

Australian Home Beautiful

OCTOBER, 1965

40th BIRTHDAY ISSUE



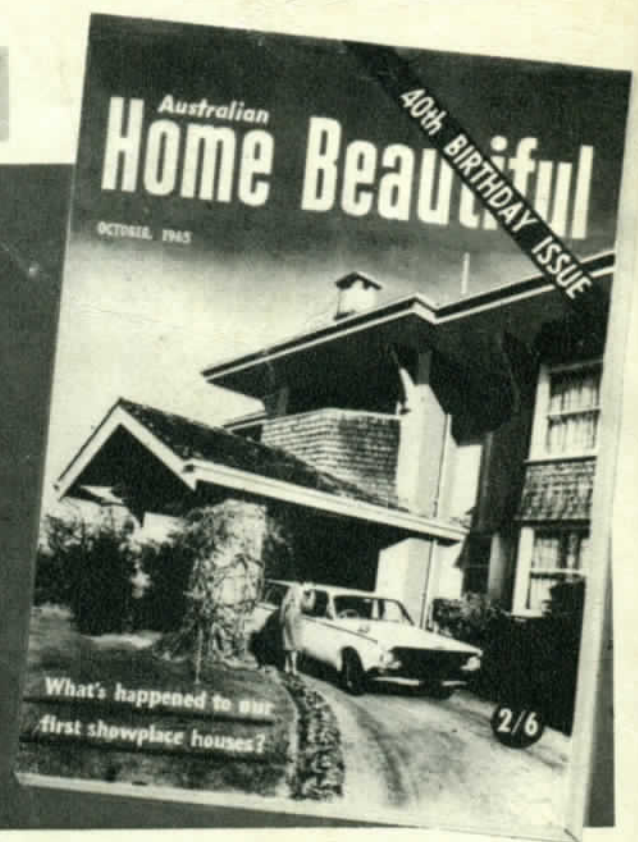
What's happened to our
first showplace houses?

2/6

1925 1965



This month we celebrate OUR 40th BIRTHDAY



Forty years ago this month, Home Beautiful made its debut to Australian home builders and buyers seeking news and guidance on domestic architecture and interior decoration.

Under other names, the magazine dated back to 1912, when The Herald and Weekly Times, Melbourne, first published a *Real Property Annual*. This recorded the year's most important real estate transactions and, later, guided home builders in the selection of sites.

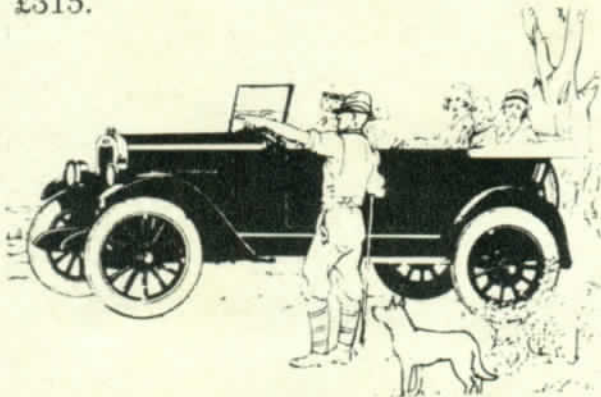
As increasing space was allocated to design and carpentry, this journal became *The Australian Home Builder* in 1922. It appeared quarterly until March, 1924, when it became a monthly.

October 1925 saw the first issue of *The Australian Home Beautiful*, with a new emphasis on solving readers' problems in home planning, gardening, furnishing and home management.

It was an era in which manufacturers promised "Comfort in the kitchen with a modern gas upright cooker priced from £6/15/-."

In most homes, chip heaters provided the hot water, if any, and a length of rope across the backyard made a clothesline. But there was a growing market for a new gas water heater costing £5/15/- and a rotary clothes hoist appeared on the market for £6/12/6.

The motor car industry was providing the chief status symbol. Advertisements offered a Chevrolet for £208 or a luxurious Essex Six for £315.



Competition in the appliance field was brisk and hire purchase was a widely-used inducement. One retailer gave free home demonstrations of an electric sweeper which could be bought for 90/- deposit and 7/- weekly.



A seven-room brick home could be erected for about £1000. A similar house in timber could often be bought for two-thirds of that price.

In 1925 the State Savings Bank of Victoria was lending up to £900 to anyone who needed a home and who had £100 for a deposit. Instalments were usually about £5 a month, depending on the amount borrowed, compared with today's rate of about £5 a week. Ruling interest rate was 6½ per cent.

However, anyone with an annual income of £400 or more was debarred from applying for bank help!

Land cost a "high" £10 a foot in the inner Melbourne suburb of Richmond and frontages were accordingly limited to 37ft. Channel, kerbing and footways cost £110 for each block.

The years since have seen architectural fashions come and go, decora-

tion tastes turn a full circle, new materials appear in profusion (confusion?) and a new dimension of costs undreamt of in 1925.

The past 480 issues of *Home Beautiful* have reflected the consequences of a Depression, the austerity of a war and the do-it-yourself vogue which the postwar shortages produced. Most recently, the boom years of the 60's have brought their own wealth of new things from local manufacturers and abroad.

HB itself has changed direction with its readers' changing needs. In 1925, HB looked chiefly at the beautiful, but high-priced, mansions. Today it takes readers into a wide range of homes — from the best medium-priced architect-designed to the budget-value mass-production from major builders all over the country.

The range of homemaking subjects has grown to include floral art, cookery, gardening, home economics, and quite advanced woodwork articles. Reader Service is a cornerstone.

And the passing years have seen major steps forward in printing techniques by which color reproduction has become commonplace. The interest of readers has intensified the search for the most qualified writers available.

So a generous proportion of this Special Anniversary Issue is given over to a reflective — at times, nostalgic — look-back over the 40 years.

Some of your regular departments have been rested, but will be back again next month. *And, as a kind of footnote, our next issue will include a look at some of the directions which tomorrow's architects feel may be commonplace forty years from now!*

IN THIS SPECIAL SECTION: Robin Boyd surveys 40 years of architectural progress • Eric Wilson looks at the best of today's homes and compares the "Bank" houses of the two eras • Rene Dalgleish discusses home decoration — then and now • David Baker revisits some of the houses that made news in 1925.

Robin Boyd, on HB's 40th birthday, asks . . .



Is our frozen house design about to thaw?

Nineteen hundred and twenty-five. The *Home Beautiful* was born and I was (I might as well confess it now to get this thing started on the right foot) six years of age.

I can recall fragments of it. T-model Fords in the street. The family tourer, about twice as high as it was wide, with the manufacturer's name done in a crackly orange-colored symbol on the front of the vertical radiator: "DORT." It was mostly used in the country.

Transport to the city was by cable tram — if possible on its dummy with the gripman straining at his great grip levers. An older cousin of mine en-

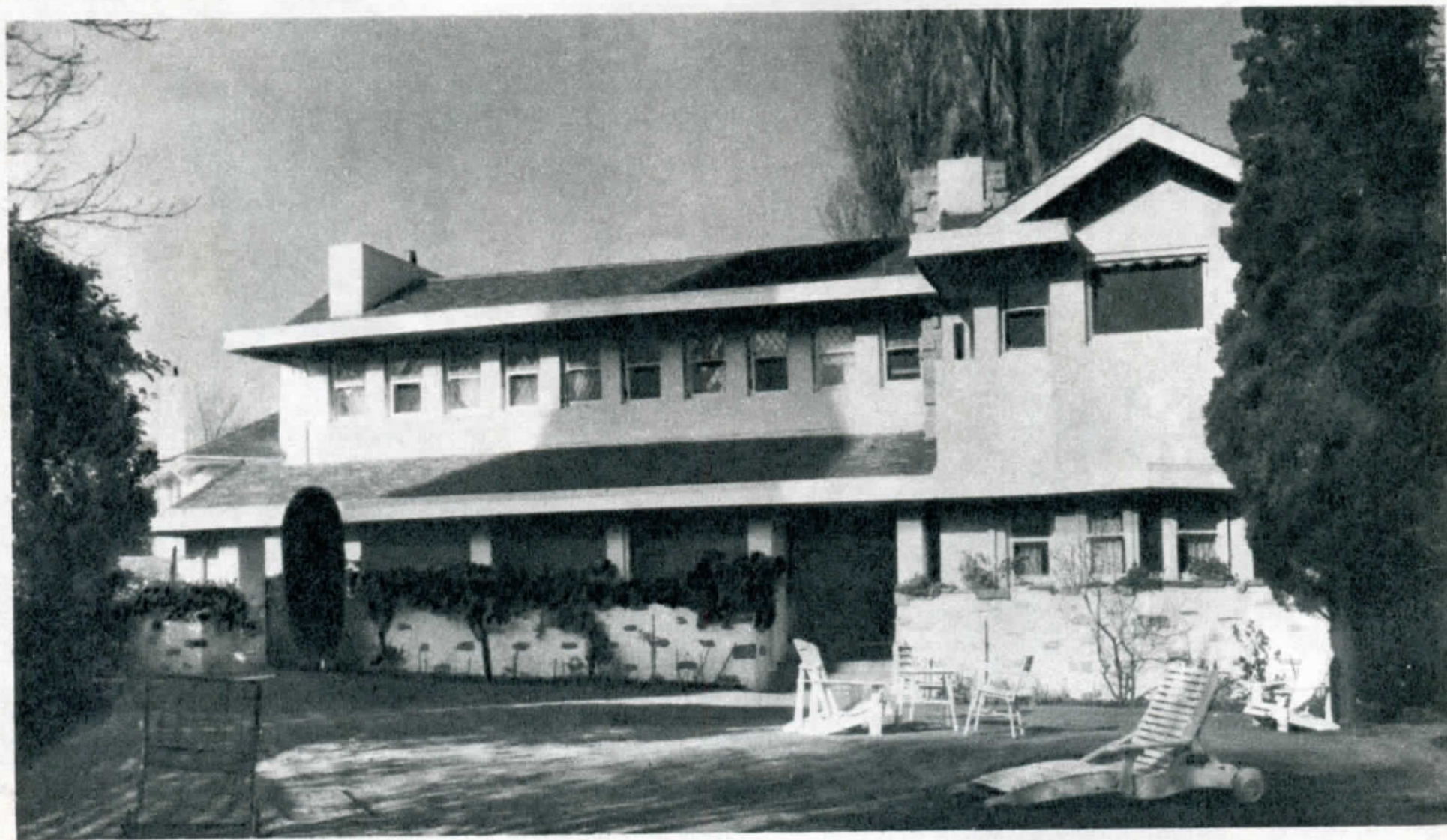
sured his place in family reminiscences when he dried his cricket flannels after a last-minute washing by wearing them in the windy front seat of the dummy.

It all seems so fresh in my memory; but am I muddling it with San Francisco, where the cables still to this day slap and rumble under the middle of the road?

In 1925 the Federal Parliament House was just rising from a sheep station in Canberra . . . the gramophone was wound up by a handle and played "Three O'clock in the Morning" . . . radio came out of headphones,

except in the homes of rich friends. They had superheterodynes with lots of rectilinear busbars behind a black ebonite front panel with as many dials as a jet plane, and 3LO or 2FC coming out of a curly-horn speaker . . . movies were silent: Wallace Beery and Raymond Hatton in "Fireman Save My Child!" . . . Coles' Book Arcade, and the Funny Picture Book still in production . . . many suburban streets and houses still illuminated by gas. . . .

But what of the houses themselves, in those quaint, quiet, dead days before the Depression?



THE TASTE-MAKER OF 40 YEARS AGO

One of Melbourne's architectural treasures — the beautifully preserved house that Canberra's designer Walter Burley Griffin designed for Mrs Mary Williams on the corner of Orrong and Clendon Rds., Toorak, and referred to by Mr Boyd, architect, critic and author, in this article. The house is now owned by Mr and Mrs V. F. Tresise.



The design of houses, like the technological products I have been nostalgically listing (and it requires some self-restraint to stop once one gets going) was at a transitional or adolescent stage. Almost everything we have now in the way of creature comforts was known then — with a few exceptions like television and airconditioning — but they were all young and awkward, feeling for the right shape to grow into.

For instance, gas refrigerators had not appeared, but electrical ones were not unknown (the earliest were 13 years old). Yet these had almost as much machinery, clumsily exposed, as a motor mower has today.

In a similar way, the house itself was awkwardly feeling its way into the modern era. The common style was a sort of homely daughter of *Queen Anne*, if we can take this name to apply to the red brick and tile and fretwork villas of the turn of the century.

Queen Anne had married a style

loosely called the *Californian Bungalow* about 1915, 10 years earlier, and the resultant offspring were now filling suburban streets.

The style was, as it happened, one of the best of the popular styles to pass by this century. The original bungalow of California which was the partial influence was a low, long, semi-rustic house, consciously modern but conscientiously humanistic. It had rubble stone and roughcast walls, wide sheltering eaves, deep porches, great open fireplaces. It was a cosy, togetherness style. Queen Anne on the other hand was, as suburbs like Malvern or Hunters Hill still demonstrate, a stern, red-faced matriarch, not very cosy at all.

It's a wise architectural style that knows its own father, and perhaps the popular style of Australia in 1925 was really the offspring of an English movement of the late nineteenth century led by a revolutionary designer named C. F. A. *Voysey*. And then again, perhaps, there was a touch of Japanese

influence, especially in the use of so many river-washed stones. These were often stuck in cement all over the facade.

One builder in the Melbourne suburb of Kew, Charles Greenhill, also had a habit of extending the roof rafters far beyond the gutter line and chopping them off square. The effect was vaguely reminiscent of the carpentry technique of an Ise Shrine and he advertised this kind of house as "Japanese-style." *It might equally well have been called the Bush-carpenter style.*

There were other regional variations of the bungalow. It prospered in the Sydney suburb of Randwick, although there the grey stucco which marked the true classic Californian style was usually discarded in favor of two or three tones of lurid and blood-red brickwork. In Adelaide the style was adapted to corrugated iron roofs and a soft stone face, in Brisbane to weatherboards.

THE TASTE-MAKER OF HOUSES TODAY

One of Australia's architectural treasures 40 years hence? The home that Sydney architect Kenneth Woolley designed for himself, and carried off the Wilkinson Award. It is just as revolutionary today as Burley Griffin's house for Mrs Mary Williams (opposite) was in 1925. Natural finishes replace the contrived; interiors are open and outward looking.

CLASSLESS SOCIETY; STRATIFIED HOUSES

In any serious discussion of domestic architecture it is necessary to define the level on which one is standing. At this moment, then, I am describing the average speculative builders' houses of the time: the kind we would call, if we were not self-conscious about this sort of terminology, middle class.



The Greenhill style



Californian Bungalow



Australian gabled bungalow

If we have managed to achieve in Australia one of the most genuinely classless of societies on earth, we have done this only for people.

Our housing is still grotesquely stratified into classes — not on a basis of size or of luxuriousness so much as on architectural grounds.

At least this is the standpoint from which I am writing, and it is perhaps not an unreasonable one in view of the name of the magazine whose 40th Anniversary we are celebrating.

A few houses have serious architectural intentions and, whether they be rich or poor, big or small, plain or complex, those are upper-level efforts in the continuing search for beauty in housing.

Some, however, have no object but to make a profit for their builder by a combination of the cheapest construction and one or two colorful gimmicks. Those occupy the lowest level.

Most houses are somewhere between these two extremes in a big conservative middle class.

Now, this class has not seen a really fundamental change since 1865 — not to mention 1925. The stocky shape, the construction of brick walls and timber-framed floors and roof, the arrangement of rooms around a passage, were all established a hundred years ago. Veneer construction and bigger windows are the only real innovations. But fashions have kept flitting across the facade that the house presented to the street.

It would be misleading to suggest any consistency, even in the middle class. On the face of it, there were great stylistic differences. If Charles Greenhill's Japanese style in 1925 represented the most glamorous and esoteric, at the other end of the scale there was a very ordinary villa made of the same old bricks and tiles that had been introduced a full generation earlier.

However, even this conventional villa was affected by the "Californian," or "Japanese," or "Voysey" flavor. It had a gabled roof rather than a "hipped" one, and grossly fat pylons supported the thin roof of a porch. Its only concession to the rugged, cosy, homespun look of the original model from which it came was a little roughcast stucco on the pylons, or on a gable end.

Between these two extremes of the middle range were various degrees of homeliness, or homespun-ness. The ordin-

ary builder-designed house was probably more unconventional at this time than at any other since old colonial days. It was groping in the dark, but at least in the right direction: towards a comfortable, cosy, warm background for family living. To express this warmth, the fireplace often moved on to the front elevation — a gesture with more psychological than practical value.

At its best, somewhere near the Greenhill end of the scale, but not too close to the Japanese, the Australian version of the Californian Bungalow, the dream-home of 1925, was a very good house. As I have said, it was possibly the best style, at its level, that has ever been popular here — best in *comfort*, best in *commonsense*, and best in *taste*.

The cosy look, the bush-carpentry, the overall simplicity and honesty which were valued in this style appealed to any good builder. He could express these things unselfconsciously without the need for an architect breathing down his neck. The style achieved its best results in two suburbs of Melbourne which were growing vigorously at the time: Glen Iris and Brighton.

The *Bright Iris* or *Glenton* style house was predominantly grey in color. This grew from a combination of the pebble-dashed plaster, the round river stones, the cement tiles on the roof, the unpainted split-wood shingles on the gable ends, and paint that blended rather than contrasted those natural materials: grey or green. You will remember, of course, that "Green Gables" was a favorite house name: done in rustic lettering on the gate.

That, then, was the fashionable style, but already it was on the decline rather than the ascendancy. Its peak in fact had been just two years earlier, in 1923. The new upcoming fashion, still only a glint in the eyes of a few daringly modern builders, was the *Spanish Mission*.

Griffin, Annear led way

For this well-remembered fashion of barley-sugar columns and swirls of yellow cement and Cordova (half-round) tiles, we had to thank Professor Leslie Wilkinson of the University of Sydney.

In 1922, a year after he arrived from London to take the first Chair of Architecture at an Australian University, Wilkinson built his own house in Vaucluse in a Spanish-Mexican style, calling it "Greenway" in honor of Francis Greenway, Australia's first, famous architect.

Spanish Mission also was the style made famous by the movie-stars' homes in Beverly Hills at the height of Hollywood's power. It appeared in countless small adaptations throughout the richer areas of our suburbs.

But to return to 1925 and the two other levels of house-building which I have neglected: The lower level need not, as they say, detain us. The poorer houses of the time were simple austerity versions of the previous fashion, the Queen Anne, made as a rule in timber and to the tired old centre-passage plan of the last century.

However, some houses which should detain us a moment were to be found among the upper level. Not that all the houses of the luckier people in the then not-so-lucky country were admirable. Most of the richer houses were merely bigger versions of the Bungalow. (It may be of passing semantic interest to note that the word bungalow in English usage refers to any single-storey house, whereas in our single-storey land the word at that



Spanish Mission



Tudor Revival



Modernistic period

time was used in a stylistic sense and could apply to a two-storey mansion in the rustic style.)

Good, big versions of the Bungalow were built in Sydney by the architect B. J. Waterhouse and by other fashion-leaders in other capitals, but the main interest to us now is not to be found among those who led a fashion which died again soon after, a whole generation ago. We can respond more warmly to the record of those who, 40 years ago, were starting out alone on a track which subsequently proved to be the straight and narrow path to the modern house of today.

There were two or three such men working in 1925. Their houses were in an upper class — not by reason of more money, but because of more imagination and foresight and sensitive appreciation of the needs of suburban family life.

One of these men was *Walter Burley Griffin*. A measure of the length of architectural time through which this magazine has lived can be taken from the record of Griffin's most famous building, the Capitol Theatre in Swanston Street, Melbourne.

Home Beautiful and the "Theatre Magnificent," as it was always billed, were practically contemporaries. The theatre actually was a year old when the first issue of the magazine appeared. It was one of the world's most advanced and exciting theatres and the greatest architectural glory of the whole of Hollywood's golden age.

And now it is closed while a shopping arcade is being driven through its heart. Perhaps it will recover from this operation, but only in another shape. Its days of glory are over, and with them a whole era of entertainment. Many of the films once screened there are to be seen nowadays on the little screen at home, and part of the pattern of Australian living has changed accordingly.

When he built the Capitol between 1921 and 1924, Griffin was a struggling architect, notorious for his eccentricity rather than famous for his imagination. Today, long after his death, he is at last appreciated and justly renowned for his more spectacular works such as the Capitol, and the Canberra plan. Yet still his important contributions to Australian suburban house design are not widely known.

The year *Home Beautiful* began was a vintage year for Griffin. In 1925 the biggest community development of his career, Castle Crag in Sydney, was firmly established and its most notable houses were under construction. In Melbourne, two of his best designs — certainly the best preserved of his houses — were built in the same year. Both are in Toorak.

Their ideas were accepted — but 40 years afterwards

One was the Salter House in Glydebourne Avenue. It was the most charming house he ever built, and a historian would be hard pressed to find a more delightful one built anywhere in the world at that time.

It was constructed in his own rather risky, patented system called "Knitlock." More important, it was planned around a small central courtyard or walled garden. This he intended to be a sort of green heart of the house, protected from Melbourne's winds. Bedrooms ringed the court on three sides, and an open arrangement of living-rooms — reception, lounge and dining all merging into one — swept past the fourth side.

The house is still intact today, thanks to sympathetic owners. It lies low behind a copse of tall white gums. Griffin loved gum trees, which was another factor which draws him out of his time like a periwinkle and places him with the more hopeful and progressive Australian home-builders of today. The oldest gum trees in Toorak are the ones he preserved or planted around his buildings.

His second house of 1925 is better known. It is a big two-storey place, most prominent at the sharp corner of Clendon and Orrong Roads, opposite St. John's church in Toorak Road. It was built for a Mrs Mary Williams, a devoted fan of Griffin, and still today her house has lessons for those home-builders who have not been very alert these last 40 years.

It has, for instance, reposeful simplicity and intelligent sun-shading above its long lines of north-facing windows. Its interior is spacious, orderly and full of original character.

And so it was with the work of one or two other pioneers of modern house design, such as *Harold Desbrowe Annear*. Their work had original character and, in fairly embryonic form, practically every one of the "new" ideas that mark the most up-to-date houses of today, including prefabrication and a concentrated mechanical core of kitchen, laundry and bathroom.

Forty years ago these men were trying against heavy odds to bring a fresh and intelligent approach to the problem of building in the Australian suburbs, and many of their devices bridge the gap of the years.

It has taken every one of the 40 years for their approach to filter through to the ordinary house, but this has at last happened. Or almost happened. At least a high proportion of "Contemporary"

houses available today are direct descendants of their designs.

In short, the rare progressive design of 40 years ago has become a routine middle, or even sometimes in cruder form, a lower class design of today, to the great benefit of both the occupiers and the look of some new suburbs.

But what happened to the middle house in the years between? The answer really would be better left buried, but the truth must be told. What happened was a style usually described as the "Modernistic."

It came after the Spanish Mission, and after the Depression, about 1935. It had some of the yellow plaster of the Mission style, but it also had bricks called tapestry because of grooves on the surface, and these were usually set in panels between windows to give a horizontal stress which was considered to be the latest thing. It had a chimney which was fat at the base but stepped in towards the top like a New York skyscraper. It had corner windows everywhere, sometimes curved, and draped inside with festoon blinds.

There was another occasional fashion before World War II: the "Elizabethan" or "Tudor" style. This had high-pitched gables, leadlights, and brown boards imitating beams nailed to clinker brick walls.

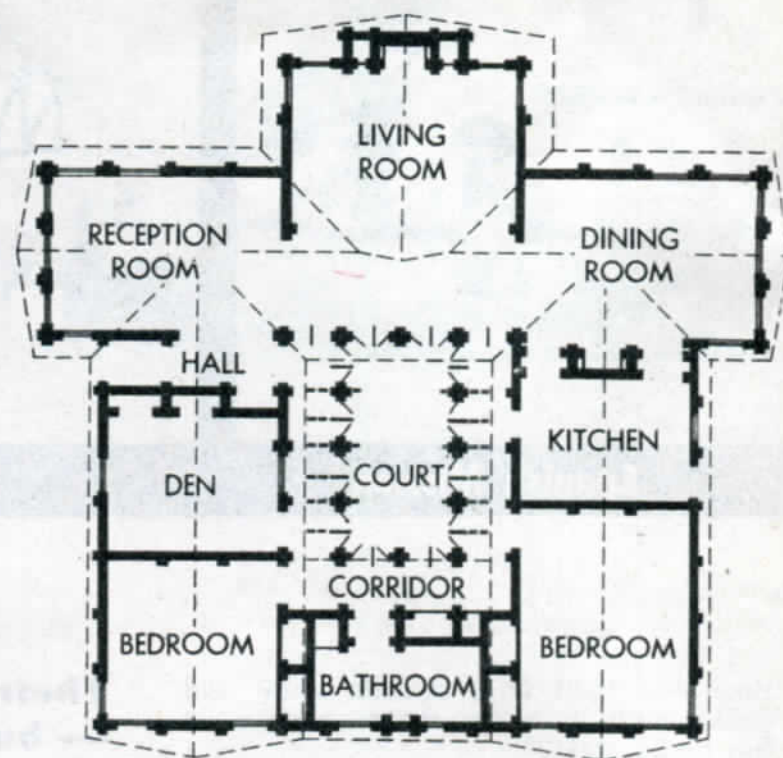
And that was the last of the casual exotic styles. It was not, however, the end of fashions in housing.

"Georgian" has never died

Today we have them still. One claims to be "Georgian," by virtue of windows broken by bars into many small panes, and a porch or front door setting with an eighteenth century air.

The Georgian has more justification as an Australian fashion than Queen Anne, the Spanish Mission or the Tudor. At least it has some historical links. It was the style brought here by the First Fleet. You might argue in its favor that it is not a period revival; it just never died.

Nevertheless, it is used today as a frankly theatrical atmospheric device — snob bait — just as any of the other historical parodies were. In Sydney, for instance, in the Old Edgecliffe Road from Rushcutters to Rose Bay, and in South Yarra, Victoria, it is being used at this moment in the building of a shopping arcade. Shops in this area used to be done in the Tudor Village style, you will recall. The move to Georgian is welcomed as a daring move by all progressive people. It represents a bold step forward, bringing us at least half-way from the period of Queen Elizabeth I to that of Elizabeth II.



1925 world's "most charming house"

Except for the Georgian, our houses today are not much interested in looking back. After 65 years the 20th century has been welcomed in the suburbs. The great majority of houses are "Modern."

But what does Modern mean? Again, it depends where one stands and what level is under discussion.

The lower level of house usually is still not trying. It is still built, in thousands, by builders who often are not equipped — by constitution, outlook or training — for the pursuit of better living. It is just a thing they make, bigger than a cupboard but serving roughly the same purpose: a thing to keep things in. Some builders see no significance at all in the fact that the kept things happen to be people.

Their houses work to the extent that they are waterproof and have the required number of private rooms. They are honestly built to the extent that there is nothing especially unpleasant up the builder's sleeve. The cheapest materials and the quickest processes are used throughout, but no one pretends anything else.

But these houses are heartless. I mean this in two senses:

First they are without a heart in the physical sense. The cluster of plaster-lined rooms lacks a warm and inviting living centre. It has, at least in the raw state when offered for sale, nothing more than another pastel-tinted plastered room, a fraction longer than any of the others, labelled "Living" or "Lounge" on the plan. It has not even a fireplace in most cases — only the blank, immobile face of some enclosed heater. If the house later gains a heart, in the shape of a television screen, that is the owner's doing. The house contributes nothing but a shelter from wind and rain and, much less effectively, from excesses of the sun.

Thus it is also heartless in the other sense, for every single house erected is occupied not just by people but by people in a very special mood. Taking on a new house is for most Australians a major step in life, emotionally far more charged than the purchase of any other commodity.

The act of acquisition is comparable to taking on a mate.

A large part of the home building industry is not inclined to recognise this. It treats the house as any other medium for making money under the principle, honored by time if nothing else, of supply and demand. It might as well be selling detergents or dog kennels. The emotional or atmospheric content of the product sold is not considered and therefore non-existent. This is what I mean by the lowest level of design.

The middle class of design is not so heartless. It acknowledges the role of the house in family life and treats the prob-

lem of its design more seriously, if conventionally. This is the biggest category of building and contains most of the "brand name" houses of the merchant builders.

Typically, the middle class of design today is represented by a house made of pink wire-cut brick veneer, with a dark cement tiled roof pitched as low as weatherproofness permits — about 17 degrees — with six rooms lined inside with plaster painted in pale tints and with one feature wall of wood or wall-paper in the livingroom. It has big windows and little or no decoration apart from something ornamental on or around the front door.





This is the average style of Australian house today, socially equivalent to the Spanish Mission or any of the other exotic styles of years past. It has few pretensions and is not especially interested in disguising itself or its materials. Brick, tiles, plaster — all are presented as they come from the manufacturers.

It is the child of the marriage of the traditional Australian town villa with the half-century-old international modern movement in architecture. From the latter come its big windows, its comparative simplicity and honesty. Even its feature wall was invented in Europe early in this century. (That was the most revolutionary decorative device since the Gothic arch. Before it appeared, no one would have dreamt of subdividing a single room into separate walls for decorative treatment.)

This modest house has made many people happy and kept many a good

family together. Its prevalence here is one of Australia's major social achievements, for without doubt a separate private house for each family is a most desirable goal for any nation, and Australia leads the world, including even the USA, in home ownership.

Undoubtedly this is the one great asset, above all others, that Australia can promise the European migrant. Consider Holland, for instance: a country with standards — in art and entertainment and food and several other branches of culture — that leave Australia standing, or rather sitting, staring at the TV.

But Holland does not have our houses. Practically everyone there lives in flats — has to live in flats. Nothing else is economically or physically possible. Yet the desire, the longing for a private dwelling, a separate domestic identity, persists. So new multi-storey flats are being built in Holland with separate front doors rang-

ing along the street, giving a separate private address to everyone despite the anonymity of the massive building.

The Australian house is a social triumph, indubitably. Yet it is often criticised, mainly by architects or others who have made a study of technological and artistic world standards in housing.

It is criticised because it is lazy. It does not try hard enough. It could be better. Its technology has hardly changed in these 40 years and its degree of artistry — the taste displayed in its choice of colors and wrought-iron scrolls — is still at the finger-painting level in the international scale.

While Australia is able to overcome the difficult physical problems of building houses for nearly everyone, it seems sad that she appears to be constitutionally unable to rally the small extra talents necessary to make the houses also adventurous in technology and admirable artistically.

GRIFFIN'S SALTER HOUSE

The three pictures and plan on these pages show the Salter House, Glyndebourne Av., Toorak, Vic., now owned

by Mr William J. McCann, a surgeon, and his wife and family. The house has been carefully preserved in original character by the new owners. Opposite, above, is the house from the street and

ground plan (from "Walter Burley Griffin," by James Birrell); left, the central courtyard, now roofed over with glass; entry is on the right and bedrooms on left. Above is the spacious living-dining area.

Plastics, population will force changes

● Those who support the average Australian house as it now stands argue that it is good because it is what Australians want, as proved by the fact that they buy it.

● Those who oppose it argue that Australians buy it only because precious little else is presented to them. Whenever more adventurous design is offered at an economic price it is snapped up quickly. There is no evidence of a well-designed house languishing on the market by reason of being too advanced for the Australian public. Many builders have made handsome little fortunes by underestimating the Australian public's intelligence and see no reason to risk these by trying out new developments.

Architects and others who criticise the average house reap a certain amount of resentment, as if they were attacking the very personal sentiments of the family hearth. *But they continue to try to change the house, as they always will, because they believe it could be better.*

In what ways better? This is best answered by the houses that are being designed now by architects. (These do not represent a large proportion of the total number built; perhaps one in a hundred.)

They are different in many ways from the average or middle-class of design. First, the colors are different. Instead of pink bricks, *clinkers* or the so-called *blue bricks* are now more prized by architects, and paint is virtually banished. Oregon beams are stained brown instead of being painted.

None of this is important. It is only a reminder that architects constitutionally just cannot be content with any popular color scheme. A few years ago when everyone else favored clinker bricks and heavy browns they introduced light colors and pure white paint. Now that these are popular, architects' houses have gone back to dark colors. When blue bricks and stained timber become popular again about 1968, architects will revert to lightness, or may find something different again.

The less superficial differences between recent architect-designed houses and ordinary ones are to be found inside. There is a certain sense of space if not of spaciousness even in the smallest of the architected buildings. This is achieved in bigger houses by a generous allocation of area to the general living centre. Old terms like Lounge and Dining-room, Reception-room and Sun-room become obsolete because of a lack of definition of specific functions.

The living space is big, but nowadays it is not just one big bland all-in room; it has corners, and alcoves, and unexpected turns, and somehow inevitably it seems to wrap itself around a courtyard somewhere in the middle of the house.

The courtyard may be sizeable and usable, with slate or tiles as a floor; or it may be quite small, merely a decorative and evocative touch of luxuriant nature inserted into the heart of the building. There is often more than a hint of Japanese influence in the river-washed stones and grouped shrubs of these courtyards. Which brings us right back 40 years to Walter Burley Griffin and Charles Greenhill. It was all there in infancy in 1925.

Architects' houses of 1965 may also enjoy themselves with various comparatively sophisticated details directed to the end of good living, such as tricks with sliding doors and concealed lights. Nevertheless, even these houses are still conceived in the same mould as the houses of 1925 or, apart from some wires and pipes and a few surfacing materials, 1825.

Architects' houses, like all others, are frozen at this stage of technological development and will remain so until the next big revolutionary step occurs. This step, which also was forecast, loudly and clearly, in 1925, is *prefabrication*.

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LEGACY FROM ANNEAR

One of the few remaining homes by Desbrowe Annear that pointed the way to the present from 1925 is "Inglesby," in Caroline St., South Yarra, Vic., now owned by Mrs C. A. Marshall Renou and her family. The original house ended underneath the chimney on the right. A balcony, later enclosed, was added on that side, and the front entrance given protection by the addition of the porch.

Griffin, Annear, and other more progressive architects of the year when *Home Beautiful* was born believed that general prefabrication, with which they were experimenting, was just around the corner. If they had been asked to prophesy the shape of houses in the distant year of 1965, they would have had no doubt a glowing vision. (Well, Annear would have; Griffin was more pessimistic about his fellow modern architects.)

They probably would have forecast houses being produced more or less as those Dorts and Fords were being produced then — mass-produced, and thus able to include at the same price comforts

and equipment that could not be considered in the one-off, custom-built models.

In 1925, Walter Gropius was building his famous Bauhaus school in Germany, and planning a system of prefabricated copper panels which could be erected in a great variety of combinations to make houses of many different plans.

In the USA, Buckminster Fuller was working on his "Dymaxion" house — hexagonal, hung on a central mast and turning to face the sun like a sunflower. He intended it to be mass-produced to sell for £A375, including five rooms complete with furniture.

"We would not have been able to come to the airplane by a straight development

of the railway engine," remarked Fuller, in a call for revolutionary action.

Griffin and Annear, our pioneers of 20th century housing, are dead. Fuller and Gropius are still highly productive leaders in the USA. But still the prefab, mass-produced, mechanised houses, which they all spoke of and demonstrated 40 years ago, are dreams of the future.

But now perhaps this future is nearer than we think. The technology of plastics and the world's expanding population are two of the new factors which suggest that the changes in the next 40 years will make the march of progress in the last 40 years look like a vigorous exercise of running on the spot.



THE "PRETTIEST HOME" IN AUSTRALIA — 1925

HB's first issue offered a £5 prize for the snapshot of "Australia's prettiest home." Above is the winner as it is today — the Burley Griffin-designed Onians house, Nepean Highway, Frankston, Vic. It is still in the same family, and still unaltered, except for a new terra cotta tiled roof replacing the Knitlock tiles. And at the left is the £5 winner — a schoolgirl then, now Mrs Gladys Hartley Watson, well known in the Girl Guide movement, and for many charity and community efforts. She is standing in front of the prize-winning house's big, homely, open fireplace.