

# WHO SETS THE HOME STYLES?

Are eastern architects lagging behind west coast home designers by clinging to traditional styles, such as the Cape Cod cottage?

Are Californians and their friends right in advocating informal rambling houses and glass-walled solar houses for all parts of the country?

Lines for a battle of the drawing boards over this East vs. West controversy were drawn in Los Angeles recently when Paul Williams and Gregory Ain, exponents of modern architecture, accused eastern designers of being reluctant "to lead their clients out of the wilderness of traditional design."

"Easterners," they said, "are still coddling Cape Cod and Early American design as if this were an only child."

Williams and Ain contended that although 83 percent of all new homes featured in national magazines in the past year were of contemporary or solar-house styles, less than 1 per cent of the houses built in the east were non-traditional. On the west coast, they said, the percentage of modern was up to 15.

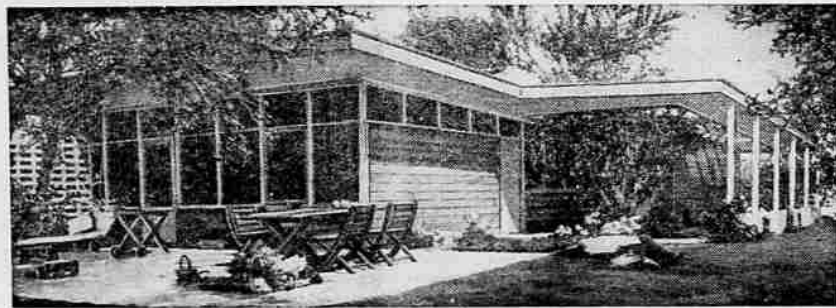
Because home buying is usually a long term investment, and no buyer wants his house to be out of style long before it is paid for, eastern and midwest architects were invited to join in a symposium on style trends.

In New York, Harold Sleeper, president of the New York Chapter of the American Institute of Architects, said he did not consider a comparison between the west and east fair because of the cost differential for construction.

In this part of the country, Sleeper said, "we have to insulate fully, build more compactly and heat efficiently. Departures from time-tested rules, such as window-walls and spread out open planning must be carefully planned to beat the climate rather than to fit the climate. In the west you can build a contemporary house for the same price as a traditional one."

Sleeper believes an architect should not be confined to any particular style when he begins to design a house. He should set out with the prospective home owner's family requirements, plus site factors, neighborhood and climate. "If the answer to this problem is a Cape Cod house, all right," he says. "If it is a ranch type house, you have fulfilled your responsibility. I think the client's problem and desires should be the major consideration."

On Long Island, Rudolph A. Matern, an architect specializing in the design of houses for large scale developers, says the home



WEST IS WEST—This design is by Williams & Ain Los Angeles.

buyer sets the style. Matern admits that personally he is a champion of the California spirit in both design and colors, but he finds the buying public prefers it in small doses.

"If a design is too advanced it will meet the same sales resistance as if it were an old hat," he says. "The balance in public acceptance of new ideas is so delicate that sometimes a season or two will spell the difference between a hit and a flop."

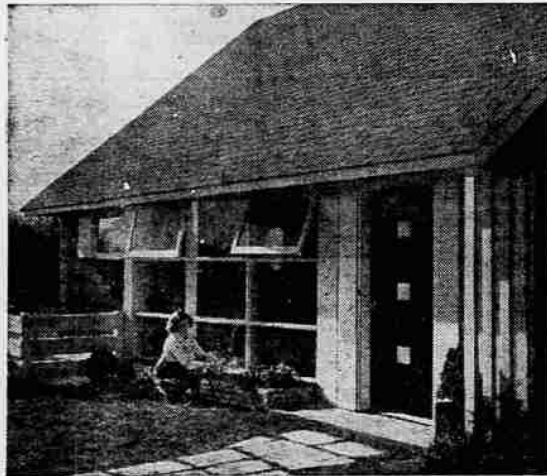
"For example, floor-to-ceiling picture windows are now readily acceptable and encounter no objections based on fears of cold surfaces. Indoor-outdoor gardens capture the popular fancy. And buyers now understand basementless construction—something they worried about a year or two ago. But open planning and flexibility by the use of folding partitions are among some of the features that many buyers are not quite ready for. They may accept them almost overnight. That happens. It is up to the architect to know."

In Toledo, Frank Sohn, architect and consultant to the Libbey-Owens-Ford Glass Co., who is an authority on the solar-house, said climactic prejudice against indoor-outdoor blending in designs is being overcome by demonstrations that it can be practicable.

"I agree with Architects Williams and Ain that much of California's contemporary design can and should be adapted to colder climates," Sohn said. "The development of insulating glass—double window panes with a dehydrated space sealed between them—has done much to break down the climate barrier in house design."

Architect Sohn points out that a solar-house or a home with window-walls need not be radical in design.

"Cape Cod houses were not built originally with big windows because it was impossible to get large panes of glass when



East Is West, too—This is how Rudolph A. Matern uses California ideas for New York's small Long Island homes.

that house design was evolved," he said. "Our New England forebears would have found picture windows more practicable than their 'widow's walks' for watching for their men who were coming home from sea."

In Chicago, Bertram A. Weber, authority in small house design, said: "I believe that as much progress is being created in architectural design in the east as in the west. Homes do not need to resemble machines for living in order to be progressive. Modern comforts can be provided with a pitched roof as well as with a flat roof, and glass walls versus windows do not alone constitute progress. Comfort and convenience, beauty and charm, represent my tests of progressive design, not whether a house does or does not look like anything that was ever created before."

"There is a trend, however, toward larger glass areas, and properly so. Glass walls and picture windows are in demand in the middle west wherever they can command a view or capture sunlight."

"I do not agree at all with the contention that the architectural design that is admirable in the desert or on the mountain top will fit equally well in a settled suburban community in the middle west or northern part of our country."

"I am for individuality and variety in design. It will be a drab world when all our communities follow one type of design, whether it be modern, colonial or whatever. I do not believe architects ever will all get on the same bandwagon and whoop it up for any one style or type of design."

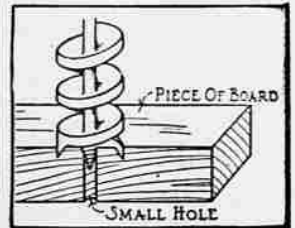
### Dusty Concrete

If your concrete floor "dusts," wet it down with a solution of three pounds of zinc sulphate to a gallon of water. Pour this on and work it well into the concrete. Let it dry, then brush clean. This will bind loose particles and harden the surface.

Griddle cakes are of the best color and texture when baked on a moderately hot griddle pan. Avoid too high or too low heat.

### BORING TRICK

Boring a relatively large hole in a small piece of wood often causes the wood to split. A careful worker avoids this by putting the wood in a vise, but if a vise is not available you can



do it this way: Drill through the wood with a small two-groove ground drill—the type without a screw on it—having a diameter of about half the diameter of the screw on the center bit you plan to use. Then center your spiral bit in the smaller hole, you can bore your full sized hole.

As soon as the point of the screw shows on the other side of the board, it is well to finish from the other side. This will avoid even the smallest splits at the edge of the hole.

### BROKEN NAIL SETS

When a nail set breaks off, it is unnecessary to throw it away. When the break is near the tip, square off the end on an emery wheel and round it off to the desired diameter.

Then place a mill file on a solid support. Hold the nail set on the file and strike it sharply with a hammer. Give the nail set a quarter turn and hit it again. This will produce a neatly knurled tip.



### WARPED BOARDS

When repairing a building, it is often necessary to straighten a warped board or plank. If it is pried into place, a joint may be loosened. Carpenters have exchanged the following idea in the American Builder.

Nail a block securely against the sill or frame about 18 inches below the crooked board. Set an automobile jack on the block and jack the board firmly into place again. Nail it firmly before removing the jack.

Even vertical boards can be straightened this way, because the pressure will hold the jack in a horizontal position while the work is going on.

## RESEARCH DEVELOPS A 'GREAT-LITTLE' \$5,000 HOUSE

By WARREN ROGERS, Jr.  
(Associated Press Staff Writer)

For \$1.50 anybody anywhere can get blueprints for a \$5,000 two-bedroom house that's so simple you could build most of it yourself and save perhaps \$1,000.

It's called "the Great-Little House" and was contrived by the low-cost housing research division, Louisiana State University, at Baton Rouge, La. The first one was built on the LSU campus for \$5,041. Living in it now is O. J. Baker, division director and his family.

"Just the other day," Baker says, "a New Orleans contractor told me he had built one there for less than \$5,000 and plans to put up more of them."

About cutting corners a little closer, he adds:

"If a fellow was reasonably handy with tools, he could do the job for about \$4,000. He could have contractors pour the floors, put up the walls and roof and get out. The inside work he could do himself."

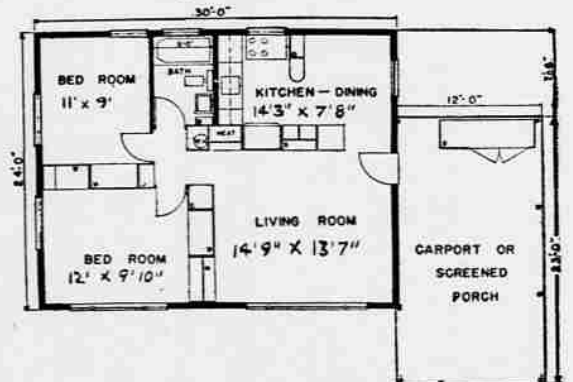


Louisiana's "Great-Little House," built for \$5,000.

The demonstration house at LSU is a sturdy, neat cottage in a lake and pine tree setting. Walls outside are of six-inch, lightweight concrete blocks coated with water-repellent paint. Floors are of concrete and the roof, supported solely by outside walls, is unpainted aluminum. Window frames are aluminum.

There are a kitchen-dinette, a spacious living room, two bedrooms and a carport that doubles as a screened porch. Inside walls are hollow, more than two feet thick and provide ample storage space.

"We've had inquiries from every state in the union," Baker says. "One came from South



America—in Spanish."

He recalls that when the demonstration house was unveiled, inquiries poured in at the rate of 500 to 600 a day.

The \$5,000 cost estimate does not include a contractor's fee. All the work was done by subcontracting. But Baker says engaging an over-all contractor would add only "overhead plus

approximately 10 per cent of the cost."

A feature Baker likes is the big roof overhang—3½ feet on the front and 2½ feet on the side and back.

"That keeps off the sun and the rain," he says. "Only slanting, wind-blown rain hits the sides of the house. In the deep south, that's important."