Sunset Magazine: 1898-1928. San Francisco, The California Historical Society, 1973.

Keeler, Charles. The Simple Home. Santa Barbara: Peregrine Smith, Inc., 1979.

Lewis, Peirce. "The Making of Vernacular Taste: The Case of *Sunset* and *Southern Living*," (unpublished manuscript for Dunbarton Oaks).

Marx, Leo. "The American Ideology of Space," in Denatured Visions, New York, The Museum of Modern Art.

McCoy, Esther. Modern California Houses: Case Study Houses 1945-1962. New York: Reinhold Publishing Corporation, 1962.

Mott, Frank Luther. A History of American Magazines. Vol. I-IV Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1938.

The New Pencil Points, July 1942.

Rybczynski, Witold. Looking Around: A Journey Through Architecture. New York: Viking Penguin, 1992.

Schrenk, Lisa D., Your Future Home: Architect Designed Houses of the Early 1920's, Washington D.C.: The American Institute of Architects Press, 1992.

Schroeder, Fred H. Outlaw Aesthetics: Arts and the Public Mind. Bowling Green, Ohio: Bowling Green University Popular Press, 1977.

Stilgoe, John. Borderland: Origins of the American Suburb, 1820-1939. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1988

Sunset (November 1898 - December 1948)

Sunset Magazine. The Sunset Camp and Cabin Plan Book, San Francisco: Lane Publishing Co., 1935.

Tomlan, Michael Andrew. Popular and Professional American Literature in the Late Nineteenth Century. Cornell University: University Microfilms International, 1983.

Turner, Frederick Jackson. "The Significance of the Frontier in American History," Proceedings of the Forty-First Annual Meeting of the State Historical Society of Wisconsin. (Madison Wis., 1894) quoted in Clyde A. Milner II, ed., Major Problems in the History of the American West, Lexington, Mass.: D.C. Heath and Company, 1989.

Williams, Raymond. Keywords: A Vocabulary of Culture and Society. New York, Oxford University Press, 1976.