

POST-WAR TYPOLOGY AND STYLISTIC DESIGNATIONS FOR RESIDENTIAL ARCHITECTURE

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Introduction

The information below is provided by the Utah State Historic Preservation Office, and is a partial draft version of a forthcoming online guide to historic architectural types. Styles are not discussed here since there are already many existing style guides.¹ This guide is not intended to be a complete architectural history, but rather an effort to aid consultants in survey work, as well as any others who have an interest in the identification of mid-to-late twentieth century architecture. Input for the information was garnered from consultants, architectural historians, and published sources. Although the information is for a planned guide to Utah architecture, most types and styles discussed will be familiar to you, while some may reflect a more regional perspective. You may see types or styles that are identified under different terms in your state as well. Also, you will notice that many dates have question marks after them - this is because we are still not familiar enough with the types/styles to know what the exact date range is. Dates are provided as they relate primarily to examples in Utah and could vary from your state or region. Again, this is a ROUGH draft; the list is not definitive and is still a work in progress!

Post-War Types

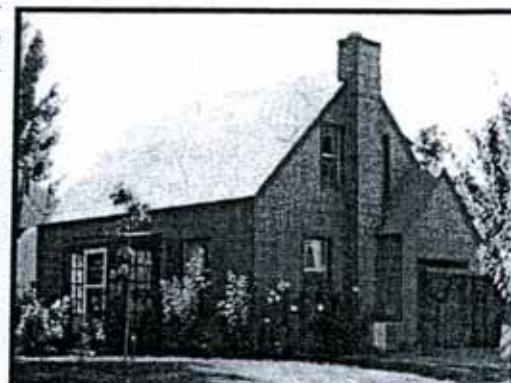
During the second half of the twentieth century changes occurred in housing design that were the result of both innovations in construction and technology as well as unprecedented demand for single-family dwellings. Because of a shortage of construction materials due to the war effort, smaller, more efficient housing designs were developed during World War II, and were partially influenced by plans developed by the federal government for war-industry related housing projects.

About this time another major change was taking place and that was in how a house interfaced with the street. In prior decades, the Victorian cottage and bungalow's primary focus was on the street with their large front porches intended for sitting and visiting with the neighbors. However, as period cottages replaced the bungalow as the most popular house type, the porch became smaller and took on a less significant role. With the development of the World War II-Era cottage and the ranch house types, the porch had become little more than a stoop.

During the 1940s and 1950s, as new subdivisions sprang up almost overnight and older neighborhoods became crowded with new infill, residents desired more privacy from the street and the focus of the house shifted toward the back yard, particularly in the Ranch house. A later derivation of the Ranch, the Split Level, became popular in the 1960s, as even more interior space was desired in homes. These post-war types influenced later housing types for many decades and can be found in any community, rural or urban.

Cape Cod: c. 1930s-1950s

The original Cape Cod was indigenous to New England, but became a popular Period Revival type throughout the United States in the 1930s and 1940s and is easily recognized. The boxy, unadorned appearance fit well with the Period Revival and Minimal Traditionalism of the era. Recognized by its typical bilateral symmetry, the Cape Cod usually has a centrally placed main entrance with flanking windows on either side. Usually directly above the windows on the pri-



Cape Cod



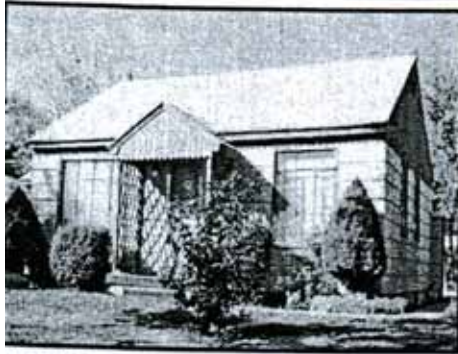
Cape Cod variant

mary façade are small gabled dormers on the steeply pitched gable roof that runs parallel to the front of the house.

Details to look for:

- Boxy plan with symmetrical façade
- Double-hung windows that mimic Colonial style
- Steeply pitched gable roof that hangs low on the façade
- Gable-roof dormers

World War II-Era Cottage (also w/attached garage): c. 1940-1950



WWII Era Cottage

From the early twentieth century up to the 1940s, houses were designed with a narrow street façade and a plan that went deep into the property, but by the 1940s a transition began to occur. Primarily because of war-time economics and housing demand, the narrow deep house form of the bungalow and period cottage transformed to a square, boxy plan with small rooms situated around a core. Known as the World War II-Era Cottage, this plan economized space and allowed for easily mass-producible housing at a time when resources and manpower were scarce and Modernism began to influence mainstream residential architecture. The earlier Period Cottage types transitioned in the 1940s as the appearance became less vertical and more boxy and compact. As demand for housing reached all time highs following the war, the World War II-Era Cottage was constructed in vast numbers in large, concentrated suburban tracts across the country, most notably in the Levittown developments in the Northeastern United States.

Details to look for:

- Typically square or slightly rectangular footprint, although porch or front window area may project slightly
- Hipped or side-gabled roofs
- Gabled projections over the front entrance and larger windows
- Side (driveway) entrances
- Attached garages
- Windows may be either wood or metal double hung, wood or metal casements, or large front picture windows with multiple panes sometimes in horizontal bands
- Exterior stairwell access to basements, intended to conserve interior space
- Materials include brick (commonly striated), asbestos or Masonite shingles, and wood or aluminum siding



Examples of WWII Era Cottages



WWII Era Cottage with attached garage

Basement House (a.k.a. "Hope House"): c. 1930?-1960?

Popularly known as "Hope Houses," (because of the hope that someday they could be expanded upon later), this type was an inexpensive means in the twentieth century of obtaining a house for those who could not afford a larger one. Basement houses typically consist of a concrete floor approximately six to eight feet below grade, and formed concrete walls that typically rise roughly one to three feet above grade. Usually Basement Houses will have a flat roof, but gabled roofs are not uncommon. An exterior stairwell descending to the entry typically accesses those with flat roofs, although there might also be an shed-like entry to the stairwell located on the roof. Gable-roof examples might have an above-grade entry into the gable end, or a stairwell (either open or enclosed). Floor plans are similar to those of other houses of the era. When financial means allowed, the roof would be removed and an aboveground storey added, essentially turning the original portion of the house into a basement. The percentage of Basement Houses converted to above ground dwellings is unknown since it is difficult to distinguish once they have been expanded. Early tax photos, if they exist, may help identify a house that was converted from a Basement House.

Details to look for:

- Concrete walls and roof only a few feet above grade
- Usually a flat roof, but sometime a gable or clipped-gable roof
- Stairwell descending below grade to the main entrance or enclosed entries, either on the side or on the roof (on flat-roof examples)



Basement houses

Early Ranch (also w/attached garage): c. 1945-1955

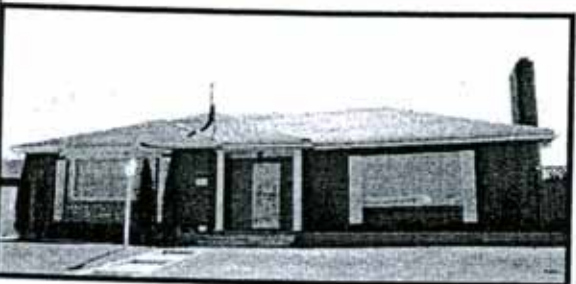
Toward the end of the 1940s with increasing post-war prosperity due to veterans receiving GI Bills and easier home-financing terms, the World War II-Era Cottage type was becoming outsized and obsolete as the number of marriages and the size of families increased. The small rooms based around a compact kitchen and living room began a transition to a new plan that was actually devised in California in the 1930s, the Ranch house, which was based on early Spanish colonial ranch dwellings. In response to compact, tightly confined WWII-Era Cottages, the Early Ranch plan stretched the house slightly more across the lot and provided larger window openings to allow the outdoors in. With the transitional Early Ranch house, floor plans changed slightly as bedrooms were pulled away from the kitchen/living room section of the house. The overall appearance is that of a slightly elongated WWII Era Cottage, slightly less boxy, but with similar details.

Details to look for:

- Slightly more elongated than the WWII Era Cottages
- Attached garages become a common feature
- Windows, siding, architectural details similar to those on the WWII Era Cottages
- Larger projecting cross gables allow for more interior space
- Materials are similar to those of the WWII-Era Cottage: striated brick, asbestos shingles, and aluminum siding



Early Ranch houses



Ranch (also w/attached garage): c. 1955-present?

The complete transition to the Ranch-type house from the WWII Era Cottage occurred in the mid 1950s. Stretched even longer across the lot than the Early Ranch, the Ranch House-type is still being constructed to this day (although it is commonly referred to in real-estate parlance as a "Rambler"). There are various plans associated with the Ranch House, however the most basic features the living room/dining room/kitchen placed together on one end of the house with a hallway extending from the side off which the bedrooms and bathroom are located. One major change the Ranch house type initiated was altering the primary focus of the house from the street to the backyard. No longer was the front porch a welcome invitation to visit with the neighborhood; now the emphasis was placed on the sanctuary of the backyard with newly emerging patio and sliding glass doors inviting nature inside as well. Front windows became smaller as the 1950s progressed into the 1960s. Horizontal sliding windows began to replace vertical double-hung sashes and casements, and large plate-glass windows opened a vista into the living room. New "Space Age" plastic materials for flooring, countertops and other details were introduced, as were shapes and colors. As the type progressed into the late 1950s and early 1960s, touches of Modernism appeared in the form of intersecting planes (wide chimneys extending out as a wall on the exterior, carports, and other wall planes that extend out from the sides). The Space Age also influenced the architecture with triangular and swooping forms typically in carport and patio roofs and supports.

Details to look for:

- Long and low, single level basic mass with gabled, hipped, or less commonly, flat roofs
- Attached carports or garages

Ranch Houses

- Rear patios become a common feature
- Less historical reference in architectural details and more reference to Modernism with intersecting planes in the more architectural designs
- Smaller windows in the front and larger ones at the rear as emphasis is placed on the backyard, although large picture windows are common in the living room



Ranch Houses with attached garage

Split Level/Split Entry: c. 1950-present?

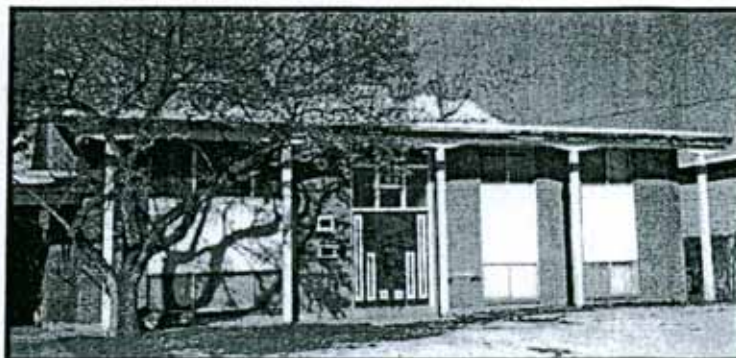
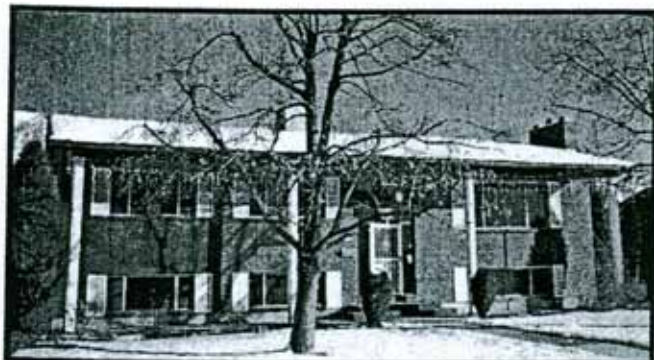
The Ranch house places the primary living spaces on a single floor, although basements were common in this type. But in the 1950s another house type was introduced that placed rooms on different floors according to use, the Split Level. Although not as popular as the Ranch when first introduced, the Split Level increased in popularity in the 1960s and 1970s. The Split Level has three and sometimes four levels, with one-half of the house comprised of a single-story portion on a raised foundation with the main entrance and the other half comprising two levels: one, a half-story above the main level and the other a half-story below. The main level contains the living room and kitchen, the upper level contains the bedrooms, and the lower level the newly introduced "family room" and bedrooms. Those with a fourth level placed a basement below the main living level. By placing rooms of various uses on different floors, public and private areas were separated, giving more privacy to the bedroom areas and emphasizing the living and family rooms. The split entry also implements a raised foundation but has two full floors. The raised entryway enters onto a landing from which a stairway raises a half level to the main living/kitchen/bedroom area or descends a half level to the family room/basement area.

Split Level houses



Details to look for:

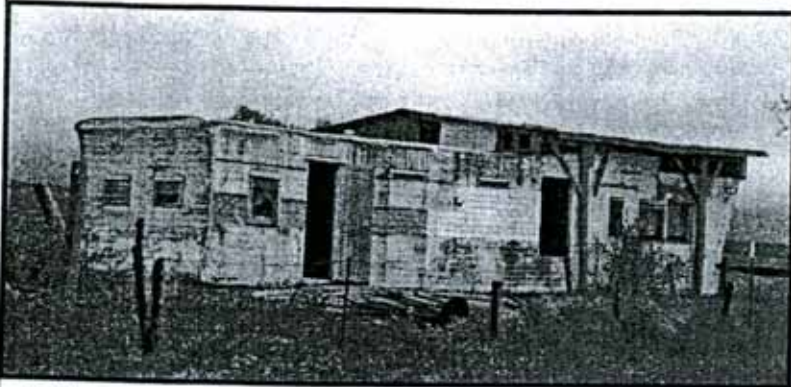
- The split level is a single-storey mass on a raised foundation attached inline to a two-storey mass (set partially below grade)
- The split entry is basically a two-story building with the lower level constructed partially below grade
- Roofs are commonly side-gabled, although flat roofs are not uncommon
- In later examples the top floor may project out a few feet from the bottom allowing more space in the bedrooms
- Early examples are commonly of brick; combinations of aluminum or vinyl siding, stucco, and brick become common later in the 1960s and up to the present



Split Entry houses

Mobile/Modular Homes: c. 1950?-present

Many would not consider mobile homes "buildings" for the fact that they are not attached to the ground. Nor would they be considered "historic" in that they don't seem to meet the



Mobile Home

50-year age criterion. Probably a majority of mobile homes, however, are only moved once - from the manufacturer to the dwelling site, and they are mobile only in that they were moved to the site on wheels. As for being historic, there are some existing mobile homes that were manufactured as early as the 1950s (or late 1940s?). However, probably because of the semi-permanent construction materials and methods (plus the perceived "disposable" nature of this type), truly historic mobile homes are difficult to find. Early models are fairly narrow and usually covered in metal or aluminum siding. Double-wide mobile homes came along in the mid-1960s. Innovations to make the dwellings more permanent

include structures (typically lumber) constructed around or over them to support a gable roof, lean-to additions, and porch enclosures.

Modular homes are basically a progression from mobile homes and have recently become more common, probably because they appear to be more permanent. The concept is not new, however, and has ties to the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries when cabins were often relocated, and more recently in the mid-twentieth century when decommissioned military and government surplus buildings were purchased for use as residences. Modular homes are somewhat similar in appearance to mobile homes in that they are long and narrow enough to be transported on trailers (usually in two lengthwise halves). However, they are typically larger than mobile homes. They are also made to sit on a concrete foundation and some can accommodate a basement, and therefore have a more permanent nature. Construction materials come in a wider variety as well, including aluminum or vinyl siding, plywood (T-111), stucco, and even a thin brick veneer. Like mobile homes, they are commonly sold from roadside lots, particularly in more rural areas.

Details to look for:

- Mobile homes are long, narrow, impermanent appearance
- Concrete block foundations and metal or fiberglass skirting are typical
- Modular homes are more commonly placed on individual lots
- Modular homes are typically larger and more permanent in construction and situation than mobile homes
- Both are typically more common in rural settings

Contemporary



Contemporary: c. 1950s-present

In the 1960s the Ranch House and Split Level house types were the dominant forms of domestic architecture. However, as in previous decades, architects had a minor influence on the mostly contractor built housing. Noted architects such as Richard Neutra and Robert Venturi were designing boldly shaped, geometrical houses in various parts of the country. These examples influenced local architects who designed resi-

ous parts of the country. These examples influenced local architects who designed resi-

dences for wealthier clients. Mostly open with large expanses of glass (these were primarily intended for view lots) the dwellings incorporate geometrical, particularly angular, shapes. Although the architect-designed versions are typically located on hillsides and canyons, their influence is seen in the more common contractor-designed suburban examples. Many of these are simply modified Ranch and Split Level-type houses with larger windows, but many also feature unique floor plans and architectural details. These houses, in keeping with their intended natural environment, use materials such as rough wood plank siding and formed concrete walls.



Contemporary

Details to look for:

- Large expanses of glass on the front
- Geometrical (typically triangular) shapes in the overall design
- Rough wood planking, stucco, or concrete as exterior wall treatments
- Variety of floor arrangements, but typically open plan

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