

If you are not a
Civic Association member,
why did we send you
this newsletter?

MAY 2018

HOLLIN HILLS BULLETIN

In May, everyone
gets the Bulletin!
It's our way to
remind you of the
CAHH membership drive.

TO JOIN CAHH OR RENEW YOUR CAHH MEMBERSHIP:

• **ONLINE:** Go to our official website www.hollin-hills.org/civicasociation. Scroll down to "Membership," complete the online membership form, and pay your dues online. A \$5 convenience fee applies for processing an online payment.

• **BY MAIL:** Membership forms were mailed to the entire HH community in late March. Complete the form and mail it in with your dues payment. Misplaced the form? At www.hollin-hills.org/civicasociation there is a printable form (scroll down to "Membership"). Also, a copy of the form is inserted in the paper version of this Bulletin.

Your Civic Association (CAHH) dues help to support the architectural integrity of our unique community, to maintain our parks, and to make possible our many community events. CAHH member benefits also include receiving the Bulletin and the Directory.

If you have questions, please contact Membership Chair Marinka Tellier at 703-401-9736 or tellim@hotmail.com.

THE HOUSE & GARDEN TOUR

The eagerly anticipated 2018 Hollin Hills House & Garden Tour took place on Saturday, April 28—before this Bulletin was sent out, but too late to include a report on the event. A full report and pictures of the Tour will be included in the June issue.

CIVIC ASSOCIATION HOLDS SPRING MEETING

On April 18, Hollin Hillers gathered in the Sherwood Hall Library for the 2018 Civic Association (CAHH) Spring Membership Meeting.

The first item on the agenda was a review of the financial operations of 2017. Despite 2017 being a year with no income from a Hollin Hills House & Garden Tour (HHHGT), the budget did a bit better than break even, ending the year with a net income of \$230.52. The CAHH total assets were \$94,041.10.

Heidi Hess and Chris Kitzmiller, 2018 HHHGT co-chairs, gave an update on the preparations for that big event. They reported that eleven homes and gardens will be showcased and more than 100 neighborhood volunteers are involved in this true community effort. The 1,400 tickets are projected to sell out.

HOD Committee Chair Christine Kelly talked about the petition drive underway to register Hollin Hills as an Historic Overlay District. The fifteen neighborhood information sessions held so far, as well as a door-to-door effort, have been very successful and 50% of HH households have already signed the petition. Once signatures of 60-70% are collected, the petition will be delivered to Supervisor Storck.

Parks Chair Elisabeth Lardner spoke about the stream restoration project underway in Goodman Park. The county is expected to have the 35% plans by beginning of May and, in early June, will be flagging trees impacted by the plans. Neighbors are invited to join in walking the park with county officials on June 9 at 10am. There will also be a public meeting June 12, 7-9pm, at the Sherwood Hall Library.

—Friederike Ahrens, CAHH Secretary

A MESSAGE FROM GUS

I realize that what I wanted to write about (the House Tour) may well be over by the time you read this, so I will, instead, write a bit about something else.

Two of the people that I admire greatly for the way they lived their lives are Alonso Quixano and Anjezë Gonxhe Bojaxhiu. The first is a fictional character who goes insane from reading too many fanciful books, and then lives his life in a completely nonsensical way. The second was a very real person determined to help the lowliest among us. Alonso morphed into Don Quixote de la Mancha, and Anjezë became Mother Teresa.

These two people from different eras had something powerful in common: both lived lives of their own creation. Don Quixote saw beauty where others did not. Dulcinea was a fine lady to be admired, not a neighboring farm girl. He did not want to see the world as most people did. He wanted to live life as a chivalrous adventure. He did it by changing how he saw himself. Mother Teresa spent her life tending to the poor. I can only assume that she chose to see God or herself or shared human frailties in the people she tried to help; through that vision, she became more connected.

We live now in a world of name-calling. Please try to reject that approach. Be kind to friend and foe alike. Picture Hollin Hills as a haven. Make it so.

—Gus Matson, CAHH President

www.hollin-hills.org is the official Hollin Hills website. Try it. You'll like it.

CIVIC ASSOCIATION OF HOLLIN HILLS (CAHH)

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ARCHIVIST	Judy Riggan	765-3025
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(Also see Hollin Hills Archives below)

DESIGN REVIEW COMMITTEE (DRC)

Chair	Frank Collins	660-6525
Members	John Burns	660-9763
	John Nolan	231-2229
	Ginny Wallace	765-7116
	Ken Wilson	768-5838

CAHH-DRC Liaison Chris McNamara 660-9536

HOLLIN HILLS POOL COMMITTEE

Chair	Barbara Bogue	571-257-9313
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PARKS COMMITTEE

Chair	Elisabeth Lardner	765-3023
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HOLLIN HILLS BULLETIN

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Editorial Assistance	Andrew Keegan	660-1004

Deadline is the 15th of the preceding month.

Articles generally should not exceed 500 words.

Send your submission in the body of an email or as an attachment to barbshear@verizon.net.

If you cannot produce computerized copy, please find someone to submit it for you.

No material will be accepted over the telephone.

Distribution problems:

• If you have not received your digital Bulletin, or to correct/change mail or email address, contact Marinka Tellier, 703-768-8709 or tellim@hotmail.com.

• To replace a missing paper Bulletin, contact Ellen Rydell at 703-768-3442.

HOLLIN HILLS ARCHIVES

The Hollin Hills Archives are part of the Special Collections and Archives of George Mason University. To contact the SC&A staff with research questions, use the following:

- For general description of HH Archives contents, go to http://sca.gmu.edu/finding_aids/hollinhills.html.
- For questions about collections, hours, usage, duplications, or directions go to http://sca.gmu.edu/using_sc&a.html.
- Other contacts: phone 703-993-2220, fax inquiries 703-993-8911, email speccoll@gmu.edu.

www.hollin-hills.org

Calendar of community events and information about our parks, the Design Review Committee, the National Historic Registry, and more.

friends

OF HOLLIN HILLS ■ EDUCATIONAL PROGRAMS

About Modern Landscapes

Once again, Friends of Hollin Hills (FHH) has hosted another well-received educational event. Over sixty people, both repeats and new faces, attended the Modern Landscapes program held at the Mt. Vernon Unitarian Church on April 8. After a social hour with wine, punch, and hors d'oeuvres, FHH Treasurer Elisabeth Lardner introduced the three panelists: Dennis Carmichael, Hollin Hills resident and landscape architect; Jim Wheeler, Hollin Hills resident and landscape installer; and Rachel Habig-Myers, Fairfax County Urban Forester.

Dennis Carmichael began the discussion with an overview of the modernist style of landscaping and how it has been implemented in Hollin Hills. Of particular note is the shared landscape of Hollin Hills, which has been created by the distinctive lack of fences between properties. Dennis also provided a brief history of Hollin Hills landscape architecture, noting that one of the key innovations of the Hollin Hills development was the inclusion of a landscape plan with each house purchased. Between 80 and 100 of the early Hollin Hills houses included a landscape plan by renowned landscape architect Dan Kiley, who later became known as the Frank Lloyd Wright of modern landscape architecture. Kiley's designs are archived at Harvard University's Graduate School of Design. You can view a video of Dennis's presentation on the Friends of Hollin Hills facebook page.

Jim Wheeler provided insight into invasive plant species to avoid, such as English ivy, Japanese stilt grass, Chinese wisteria, and Bradford pears, and also discussed non-invasive substitutes. Good tree options for natural privacy screens are American holly, junipers such as eastern red cedar, and southern magnolias. Evergreen viburnums are also a great shrub option for privacy screening, but certain species of viburnums (Linden, Doublefile, and Siebold) are considered invasive, so caution should be used. If you are looking to fill in the understory in your forest, redbuds and dogwoods are great flowering understory trees.

Rachel Habig-Myers discussed tree care. By far the most important part of the tree is its root system. Therefore, care should be taken to minimize tree root compression when planning surrounding landscaping and hardscaping. In general, grass is not ideal as a ground cover in the immediate vicinity of trees, although it is better than English ivy, which climbs and chokes trees. Due to natural tree loss, deer pressure, and a lack of native regeneration, it is important to plant new trees in order to maintain your forest over time. Rachel identified a number of online resources available to assist in tree care and planting:

- www.goodtreecare.com: Mid-Atlantic Chapter of the International Society of Arboriculture, where you can search for a local certified arborist
- www.treesaregood.org: International Society of Arboriculture
- Itreetools.org: suite of tools for assessing the local tree canopy and planning tree plantings

—Christine Hooks, FHH Chair

next program: the architectural history of hollin hills

The third Friends educational program will be a lecture by John Burns, FAIA, on the architectural history of Hollin Hills. The lecture, which will open the Hollin Hills House & Garden Tour, will be presented on April 28, 10:30am, at Hollin Meadows School. The Friends will provide coffee and donuts.

QuickTakes



BUYERS, SELLERS, OR BROWSERS— GET READY FOR THE BIG YARD SALE

Whether you plan to buy, sell, or just browse—there’s fun ahead for everyone at the annual Hollin Hills Community Yard Sale. It will be held on Saturday, May 12, from 9am to noon, in the Hollin Hills Pool parking lot. Don’t miss it!

If you have items to sell, or want to set up another kind of stand (in past years we’ve had pottery, tennis lessons, dog walking services, book sales, and lemonade/bake goods, etc.) please register with us by email at gonzoenglish@gmail.com. Details about setup, signage, etc., will then be sent to you. Registration is free, but all participants are asked to contribute to making and posting signs for the sale. See you at the sale!

—Kim and Cory English

HISTORIC OVERLAY EFFORT CONTINUES TO GROW

Our door-to-door efforts for signatures in support of the Historic Overlay Petition (HOD) are going well and will continue until the end of the month.

Historic Overlay Districts overlay the existing county permitting process with, in our case, the Design Review Committee requirements. With an HOD, our DRC requirements can and will be enforced without expensive litigation.

Your signatures promote protection of the unique community and the architectural character of Hollin Hills and, just as important, our property values!

For those of you who are still thinking about the issues, please contact me. I will be happy to answer your questions. If you have not signed yet, sign now via the web at:

<https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/HH-HODPetition>

—Christine Kelly, Chair, HH HOD Initiative

in Our Parks

Hooray for our park volunteers!

Two work parties this spring have brought volunteers willing to pull ivy, pick up trash, and do other park maintenance work in our parks. We kicked off our spring season work sessions at the Wildlife Sanctuary where, disappointingly, only one volunteer showed up—and that one person was an anonymous non-resident.

There was a better turnout for the second work session, held in Paul Spring Park. Led by the co-wardens of the park, Barbara Liggett and Lee Ann Kinzer, others who pitched in included Bob Kinzer, Barry Pearson, Joe Hineman, Ginnie Wallace, Gretchen Spencer, and Barbara Bogue. Thank you!

Upcoming work parties, come join the fun!

- **Saturday, May 5, Goodman Park, 10am-noon.** We will meet in the upper section of Goodman Park to remove the multiple bamboo stands. Bring clippers, gloves, rakes, and energy.
- **June 23 and 30 Voigt and McCalley Parks, 9am-noon.** We will meet in these two parks to help tidy up in advance of the July 4 picnic. Bring clippers, gloves, rakes, brooms, and gumball sweepers.

—Elisabeth Lardner, Parks Chair
703-765-3023, eblardner@aol.com

POOL OPENING PREPS

Member clean up days, opening day (Saturday, May 26) and food trucks lead off the Hollin Hills Swimming Pool 2018 season.

As a volunteer-based pool, we rely on the goodness of members to help us get ready every year. The second Member Clean Up day is Saturday, May 5, from 9 to 5. Volunteers wrangle ivy, place deck furniture, spiff up the playground, and much more to get things ready for opening day.

We will have food trucks again this year, with the first on Memorial Day Monday: Turkish Kebab and Cookie Man.

The annual membership drive continues. While there is a two-year wait list, residents of Hollin Hills are automatically admitted if they are also members of CAHH.

Go to <http://www.hollinhillspool.org/> for more information.

—Barbara Bogue, HH Pool Chair

IN MEMORIAM, EUGENE KERBER

Former resident Eugene Kerber died on December 22, 2017, at the age of 97. He moved to Hollin Hills in 1958, where he and his former spouse, Norma Floyd, raised their two children, Amy Kerber-Brancati and Susan Kerber Price. Daughter Amy writes, “He cherished his life lived in the very unique community of Hollin Hills, and very much enjoyed the many lifelong friendships he built with his neighbors. He was an active resident and served on the CAHH and swimming pool committees during his years living there.”

Amy may be reached at askjbrancati@aol.com, and Norma Floyd still resides in the Hollin Hills family home.

The link to Kerber’s obituary from the Pittsburgh Post Gazette: <http://www.postgazette.com/local/city/2018/01/07/Eugene-Kerber-obituary-economist-federal-government-IMF-world-bank/stories/201801050138>.



Armed and extremely dangerous (to the invasive plants that lurk in our parks). Volunteer warriors (l-r): Barbara Liggett, Gretchen Spencer, and Ginnie Wallace display their weapons before joining fellow volunteers to do battle against the Paul Spring Park invasives.

Design Review

The Design Review Committee (DRC) met on Wednesday, April 11, 2018, at Sherwood Regional Library. Members present included Frank Collins (Chair), John Nolan, Ginnie Wallace, and Ken Wilson. The DRC addressed the following homeowner projects.

• **2104 Martha's Road, Lerner residence:** The DRC discussed a roofing addition that had been started prior to DRC approval with the homeowner. The homeowner made a detailed presentation about the addition, presented Fairfax County-approved drawings and answered questions posed by neighbors in attendance. After the presentation and discussion, the DRC approved the roof edition as presented, with the detailing options discussed.

The homeowner also discussed plans for a carport extension and proposed new driveway configuration. The DRC asked the homeowner to submit:

1. More specific plans, including detailing, materials, and the exact location to scale, for the carport discussed prior to any construction and

2. More specific plans, including the exact location to scale on the site plat, materials and photos of the various site lines, for the new stone driveway discussed prior to any construction.

• **7309 Stafford Road, Baer residence:** The DRC reviewed and discussed preliminary design plans for three additions presented by the homeowner. The committee offered several thoughts on size of the additions and construction materials. It also encouraged the homeowners to conduct pricing research on achieving the designs. The DRC encouraged the homeowners to continue developing the

ABOUT THE DRC

The Design Review Committee (DRC) of the Civic Association of Hollin Hills (CAHH) meets monthly to offer homeowners guidance about potential exterior property renovations and whether those desired renovations are in harmony and conformity with the association's DRC Guidelines. All DRC-approved projects are subject to and must comply with Fairfax County building regulations, policies, and codes. Homeowners should complete appropriate County permit processes prior to the start of any renovations.



designs and looks forward to working with the homeowners when they are ready to submit fully developed design plans.

Other Activities

• **7316 Stafford, Sproul residence:** Immediately after the DRC's April 11 meeting, the committee approved by administrative review the installation of a back-step railing.

Next DRC Meeting

The next DRC meeting will be on Wednesday, May 9, 2018, 7:00pm at the Sherwood Regional Library, Sherwood Conference Room 3, 2501 Sherwood Hall Ln., Alexandria,

—Chris McNamara

Garden-Wise

Fantastic Ferns

Twenty-three Hollin Hillers were treated to an informative and delightful presentation on native ferns at the April 11 Garden Club meeting, at Kari Larson's home. Our enthusiastic fern expert, Rachel Tolman, who is also a full-time park naturalist at Long Branch Nature Center, wowed us with her in-depth knowledge and beautiful slide presentation. I, for one, came away with a renewed appreciation for native ferns. Their variability and amazing adaptability to many growing condition besides shade make them indispensable in the garden. They will thrive in wet spots, rocky places, sunny areas, and dry corners, as well as any combination of the above!

Why ferns? They are beautiful, have no pests, are deer resistant, provide interesting texture and shades of green in the landscape, and they love shade (of which there is much in Hollin Hills) as well as those tricky wet, moist areas many of us have in our yards. In addition, ferns predate flowering plants by millions of years and are found on every continent. Fossils of ferns have even been found on Antarctica! So, ferns certainly have longevity, are easy to grow, and carefree in the garden—once established. There are over a 100 species of native ferns in the Mid-Atlantic region from which to choose! Rachel also talked about companion plants for ferns such as Virginia bluebells, coral bells, Solomon's seal, wild stonecrop, and turtlehead, to name a few.

I immediately purchased a cinnamon fern (*top right*) and an interrupted fern (*lower right*) to add to my garden's shady area. The former puts up separate cinnamon-colored fertile stalks, and the lat-

ter has its spores in the middle of its green frond. Two interesting characteristics! So, now that it's planting time, think about adding some native ferns to your garden or landscape.



Butterflies and Climate Change

We hope you can join us at our next scheduled event on May 9, 7:30pm, at Huntley Meadows, in the visitors' center. We are co-sponsoring a program with the Friends of Dyke Marsh on butterflies and climate change. The speaker will be Georgetown University biologist Dr. Leslie Reis.



—Gretchen Spencer, Garden Club Co-Chair

CLASSIFIED

Our friend, Margaret Brosnan, whom we have known for some 30 years, is available to help with daily needs such as driving, shopping, meal preparation, laundry. We have long observed her taking excellent care of her father and other aging people. She is intelligent, caring, cheerful, and resourceful. Her phone number is 571-214-9866. Her email is margy.brosnan@gmail.com Call us if you have any questions. —Margaret and Arnold Edelman (703-765-0369)

On April 18, I became

75

I will live until May 29, 2029, another 11.11 years, if I meet Social Security's average life expectancy for a man of my age. I think that's pretty good, as I've been assuming I will only live to 81, the age at which my father and his father died.

Of course, the mere fact that I'm thinking about such things tells me I've entered yet another new stage in my life. I've already survived multiple stages: (1) the not-so-pretty, unlike my sister, baby stage, where my father asked my mother if she could take me back; (2) grade school and high school, where I figured out my academic (excellent), athletic (so-so) and social (girls are different than boys) skills; (3) college and law school, where I discovered the pleasures and heartaches of women and managed to stay out of Vietnam; (4) work (where the writing, verbal, and inter-personal skills I developed as a youngster paid off, as I was really good at my job); and family life (I got it very right the second time around with Ginny, even with the stresses of four kids from two families living primarily in four different places; and (5) retirement, figuring out what to do to enjoy life after realizing I had an expiration date.

But 75 is different. It is old. People now hold doors for me. Doctors refer to how they treat older patients' injuries differently, using the term "older" four times in three minutes. People talk slowly and loudly because they think old age makes one stupid (although I admit that their loudness does help with my diminished hearing capacity). Auto rental companies reserve the right to charge me more because I'm over 70, or not to rent a car to me at all. And, one of my daughters calls every day to see how we're doing. I tell her we're still alive and that I would call her if we had died!

Speaking of doctors, I decided to make a laundry list of everything that was bothering me last year before visiting my GP for my annual physical (if Medicare is reading this, it's not really an annual physical; it's just an opportunity to check up on what's bothering me, and there are enough things to justify the visit. It is merely coincidental that these doctor visits occur on an annual basis). I dutifully listed my actual or perceived issues: acid reflux, shoulder pain, Achilles tendon pain, occasional migraines, regular coughing, and sleep issues. My doctor immediately sent me for an MRI and MRA for the migraines and then proceeded to send me to see my gastroenterologist for the acid reflux, one of my orthopedists for my shoulder, my physical therapist for my Achilles tendon, a pulmonologist for my cough, and my eye doctor and a neurologist to follow up on my migraines. And a cardiologist, just for the hell of it.

The good news: after nearly a year of poking and prodding, none of these issues pose any serious risk. The bad news: I spent way too much time having these things checked out. So, as I don't have any more time to waste with unnecessary doctor visits, I have changed my approach to my upcoming (non)annual physical: I will tell my GP that nothing is bothering me and spend the next year enjoying myself.

That will leave me with just my annual Medicare Wellness visit and assessment. The test takes about 10 minutes and the toughest parts are drawing a clock with a specified time and remembering two simple words for a few minutes. I am proud to report that I always ace this test, getting a perfect score. I am less reassured to know that it is the same test that Trump's doctor used to determine that he is in "excellent" cognitive health.

At 75, another issue that rears its ugly head is what Ginny or I would do if we don't die together (which is our goal, as long as it's about 10 years from now; we reserve the right to push the date off if we live another 10 years). A less extreme version of this issue is what we would do if one of us gets sick or injured. We have a fairly conventional allocation of responsibilities now: Ginny cooks (fabulously) and does most of the grocery shopping, while I manage our finances. We both are very good at our tasks and pretty bad at each other's. Recently, when Ginny broke the pinky on her dominant hand, we got a taste of what might happen. It led us to a series of doctor visits, where I was the chauffeur. Then I tried my hand at cooking. My first effort was chicken soup where, following Ginny's directions, I did a pretty good job (although I could have lived without removing the guts from the chicken). What I found out was that I excelled at making matzo balls for the soup. Apparently the skill runs through my Jewish genes.

Of course, it is far easier to deal with additional responsibilities for a short time than to deal with the death of the person you have loved for more than half your life. I can't really imagine it, although, were it to happen, I can see the possibility I would die of starvation or, worse yet, from a diet of fast foods. Ginny would eat well until she ran out of money in six months.

But enough of depressing things. At age 75 I think a good dose of denial can go a long way. In addition, I am enjoying the many things I can still do, some of which I couldn't do when I was younger.

I can still use my mind, whether it is for working on a memoir or testifying before the U.S. House Judiciary Committee at a hearing on how to protect the rights of people with intellectual disabilities like my son, Jason. Whether this essay proves or disproves my mental capacity is up to each reader.

Ginny and I can drive in and out of Washington to visit museums whenever we want without fighting rush hour traffic. We can take advantage of senior citizen discounts for a host of things (except we refuse to go to early bird dining specials; we do have limits). I also have time to read the books I didn't have time to read while raising kids and working.

While I am losing more friends these days, I am using the internet to catch up with friends from high school, college, and law school, and to keep up with friends from work. I find it very enriching.

Lastly, I have hit on a foolproof way to live at least another three years. I have assured this by purchasing advance tickets to my 60th high school reunion in 2021. Of course, I already knew that I would make it that long because the Social Security tables tell me I will still have 8 years, 11 months, and 22 minutes to live after my reunion.

—Peter Kinzler



Peter and Ginny

mid-century modern ARCHITECTURE IN AMERICA

part 7
its history, its
future, and
what it means
for Hollin Hills

Mid-Century Modern (MCM) neighborhoods were developed simultaneously in many places across America. Their architects and developers wanted something different than the standard subdivisions, which were denuded of vegetation, intensely graded, and contained cookie-cutter homes. MCM home buyers also wanted something different, unique, and unconventional, as they dove into the starter housing market after World War II. And the market was hot, after the Great Depression and the war had suppressed construction for many years.

Where MCM subdivisions were built, architects generally planned the entire site, preserving natural grades and landscapes, using curved streets and cul de sacs to create a more intimate, neighborly atmosphere, and

orienting lots and homes in an environmental-ly sound fashion. These neighborhoods often included community facilities and were inter-laced with heavily wooded linear parks.

MCM homes by no means all looked alike, nor rigidly adhered to the pure International Style of architecture, although they drew on concepts from it and from the work of Frank Lloyd Wright. They had many things in common: low-pitched or flat roofs, an asymmetric façade and elongated shape, massive window walls, and minimum ornamentation. When clustered in neighborhoods, there was a concerted effort to preserve their design character through reliance on design review boards to oversee proposed modifications.

Their interiors exhibited features that other new, post-War housing did, with open public

areas that combined kitchen, living and dining rooms. They were also located almost exclusively in suburban areas, reflecting a federal government bias against offering mortgage insurance for city neighborhoods and the cheaper cost of land and construction on vacant sites.

By the mid-1960s, the momentum of the MCM movement was slowing, not just for housing, but for commercial structures as well. Now, there is a modest revival. Several Mid-Century Modern neighborhoods, including Hollin Hills, have been so successful in preserving their unique design features that they have achieved listing on the National Register of Historic Places.

What are the key aspects of this style, and what is its future?

TWO FUNDAMENTAL ASPECTS OF MID-CENTURY MODERN DESIGN

1. Form follows function

First coined by the great Louis Sullivan, the Chicago-based architect widely hailed as the ‘father of the modern high rise’ and mentor to Frank Lloyd Wright, this concept addresses at the most basic level how a building should be designed and what that design should emphasize.

It starts with designing a home from the inside out. What is the function of a home? It is to provide shelter for human beings. Therefore, its most important feature is to provide comfortable, commodious, living space. This living space should comprise the most dominant mass of the house, rather than its roof or a two-car garage.

Why did so many American houses feature tall, steep roofs? Because in the 17th century immigrants built houses identical to those they had occupied in England. These cottages had roofs made of thatch, which had to be steeply pitched to shed water quickly. This kind of roof was quickly abandoned in the harsher American climate, but the steep pitch form lived on, even though it played no function other than to provide a lid on the box of the house.

When one looks at a house, one’s attention is focused on whatever comprises the largest mass of the structure. If it has a steeply pitched,

tall roof, that comes across as the most dominant feature. If half of its front façade is a garage, then that dominates. Neither the roof nor the garage represents the primary purpose, or function, of the house.

Similarly, as Austrian architect Adolph Loos so pithily said, “ornament is crime.” A home does not need to be gussied up with a great deal of exterior decoration, which plays no function in making it a more commodious place to live. Instead, its exterior should reveal, rather than hide, the basic structure. Nor is such decoration desirable inside, where the absence of live-in servants makes cleaning the house one of many chores faced by harried homeowner, and the presence of ornament makes cleaning more difficult, which architect Irving Gill of Southern California emphasized at the very beginning of the Modern movement.

2. Merge the indoors with the outdoors

Frank Lloyd Wright articulated this concept in rebellion against the dark interiors of the typical Victorian home, but it has been embraced by all the MCM architects. It reached its apogee in the balmy climate of Southern California, where architect Rudolph Schindler went so far as to design rooftop, open air sleeping porches, and architects Richard Neutra and John Lautner installed huge glass doors that opened so wide as to erase any distinction between inside and outside.

This concept has an economic impact as well. One can live comfortably in a smaller house if there are ‘outdoor rooms’ that provide the feeling of living in a larger house. But it also requires that one’s view outside offers a vista of attractive landscaping and, where possible, raw nature, rather than peering into a neighbor’s window.

Charles Goodman did this in Hollin Hills by minimizing grading, preserving existing tree cover, *(continued on pg. 7)*

English thatched-roof cottage

Suburban garage with attached house



and orienting each house on its lot to provide an intimate view out front and a feeling of unfenced back yards stretching off into the distance. Developer Robert Davenport also provided Hollin Hills buyers with a landscape design done by talented landscape architects, as did Joseph Eichler in California, to enhance the natural environment.

WHY DID MCM LOSE MOMENTUM?

The International Style of architecture, particularly in commercial structures, became unpopular by the late 1960s. While architects such as Mies van der Rohe designed truly elegant, beautifully proportioned, glass curtain-wall high rises, too many developers saw this style as a golden opportunity to erect a cheap building for maximum profit.

These office buildings spread throughout the downtowns of American cities. They did not define the streetscape, or relate to their neighbors, as the high rises of Louis Sullivan did. They had a uniform façade from bottom to top, with no shop windows at ground level and no cornice on top. Instead, each building stood alone. Critics began calling them ‘refrigerator boxes’ or, as architectural historian Vincent Scully commented, ‘inert slabs’.



In response, Post-Modernism developed, with buildings of varied shapes and ornamentation. In response to Mies saying “less is more,” architect Robert Venturi said “less is a bore.” The most in-your-face example of this new style was the AT&T headquarters in New York City by architect Philip Johnson, with its Chippendale top. This was especially ironic, since Johnson had been a devoted imitator of Mies van der Rohe his entire career and coined the very term ‘International Style’ for a pioneering exhibit at the Museum of Modern Art in 1932.

In housing, Americans became more affluent. They wanted larger homes, with decoration. The widespread use of air conditioning reduced the popularity of the indoor/outdoor unity in climates with hot summers and cold winters.

Americans also became less bold and adventurous. The war in Vietnam, the energy crisis, the double-digit inflation, unemployment, and interest rates, and racial strife in major cities, all contributed to diminish the tremendous confidence and dynamism that characterized the United States following its emergence from the Great Depression and World War II as the most powerful, prosperous country in the world. Home

From top: Guaranty Building (Buffalo, 1896, Louis Sullivan); Seagram Building (NYC, 1958, Mies van der Rohe); AT&T Building (NYC, 1984, Philip Johnson)



Top: Rooftop bedroom by Rudolph Schindler; window walls by Richard Neutra. Below: Cliff May ranch style house; Tudor revival house.

became more an inward-looking place of refuge from the outside world rather than an integral part of a small neighborhood of like-minded people. Social connections shifted from geographic proximity to Facebook and Twitter.

The design of housing changed, hearkening back to earlier historic periods to introduce a more secure and sentimental feeling. At first, the ranch style house became popular almost simultaneously with Mid-Century Modern, including many of the same features as some of the same interior design concepts.

But the ranch style house had far different origins, beginning in Southern California in 1932. Merchant builder Cliff May was inspired by the old Spanish adobe ranchos that his grandparents occupied. So, he began developing houses that were L- or U-shaped, partially enclosing an outdoor patio from which all rooms opened. While it was long and low without much ornamentation, like an MCM house, it featured rustic beams, shutters, and doors, and tile or wood shake roofs. May sold designs for these homes across the nation. Over time, the rusticity disappeared, and these homes became even more like Mid-Century Modern. Then, builders turned to styles mimicking earlier European fashions (see Tudor revival example above), offering larger homes, in larger yards, with steep roofs and multi-car garages.

WHAT IS MCM'S FUTURE?

Now Mid-Century Modern is making a comeback. Perhaps this is fueled in part by the same nostalgia and longing for the good old days as Post-Modern housing, only this time for the good old days following World War II, rather than hearkening back to the 19th century. But it is also because Americans are now opting to live closer to central cities and, once again, to prefer more modestly sized homes. MCM neighborhoods share these characteristics.

Whatever the reasons, Mid-Century Modern neighborhoods are back in style. Those like Hollin Hills that have managed to sustain their design integrity over a half century are now enjoying favorable press coverage, well attended house tours, and high self-esteem.

The challenge for the future will be to maintain the design integrity that makes neighborhoods like Hollin Hills unique.

This is the last of the Bulletin articles on Mid-Century Modern architecture by Michael S. McGill. The series will soon be available on the Hollin Hills website, www.hollin-hills.org.