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THE ARCHITECTURE OF AMERICA'S ROADSIDE LODGING
FROM ITS BEGINNING TO THE INTERSTATE ERA

by
DANIEL I. VIEYRA

Submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements
for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

Dissertation Adviser: Dr. Park Dixon Goist

Program in American Studies
CASE WESTERN RESERVE UNIVERSITY

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GRADUATE STUDIES

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THE ARCHITECTURE OF AMERICA'S ROADSIDE LODGING
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Abstract

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This dissertation will examine the physical and architectural evolution of roadside lodging in America. It will trace the development of motorists' overnight accommodations from the beginning of automobile travel to the Interstate Highway era. Structures published in builder's and trade journals will be compared with the coverage roadside lodging received in architectural periodicals. This study will explore the conflicting building practices of applying ornament to conventional solid buildings and expressing or articulating a building’s structural system in place of traditional applied ornament.

The construction of accommodations began with the erection of platforms and frameworks at tent camps where auto travellers could camp. As this facility took on a more permanent nature, the cabin camp emerged. With the emphasis on camping replaced by the need for efficient, economical roadside lodging, the tourist court took
form during the Depression era. In the post World War II era, the motel, combining the amenities of the hotel with the efficiencies of the tourist court, became the accommodation of choice on an increasingly decentralized landscape. As roadside lodgings grew in size and offered the traveller more amenities, their design became more sophisticated as well. The evolution of these facilities will be examined against a backdrop of the changing American landscape which provided the setting for these structures and in turn, influenced their architecture.
TO:

K.R.V.

and

R.E.V.
M.B.V.
M.R.V.

who all made sacrifices
which, at different levels,
made it possible
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INTRODUCTION

This dissertation will examine the physical and architectural evolution of roadside lodging in America. It will trace the development of motorists’ overnight accommodations from the beginning of automobile travel to the Interstate Highway era. Structures published in builder’s and trade journals will be compared with the coverage roadside lodging received in architectural periodicals. This study will explore the conflicting building practices of applying ornament to conventional solid buildings and expressing or articulating a building’s structural system in place of traditional applied ornament.¹

The construction of accommodations began with the erection of platforms and frameworks at tent camps where auto travellers could camp. As this facility took on a more permanent nature, the cabin camp emerged. With the emphasis on camping replaced by the need for efficient, economical roadside lodging, the tourist court took form during the Depression era. In the post World War II era, the motel, combining the amenities of the hotel with the efficiencies of the tourist court, became the accommodation of choice on an increasingly decentralized landscape. As roadside lodgings grew in size and offered the traveller more amenities, their design became more sophisticated as well. The evolution of these facilities will be examined against a backdrop of the changing American landscape which provided the setting for these

¹Retrospective studies of roadside lodgings include Warren Belasco’s Americans on the Road: From Autocamp to Motel, 1910-1945 (Cambridge, Massachusetts: The MIT Press, 1979) which examines, from social, business, and historical perspectives, the evolution of the roadside lodging phenomenon from an inexpensive individualistic sport to a large standardized recreational business geared toward mass consumption. The physical and architectural aspects of lodging are not explored. In addition Chester H. Liebs’ Main Street to Miracle Mile: American Roadside Architecture (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, A New York Graphic Society Book, 1985) in its building type section, includes an historical overview of motels.
structures and in turn, influenced their architecture.

The two major factors defining an architecture are a structure's placement in space, or setting, and its physical characteristics. The notion of American Space as a vast open space to be swiftly conquered or mastered complements the American spirit of personal freedom.\textsuperscript{2} The automobile provided the perfect vehicle for achieving these ideals, yet its adoption transformed the landscape, controlling the placement or setting of individual structures. As the car accelerated change, its potential for simultaneously centralizing and decentralizing made it a major force in achieving America's elusive spatial ideals.\textsuperscript{3} As is perhaps most dramatically evidenced in the Post World War II growth spurt, decentralization spurred the development of roadside structures as revealed in the analysis of the motel.\textsuperscript{4}

Also reflecting the American view that the environment must be quickly conquered are the physical characteristics of the structures which occupy this space. American buildings of the twentieth century have drawn on two conceptually opposing design techniques: applied ornament versus structurally expressive and integral. The former applied decorative trim onto a solid, conventional structure. This method had its roots in colonial architecture. The integral approach is based on


\textsuperscript{4}More recently, the forces of centralization have fostered the emergence of multiple urban cores, or Edge Cities, linked by a rigid system of Interstate Highways flanked with buildings of a different nature. Joel Garreau, \textit{Edge City; Life on the New Frontier} (New York: Doubleday, 1991).
revealing and expressing a building's structure in a way that elegantly enhanced and grew out of the design and its materials. This approach derived from the honest, straightforward, if not elegant, factory structures of early twentieth century America, most notably automobile production plants, and resulted in the stylized adaptation which emerged during the 1930s as modernist architecture.

This conflict between the decorative or applied ornament and the integral or functionally expressive is part of a larger context and occurs throughout American life. It is manifest in various branches of the arts, design, and material culture as well. In literature the contrast is evident in comparing the work Ernest Hemingway with that of Theodore Driesser. Similarly in music, jazz and its successors stand in contrast to other, more traditional forms of music. In design, Horatio Greenough stressed the adaptation of form to function, while Andrew Jackson Downing espoused the ornamentation of otherwise plain structures. John Kouwenhoven explored this and other aspects of what he terms the dynamic tensions between the cultivated and the vernacular traditions. In a subsequent work, Kouwenhoven seeks to identify

\[\text{\textsuperscript{5}}\text{The work of Albert Kahn for Packard and Ford are notable examples. This is discussed in Reyner Banham, \textit{A Concrete Atlantis: U.S. Industrial Building and European Modern Architecture} (Cambridge, Massachusetts: The MIT Press, 1986); David P. Handlin, \textit{American Architecture} (London: Thames and Hudson Ltd., 1985), chaps. 6-8; Leland M. Roth, \textit{A Concise History of American Architecture} (New York: Harper \& Row, 1979).}\]


uniquely American qualities by examining various aspects of America's material culture. One aspect of this investigation leads him to compare "objects whose inner structure and outer form are integral" with those "whose outer forms merely sheath an inner structure or mechanism." This dissertation employs a parallel methodology in investigating the opposing applied and integral architectural design techniques on the American roadside.

The desire to rapidly foster growth on a vast continent, along with an absence of skilled labor and of the conventional materials associated with fine detailing caused American builders to apply ornament to their structures. Visually this often compensated for crude construction techniques. My argument in this dissertation is that buildings of the twentieth century American roadside generally adopted the applied construction technique. In the early twentieth century, roadside entrepreneurs swiftly erected plain structures to serve motorist's needs. Decorative ornament was often added to soften the harsh impact of these structures and attract customers. The elaborate detailing that defined formal edifices throughout Europe and older American cities was inappropriate and nonexistent on the American Roadside of the 1920s and 30s. Instead, crude, often overscaled ornamentation more effectively communicated with the rapidly travelling consumer than refined details which were likely to remain undistinguishable to the motorist as he or she sped past.

Alternatively, an undecorated structure could pragmatically create straightforward, usable industrial space. The need for vast unobstructed areas in which manufacturing and assembly could be undertaken resulted in the use of new

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technology and materials. In these new practical structures, materials and framing were typically left exposed. This technique yielded an integral architecture in which the direct use of structural members took on expressive, decorative qualities. The stylization of this integrated approach resulted in the introduction of modernist architecture.  

Thought to be free of cumbersome associations, modernist architecture was championed by the architectural journals and embraced by American architects. Two events are most closely associated with the beginning of this integral, modernist architecture. The 1933 Chicago Century of Progress Exposition did much to popularize this new machine age architecture. Just as Chicago’s previous fair, the World’s Columbian Exposition of 1893, had done much to expose people to a grand, classical urban order which resulted in the City Beautiful movement, so the 1933 Fair made modern, future looking, machine age architecture a present-day reality for many Americans. In addition, a staid, and perhaps more sophisticated version of modern architecture was unveiled to the public with the New York Museum of Modern Art’s opening of its pivotal 1932 show, "Modern Architecture: International

10Banham, A Concrete Atlantis.


Exhibition." Travelling across the country, and followed by a subsequent book, *The International Style: Architecture Since 1922*, this ten year retrospective filled with the best examples of modernist buildings, mostly from Europe, had a tremendous impact on the American architectural profession, but little initial impact on the landscape. The ideal of a modern, machine inspired architecture was captivating to American architects.

America’s technological achievements, while drawing much attention, were typically not credited with having any artistic value; in fact Europeans traditionally scorned America’s meager artistic achievements. However, in the aftermath of World War I, a generation of European architects emerged who found America’s plain industrial structures to be of considerable interest. Attracting the admiration of the Europeans to whom Americans customarily looked for direction, these structures became the basis for a high style architectural idiom. The subsequent availability of Europe’s eminent modernist architects to take the helm of America’s leading schools of architecture in the late 1930s, such as Walter Gropius at Harvard and Mies van der Rohe at Illinois Institute of Technology, changed the direction of American architecture. In turn, this modernism would be altered by its placement in American space.

Modernism, often referred to as International Style architecture, took the

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concept of expressing frank industrialism and sought to elevate it to a "high style." A modern structure's intrinsic elegance, according to modernists, should derive directly from its materials rather than applied ornamentation. Clearly visible structural members, usually in technologically advanced forms such as steel "I" beams were expressed and articulated, replacing ornament. Rather than enclose space, clear continuous glass walls could create a building skin which allowed the building's structure to be seen. The result would be an elegant flow of spaces, uniting inside and outside space. Architectural journals espoused this modern, integral architecture. It is my contention that this modernism stood in stark contrast to the architecture of the early roadside and that later, modified modern architecture, bears the imprint of the bold ornamented roadside structures of the earlier era.

American architects of commercial buildings practiced "modernism" yet drew on the aspects of the crude, ornamented structures to effectively communicate their commercial message on the vast landscape. While buildings employing either the applied or integral modes of design were constructed side by side on the American roadside during the 1930s, the roadside buildings of the 1950s post war era saw the conflicting ornamented and integral approach co-exist in single structures.¹⁵ The vernacular influenced adaptation of high style modernism appeared on the roadside in structures designed to offer amenities to motorists. The motel provides a good example of a commercial building which, through its architecture, had to quickly convey to the motorist why he or she should stop and stay. The design of roadside lodging is a particularly appropriate vehicle for tracing the development of the

¹⁵This phenomenon is perhaps evidenced by high style architecture of the 1950s which were at once decorated and integral. Minoru Yamasaki created a modern version of Gothic architecture reinterpreting a historic style which was known for its clear expression of structure. Douglas Haskell, "Architecture and Popular Taste," *Architectural Forum* 109 (August 1958): 105-109.
applied and integral architectural traditions and their ultimate co-existence on the American landscape.

This thesis will conduct its examination of the evolution of America’s roadside lodging by reviewing the physical, stylistic and architectural evolution of roadside lodging in America. It will examine the changes in this architecture through a detailed analysis of builder’s and trade journals, as well as professional architectural periodicals. This detailed building oriented analysis will be set against a backdrop of popular family and business journals which illustrate the evolution of roadside lodgings, from tent and cabin camp origins, to tourist courts, and ultimately to the elaborate, luxury roadside lodgings which emerged as motels and became an ubiquitous part of the American landscape. Business journals examined are The Magazine of American Business and Forbes in the late 1920s, Fortune from the mid 1930s through the early 1950s and Business Week in the 1940s and 1950s. Family journals examined are Women’s Home Companion in the late 1920s, Better Homes & Gardens and Harper’s Monthly Magazine in the 1930s, American Magazine in the 1940s, Saturday Evening Post in the late 1920s and early 1960s.

Builder’s publications and trade journals of the emerging roadside lodging industry examined a range of specific issues to consider in planning roadside lodgings as well as overall appearance, generally termed "roadside eye appeal." These sources, which documented the implementation of the applied, ornamented building tradition to roadside lodging were Popular Mechanics from the 1920s through the 1950s, American Builder and Building Age in the early 1930s and then in the late 1930s when renamed American Builder and the Tourist Court Journal beginning with its founding in 1937 through the late 1960s; it was renamed Motel/Motor Inn Journal in 1971.

The architectural journals, in contrast, documented the increasing role of
architects in designing overnight accommodations for motorists. Through these sources the development of the integral tradition is chronicled, along with the influence of the applied decorative tradition, and the resulting emergence of an architecture uniquely suited to the American landscape. This is evidenced in *Architectural Record* from first coverage of the subject in 1933, the *Architectural Forum* beginning in 1937, and *Progressive Architecture* beginning in the 1950s. Examination of all three architectural journals continued through the early 1960s when coverage waned as standardized chain plans took the place of custom designed architects' works.

Chapter 1 sets the stage for examining the architecture of roadside lodging by exploring the effect of the automobile on American life. It examines the automobile's considerable role in altering the environment. Initially, the automobile was seen as a vehicle for achieving elusive and often conflicting American spatial ideals. The adoption of the automobile was expected to simultaneously relieve urban congestion, by serving as an agent of decentralization, and solve rural isolation, by promoting centralization. These conflicting promises contributed to its almost universal attraction. In the resulting auto oriented landscape, however, decentralization dominated prior to the Interstate Highway era. These conditions provoked an architectural response in which the applied and integral design techniques came to co-exist.

Chapter 2 provides an overview of the various forms of overnight accommodations for auto travellers in the early twentieth century. At their most basic, in the 1920s, these were "tent houses" which offered the autocamper a place to stop and "camp" by the roadside for the night. These structures quickly evolved into more permanently constructed cabins which ranged from "chicken coops" to sophisticated cottages. In the 1920s popular journals provided advice to
"vacationists" about to embark on autocamping road trips. By the 1930s articles often presented information to those seeking business opportunities on the roadside. Beginning in the 1930s, architectural periodicals provided limited coverage of this era of roadside lodging. The concept of roadside cabins for tourists and the site plan possibilities of such complexes were the focus of coverage. Modest examples of projects for tent like buildings which directly expressed their wood structures provided a precursor of the adaptation of modernism to the American roadside. Overshadowing the coverage by the architectural media were builder oriented journals. These reported on tourist cabins and offered information ranging from construction instructions to farmers to more elaborately executed contractor built cottages. These structures typically bore applied ornamentation in the form of domestic symbols which conveyed images of home and hospitality.

Chapter 3 explores the tourist court. Emerging in the late 1930s, this form of roadside lodging persisted through World War II. Making a virtue of necessity, this Depression era business provided economical roadside accommodations. Popular business journals noted the emergence of tourist courts as "big business." This is confirmed by the establishment, in 1937, of the International Motor Court Association. The organization's publication, *The Tourist Court Journal*, emphasized the importance of design issues, especially eye appeal from the road, as a marketing tool. Serving as surrogate architect, the journal addressed "courters" specific concerns ranging from overall site plan and site amenities, such as night lighting for visibility, to individual room appointments. Proposed building treatments were within the tradition of applied ornament. Ironically, the application of "modern" auto scaled ornament was sometimes suggested as a means of achieving an up to date integral aesthetic.

Builder's journals, while continuing to publish roadside accommodations,
were all but eclipsed by the specific trade journal coverage. Architectural journals reflected an awareness of the potential of this new roadside tourist industry. The coverage of more sophisticated cabins, while an element of the architectural media’s coverage of the field, was overshadowed by its interest in what it repeatedly termed the "highway hotel." Anxious to impart roadside lodgings with a more substantial image, and recognizing the traditional downtown hotel image to be an inappropriate architectural response, architects tentatively began to explore the dramatic possibilities offered by expression of structure associated with the integral design mode. Articles emphasized the practicality and inherent economies of adapting this integral approach to what the architectural media saw as a new building type. The era ended with architectural journals projecting futuristic highway hotel projects. These designs, which were never built, were dependent on the adaptation of war time technology to peace time construction.

Chapter 4 documents the appearance in the post World War II era of the motel. Marking the nation’s decentralized growth spurt, the roadside motel emerges as the country’s primary form of overnight accommodation. Architects’ involvement surged as the era of the plush, individually owned motel or motor lodge dawned. The sudden flood of commissions is marked by a significant increase in coverage by architectural journals. At the same time, roadside lodging virtually disappeared from builder’s journals. The architectural publications document an integration of the applied and integral design traditions, and the creation of a new design mode uniquely suited to the American motorscape. Learning from traditional applied ornament of previous era’s roadside structures while striving to maintain a clean, integral aesthetic, architects created a new form of modernism largely dictated by roadside space. This new architecture was sometimes relaxed, with traditional wood beams and posts clearly articulated and offset by large expanses of glass.
Alternatively, this architecture was wildly exuberant, expressing or reflecting the structural capabilities of the newest "high-tech" materials and methods of construction.

The emergence of motels of the Interstate era is beyond the scope of this dissertation. The analysis stops at this point because the alteration of the American landscape by the Interstate Highway system resulted in a new forms of roadside architecture which received little attention from the architectural media. This new architecture employed both the applied architectural technique and integral aesthetic, adapting them to communicating corporate messages to the high speed traveller. In contrast, the architecture of roadside lodging explored in this dissertation initially, during the cabin camp and tourist court eras, illustrates either the applied or the integral tradition on roadside structures. During the motel era, prior to the Federal Highway Act of 1958, both the applied and the integral traditions coexisted in a single building. After this time, as motel chains began to supplant individually owned lodgings on the roadside, the applied and integral design modes began to take new forms which in turn contributed to the emergence of new architectural standards. No longer casually located along the roadside, these substantial facilities, usually located at major Interstate highway intersections, have emerged as the auto driven landscape's equivalent of the downtown railroad station hotel.
CHAPTER I - THE AUTOMOBILE AND AMERICAN SPACE

Americans' adoption of and subsequent love affair with the automobile led to its integration into national life, profoundly changing our culture. As a result, the automobile is alternately credited with and blamed for creating an economic and social revolution in the twentieth century characterized by the development of a "car culture" and its attendant "motorscape." The emergence of this motorscape rekindled the ongoing debate concerning what American space and the built environment ought to be. Issues of urban versus rural space and centralization versus decentralization took on increased importance as the auto accelerated the forces of change on the American landscape.

President Warren Harding, addressing Congress in 1921, prophetically pinpointed the motorcar as "an indispensable instrument in our political, social and industrial life."¹ Two years later, Ransom E. Olds acknowledged the responsibility of the automobile industry to the nation stating that, "The automobile industry has become of such tremendous importance and such gigantic proportions, that anything that affects it affects the country as a whole."² The following year, an issue of The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science: The Automobile: Its Province and Its Problems³ presented "the new province of the automobile," outlining a broad range of economic, social and physical changes that accompanied adoption of the automobile.

Based on the early uses to which Americans put the automobile, The Annals


essays predicted that the car would play a key role in solving a variety of problems; both those which had been inherent in American life and those which the automobile itself was beginning to cause or exacerbate. For example, the auto was at once welcomed as a means of ending rural isolation and eliminating urban congestion. These divergent views of the implications of adopting the automobile developed into inherently contradictory theories of the auto as an agent of centralization, bringing people together, and the notion of the automobile as an agent of decentralization, dispersing people across the American landscape. As one *Annals* essay explained, "the automobile is a vehicle for assembling of people from a wide area at a center and for reaching all the farms of the area with services."4 Such opposing, yet simultaneously held visions represent the broad and often contradictory expectations placed on the automobile. While many of the early predictions, such as the auto’s impact on the American economy, have ultimately been realized, the results have been different from those originally anticipated.

The automobile has long been a force driving the American economy. From the beginning, production of automobiles was linked to industrialization, spawning a demand for related products and revolutionizing industry with its mass production techniques. As consumerism and service became the mainstay of the economy, the automobile’s role shifted from production to consumption as mobile consumers drove the economy.

The importance of the automobile in the American economy was borne out not only by the magnitude of the auto industry itself but also by the demand for other products and services that it spawned. "The automobile is revolutionizing American

4Warren H. Wilson, "What the Automobile Has Done To and For the Country Church," *The Annals*, 85.
life and industry. The gas driven machine has brought an era as distinct and creative as that brought by steam" noted *Annals* editor Clyde L. King in his foreword.\(^5\) By the 1920s, the auto had become the lifeblood of the petroleum industry. Previously by-products of the refining process, auto oriented petroleum products like gasoline, motor oil and lubricants accounted for 90% of the industry's production by the 1920s. Similarly, 80% of the rubber industry's resources were now producing automotive tires, trim and the like; 75% of the plate glass industry's production yielded auto windshields; in addition, quantum leaps in demand affected the steel, machine tool and paint industries. Automobile historian John B. Rae states that by 1928, the automobile had "become the bellwether of the American economy."\(^6\) In the first decade of this century, auto manufacturing climbed from one hundred fiftieth to twenty first place in terms of value of products produced among American industries.\(^7\) Increasing automobile production, the resulting decrease in price combined with the availability of installment purchase plans, made the car an attainable part of life for many American families by the late 1920s. With the full purchase price no longer required, the automobile was now within reach of a broader segment of the population.

A rise in consumerism accompanied the adoption of the automobile by American families. Virtually every aspect of everyday housekeeping was affected. As the Lynds' noted in their *Middletown* study, "more and more of the things utilized

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\(^7\)Ibid., 48.
as food, clothing and shelter are being shifted from home production to purchase."\(^8\) This fundamental change was the basis for automobile historian James J. Flink's observation that, "During the 1920's, automobility became the backbone of a new consumer-goods-oriented society and economy that has persisted into the present."\(^9\) For example, during this decade, production of durable consumer goods increased by 72 percent. By 1929, The Hoover Committee on Recent Economic Changes noted that, "simultaneously with the advance in the use of the automobile there has been a marked advance in the purchase of many commodities that a decade ago would have been described as luxury goods, but which have since entered so universally into the average budget as no longer to be regarded as such."\(^10\) The adoption of the mass production techniques developed for the automobile industry to a broad spectrum of commodities dominated the shift to a consumer goods oriented economy.

Developing his economic theories in the auto age of the 1950s, W. W. Rostow saw the diffusion of the private automobile as a prime indicator of his stages of economic growth. The democratization of the automobile, according to Rostow, was inextricably tied to the commencement of the age of "high mass-consumption."\(^11\) Reinforcing Rostow's point, referring to the nation's auto

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\(^10\) Cited in Flink, *The Car Culture*, 149.

\(^11\) "For the United States the turning point was, perhaps, Henry Ford's moving assembly line of 1913-1914; but it was in the 1920s, and again in the post-war decade, 1946-56, that this stage of growth was pressed to, virtually, its logical conclusion." W. W. Rostow, *The Stages of Economic Growth* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1960), 11.
dominated post World War II era, John Rae notes, "At the peak of the automobile boom of the 1950's, therefore, the American passenger car was exemplifying Thorstein Veblen's concept of conspicuous consumption on a scale never anticipated by him."\textsuperscript{12}

Maturing consumerism, however, was no longer directly related to automobile production. Hence, the automobile no longer maintained its significant role in our economy as an agent of industrialization. In 1957, on the verge of the country's adopting the Interstate highway system, the service sector started to surpass the manufacturing sector as a proportion of our national economy.\textsuperscript{13} By the end of the 1970s, the increase of foreign products and services reflected the decrease of America's international industrial domination. In many ways, this shift to a service economy which continued through the 1970s marked the end of the "Mom & Pop" personal roadside service era and the emergence of a new type of corporate, efficient roadside service.

The automobile continues to play a key role in this service-oriented society. Rather than through its traditional role of industrializing of our economy, however, the automobile pervades through the commerce of our auto environment which is dominated by franchises providing services to motorists. The concept of mass production and interchangeable parts has evolved from producing automobiles to constructing the buildings of the auto-dominated environment they have helped to shape.

As early as the 1920s, intertwined with the automobile's profound impact on

\textsuperscript{12}Ibid., 209.

the American economy were a series of social changes that were perhaps even more far reaching. According to John Rae, by 1928, the automobile had become "the most important single influence in American social life."  

The effect of the automobile on American society can perhaps best be understood by looking at a variety of family related issues. These range from church attendance to the way in which the family lived both at home and on the road as it began to use the automobile as its major mode of transportation. Over time, a series of contradictory expectations have all come to be fulfilled.

Clergy in both urban and rural areas evinced considerable interest in discovering whether increased driving would have an impact on church attendance. While acknowledging that the village church had begun to lose its hold on farmers, one Annals essay explained that "the motor has brought people to church whom the horse would never have brought thither." The essay also commented that pastors were beginning to use automobiles "for visiting the remote ranchers above the ditch." At the same time as optimism based on simultaneous centralization and decentralization was expressed for the country church, the auto was seen as helping the city church as well. As construction of elevated railroads and electrification of horse car lines pushed the dwelling places of families away from traditional urban neighborhoods and their churches, the auto, it was projected, would provide an alternative to the "trolley-ride down into the city [which] proves too irksome for parents with small children," thereby making it easier for the entire family to attend its old neighborhood church. This essay concluded, "It is obvious that the downtown

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14Rae, The American Automobile, 106.

15Wilson, "What the Automobile Has Done," The Annals, 83.
church has found it easier to remain with the coming of the automobile."\(^{16}\)

Conversely, a leading *Middletown* minister denounced the disease of "automobility - the thing these people have who go off motoring on Sunday instead of going to church. If you want to use your car on Sunday, take it out Sunday morning and bring some shut-ins to church and Sunday School; then in the afternoon, if you choose, go out and worship God in the beauty of nature - but don't neglect to worship him indoors too."\(^ {17}\)

Could this Middletown minister have envisioned, within a generation, Reverend Dr. Robert H. Schuller leading his flock from the pulpit of what he calls his "22-acre shopping center for Jesus Christ" as they worship in their cars with their car radios tuned to his *Hour of Power* message? In designing Rev. Schuller's Garden Grove Community Church (1962) in Los Angeles, California, architect Richard Neutra borrowed the architectural vocabulary of the commercial strip, combining it with the concept of the drive-in movie to create an ecclesiastical structure which was truly reflective of the impact of the automobile. In commissioning Philip Johnson and John Burgee in the late 1970s to design a Crystal Cathedral to replace his already outgrown drive-in church, Reverend Schuller instructed the architects, "I want to tie the religious experience to nature. And if you can see the sky, and the traffic on the freeway too, that's good - it means that religion is not divorced from reality."\(^ {18}\)

If adoption of the automobile contributed to a change in church attendance and other family traditions, it was credited with or blamed for ushering in radical changes

\(^{16}\)James J. Coale, "Influence of the Automobile on the City Church," *The Annals*, 81.

\(^{17}\)Lynd, *Middletown*, 259.

to the house which the altered family called home. In an *Annals*, essay architect John F. Harbeson of the University of Pennsylvania predicted that the home of the future would be smaller because the expense of purchasing and maintaining the family car would reduce "the proportion of one's earnings which can be spent for so many square feet of home." Harbeson noted that the old fashioned kitchen was gone, that the dining room was going, and he predicted, "bedrooms will approach more and more the pullman car compartment." 19 This prediction was already becoming a reality in experimental homes such as Frank Lloyd Wright's Usonian houses.

Beyond the economic forces, less space was required at home for the family on the move. As one *Middletown* Chautauqua speaker put it, "The home was once a sacred institution where the family spent most of its time. Now it is a physical service station." 20 As another social critic commented in 1932, "the increase in the ease of transport makes people look upon the home as little more than a dormitory." 21 In addition, the parlor and the front porch, once important social spaces, fell into disuse, and by the 1930s, disappeared from the house as it evolved in response to the social changes brought with automobility. In their place, the garage, an element once hidden from view, came to dominate the front facade; it displaced the traditional entry portal, and, as Folke Kihlstedt observed, "introduced

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20 Lynd, *Middletown*, 177-78.

a note of informality into the home."^{22}

It was in the post World War II era that Federal Housing Authority (FHA) houses, with their mandated minimum square footages, became ubiquitous. By the 1960s, with the emergence of the two car garage as a standard, one third of a house's square footage was given to housing the car. As the front yard became a small, very public, auto dominated space, the family retreated to the rear yard or "garden," with its patio, which, replacing the front porch, was usually an extension of the family room, a new informal combination parlor and dining room. The automobile has literally turned the American house around.^{23}

Just as auto production was no longer driving the American economy by the 1960s, the auto itself was no longer viewed as a threat to family life. The auto dominated environment, however, especially its fast food establishments began to be viewed as a threat to family traditions. Stan Luxenberg conducted a series of interviews analyzing various aspects of what he calls "the franchising of America". One interview reveals, "Eating fast food has . . . undermined the solidarity of our family. I don't eat with my family as often as I used to. If I'm working at something at dinnertime and I'd really like to keep on, I give a call home and say I'll

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^{22}Ibid., 161; also see J. B. Jackson, "The Domestication of the Garage," Landscape XX (Winter 1976): 10-19.

^{23}The changing configuration of the American house fostered by the automobile is reflective of changes to family life that came with automobility. One Middletown housewife, lamenting the changes brought with automobility, recalled: "In the nineties, we were all much more together... People brought chairs and cushions out of the house and sat on the lawn evenings. We rolled out a strip of carpet and put cushions on the porch step to take care of the unlimited overflow of neighbors that dropped by. We'd sit out all evening. The younger couples would perhaps wonder off for half an hour to get soda but come back to join in the informal singing or listen while somebody strummed a mandolin or guitar." Lynd, Middletown, 257.
catch something to eat later."24 Yet, as the object most associated with changing times, the automobile continues to be the target of criticism by those who resist change. As John Rae points out however, "this criticism exemplified man's propensity to blame his technology rather than himself for whatever evil consequences it might produce. . . If [the automobile] was used for the wrong purposes, the fault was with the users."25

If the auto encouraged the scattering of the family, it also was seen as a powerful force in keeping it together. As a 1914 issue of Automobile explained, "Holding the family together is with many families one of the strongest arguments that can be advanced in these days when the divorce mill is grinding over time. . . .It is an argument that has sold thousands of cars. . . Any force that makes stronger the family ties is bound to be a potent force; it is bound to be an enduring force."26 As a Middletown mother noted, "I never feel as close to my family as when we are all together in the car. . . . It keeps the family together."27 Henry Ford spoke of his Model T providing American families with a means of taking "the Sunday drive" and enjoying "God's great open spaces."

Family travelling, and perhaps camping together on an automobile vacation is a prime example of how some believed the automobile could be used to reinforce traditional values. In fact, the concept of the family vacation became inextricably


25Rae, The American Automobile, 95.


27Lynd, Middletown, 257.
tied to the automobile. As early as 1913, *Motor Life* featured a "Family 'Made Over'" article and *Sunset* Magazine for October 1916 contained "Motor Touring as a Family Affair." Within a few years, the generation home from World War I put the automobile at the center of their rediscovery of our nation's unspoiled natural beauty as they relived the pioneer experience of the conquest of the continent. Traveling together in their automobiles, "autocamping" American families could enjoy arcadia, albeit only for a few weeks at a time. Freed from the "beaten path" and rigid schedules of the railroad, families could roam across the landscape breaking away from the confines of urban industrial cities.

In the shift from a traditional industrial landscape we may have gained access to the mythical "middle landscape" or "garden" Leo Marx discusses in *The Machine in the Garden*[^28], but in the process, we have profoundly altered it. While providing a vehicle for conquering the vast American space, the automobile has transformed this space, bringing Americans closer to the mythical "middle landscape." It has made it what Phil Patton calls "a garden mostly of weeds, but with the vital force of weeds, a field in which from time to time, beautiful wild flowers appear."[^29] This transformation of American space has been well chronicled. At the turn of the century, Americans were most often either rural or urban dwellers; by 1950, one quarter of the American people lived in auto dependent suburbs[^30]. As Kenneth Jackson notes, between 1950 and 1980, a period during which the American population increased by fifty percent, the number of their automobiles increased by


[^29]: Patton, *Open Road*, 158.

two hundred percent. The proliferation of automobiles on the American landscape caused its radical alteration.

Daniel J. Boorstin noted in 1965 that the American environment could no longer properly be called a landscape. The automobile, he commented, "has been responsible for transforming large tracts of America and the dwelling places of most Americans into an environment neither urban nor rural, not properly to be called landscape. Dominated by superhighways and motels and drive-ins... much of America can now be called motorscape."³¹ In this context, the motorscape proved a fertile field for "pseudo-events" or "images" taking the place of the "real", a phenomenon Daniel Boorstin had previously explored. With access to the landscape provided through the windshield, tourists were offered a variety of "pseudo-events" which substituted for real experiences. Boorstin notes that the automobile provides us with a "moving 'picture window' through which we can look out from air-conditioned comfort while we hear our familiar radio program. The whizzing cross country motorist [is]... reluctant to stop at all."³² Perhaps the most expressive "image" on this new motorscape is the much celebrated and condemned Long Island Duck. Built by a poultry farmer "to advertise his business", this fourteen foot tall lath and concrete structure in the form of a duck was matter-of-factly reported in the Popular Mechanics of November 1932 under the heading "Concrete Bird Draws Attention To Duck Farm." This pseudo-event was to become an icon representing to some what was wrong with the auto dominated environment, and to others opportunity to learn from our everyday surroundings.


The phenomenon of pseudo-events turned the American roadside into what Karol Ann Marling in *The Colossus of Roads* calls "a privileged zone, strewn with marvels for the detection of the wayfarer. . . in which all things are possible."³³ Through the manipulation of architectural symbols, instant tourist attractions could be created at any point on the roadside. For example, travelers could stop to "Eat and Sleep in a Wig-Wam" or other teepee-style huts which sprang up in a number of locations in the late 1920s and 1930s.³⁴ Marling sees these buildings as "a statement about the frontier status of the highway. As an architectural form, the teepee shape conveys messages of transience, shelter, and temporary stoppage."³⁵ In Sinclair Lewis’ *The Man Who Knew Coolidge* [1928], Lowell Schmaltz tells George Babbitt of an epic voyage involving wigwams, pioneer cabins, Mount Vernon, and Pagodas. It is only later that it becomes evident that all of these sites were seen within a few days travel from home. Indeed, all these roadside pseudo-events became acceptable substitutes for the structures they emulated.

As highways developed and motorists moved at faster speeds, roadside buildings increased in size. Stature and large scale became more important than accurate detailing. Through their often exaggerated architectural symbols, these roadside "pseudo-buildings" conveyed the essence of the original icons. Thus, the America being viewed was no longer real, but, scaled to the fast moving motorist, became a larger and more exotic place. The various views of this new space provide


the context for studying the role of the road and the contribution of roadside buildings toward the creation of a truly American architecture.

The definition of an ideal American space has been the subject of intense debate since before the time of Thomas Jefferson. Some early American spatial ideals, articulated by William Penn, visualized city dwellings set among green gardens and orchards. Jefferson saw small landowners as "the most precious part of the state" and espoused reducing the importance of cities. By the 1920s the automobile was seen by some as a mechanism for achieving Jefferson's long elusive American spatial dream.

The "City Beautiful" vision of the European grandeur of classically inspired buildings lining broad, elegant boulevards which carry a flow of autos away from cities to more rural settings has its roots in Jeffersonian ideals. This vision of American space at once proposed classical civic architecture of a European order for American cities, while providing the means for Americans, if not as yeoman farmers and husbandmen, to nonetheless be land owning citizens in suburbs.

In his *The Annals* essay, John Ihdler, Manager of the Civic Development Department of the U.S. Chamber of Commerce, reported on the potential role of the auto in helping America realize its illusive dream of "green and spacious cities."38


37Jefferson's view of cities is that they "add just so much to the support of pure government, as sores do to the strength of the human body. It is the manners and spirit of a people which preserve a republic in vigor. A degeneracy in these is a canker which soon eats to the heart of its laws and constitution." Thomas Jefferson, *Notes on the State of Virginia*, excerpted in Leland M. Roth, *America Builds; Source Documents in American Architecture and Planning* (New York: Harper and Row, 1983), 24-25.

Looking backward for inspiration, Ihdler saw "broad boulevards which added to the dignity of cities," while adding to their ability to handle automobile traffic. The car, "instead of enabling us to crowd more people into a given area . . . is forcing us to diminish the density of population."³⁹ Such new, auto driven planning concepts, it follows, were not limited to municipal borders, but were to be applied to wider metropolitan areas. The automobile would relieve urban problems by serving as an agent of decentralization. Looking toward the future, Ihdler envisioned,

a considerable number of communities, each more or less self sufficient, grouped about a metropolitan center which was the old time city. These communities are supported from the center and from each other by broad belts of open land, not parks merely but farms, orchards, truck gardens, woods. With well paved arterial highways, or perhaps even narrow strips of built-up land crossing them, as old London Bridge with its flanking rows of shops crossed the River Thames, these open spaces mean to the automobilist only five minutes more in the open air.⁴⁰

While in fact significantly altering the central city, Ihdler's 1920s metropolitan vision of the future quite accurately anticipates Edge Cities of the 1990s.

The forces of decentralization were already at work during the 1920s. By 1922, two years before the publication of Ihdler’s vision in the Annals, about 135,000 suburban homes in sixty cities were already completely dependent upon cars for transportation.⁴¹ Also during the decade of the 1920s, the suburbs of the nation’s 96 largest cities grew twice as fast as the core communities. During this time period, automobile registrations rose by more than 150 per cent.⁴² As the location of housing radiated outward from central cities, it was only logical that

³⁹Ihdler, "The Automobile and Community Planning," The Annals, 201.

⁴⁰Ihdler, "The Automobile and Community Planning," The Annals, 204.

⁴¹Flink, The Car Culture, 178.

⁴²Jackson, Crabgrass Frontier, 175.
shopping facilities should follow. The process of trade following the automobile out of cities was described by a downtown Atlanta, Georgia retailer, who in 1926 noted, "the place where trade is, is where automobiles go... A central location is no longer a good one."\textsuperscript{43} At first, the newly dispersed retail stores were housed in "taxpayer" strips or blocks lining the roads which connected the central city with outlying suburbs.\textsuperscript{44} These were simple, long, one or two story structures that housed a number of different shops. In a sense, they were an instant variety of traditional main streets. Their name derived from the fact that such blocks were erected as temporary buildings, the revenue from which was to cover the cost of taxes until they could be replaced with more permanent, intense development. This, of course, never occurred, since the strip continued to grow in a linear, sprawling pattern, never justifying the anticipated redevelopment.\textsuperscript{45}

From the initial recognition of the automobile's potential to alter the American landscape, to the realization that it was creating a new environment, architects and architectural critics have offered commentary on the evolving motorscape. Frank Lloyd Wright saw the auto as offering freedom from traditional cities and presenting the opportunity for achieving Jeffersonian pastoral ideals. His proposal for


\textsuperscript{45}For a discussion of the evolution of the strip, especially in relationship to American settlement patterns, see Richard P. Horwitz, The Strip: An American Place (Lincoln, Nebraska: University of Nebraska Press, 1985).
Broadacre City\textsuperscript{46} was an expansive community in which little farms, self sufficient homes, homes for industry, factories and schools sprawled across the landscape in an orderly fashion. Conversely, Lewis Mumford saw the auto as a threat to cities and to our landscape. Having earlier advised us to "forget the damned motor car and build cities for lovers,"\textsuperscript{47} by the late 1950s Mumford saw the car as a device to compensate for egos "shrunken by our success at mechanization."\textsuperscript{48} He predicted that, since the roads of Metropolitanism lead not only away from, but also into urban areas, that the car would strangle the city. He lamented efforts to continue to build new roads and highways to accommodate the automobile, noting that this "brutal assault against the landscape. . . eventually, would wipe out the very area of freedom that the private motor car promised to retain."\textsuperscript{49}

Peter Blake, influential editor of architectural journals, offered a strident commentary on what he termed "the flood of ugliness engulfing America." Acknowledging \textit{God's Own Junkyard} to be a muckraking book, he explained that "there was so much muck around, that it needed to be raked."\textsuperscript{50} His allegorical tour of the country includes cities and townscapes destroyed by the jarring chaos of

\textsuperscript{46}Frank Lloyd Wright, "Broadacre City: A New Community," \textit{Architectural Record} 77 (April 1935): 243-54.

\textsuperscript{47}Jackson, \textit{Crabgrass Frontier}, 248.

\textsuperscript{48}Lewis Mumford, "The Highway and the City," \textit{Architectural Record} 123 (April 1958): 179-186. It is interesting to note, however that architects in search of commissions, followed the decentralizing routes of commerce. The balance of this issue of \textit{Architectural Record}, accordingly, was devoted to a Building Type Study of "Motor Hotels; As Building Business and As Architecture For Business."

\textsuperscript{49}Ibid., 179.

\textsuperscript{50}Peter Blake, \textit{God's Own Junkyard; The planned Deterioration of America's Landscape} (New York: Holt Reinhart and Winston, 1964), 7.
billboards cloaking and overshadowing deteriorated buildings or by new urban areas which suffer from "a cancer of uniformity." He found the emerging middle landscape of suburbia to be "an interminable wasteland dotted with millions of monotonous little houses. . . crisscrossed by highways lined with billboards, jazzed up diners, used car lots, drive-in movies, beflagged gas stations, and garish motels." His juxtaposition of natural beauty with man's desecration of the landscape includes contrasting idyllic lakeside views of children feeding ducks with a views of the now famous roadside duck. Blake's colleague, Douglas Haskell, recognizing the "vitality in America's popular building, even in its roadside honky-tonk," argued for a rapprochement between "severe early modernism" and "popular taste," explaining that the result would be the "architectural counterpart to jazz." Haskell cited Yamasaki's work for being at once structurally expressive and decorative as well as Eero Saarinen's TWA Terminal which he declared "to be like a big bird, but with an aesthetic standard."

John Brinkerhoff Jackson, founding editor of Landscape magazine in the 1950s cautioned against reacting to the aesthetics of the changing landscape. Rather, he advised that we "learn to see" analytically and non-judgmentally. Had we

51 Ibid., 24.
52 Ibid., 8.
53 Douglas Haskell, "Architecture And Popular Taste," Architectural Forum 109 (August 1958): 106. It is interesting to note that Haskell's call for a change from strict modernism was, in a sense, answered with the announcement, in the same issue of Architectural Forum of the retirement of Mies van der Rohe, former Bauhaus director and a founder of modernism, from Illinois Institute of Technology.
54 Ibid., 106.
55 John Brinkerhoff Jackson, Discovering the Vernacular Landscape (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1984), ix-x.
viewed suburbs this way, we would have understood them to be auto induced versions of Leo Marx's Garden, containing the seeds of Edge City. With the traditional way of seeing the world abandoned, Jackson argued, from behind the wheel of our cars, we could experience, as active participants, a genuinely new American landscape. Adding a visual component to the cultural and social analysis that J. B. Jackson espoused, Robert Venturi advocated an analysis of precisely the elements in the environment that Peter Blake found to be "deteriorated and ugly." He concludes that "it is perhaps from the everyday landscape, vulgar and disdained, that we can draw the complex and contradictory order that is valid and vital for our architecture as an urbanistic whole." In writing *Learning From Las Vegas*, Venturi was joined by Denise Scott Brown who had been influenced by the British townscape movement and Steven Izenour who was familiar with the work of J.B. Jackson and had completed an in depth study of Louis Sullivan's mid-west banks that Venturi found to contain interesting juxtapositions and diverse combinations. The combination of perspectives made this examination of the evolving decentralizing auto dominated strip particularly significant. *Learning from Las Vegas* concludes that symbolism is an essential part of the American architectural tradition. This symbolism, especially on the roadside, was often communicated through the application of ornament to otherwise simple structures. Although a product of the Interstate era, *Learning From Las Vegas* provided the basis for an examination of

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symbolism in architecture by examining the vibrant strip which was designed to be perceived by auto travellers.

The concept of motion across the vast American space had been recognized as contributing to the character of its architecture by John Kouwenhoven. In defining "What Is American in Architecture & Design," Kouwenhoven points to "motion and change" as phenomena "central to that ‘American’ quality which we are trying to define." 59 Citing the railroad’s fast paced crossing of the continent, he notes that the very qualities that kept American architecture crude and colonial also became "a vehicle for an architecture expressive of the American environment." 60 It was Venturi, Scott Brown and Izenour, who through Learning From Las Vegas accepted the challenge of the American auto driven landscape as a determinant in defining an American Architecture which responded to American space.

The auto driven decentralization which modified architecture could not continue indefinitely either in time or space. As suburban communities matured, mega-complexes containing major department stores as well as ancillary enterprises offering a variety of goods and services all within the confines of an enclosed, climate controlled environment. Ultimately the strips and highways were punctuated with satellite cities. Just as the taxpayer strip was an instant main street, the shopping mall and its surrounding structures, has become a satellite or surrogate downtown. These malls, often at freeway intersections, commonly surrounded by suburban development have, with the addition of offices and other work places,


60 Ibid., 158.
emerged as multiple, decentralized urban centers or "Edge Cities." The decentralization process has therefore culminated in a new type of centralization.

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CHAPTER II - CABIN CAMPS AND THEIR PRECURSORS

Roadside cabin camps evolved during the 1920s from auto camps, which at their most basic offered space for pitching a tent. As the level of amenity rose, the concept of pitching one's own tent at nightfall was replaced by facilities offering tent houses that awaited the auto traveller as he sought a place to "camp" for the night. Tent houses consisted of heavy canvas supported on wood frames set on board floors. These structures quickly evolved into more permanently constructed wood frame cabins as cabin camps emerged, setting new standards in roadside lodging. Cabins ranged from "chicken coops" or shacks the size of corn cribs that provided basic shelter to cabins or cottages bearing architectural symbols evocative of specific images. At once naive and sophisticated structures, these cottages evolved as the architecture of the cabin became a vehicle for conveying the waning sense of adventure and romance as rugged auto camping gave way to less demanding auto tourism.

The site plans of tent and cabin camps ranged from the random to the highly organized, whether straight linear roads or picturesque compositions that belied their careful planning. Cabins were built in fields set back from the main road, often separated from the thoroughfare by a store or gas station. They were often grouped around a central open space or community building that served as the camp's visual and social focus. Sometimes the cabins were arranged in straight rows or streets that also defined a central camp area. In relatively rare cases, the more elaborate site plans tended toward the picturesque, causing these cottage camps to emerge as a new type of "country club" outdoor hotel offering a full range of hotel services in "natural" yet convenient roadside environments. The site plans of such lavish facilities and the attendant architectural embellishments made them transcend their basic function of offering roadside lodging. The various site plan themes for the
cabin camp merged, reappearing in the flamboyant motels of the 1950s.

By the 1930s, the architectural journals began reporting on what the *Architectural Record* for December of 1933 referred to as the emerging phenomenon of "convenient overnight shelters for auto travellers." This first article in an architectural periodical that acknowledged a potential opportunity for architects explained that "The construction of 'shacks' has been the single growing and highly active division of the building industry during the depression years."¹ Containing illustrations of a variety of non-architect designed structures, which appeared to be little more than shacks, the article challenged architects to respond to what it suggested was one of the few opportunities afforded during economically troubled times and to design roadside lodging facilities. The pictures of unattributed shacks and cabins were accompanied by architect designed proposed site plans.

The limited coverage in architectural periodicals, which continued throughout the cabin camp era, was overshadowed by builder oriented journals. These ranged from *Popular Mechanics*, which advised farmers on the construction of roadside cabins, to the more sophisticated *Building Age*, which reported on the involvement of architects and designers in the design and construction of roadside lodging. In addition, popular journals contained articles that included, in the late 1920s, advice to vacationers, and by the early 1930s, advice to those seeking business opportunities on the roadside. The latter also included detailed descriptions of various facilities that might serve as models for potential roadside entrepreneurs.

"We are seeing our country for the first time," noted Emily Post.² With the auto driven rediscovery of our country came the highly fashionable sport of autocamping. This almost aristocratic pastime offered a vehicle for wealthy families to escape strict Victorian constraints while legitimately opening what Theodore Dreiser described intimate contact with "woodland silence and grassy slopes" as well as the timeless, pastoral calm.³ The automobile offered the traveller freedom from the "beaten path" and rigid schedules of the railroad that came to represent the negative aspects of industrialism. As James Flink explains, "the motor vehicle offered the flexibility of the horse with the speed of the locomotive."⁴ The technologically driven primitivism of autocamping made it possible for Americans to heed Theodore Roosevelt's call to a return to "the strenuous life" while propelling the nation's rise as an industrial power. Naturalist John Burroughs was among the first to justify auto camping as a way of returning to nature. His auto camping jaunts to the country with Henry Ford, Thomas Edison, Harvey Firestone, and President Warren Harding did much to legitimize the increasingly popular pastime.

As more families were able to afford automobiles, autocamping became a middle class pursuit. With automobility came the opportunity to break away from the rigors of industrial urban life. Autocamping publications of the early 1920s offered virtually everyone "Thoreau at 29 cents per gallon." Stressing the individual

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freedom brought by automobility, these publications explained, "You are your master, the road is ahead; you eat as you please, cooking your own meals over an open fire; sleeping when you will under the stars, waking with the dawn." 5 By the early 1930s, widely circulated family magazines such as Better Homes & Gardens advised autocamping for the two week vacationer who wished to be "as free and independent as a gypsy." The autocamper, a feature explained, "can go where the beckoning land leads, he can stop where he chooses, he can stay as long as he wishes in a spot he likes . . . the autocamper can live right out next to nature and let the clouds roll by and the world go hang." 6

As autocamping grew in popularity, appealing to an increasingly broad segment of society, it held the promise of breaking social barriers, rekindling an egalitarian spirit of democracy. "The motor camp today is our finest American democracy," declared an article in the August 1927 issue of The Magazine of American Business. "Snobbery is taboo, every man is your ‘neighbor’ and all are bound together by an almost unbelievable tie - the dust of the open road." 7 As an operator of a roadside camp explained during the prosperity of the late 1920s, "All sorts of parties came to the camp. Big new $5,000 limousines would be parked next


to rusty, worn-out little touring cars that rattled like junk wagons." According to the early experiences of this roadside entrepreneur, it was not uncommon for a bank president, a shop foreman, a school teacher, and a farmer to all camp together.

As auto camping became increasingly popular, the once welcome occasional auto traveller who offered the farmer some extra income for the privilege of parking and pitching a tent overnight became a nuisance. Farmers posted "no camping" signs as autocampers became known for the debris they left behind and property they damaged and sometimes took as they travelled on. Owners of filling stations, small grocery stores, and other roadside businesses, however, began to realize a good profit from this burgeoning tourist trade. Commenting on the emerging business opportunities, *The Magazine of American Business* noted, "Motorists are annually buying scenery--paying the price most willingly--worth to the sellers of this commodity three and one third billions of dollars." To cash in on these business opportunities while protecting themselves from the nuisance, local businesses, often through their Chambers of Commerce, established free campgrounds. Intended to draw the tourist to downtown businesses he might otherwise by-pass, these municipal campgrounds, often located at the outskirts of town, began to offer something more than space under trees as they introduced graded sites, privies, and running water in their bid for the auto tourist.

By the late 1920s a series of problems began to make these camps impractical. The difficulty of insuring sanitary facilities and clean drinking water was a long standing issue that began drawing national attention. As the camps were made more

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elaborate with permanent installations, including better plumbing with showers and toilets, electricity, and sometimes cooking facilities, it became difficult to cover the increased operating costs with the tourist dollars they generated. These problems were exacerbated by the Depression, which bred millions of auto wanderers. With cheap used cars available, more people took to the road, often in desperate search of opportunities. The growing numbers of motor vagabonds became the auto era's equivalent of the railroad hobo. The free municipal camps found themselves hosting this type of motorist instead of the tourist they sought to attract. The democratic dream of autocamping breaking social barriers was replaced by the ugly stigma of the roadside lodging as a refuge for vagrants and other undesirables. Roadside entrepreneurs often turned to the architecture and design of their facilities in an attempt to counter this negative image.

By the 1930s, the well established tradition of autocamping was ready for change. What began as a romantic sport of the wealthy was beset with problems. The emergence of municipal auto camps caused farmers and other roadside entrepreneurs who accommodated camping tourists in the open country to add amenities. The demise of the free camp, brought on in part by the Depression, in turn caused the evolution of the auto-camp to the tent-camp. Tent camps emerged as auto camps evolved from open fields with space for tents and few amenities to facilities with more permanent tent-houses along with a variety of services. Offering a convenient and economical alternative to pitching one's own tent, as Better Homes and Gardens noted, these facilities, "relieves the men the burden of pitching camp every night and picking up every morning."\(^{10}\) The fee requirement not only

\(^{10}\) "Tips For Two-Weeks Vacationists," Frank J. Taylor, Better Homes and Gardens 9, no. 10 (June 1931): 93.
benefitted the owners, but insured the absence of vagrants and undesirables among the guests.

At their most basic, such upgraded facilities featured tent houses that were no more than wooden platforms on which traditional tents, similar to those formerly pitched adjacent to cars, were erected. Tent houses of a slightly more elaborate nature emerged as early as 1920. According to a *Saturday Evening Post* account, improvements, such as those undertaken at the U-Smile Auto Camp in Dodge City, Kansas in 1920, demonstrated the movement away from traditional camping facilities for motorists. Graded tent sites gave way to the construction of 12 by 14 foot wooden platforms supporting waist height wooden parapet walls and sheltering shingle roofs. The area between walls and roof was partially enclosed by canvas stretched between wooden posts. A single cold water faucet, sink, and drainboard added a level of amenity. Each tent house was furnished "with a strong double bedstead and woven wire springs, a two burner gas plate, a small sheet iron stove, a plain wooden table, a wooden bench, and two small chairs or camp stools of the folding variety."¹¹

An architect designed variation of tent houses was first published in the February 1935 issue of *Architectural Record* as part of its "Portfolio of Special Building Types." This was the publication’s second issue dealing with tourist accommodations and the first to illustrate examples of work by architects. Designed by Julian Whittelsey for a site in Wilton, Connecticut, (illustrated, page 41) these structures were noteworthy for the influence of European machine inspired modernism combined with American pragmatism. While the concept of a modernist

TOURIST CABINS AT WILTON, CONNECTICUT—DESIGNED BY JULIAN WHITTELSY
tent seems inherently contradictory, it foreshadowed the arrival of modernist architecture on the American roadside; this phenomenon was to further develop with the emergence of cabins. The modernist aesthetic of clean lines and clearly articulated structure also served the pragmatic purpose of making the modern tent house, which was made exclusively of standard, stock materials, totally and easily disassembled.

The architect designed tent house featured a continuous projecting gently sloping canvas shed roof supported by a clearly articulated timber frame. Projecting "floating" platforms on which the 8 by 9 foot "tents" were built alternated with auto bays within this framework. Continuous platform to ceiling homasote wall panels provided uniform sheathing. The row's clean lines were reinforced by a continuous canopy that sheltered the front portion of the platforms, visually unifying them while creating practical outdoor seating areas. The interiors were outfitted with built-in furniture that provided the same usable square footage in these 8 by 9 foot tent houses as had been contained in the larger 12 by 14 foot Dodge City structures. The use of roof planes to unite the units while sheltering the car presaged the tourist courts of the 1940s.

Traditional builder's journals did not cover the construction of tent houses. In light of their untraditional nature as a building type, corresponding low volume of construction, combined with their unconventional use of conventional materials, this is not surprising.

More permanent cabins or cottages began replacing tent houses early in the 1930s. The resulting cabin camp became an established part of the roadside. By 1933, Harper's Monthly Magazine estimated that more than thirty thousand cabins camps dotted our highways. Graphically illustrating the point, the magazine explained that "if all these cottages were lined up on a single transcontinental
highway, there would be one of them every two hundred yards from Maine to California."\textsuperscript{12} Cabins, initially merely a more sturdy, permanent form of tents, were often hurriedly nailed together by roadside camp owners without regard for aesthetics. It did not take long, however, for the design of cabins to become a marketing issue. Builder's journals such as \textit{Popular Mechanics} and \textit{American Builder and Building Age} presented cabin camp projects that were sometimes, but not often, architect designed. The promise, sometimes explicitly stated, was that with good design came good profits.

Good cabin design, as presented in these builder oriented journals, often conveyed an image or a theme. Through the application of architectural ornament, or the manipulation of certain forms, such as the roof, the cabins could be imbued with associative values that would help attract guests. The image of domesticity, promising a quaint, cozy home away from home could be conveyed by ornamented or porched entries, window trim ranging from window flower boxes to canvas garden awning canopies, to more staid shutters. An exaggerated gabled roof pitch could convey a sense of domesticity while enhancing a cabin's visibility from the road. Conversely, a rugged sense of adventure could be suggested by a rustic motif. A non-descript cabin could become a pioneer log cabin if sheathed with log shaped siding.

The cabin camp emerged as a Depression induced middle ground between tent camps and traditional downtown railroad hotels. Cabin camps not only offered a more economical alternative, but they also offered a variety of conveniences over downtown hotels and the comforts they offered made auto camps obsolete. Through

the 1930s, cabins at "camp-hotels," as they were then called, were available for between 75 cents and $3.50 per night. Cabin camp operators were keenly aware that the future of their Depression borne industry lay not in merely undercutting hotel prices. "We do not want people to come here just because they can live cheaper than in hotels," commented one camp owner. "We mean to induce them to come by offering them certain services that they cannot get in the average hotel"13

Services that the auto tourist could not get at hotels appropriately began with the car itself. Instead of having to unpack the car and find a downtown garage, as he would at a hotel, the cabin camp guest could park his car immediately adjacent to his cabin, often under a roof of its own. Harkening to the early auto camping era in which a lean-to tent would be hitched to the side of the car, this preserved the notion of the car as one's vehicle for returning to nature. It follows that one would wish to remain close to one's car and park in the mythical "garden." Cabin camps also often provided their guests with amenities for the automobile including free car washing, as well as gas and oil services.

Informality was another cabin camp attraction for the auto traveller. Parading a road weary, dusty, and often casually dressed family through a formal hotel lobby only to be coldly greeted by a hotel clerk, accustomed to male business customers, was more than the auto traveller wished to confront after a long day on the road. Instead, being welcomed by a farmer's daughter who would ride along side on your car's running board as you drove through a field of "identical cabins lined up like lumps of sugar on a green table cloth" as you picked your "home" for the night was a far more welcoming prospect. If one arrived at twilight the cabins might be

visually defined by their windows, appearing as "squares of friendly yellow light."\textsuperscript{14}

In addition to their conveniences, cabin camps began to offer the comforts of home, and sometimes more. As a comparison of the evolving forms of overnight accommodations noted, "Camping has lost its charm. Cabins are more comfortable."\textsuperscript{15} Cabin camps began offering a broad range of amenities and services, sometimes providing guests with conveniences on the roadside that they lacked in their own homes. Basic utilities such as gas, electricity and water made it possible for facilities to provide not only light for night reading, but modern plumbing with full baths and showers as well as up-to-date appliances, including full cooking and laundry facilities. Some cabin camps supplemented these amenities with full porter and maid service.

Dining as well as dancing to live music or to radio jazz bands often took place in luxurious, yet rustically decorated community halls. These facilities often came complete "with bare rafters and mounted deer above a great stone fireplace." The structures made reference to the great outdoors while providing all the modern conveniences. As Harper's Monthly Magazine noted in 1933, "We are not a knapsack open air people. We like nature, but . . . we want to view the scenery through the windows (usually closed) of a two door sedan (witness the decline of the touring car)."\textsuperscript{16} The paradox of the industrially produced auto providing access to nature continued in roadside lodging as some cabin camps began to rival the luxury


\textsuperscript{15}"Tips For the Two-Weeks Vacationist," Taylor, Better Homes & Gardens 9, no. 10 (June 1931): 93.

of Victorian era hotels.

Even at its most basic, however, the cabin placed "over one's head a substantial roof . . . windows . . . closely screened against insect pests, and . . . a clean floor underfoot."\(^{17}\) It was possible to enjoy the fundamental comforts of a cabin camp without spending more than the cost of autocamping. In fact, given the cost of camping equipment, the cabin camp was seen by some as more economical than traditional camping. The traveller who carried his own bedding, food chest, gas cooker, and folding furniture could save significantly while staying at a simple cabin camp. This austere type of camp was perhaps best described by *Fortune* magazine as "a henhouse or a rabbit hutch turned into a cabin (for someone too lazy to pitch his tent)."\(^{18}\) Whether made up of luxury cottages complete with full hotel services, or little more than a simple shack, the cabin camp offered the convenience and freedom of private rooms at the roadside along with the camaraderie of the auto camp.

As early as 1922, popular building journals illustrated the cabin camp at its most basic. The March issue of *Popular Mechanics* featured an Oakland, California, camp's "bungalettes" which, it reported, were "designed to take the place of tents." The camp's wood framed facilities ranged from an open structure to an enclosed 2 bedroom cottage. A 9 foot square "shelter house," which was open on two sides provided basic shelter under its pitched roof. One and two room board and batten sided cottages containing running water, electric lights, sinks, and two burner gas plates offered a more comfortable alternative. The camp's community facilities,


housed in simple tar paper-sheathed structures, included a store, laundry, and bathhouse. The latter featured sanitary toilets, and "enamelled tubs," complete with hot and cold running water. The various structures were dispersed along an internal "street" that created the only discernable order in the site plan.¹⁹

Thirteen years later, Popular Mechanics again reported on roadside lodging. This time, the journal provided detailed plans for the construction of two variations of simple tourists' cabins (illustrated, page 48) that it claimed would "get the business." The magazine assured prospective builders that construction of "cabin's of the attractive type shown will afford you a substantial income during summer months." The smaller model was a 10 by 12 foot pitched roofed clapboard cabin. On either side of its central door, the cabin featured standard barn windows that extended to the building's corners. Under these windows, which encompassed the full elevation, small flower boxes at the window sills added a decorative element to the compact elevation. The juxtaposition of elements and the seeming incongruity of scales between the cabin's door, its windows, and flower boxes belied the cabin's diminutive size; these elements, however, also powerfully contributed to the structure's domestic imagery. Inside the cabin, the ceiling high corner windows became a feature, with corner sill shelves forming the top of a clothing storage area. With the fenestration repeated on the side elevations, the hinged corner windows could fully open the cabin's corners to the outside. As the article noted, "all windows open inward to afford good cross ventilation."²⁰

The plans for the larger cabin offered by Popular Mechanics took the


TOURISTS' CABINS

that get the business
domestic imagery further with the addition of a "small porch" complete with decorative porch lantern. This cabin's traditional domestic entry was utilized to mediate between the conflicting scales of the standard size door and a minute elevation. The swooping domestic entry cover, which addressed the scale problem so evident in the simpler cabin, was in fact not a porch, but merely a 24-inch extension of the cabin's domestically pitched roof. The interior of the more ample cabin's 12 by 14 foot room featured built-in furniture, including a cabinet whose door folded down, creating a table. While making better use of the cabin's limited square footage, the inclusion of this type of furniture provided amenities that would not disappear with the departure of overnight guests.

In 1931, *American Builder and Building Age*\textsuperscript{21} promised "good profits" to those who would use architect John Hocke's suggested plans (illustrated, page 49) for a complete cabin camp. Similar to *Popular Mechanics*’ plans for individual cabins of four years later, this more sophisticated plan for an entire complex featured smaller, simpler cabins, which derived a visual strength from a highly cohesive site plan. Individual cabins lined the perimeter of the site while common services dominated the center. This proposed cabin camp enclave could be accommodated on any 100 by 135 foot lot.

The core of the *American Builder* complex was defined by a 24 foot wide community service building. At its front or street elevation, this building featured a two story "office tower" that served as a visual landmark, housing a caretaker's apartment above the office. The flanking street walls created a sense of closure while dramatically marking the camp's entry and exit points at a vehicular scale. These walls were little more than cornice height billboard bands, with fences below,

which, lining the street front, linked the central building to the flanking cabins while creating impressive vehicular size entrances. Behind the office, the central building extended 100 feet to the rear of the lot housing a refreshment and grocery area, a dining room and community kitchen. Men's and women's shower and toilet facilities were to the rear of the building, immediately in front of a car wash area at the end of the central structure. A 25 foot wide driveway, surrounding the long central structure on three sides, created a U-shaped court. The court's edge was defined by alternating individual cabins and parking slots. Each cabin consists of a pair of 7'-6" by 12'-0" units defined by a pyramidal roof. The strategic application of decorative wood trim, such as brackets supporting the broadly overhanging roof planes, completed the architectural composition. Designed to be noticed from the street by motorists, the integration of this architecture with site planning concerns presaged the tourist court that was to later emerge as an integral part of roadside lodging.

In 1940, *American Builder* published a design for its first built cabin camp. This camp's contractor designed twelve double cabins (illustrated, page 51) derived their evocative pioneer image from the application of 2 inch thick redwood "log cabin" siding to each structure. *American Builder* touted the "rustic woodsly effect" as fulfilling a critical need of meeting the expectations of tourists from urban areas as they forged into the Connecticut countryside. "When people go to the country, they want to be in country like surroundings," the article explained. Rustic rough cedar poles and railings carried the imagery further by delineating ample front porches, cut under the cabin's pitched roofs, from which guests could enjoy their country settings. Transplanted pine trees and shrubs enhanced a sense of privacy for

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22"Rustic Cabins and Filling Station," *American Builder* 62, no. 7 (July 1940) 68-69.
the units that were actually sited around a semicircular gravel driveway. Providing a counterpoint to the camp's carefully planned rustic primitivism, each two bedroom cabin was outfitted with a variety of modern conveniences. Sound-proofed, double walls insured privacy; thermal insulation, heating, and full private lavatories with showers guaranteed all the comforts of home.

Architect designed variations of the log cabin motif were presented in the successful entries to the 1941 Michigan Society of Architects Cabin Camp Design Competition.\(^{23}\) First prize was awarded to Walter K. Johnson whose cabin camp design contained interesting contradictions. The cabins themselves presented a curious mix of clean, modern imagery and rustic architectural imagery. The juxtaposition of images is perhaps most graphically communicated by the placement of soaring, cantilevered roof planes above otherwise traditional log cabins. Citing the roof treatment in awarding this scheme first prize, the jury commented that it was "impressed with the idea of providing cantilevered roofs with sufficient projection to enable guests to get from their car to their cabin without getting wet in rainy weather. The inclusion of industrial windows at the corners of the log cabins continued the visual contradictions. The regular placement of the one, two, and three bedroom units around a formal, rectangular green or court carried the contradictions inherent in the cabins to the overall composition. Second and third prizes were awarded to similar but somewhat less engaging categorically modern cabins constructed of rustic materials and arranged in formal site plans.

Recognition of roadside lodging as a venue for architects rather than builders began with *Architectural Record's* December 1933 article "Roadside Cabins for

Tourists." With this feature, the professional journal tentatively welcomed the design of roadside lodging as an appropriate venture for architects. *Architectural Record* estimated that in the four years prior to its 1933 recognition of the building type, "more than 400,000 ‘shacks’ for autoists have been erected." It further explained that "the building of these cabins represents an investment for buildings alone of over $60,000,000."24

With the recognition of the roadside in general and the cabin camp in particular, came the notion that the machine driven motorist should be serviced from appropriately machine-age buildings. Accordingly, *Architectural Record* advocated "sound architectural treatment without wasteful and unnecessary decorations."25 It presented four cabin camp complexes, the cabins of which embodied a level of simplicity, if not of modernism. They presented a stark comparison to architect John Hocke’s proposed design for a complete cabin camp published two years earlier in *American Builder and Building Age*. While Hocke’s plans made skillful use of architectural ornament, the text accompanying *Record’s* projects rejected an ornamented, eclectic architecture.

However, the cabins published by *Record* were not devoid of the ornamentation eschewed by the magazine. For instance, the cabins in Moro Bay, California,26 which appeared to be industrially produced mini trailers or diners complete with utilitarian bowed trussed roofs, bore decorative roof brackets, flower boxes and canvas garden style canopies supported by decorative ironwork. The cabin

24"Roadside Cabins for Tourists," *Architectural Record* 74 (December 1933): 457.

25Ibid., 458.

26Ibid., 457.
camp at Kingman, Arizona\textsuperscript{27} contained a chaste variation of the clapboard covered
domestic cottages featured in \textit{Popular Mechanics}. Closest to embodying the
modernist principles advocated by \textit{Architectural Record} was a blocky, solid looking
composition at Raton, New Mexico,\textsuperscript{28} that featured simple unadorned white plaster
exteriors. The article closed with a photo of gabled roofed cabins outside Chicago,
which, it explained were erected, "to accommodate Auto Tourists at A Century of
Progress Exposition."\textsuperscript{29}

The first overtly modernist cabins were published two years later, again by
\textit{Architectural Record}.\textsuperscript{30} As if answering its challenge to architects, this unbuilt
"Tourist Village" designed by Earl G. Von Storch (illustrated, page 55) featured four
unit clusters creating flowing horizontal enclaves that literally embraced, and, in
elevation, served to hide, the automobile. All framing, both the vertical, and the flat
roofed horizontal, was clearly expressed. Insulated wall panels and stock windows
were combined within the framework to create seemingly expansive window walls.

The site plans of both the 1933 and 1935 cabin camps published by \textit{Record}
were perhaps their architects' most long-lived contribution to roadside lodging. While it appears that the cabins illustrated in the 1933 issue were not the work of
architects, two of these camps were accompanied by elaborate, architect designed site

\textsuperscript{27}Ibid., 459.

\textsuperscript{28}Ibid., 458.

\textsuperscript{29}Ibid., 462.

\textsuperscript{30}"Portfolio Of Special Building Types - Tourist Cabins," \textit{Architectural Record}
plans. The plan of the camp at Raton, New Mexico,\textsuperscript{31} featured a central common space ringed by cabins alternating with car stalls. Articulated by shrubbery within a linear paving pattern, this island created what Record referred to as "quiet outdoor space" complete with playground, toilet and shower facilities, as well as a food and supply structure adjoining a gas canopy.

The site plan for Record's 1935 Tourist Village\textsuperscript{32} consisted of a U-shaped road lined on either side with groupings of four unit clusters. At the core of this linear composition was a central green with sanitary facilities. The use of breezeways in the clustering of cabins to create larger more cohesive units effectively defined exterior space as well. This use of architectural elements to visually expand the building and create an interior-exterior space relationship reinforced the Village's modernist theme. Unlike John Hocke's cabin camp plan, which created a significant street facade where it was commercially important, both Earl G. Von Storch's and the other Architectural Record site plans were internally oriented, and, in seeking to make cohesive expansive compositions rather than commercial packages, turned their back on the commercially important street.

Another, albeit more slowly, emerging issue covered by the architectural media was that of cabin camp chains. Portending the future, The Architectural Forum, in 1937, published a prototype for the Tourist Traveltowns, Inc. chain.\textsuperscript{33} Designed by architect Adolph E. Klueppelberg, these "colonial white clapboard" cabins, complete with colonnaded portico and panelled shutters were at once "tidy

\textsuperscript{31}"Roadside Cabins for Tourists," Architectural Record 74 (December 1933): 458.

\textsuperscript{32}Ibid., 97.

and respectable." Their ornamentation provided these cottages with the quickly recognizable, prestigious image of the American colonial architecture period. Within the broadly sweeping mode of period revival architecture, often employed in domestic design, these cabins simultaneously conveyed associations with history and domesticity. At the same time, the colonial style offered the recognition so important in chain merchandising. The design of the cabin camp, according to the article, was in fact, a "problem in merchandising." Accordingly, the purpose of a cabin camp's architecture was "to effect an instantaneous sale." The architectural motif was literally taken to the road; 12 by 25 foot billboards featuring the silhouette of the camp's colonial cabins were posted along major roads every 50 miles within a 250 mile radius of the camp. Not only did this emphasize the recognition of the importance of the architecture in marketing, but it demonstrated a pioneering effort to market to a mobile, but road-bound consumer, through architecture. The incorporation of commercial architecture into signage has since become an accepted part of the everyday built environment. Supplementing the marketing value of the historic exteriors were the cabin camp's grounds on which a croquet lawn, play facilities, and perhaps most importantly, a swimming pool were strategically sited.

If the exteriors recalled the past, the interiors were almost futuristic in their specialized design to accommodate transient guests in comfort. Specially designed multi-purpose furniture and advanced lighting took the place of traditional hotel or cabin camp furniture. The camp's ample 12 by 12 foot rooms included double beds, "a modern writing table with a few drawers for shirts or blouses" in place of the traditional separate bureau and chest, and "two moveable wall lamps with light

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34 Ibid., 464.

diffusing glass bowls  in place of chandeliers, heavily shaded lamps, or the early cabin's bare bulb. Full bathrooms with washbowls, showers, and toilets were featured in every room with special partitions to "simplify hurried and simultaneous dressing." The rooms were fully insulated and heated for comfort in the winter and cross-ventilation captured summer breezes.

Within four years of eschewing ornamentation, the architectural media seemed willing to accept it on the exterior. The principals of efficient modern design were, however, clearly applied in the structures' interiors. Publication of a prototype for Tourist Traveltowns, Inc. anticipated by fifteen years the concept of company affiliated tourist facilities of uniform design. More significantly, perhaps, it foreshadowed the battle that was to develop between the traditional, ornament bearing, image evoking architecture carried by the builder oriented journals and the clean, cool integral modernism espoused by architectural journals. It was not until the 1950s that elements of both were accommodated and the conflicting forces of the applied and the integral modes of design began to be resolved.

The placement of the cabins on the site in relation to the road as well as to the buildings in the camp increased in importance. By virtue of this attention to site plan organization, architect designed cabin camps, published in both builder oriented and architectural journals, were beginning to presage the tourist court. This next step in the evolution of roadside accommodations was to emerge in the 1940s.

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36 Ibid., 465.

37 Ibid., 464.
CHAPTER III - TOURIST COURTS

By the early 1940s, the cabin camp had given way to the tourist or auto court. This form of roadside lodging emerged in the late 1930s and dominated through World War II. It was replaced in the post War era by the motel. The emergence of the tourist court was primarily the result of the changes in travel brought by the integration of the automobile into American life. The tourist court marked the beginning of a roadside lodging industry. Significant changes ensued in both unit construction and site plan configuration as the tourist court became the dominant form of this expanding roadside lodging industry. As Business Week noted, "the auto court represents more than a different mode of accommodation. It stands for a new way of life in tourism--a way that combines convenience, inexpensiveness, and informality in a formula that is definitely clicking."¹

The tourist court in many ways made a virtue of a necessity. Harkening to the romance of the autocamping era while yielding to the economies necessitated by the Depression, the tourist court offered a limited version of the old camaraderie of the roadside acceptable to the new breed of auto tourist who had, until then, lodged in traditional hotels. Physically, this took the form of an informal, yet well defined community space or court that became the focus of the facility. The court also served to convey an increasingly resort-like image in the all important quest for guests. This new auto oriented space served as an outdoor lobby, around which the rooms were placed.

Auto court rooms, catering to hotel oriented travellers, offered a level of amenity unprecedented at the roadside. Paradoxically, while each room's interior appointments became increasingly important, their exterior appearance became less

significant as the units' primary role evolved to defining the court's edge.

A survey of American Automobile Association members revealed that between 1937 and 1939 the number of travellers staying at motor courts more than doubled, rising from 12.5% to 26%. Conversely, those staying at traditional hotels dropped from 61% to 46% during the same period. As motorists accustomed to hotel services began to stop on the roadside for their lodging, they began to demand new standards for such accommodations. In many ways the tourist court, often referred to as a "highway hotel," was at once an upscale roadside cabin camp and an informal adaptation of the downtown railroad hotel.

In April of 1937, the International Motor Court Association was established. By 1940, it had 2,042 members and affiliates representing each of the country's 48 states. The purpose of this trade association was to elevate the motor court from its humble beginnings. In distancing itself from roadside lodging's non-felicitous past, often perceived as no more than shacks along the roadside, the motor court association sought to win the hotel class customer. This was evidence of the emergence of a roadside lodging industry with its own collective concerns, separate from those of the traditional hotel industry.

Rather than the room as a free standing object in space as it had been in cabin camps, the tourist court units merged into a more anonymous grouping that collectively defined the space of the court. Since parking adjoining the cabin was a standard feature of the cabin camp, the addition of adjacent roof shelters for the auto was the first step in the unit's evolution. This gave way to a formal carport attached to each individual cabin. The pairing of such car and room units brought economies of multiple units per structure, including minimizing the number of more expensive exterior walls while offering opportunities for back to back plumbing. While carport and room initially maintained separate roof lines, or were limited to paired free
standing units, they were ultimately unified, often in long rows, under continuous roofs that featured pairs of rooms alternating with garage bays. While maintaining the car as an integral part of the row, these presaged the motel, in which the car was removed from the structure and placed in front of the long rows of often double banks of back to back rooms.

The court itself was, however, the major area of evolution from cabin camp to tourist court. As it became increasingly visible from the road, the court began to be used as a marketing tool to attract motorists. The court, usually open toward the roadside, often featured a rolling, tree shaded lawn, on which guests could be seen from the roadside enjoying lemonade or coffee. Pragmatic community facilities, such as community kitchens or showers, were removed from the court and incorporated into each room as private amenities. Eventually the glamorous swimming pool, as much a symbol as an actual place to cool off and refresh after a day’s drive, took the place of the rustic camp fire as the community facility.

By 1940, with 20,000 motor courts lining America’s roads, Business Week announced, "auto courts have become big business," noting that the gross or "take of the whole industry is expected to exceed $300,000,000 this year." This startling statistic took on additional significance in view of the fact that this upstart industry translated 36.8% of its gross into profit, in comparison to the hotel industry that yielded only 1% of its gross as profit.²

As tourist courts became the accommodation of choice for more travellers, attempts were made to quantify and evaluate roadside options available to motorists. The American Automobile Association, itself a product of the influence of the automobile on American life, began the publication of its Directory of Motor Courts

²Ibid., 19.
and Cottages, which, as a service to its membership, surveyed and listed roadside accommodations. Of the 9,600 roadside lodging facilities the AAA inspected in 1940, one third, or 3,200, met their standards for listing. One thousand of these, the AAA affiliates, achieved the highest rating: "unreservedly recommended." This select class of tourist court ultimately bore the AAA recommended insignia, a national system of recognition for a still local industry.

In monitoring its own trade, the International Motor Court Association established standards of its own. Estimating there to be 5,000 first class motor courts across the country, 1,000 of which it classified as deluxe accommodations, its survey and evaluation of roadside lodgings bore out the AAAs findings. Self evaluation and the constant need to maintain a thoroughly "modern" motor court remained an integral part of this increasingly "big business," which remained in the hands of many small-scale individual entrepreneurs.

Despite its economic importance, the tourist court industry remained the domain of the small entrepreneur. Unlike the farm couple who sought additional income by constructing cabins on a roadside portion of their land, "Ma and Pa" tourist court operators did so for their livelihood. For these "courters," keeping abreast of national issues and emerging trends that affected them in their fast evolving area of the tourist industry was of critical importance. Toward this end, the International Motor Court Association, upon its founding in 1937, began publishing the Tourist Court Journal.³

In announcing the Tourist Court Journal as the International Motor Court Association's "official organ," its President, A. C. Hanson, noted, "The development

³Prior to the Tourist Court Journal, the only parallel trade publication had been the shortlived Tourist Trade, which was published monthly for only one year, beginning in September of 1932.
of a worthy trade magazine will make of it a benefactor to every reader, so long as producers and we journey together in serving others.4 The purpose of this journal appears to have been to unify scattered entrepreneurs utilizing the sponsorship, in the form of advertisements, of a variety of suppliers who saw a potential market in this newly emerging industry. As it grew and matured, aided by this national network, the tourist court industry began offering the motorist a variety of conveniences. Just as the cabin camp offered comforts over camping while maintaining a level of informality, the emerging tourist court offered additional amenities and conveniences surpassing downtown hotels while still accommodating the tourist and his car.

The auto and the decentralization it brought to the landscape did not bring the relief expected to congested downtown areas; instead, it only exacerbated the problems, making cities even more difficult for the auto traveller to negotiate. The motor court now often offered proximity to downtown, without its congestion. Downtown traffic, hotel parking problems, and baggage and tipping hassles could all be avoided by lodging at the motor court. Early morning starts were made easier by the elimination of time consuming hotel check-out procedures. In an increasingly auto-oriented decentralized landscape, the motor court, unlike the cabin camp before it, was not necessarily limited to isolated areas. Located along the by now well established transcontinental highways, most often at the outskirts of town, the motor court offered the conveniences of being in the country while in close proximity to cities.

Varying levels of privacy could also be enjoyed at the tourist court. The court was a communal space in which non-essential services and amenities such as

landscaped garden courts complete with swimming pools were offered. The central communal spaces of the cabin camp, by contrast, had offered essentials, such as cooking and bathing. At a tourist court, a guest could drive directly to the room and not participate in the court oriented activities. Conversely, the camaraderie of the roadside was available to those who wished to participate in upscale variations of the auto camping or cabin camping activities.

Tourist courts, much like their cabin camp predecessors, were often viewed as refuges harboring a variety of undesirables. Ironically, this unsavory image persisted in large part because of the conveniences offered at tourist courts. Accommodations outside congested city limits could be portrayed as escaping municipal authority and police jurisdiction. The privacy available to tourist court guests could be viewed as providing undesirables anonymity and allowing for a variety of sinister activities. Free of baggage and tipping hassles, tourist court guests who travelled with no baggage would not draw attention to themselves. In fact, the "hot-pillow-trade" was economically attractive to the court operator in the short term because it permitted the same room to be rented several times in a given evening.

Initially, the economic success and emerging importance of the tourist court served to fuel the fires of the roadside lodging's image problems. The hotel industry, hard hit by the Depression, saw what it termed the "motor court menace" as an increasingly serious impediment to its economic recovery. A report on tourist camps was submitted in 1935 to the Hotel Association by Frank Zimmerman documenting, in detail, the more unsavory aspects of tourist courts' operations. The stigma reached perhaps its most feverish pitch with a now famous article by FBI Chief, J. Edgar Hoover, in which he labelled roadside tourist facilities as "1940-style hideaways for public enemies." These "homes of crime," he continued, served as "bases of operations from which gangs of desperados prey upon the surrounding
territory." Hoover was perhaps even more disturbed by tourist courts use for "assignations and dubious entertainment." Accordingly, he saw the tourist court as "a new home of disease, bribery, corruption, crookedness, rape, white slavery, thievery, and murder." The economically troubled hotel industry did much to capitalize on and promote tourist courts image problems. Many hotels gave out reprints of Hoover's article as handbills to their guests as they checked out.

As in the cabin camp era before, roadside entrepreneurs sought to combat the continuing negative image and gain respectability for their trade by bringing a level of sophistication to the design of their facilities. Site plan, landscaping, architecture, and construction as well as interior appointments and amenities all received increasing attention as they became key weapons in the hard fought battle for respectability.

With more than eight hundred motor courts being built annually in 1940, a Depression starved building construction materials, furnishing and equipment industry found a lucrative outlet for its wares in the tourist court market. Court furnishings alone represented an investment of $50,000,000, plumbing and bath fixtures, an expense of $37,000,000. Forty thousand air conditioning units and over 100,000 fans had, by 1940, been sold for installation in motor courts.

Reflecting the International Motor Court Association's goals, the Tourist Court Journal set out "to raise the standards of tourist courts . . . both the standards

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of construction and the standards of operation." Accordingly, the magazine often featured articles focusing on the design and improvement of the tourist court. After only one year of publication, the *Tourist Court Journal* boasted a circulation of over 5,000 owners and operators of tourist courts in the United States, Canada, and Mexico. Ultimately, the magazine outlived the tourist court as it continued to serve its evolving industry. It disseminated concepts and data on design issues ranging from overall complex configuration including siting, site planning, landscaping, and exterior amenities, to unit design and appointments, often featuring new materials and construction techniques, and introduced a level of standardization to this emerging big business.

The *Tourist Court Journal* commenced when the tourist court emerged as a new building type in the late 1930s. Throughout the 1950s and 1960s, when, in the face of bigger, modern motels, attempts to keep the tourist court viable seemed almost futile, the publication offered supportive articles, such as "Why I Like 'Second Rate' Motels." It also offered pragmatic advice on the emerging trend of tourist court chains with such articles as "How Independent Motels Can Meet Chain Competition" as well as providing a forum for the emerging chains that welcomed Ma and Pa. In "How Quality Courts Lives Up To Its Name," Quality Courts United Incorporated's President, John Lacock, explained, "We are still very much interested

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in the Ma and Pa operation because we feel that they really give better service to the travelling public than some of the big, posh operations."\textsuperscript{10} In an exclusive interview, Scott King, head of the emerging Travelodge chain, explained the economic and other advantages to "courtiers" of affiliation with his burgeoning enterprise.\textsuperscript{11} Finally, after thirty-five years of publication and acknowledging the reality of a new era in roadside lodging, the journal was re-named \textit{Motel/Motor Inn Journal} in 1971.\textsuperscript{12} The changed name accurately reflected its new emphasis catering to a different, more corporate type of "big business."

In an industry that placed great importance on the appearance of its buildings and grounds, while still regarding the services of an architect as an expensive luxury, the influence of the \textit{Tourist Court Journal} was inestimable. Substituting for the architect, this trade journal was usually the sole source of architectural advice to the "courter" who was about to build or renovate. While advice sometimes came from fellow "courtiers," articles and columns frequently featured information from the journal's consulting architects. As a result, clearly focused and pragmatic architectural advice offered in this trade journal in many ways bridged the gap that existed between the builders' and architects' journals in their coverage of the cabin camp era. As a pragmatic trade journal addressing architectural issues, the \textit{Tourist Court Journal} was forced to deal with a new set of design determinants. Not only was the structure designed for a consumer, but it was to be visually attractive to a fast moving mobile one. The tourist court had to convey an eye appeal that would


\textsuperscript{12} \textit{Motel/Motor Inn Journal} 35, (October 1971).
persuade a motorist to pull in and become a guest. It was perhaps the architectural coverage in their trade journal that contributed to the "courters" sense that armed with the Tourist Court Journal, they could independently design their own motor courts.

Site planning issues were addressed early, as the tourist court literally began to take form. The Tourist Court Journal's first issue featured a rendered site plan of an "ideal motor court." The plan demonstrates two site plan issues, which were inherent in the evolution of the motor court. First was the accommodation of the automobile on overnight stops. Second was the level of privacy offered each guest. The motor court had to mediate between maintaining a sense of community and insuring privacy. In this proposed configuration, square pedestrian courts or "inner gardens" were formed by banks of alternating rooms and garages. Vehicular access to the garage was only from an outer vehicular court. The rooms that opened onto the pedestrian court could also be accessed from the adjacent garage or rear court. While far more sophisticated in its separation of pedestrian and vehicular areas, this design shows an affinity to and evolution from architect's projects like John Hocke's cabins published in 1931 in American Builder and Building Age in which cabins define a cohesive space.

The emerging tourist court contained ordered units, which comprised well organized site plans, often clustering around a central court from which the auto was generally excluded. This represented the realization of goals architects had brought to the design of roadside lodging as evidenced in both builder's and architect's journals during the 1930s. Architects' essays in cabin camp design had shown a

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13 Tourist Court Journal 1, (October 1937): 12.

concern for the treatment of the overall site plan. The layout of the new breed of tourist facility preserved the sense of independence and freedom instilled by the cabin camps while fostering a sense of safety and community of the court. With the primitivism of auto and cabin camping gone, the tourist court guest was indeed a "tour-ist" and no longer a traveller in the traditional sense.

A swimming pool was the visual focus of a lavish variation on the Tourist Court Journal’s first proposed court site plan. A more detailed proposal, published six months later, featured a large pedestrian court, complete with pool, flanked by more intimate courts; the entire complex was surrounded by a service drive that enabled the courts to remain a pedestrian space. In presenting the patented plan by architect, T. E. Lightfoot, the article noted the importance of the court’s appearance and site plan in making a favorable impression on a potential guest. "Conspicuousness at a distance, but in good architectural taste. . . . The entire court presents an ‘open face’ appearance from the highway, and will not fail to arrest the attention and slow the speed of the fastest traveller."¹⁵ Paradoxically, the increasing popularity of swimming pools resulted in a reduction of the courts’ openness to the road, in large part to create privacy for the pools. By the 1950s, as pools became requisite for the up-to-date motor court, detailed advice regarding swimming pools appeared frequently.¹⁶

Throughout the 1940s the mainstay of site planning focused on planting and beautifying the motor courts’ grounds, whatever the site plan or layout. Beautification through landscaping, a fundamental, yet important issue from the


outset, remained the primary way in which "courters" improved the motor courts' eye appeal. "Natural Beauty is easy to attain in the Tourist Court business. Use it. It is your most natural and effective way of advertising to passers-by," explained the Tourist Court Journal's first feature on the subject.\(^{17}\) The visual importance combined with the relative low cost of proper planting caused it to remain perhaps the most popular subject of advice to "courters."\(^{18}\)

By the 1950s, as more severe rows of contiguous rooms began to eclipse the traditional motor court units, planting became even more important in maintaining eye appeal. With cars moving to the front of the room, instead of at the sides, planters were promoted as a viable way of separating the car from the room, providing a visual screen. Plants and shrubs were also used to soften the austere silhouette of the increasingly large buildings which defined the court. "Plant boxes can contribute appreciably to dressing up a tourist court building," explained an article that illustrated plantings being utilized to add an element of variety to the new type of court building. Conversely, the article, accompanied by detailed drawings, showed how plantings could add an element of uniformity to the old motor court, updating its appearance.\(^{19}\)

Just as plantings were effective in improving a court's appearance by day, lighting quickly emerged as an essential element to improve visibility and eye appeal at night. Noting that motor court "operators sell service on a twenty-four hour

\(^{17}\)"Beautifying Motor Courts and Lodges by Means of Proper Planting," Tourist Court Journal 1 (December 1937): 5-6, 30ff.


\(^{19}\)"Its Time to Landscape Your Grounds," Clare A. Gunn and Joseph T. Cox, Tourist Court Journal, 17 (March 1954): 10-12, 82ff.
basis, the *Tourist Court Journal* encouraged "courters" to use lighting not only for utilitarian purposes, but as a "beautifier" as well. Proper lighting could create an "environment that is appealing to the eye and pleasing to the senses," it pointed out. Given that increasing numbers of tourists selected their accommodations after sunset, lighting emerged in the 1940s as a "vital factor in competition." Lighting technology developed for war use was quickly transferred to illuminating the motor court both inside and out.\(^{20}\)

The forerunner of the motel was featured in the *Tourist Court Journal*’s January 1944 issue. Manipulation of car parking on the site resulted in a design which consisted of rows of continuous units, uninterrupted by garages. The concept apparently found no immediate following since it did not reappear in *The Journal* until eight years later. In the interim, however, experimentation with the tourist court formula of alternating rooms and carports was taking place. In June of 1947, a variation appeared in which rooms were set above garages. Examples of this land efficient configuration from Dallas, Texas, and Omaha, Nebraska, were featured. Complete with interior stairs linking room and car, these units offered virtually the same proximity to ones’ car as both the cabin camp and the traditional motor court, while assuring complete privacy.\(^{21}\)

With experiments under way that moved the car from its traditional spot alongside the room, it would not be long before they were put in front of the room. Uninterrupted rows of units combined with the detailed coverage of the motel as a building type distinct from the motor court first appeared in the *Tourist Court Journal*.


\(^{21}\)"Will Your Guests of the Future Sleep Over the Car or Beside It?," *Tourist Court Journal* 10 (June 1947): 4-5.
Journal's case study of Miami, Florida, in 1952. Motels have since become ubiquitous.

Optimum room configuration and unit amenities were regularly covered in the Tourist Court Journal. Suggestions for a range of convenient and efficient room layouts were first offered in the June 1938 issue. Flexibility of layout was stressed, in the effort to move the motor court room away from a traditional hotel style bed room. To this end, sofa beds were utilized to create pleasant living room arrangements by day which could be converted to bed rooms by night. Options for furniture arrangement within the then standard nine and one half by fourteen foot room were explored, again stressing the importance of a flexible furniture arrangement. Keeping the furniture to the room’s perimeter contributed to maintaining an uncluttered appearance. The inclusion of a kitchen alcove unit added a level of amenity without compromising the room’s clean lines.

Technological advances, especially those resulting from war related research, found application to the motor court. These ranged from technology which could provide amenities, to experimental materials and methods of construction. By the mid 1940s, especially with the emergence of the motor court as temporary war related housing, the kitchen unit, often factory assembled, was a very popular room


appendage.25 Bathrooms, sometimes along with the kitchenette, were often paired, abutting those of the adjacent unit. The resulting shift of rooms was the first step toward the movement away from individual units towards rows of rooms.26 Average room size had grown to an almost square fourteen by fifteen feet.

The uncluttered modern aesthetic of the room was extended to its furnishings as technological advances, often associated with the war, also made their way to furniture design and production. Metal, often in bold colors, lent itself to the clean, flowing lines of new furniture forms such as the combination head board and night stand. The promise of broad planed "clean and neat" wood furniture "with practically no decorations that catch the dust" came with the improvement of wood technology, such as plywood and finishes.27 Both these truly modern developments portended the future of roadside lodging. Ironically, the tourist court room interiors remained traditional looking, even if machine made, while the exterior appearance and construction of the post War era’s motels adopted modifications of the modern aesthetic, if not its principles.

Multi-purpose furniture combined with the concept of maximizing the usable space within a given room’s square footage resulted in the introduction of Murphy beds to the tourist court market. Advertisements in the Tourist Court Journal touted


"Two Room Efficiency at One Room Cost."\textsuperscript{28} This notion of built in or convertible furniture was in some ways ahead of its time. By the 1950s, however, multi-purpose built-in furniture designed specifically for the overnight guest was frequently featured in tourist court rooms. In many ways, this was the contemporary equivalent of the cabin's primitive fold down table or combination corner closet window shelf.

By 1950, motor court room amenities surpassed not only those of the traditional hotel, but of the home as well. The \textit{Tourist Court Journal} published the results of the El Rancho Rankin Tourist Court's experimentation with room amenities. Chrome fitted furniture included headboard units that integrated a radio, reading lights behind frosted glass, and an alarm clock with luminous face. In addition, each room featured wall to wall carpeting and an in-wall television that could be watched from the bed or a sitting area.\textsuperscript{29} The application of modern technological advances to create amenities was, however, not limited to futuristic room appointments and furniture.

Air conditioning, a technological advance that would contribute to guests' comfort, offered courters significant marketing possibilities. First introduced in the late 1930s, this costly amenity was gradually integrated into the tourist court. A comprehensive 1939 article on the subject, stressing the importance of guest comfort, outlined a variety of thermal comfort options. These ranged from economical attic fans that removed hot air while drawing in cool air to more sophisticated central units, which, it explained, "will heat as well as cool." The article concluded, "a tourist court built today which is planned without any provision for air-conditioning

\textsuperscript{28}"Two Room Efficiency at One Room Cost," \textit{Tourist Court Journal} 11 (October 1947): 18.

\textsuperscript{29}"The Tourist Court with 'The Bed'," Dorothy Wade, \textit{Tourist Court Journal} 13 (April 1950): 6-7, 31ff.
may be considered obsolete before the last shingle is tacked down."\textsuperscript{30}

The application of a variety of technologically advanced materials and construction techniques was sought for the production of a cheaper, more efficiently constructed tourist court. Experiments in building technology usually focused on various materials and their potential for application to prefabrication. As early as 1939, the Portland Cement Association offered a broad spectrum of possible court cottages constructed of either concrete blocks or of reinforced, poured concrete. It suggested the virtues of domestic overtones for such units, adding that practical and appealing amenities such as fireplaces were easily incorporated in concrete construction.\textsuperscript{31}

Further exploration of new and more efficient construction techniques came in anticipation of the construction boom that would follow World War II to satisfy post war shortages. In 1944, the \textit{Tourist Court Journal} began a monthly "Plan Now for the Post War Motor Court" series. Combining the Portland Cement Association's experiments of the late 1930s with techniques of prefabrication, the periodical predicted the use of gigantic concrete forms in which entire room units could be

\begin{quote}
\textsuperscript{30}Making a Motor Court Comfortable by Heating, Air Conditioning and Humidifying," \textit{Tourist Court Journal} 2 (April 1939): 5-8, 26ff, p. 5.

The wide disparities between tourist courts of this era is demonstrated by the publication during the same year of a feature on adding indoor plumbing to older cottages. "Adding Bathrooms to Small Units Presents a Major Problem for the Older Cottages," Tom E. Lightfoot, Consulting Architect, \textit{Tourist Court Journal} 2 (August 1939): 11, 19ff.

\end{quote}
poured. This adaptation was derived from a proposal to pour entire houses of concrete; it anticipated post war modular housing that was ultimately not constructed of concrete. Ironically the concrete related technology was utilized in housing and hotel experiments of the 1960s, such as architect Moshe Safdie’s "Habitat" in Montreal, Canada, and Ford, Powell Carson & Bartlett Cock’s Palacio del Rio Hilton, in which prefabricated concrete rooms were stacked to quickly create a large hotel in San Antonio, Texas. Prefabricated modular tourist court units of materials other than concrete were also the subject of experimentation. Beginning in 1947, The F. M. (Factory Manufactured) Insta-Home Company offered packaged tourist courts ready for delivery to your site. These futuristic "all aluminum" units (illustrated, page 77) came "completely equipped with electrical and plumbing fixtures." Indicating the additional advantages of pre-fabrication the ad pointed out, "Within a few hours (after the Insta-home arrives on your property), it is ready for occupancy!"33

Despite the acknowledged importance of a tourist courts’ "eye appeal," the overall exterior appearance of its buildings was seldom a focal issue. The lodgings’ architecture, which became increasingly important as the motel era emerged, initially took a back seat to the court’s site planning and landscaping as well as the guest comforts and amenities of its individual rooms. Exterior building design was initially represented to courtiers by The Tourist Court Journal as an issue of additive ornament. In the tradition of builder’s journals, certain types of ornamental treatments or materials could be added to a basic box to convey the desired image.

32"Can A Tourist Court Be ‘Laid’?," Dorothy Wade, Tourist Court Journal 10 (December 1946): 5-9, 18ff.

33ad for F. M. Packaged Tourist Courts, Tourist Court Journal 11 (October 1947).
It wasn’t there Yesterday!

You’re right, kitten, it wasn’t there yesterday but, you see, that Auto Court was constructed with the new FM INSTA-HOME!

FM (Factory Manufactured) all aluminum INSTA-HOMES are delivered and installed on your property completely equipped with electrical and plumbing fixtures, aluminum windows, and entirely insulated against heat and cold! WITHIN A FEW HOURS AFTER THE INSTA-HOME ARRIVES ON YOUR PROPERTY, IT IS READY FOR OCCUPANCY!

The same model INSTA-HOME, without any changes in the over-all dimensions, can be furnished to serve as a communal laundry, a rest room, an office or a kitchen. Or it can be furnished to accommodate one, two or four families.

No wonder enterprising businessmen are ordering this sensational low-cost, low-upkeep housing unit.

Write or wire today to United Manufacturers, Williamson, Michigan, for complete illustrated literature of the FM INSTA-HOME — the home that pays for itself — INSTANTLY!

For a limited time applications are being accepted for distributors.

InfaMome
UNITED MANUFACTURERS
WILLIAMSON, MICHIGAN
PALACE CORPORATION
BUILT TODAY
The *Tourist Court Journal*’s first issue, featuring the "ideal motor court" in site and floor plan only, noted that architectural embellishment could be achieved by capping the court’s buildings with Spanish Tile roofs\(^{34}\). This almost parenthetical treatment of the court structure’s exteriors suggests that it was a secondary issue that, if necessary, could be dealt with by the addition of ornament, as builder’s journals had recommended.

Applied ornament was utilized to soften the harsh appearance of tourist court buildings, especially those resulting from experiments in building technology. Concrete, either poured or laid in blocks, for instance, could efficiently produce buildings that had a rudimentary, box-like appearance. While economical, the results were at best visually unexciting. When adorned with a variety of ornaments, however, the concrete utilitarian structures underwent a radical visual transformation. The decoration of rudimentary concrete box buildings made it possible for the Portland Cement Association to promote its experimental tourist facilities on the basis of their aesthetic as well as pragmatic qualities. The most common and easily applied decorative motifs conveyed a domestic imagery. Some ornament was itself made of concrete. Urns and gracefully curving elevations could endow simple concrete privacy walls at a trailer camp with the qualities of a grand, formal garden wall.\(^{35}\) The addition of a pitched roof, large multi-paned, shuttered windows, and decorated front door surround could visually convert a utilitarian concrete box to a

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\(^{34}\) "Ideal Motor Court Offered By UMC Western Division," *Tourist Court Journal* 1 (October 1937): 12.

While the tradition of simple structures enlivened by the addition of ornament continued, a simple, modern looking alternative gained increasing popularity. Unlike their decorated counterparts, which visually denied the technological experimentation from which they were derived, these clean, efficient looking structures conveyed a straightforward simplicity. These structures alluded to the aesthetic of the modern movement in architecture, without subscribing to its basic principles. While the clean, flat-roofed modernist or International Style buildings clearly reflected or articulated their structures, often through free standing transparent glass curtain walls that exposed elegantly detailed structural systems, these "modern" tourist court structures were, in fact, solid boxes bearing minimalist ornament evocative of the International Style.

Often presented as modern variations of their more traditional, overtly decorated and romantically evocative counterparts, these severe structures were relieved only by minimal, abstracted ornament, often in the form of horizontal bands. Such bands visually enlarged windows by extending their mullions, header or sill lines, creating the allusion, on a solid box of the International Style's hallmark "window wall" without incurring its construction costs. The "absence" of ornament was highlighted as a virtue, both visually as well as economically.

The relatively simple designs of this genre were touted for their inherent economies. While alluding to the elegance of the elaborately finished exposed integral structural systems of modernist architecture, they maintained traditional,

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37Ibid., 10.
FREE OF LAYOUT FOR TRAILER CAMP WITH PRIVATE TOILET AND YARD
DOUBLE PARKING SPACE BETWEEN PINE ISLAND
TRAILERS MAY BE PARKED EITHER RIGHT OR LEFT
CAMP MAY BE Laid OUT WITH PARKING SPACE AND ISLANDS ON THE DIAGONAL GIVING EASIER PARKING FREEDOM

ELEVATION OF TRAILER CAMP
SKETCH OF LAYOUT FOR TRAILER CAMP WITH LIVING PORCH AND PRIVATE TOILETS
DOUBLED PARKING SPACE BETWEEN EACH ISLAND
TRAILERS MAY BE PLACED EITHER RIGHT OR LEFT
CAMP MAY BE LAYED OUT WITH PARKING SPACE AND ISLANDS ON THE DIAGONAL OFFERING EASIER PARKING FREEDOM

SIDE ELEVATION OF TRAILER CAMP
SKETCH OF LAYOUT FOR TRAILER CAMP WITH PRIVATE TOILETS
DOUBLE PARKING SPACE BETWEEN EACH ISLAND - ONE WAY PARKING ONLY
CAMP MAY BE Laid OUT WITH PARKING SPACE AND ISLANDS ON THE DISCOWAL GIVING EASIER PARKING FREEDOM

ELEVATION OF CAMP WITH TRAILERS PARKED
TOURIST CAMP COTTAGES OF CONCRETE MASONRY OR REINFORCED CONCRETE CONSTRUCTION
TOURIST CAMP COTTAGES OF CONCRETE MASONRY OR REINFORCED CONCRETE CONSTRUCTION
TOURIST CAMP LAYOUT - CONCRETE CONSTRUCTION - 6 TYPES OF COTTAGES - 2 TYPES OF CARETAKERS COTTAGES
unexposed, less costly structural systems. At the same time, elaborately detailed and often costly applied ornament was indeed eliminated. In this roadside version of modern design, therefore, the truly Modernist principles were instantly compromised if not subverted to create a series of motor court buildings that, while they appeared "modern," were actually well within the tradition of solid, decorated boxes of the builder's journals.

The appearance of modified modernism, often found on the roadside, was embraced by architects. It was promoted in the Tourist Court Journal by its consulting architect, Tom Lightfoot.\textsuperscript{38} His patented proposal for "a modern tourist court," (illustrated, page 87) was touted for its "ultra-modern modernistic architecture with its simple clear-cut lines of exquisite attractiveness."\textsuperscript{39} Consisting of 25 cottages, managers' quarters, an office and lobby, as well as a cafe, the complex was unified into a flowing composition surrounding a court with continuous overhanging canopies. The buildings were characterized by smooth, pure white stucco surfaces punctuated by large floor to ceiling expanses of glass in public areas. Room glazing included large wrap-around corner windows that, while contributing to the structures' modern, clean aesthetic, were touted as insuring cross ventilation. In fact, the drawings portrayed a complex genuinely within the realm of integral architecture.

Lightfoot's motor court proposal was realized, on an enlarged scale, with the construction of the Charro Courts in the Rio Grand Valley of Texas. Modified by its site that featured a creek, the complex included thirty-six units, an office, an entertainment room, a second floor manager's apartment as well as maid's, porter's,

\footnote{\textsuperscript{38}"Constructing A Modern Motor Court," E. H. Lightfoot, \textit{Tourist Court Journal} 1 (March 1938): 5-8.}

\footnote{\textsuperscript{39}Ibid, p. 8.}
and linen rooms. In addition, the complex included a service station and a cafe. Although its building program exceeded that of the modern court initially proposed by Lightfoot, the building construction was more conservative, and while still modern in appearance, contained key modifications. Continuous floor to ceiling windows gave way to smaller bands of glazing supplemented by smaller openings. While the corner room windows survived, the continuous canopies that had done so much to unify and contribute to the flowing modern aesthetic gave way to small canopies sheltering the windows and entries only. As ultimately realized, its modern architectural vocabulary notwithstanding, this structure had more in common with the traditional decorated boxes of the builder’s journals than it did with the integral mode of architecture.

In the *Tourist Court Plan Book*, published seven years later, in 1945, by The *Tourist Court Journal*, architect Lightfoot reiterated "that the architecture most adapted to the up-to-the-minute court, is a ‘Modern Style,’ often spoken of as ‘Modernistic Architecture’." He explained that this "new functional utilitarian style which has been in use for the past several years [and is] . . . devoid of almost all decorations and frills [is] perhaps the least expensive architecture."40 Detailed drawings including plans, elevations, and perspectives for a variety of motor courts are presented. The first set of drawings are for a court that is, in fact, a variation of the court he initially proposed in 1938. It incorporates many of the modifications brought to this scheme with the construction of the Charro Courts, while maintaining a modicum of modernism.

Perhaps the most revealing comment on the state of modernism or the modern

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aesthetic is that alternatives in the "cottage" and "Spanish" styles are presented for otherwise identical structures. The notion of architectural style is therefore conveyed by the application of ornamentation—be it modern, domestic, or historical. Ironically, this presents "modern" architecture, whether of the "pure" high style type, or of the solid builder's variation, as merely another style within the lexicon of the builder's vocabulary.

In January 1953, Tourist Court Journal began the "Upgrading Feature," which appeared regularly for several years. Suggested improvements focused on ornamentation rather than substantive, more integral, structural changes. As the first article explained "outside 'gingerbread' decorations may be added or removed."\(^\text{41}\) Given the increasing influence of modernism in upgrading, it became common to remove decorative elements which contributed to conveying an image. A cabin's quaint domestic qualities, for instance, were converted to a modern look by the removal of ornaments, such as window flower boxes and shutters, that for so long had characterized the domestic cabin. Taking things further, roof gables once placed above the cabin's door to suggest a second floor and mark the entry were similarly removed. Continuous roofs were added, uniting individual cottages into large banks of rooms. Old carport areas gave way to new rooms. Unifying roofs became a decorative element defining a continuous front entry zone that separated the rooms from the cars now parked in front of each unit rather than adjacent to it. Treated this way, many tourist courts were actually converted to motels.

The other aspect of upgrading was the addition of a more formal motel-type office (illustrated, page 90). Usually closer to the road at the front of the court,

\(^{41}\)"How I Would Upgrade This Court," Theodore Coleman, Tourist Court Journal 16 (January 1953): 6-9, 41ff.
these new offices were instrumental in creating a street presence as the motorist passed at greater speeds. Visually dominant, these new appendages served to advertise the upgraded facility, graphically demonstrating modern improvements that were not always consistently implemented throughout the complex. The modern, integrated, yet ornamental nature of a court's architectural elements, was perhaps best demonstrated by the vertical extension of a registration office wall "to form a pylon" bearing the motel's name in large bold letters radically improving the court's visibility from a distance.42 These renovations, in the somewhat simplistic tradition of builder's journals, foreshadowed the basic concerns that architects would accept as part of the design problem, to which they brought their Modernist training as they became increasingly involved in designing motels in the late 1950s.

By 1956, however, with the unveiling of the Federal Interstate Highway program, all expansion and renovation seemed to be put on hold. In the early 1960's a very different type of roadside lodging emerged with architects designing motels.

The emergence of the tourist court as a big business with a considerable impact on the construction industry was surprisingly not reflected in builders' journals. In fact, the tourist court brought with it no significant change in the volume or type of coverage afforded roadside lodging in builders' journals. The lack of growth of builders' journals in this area is perhaps precisely because the needs of the new industry were met primarily by specialized trade publications, such as the Tourist Court Journal, that focused on issues unique to roadside lodging. The design concerns addressed in that publication ranged from the general, such as eye appeal from the road, to those related specifically to lodging, such as guest amenities. With

this information, the more professional courtier could take an active role in the design and construction of his tourist court. As a result, the builder was no longer considered as a primary source for design ideas.

Furthermore, while builders' journals did pick up on the new tourist court trend, they did as much to keep the cabin camp tradition alive as to promote the new building type. Into the 1940s publications, such as *American Builder*, continued to publish articles on the construction of individual cabins that made up traditional cabin camps. They did, however, also publish plans for entire complexes that brought many individual issues raised by the *Tourist Court Journal* together, presenting entire projects as comprehensive design solutions to a variety of problems. This view of the evolving roadside lodging maintained the builder's journals' tradition of presenting simple structures bearing evocative ornament that had to quickly provide "eye appeal" to the motorist who passed with increasing speed.

The same year as the *Tourist Court Journal* commenced publication, *American Builder* featured the Grande Vista Tourist Homes (illustrated, page 93). They were actually a cross between traditional cabins and the emerging tourist court. Flanked at either side by car portals, these double stucco cottages were centered about large rustic chimneys. The visually prominent large double chimneys dominated the composition, defining a visual focus while conveying the rustic lodge character. Consistent with the architectural traditions of the builder's media, and to a large degree the building type, emphasis was on evocative detail. Windows, traditionally an element suitable for decoration (i.e., early cabins in *Popular Mechanics*) were capped by Spanish tile hoods, which added a Mediterranean flavor. The overscaled chimneys, for instance, were composed of a random combination of "ore, petrified wood, and quartz." Summoning a merchandising analogy, the article emphasized the importance of making "the exterior just as attractive as possible. It is the exterior
that first catches the eye of passers-by; and just as the well dressed window attracts purchasers to the store, so does the attractive exterior extend an invitation to travelers to 'bide-a-while.'" The tall intricately detailed chimneys also served to convey the promise of an ample hearth with warm fire inside. In fact, the ample 11 x 21-foot rooms, the dimensions of which were dictated by the automobile, provided a variety of comforts while maintaining a rustic motif. As the article advised the prospective builder, "Build every comfort and convenience that the modern home knows. Let the average home suffer much by comparison."\(^{43}\)

The motor court building boom that would have no doubt attracted the attention of builders' journals as it became part of general construction practice was curtailed by World War II. While travel related construction came to a virtual standstill, War related projects such as housing for War workers persisted. Combining a present need with an anticipated one, *American Builder* posed the question, "Why not house temporary war workers . . . in motor lodges and tourist homes. . . . After the war these motor lodges will continue to be of use and value to the American public . . . [when] tourist accommodations will be in great demand."\(^{44}\) It featured the Twin Lakes Motor Lodge (illustrated, page 95) by architect, William Moyer, Jr., on State Highway 4 in North Hackensack, New Jersey. The long brick lodge buildings, straddling winding crushed stone drives, with cul-de-sacs, at once anticipated the motel and post war suburbia. Cars were garaged to the rear of the site. Each linear brick-faced box was decorated with loosely classical quoins, pedimented entries and other projections which, while

\(^{43}\)"Grande Vista Tourist Homes," *American Builder* 59, no. 6 (June 1937): 78-79.

\(^{44}\)"Ingenuity Will Help House War Workers," *American Builder* 6, no. 3 (March 1942): 45.
Detailed plans and elevations by Architect William Wayte. It shows careful study and good design in Twin Lakes Motor Lodge. Each unit has ten rooms, serviced by central heating plant.

Three lodges and office are artistically placed on lower plot. Closest unit to road is 126°. There is a parking lot at rear.
serving to break up the buildings’ massing, provided the private entries. Individual room features included private baths with tile showers, steam heat, cross ventilation through steel casement windows, oak flooring, and "tasteful Early American maple furniture. This project is representative of both the type of structure and coverage given to roadside lodging by the builders' journals of the era.

In 1946, American Builder completed a 3,500 mile road trip along the Pacific coast, reporting that three hundred "highway rental unit" or "transient home" projects ranging in size from 6 to 100 units were under construction. It focused on a 35-unit Santa Barbara, California, project. Casa Del Mar, (illustrated, page 97) "one of the most impressive," it reported, consisted of "drive-in stalls on the ground level with hotel rooms above." Conceptually related to the Tourist Court Journal's, "Will Your Guests of the Future Sleep Over the Car or Beside It?," this variation exhibited a rich architectural vocabulary consistent with the builders' journal tradition that had not been fully developed in the Tourist Court Journal's examples. The L shaped and elaborately decorated spanish extravaganza defined a palm-filled court that was entered via automobile from the street through an overscaled arched portal. The stucco structures' ground floor garage area was screened by broad arched portals; the rooms above overlooked the court, and were reached from a continuous overhanging balcony which was given visual emphasis by its heavy turned spanish baluster railing. A broad overhanging spanish tile roof capped the entire composition, contributing powerfully to the stylistic theme.  

Six years later, American Builder presented a Safford, Arizona, tourist court

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45“Will Your Guests Sleep Over the Car?,” Tourist Court Journal 10 (June 1947): 4-5.

46“35 Rental Units in Distinctive Motel,” American Builder 68, no. 8 (August 1946): 60, 150.
composed of individual units lining a "street." This court (illustrated, page 99) simultaneously harkened back to the cabin camp and ahead to the emerging post World War II suburban subdivision landscape.⁴⁷ "Presenting the appearance of a group of small, comfortable houses," the motor court design made skillful use of a variety of architecturally evocative elements. Rustic, "weeping" concrete mortar joints, red roof tile, and white shutters and trim combined with other elements to imply a domestic colonial imagery using the architectural vocabulary of the contemporary American suburb. Set behind a "ranch" fence each unit featured a planting area in front of a porch-like arched breezeway. This element provided both a physical and visual connection between the cottage and the adjoining car port. The imagery was reinforced with decorative lamp posts in front of what appeared to be a porch. The "porch" in fact was a shallow breezeway that provided a physical and visual connection between the cottage and the adjoining car port. The function of the car port was, in turn, obscured by the repetition of ranch fencing at its roof level which implied the presence of a balcony where there was none. The elements came together to create something bigger than the sum of its parts. This extended the builders’ journal tradition and gave new meaning to the new level of utilizing applied architectural ornament. In the past, a cabin’s window or door trim was exaggerated or a simple cabin was given additional meaning by the application of architectural ornament. New architectural elements that were associated with given functions, such as porch or balcony railing, were in fact given a dual purpose—to suggest one function while fulfilling another. If not for the complex messages conveyed by the skillful application of simple, decorative elements, the cottages of this and other

⁴⁷"Here Concrete Helps Solve a Problem," American Builder 74, no. 3 (March 1952): 147.
courts like it were merely simple concrete block boxes. It is this manipulation of imagery which, combined with the expression given to modernism in the 1950s and 1960s roadside architecture, contributed to the creation of Post-Modern architecture.

By 1940, the *Architectural Record* welcomed tourist courts, which, it explained, "constitute a new type of hotel accommodation." Presenting Motor Hotels as part of its "Hotel Building Type Study" in the July issue, the *Record* categorized the emerging building type as "a modern variation of the hotel business" rather than as an extension of what it dismissed as the "inadequate accommodations" of the "unplanned, poorly built" cabin and tourist camp business. While acknowledging that roadside lodging, "has not until recent years, been a field into which the architect could profitable venture," it expressed optimism that this new type of roadside lodging brought with it increased opportunities for architects. Expectations for the increased involvement of architects were based on a variety of factors, which all ultimately stemmed from the realization of the decentralization that the automobile was bringing to the American landscape. These ranged from the state of the changing lodging industry and the related increased demand for roadside units to new factors governing the design of roadside units.

Noting the International Motor Court Association's *Tourist Court Journal* as an industry source, the *Record* cited the emergence of the tourist court industry as an identifiable big business, and therefore, by extension, a logical client group. Addressing the demand spawned by this new industry, the article observed, "during the past three years about half of the existing motor hotels have found it necessary to construct additional units." The belief that in the new auto-oriented industry's best

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49 Ibid., 86.
interest, "coherent planning and reasonably good construction," would characterize these new roadside building efforts, seemed to the *Architectural Record* to insure a role for architects.\(^{50}\)

In redefining the design problem of the tourist court as a "hotel with a front entrance for the automobile and its occupants and with accommodations for both,"\(^{51}\) the *Record* set design parameters not only for a new type of roadside lodging but, on a broader scale, for a new type of auto-oriented architecture at home on a decentralizing landscape. The "roadside hotel" concept ran counter to the tourist court industry's view of itself as a vastly improved and upgraded cabin camp, having little or no relationship to the old, established hotel industry. It did, however, anticipate the emergence of the luxury motel, an area of design that did provide, for a brief time in the 1950s, until chain motels became dominant, numerous opportunities for architects. The projects published by architectural journals, such as the *Architectural Record* and its less corporate-oriented counterpart, *Architectural Forum*, showed the emerging roadside lodging to be a highly elaborate, mature rendition of the cabin camp and tourist court, which was very different from those presented in builders journals and popular periodicals.

In the architectural journals, both site plan and building design were developed in a direction that transformed the cabin camp sense of rustic outdoor adventure to one of country club elegance. The evocative, often crudely applied architectural ornament of the cabin camp and early tourist court gave way to a smoother form of architectural expression, which despite its modern and often subtle abstractions, sought to communicate effectively with the passing motorist. Rather

\(^{50}\text{Ibid., 86.}\)

\(^{51}\text{Ibid., 86.}\)
than feature lodgings that displayed the court as a visual feature or depend on signage, lodging projects published by the architectural press sought to use structures by the roadside as a baffle from the highway which doubled as a billboard advertising the facility. These "baffle/billboard" structures often housed hotel-like amenities, such as a public restaurant or the motel office, which, with its overscaled "display room" simultaneously offered elements of the hotel lobby and the "bounce on the bed" cabin inspection of a previous era in roadside lodging.

The publication by *Architectural Record* of the Rancheria, near Santa Barbara, California, (illustrated, page 103) demonstrates the manner in which architectural journals encouraged a shift from the traditional tourist court to a new, more sophisticated highway hotel that ultimately emerged as the motel.\(^{52}\) On one level, the Rancheria is most similar to the traditional motor court; its site plan is fundamentally that of a court, and its ornamented architecture, complete with windows bearing shutters and flower boxes, recalls the cabins of building journals. A visual screen between the court’s open side and the adjoining road is created by the office/owner’s apartment which occupies half of the court’s open side. Auto access to this area is limited by a one way road which punctuates the space, leading to a garage/car shed to the site’s rear. The court, renamed a "patio," becomes an outdoor, auto-oriented version of the traditional hotel lobby. No longer a mere court, the space becomes a ceremonial one in which "arriving cars discharge guests."\(^{53}\) Defined on three sides by attached cottages, the patio is given a relaxed resort quality by a continuous veranda which provides a transitional sitting space

\(^{52}\)"Attractive Setting Helps Tourist Court Set Income Record," *Architectural Record* 88 (July 1940): 100-102.

\(^{53}\)Ibid., 101.
between the public outdoor space and the private rooms. While the *Record*’s article enumerates the buildings’ evocative combination of stucco, redwood board and batten siding and cedar shingle roofs, it fails to mention the ornamental shutters and flower boxes that combine to create a design awarded special recognition not only by the architectural media, but by its area’s civic community association as well. Accordingly, this roadside facility, noted the *Record*, was able to "compete seriously for resort clientele."\(^{54}\)

The same issue of *Architectural Record* featured the unassuming, yet architecturally, modern Jack Tar Court (illustrated, page 105) in Galveston, Texas.\(^{55}\) Its architects, John J. Croft, Jr. and H. S. Shannon, employed contrasting materials to enliven the simple rectilinear units, achieving an architectural articulation, the modern alternative to decoration. Its site plan, while that of a tourist court, foreshadowed the motel. Its paired, free standing unornamented units were situated within a large court which was itself defined by a backdrop of motel-style rows of rooms. Both variations of room units were constructed of "second hand brick and asbestos siding."\(^{56}\) The two story boxes were punctuated by large, industrial metal framed windows. The upper level windows, resting on a one and a half story base, were surrounded by asbestos siding which continued to the structures’ overhanging flat roof, creating a light attic level capping the structure. Grouped entries within the brick base were articulated by curvilinear projecting canopies which reflected the curved concrete entry step below, and combined to

\(^{54}\)Ibid., 101.

\(^{55}\)“Auto Court Is Planned For Privacy,” *Architectural Record* 88 (July 1940): 98-99.

\(^{56}\)Ibid., 98.
Restaurant and service station, in same building, operate independently. Office unit controls entrance, contains manager's apartment and boiler room. Typical one- and two-room apartments are shown at right.
create traditional entry porches utilizing a modern architectural vocabulary. Although of traditional construction, these structures lacked the typical elaborate trim and detailing and instead merely separated contrasting materials by fenestration rather than ornamentation, reflecting a modern architectural idiom.

The Jack Tar Court office, prominently placed at the court's entry, featured a vertically oriented variation of the brick and asbestos configuration, which, without the entrance canopies, provided a stark counterpoint to the complex's already unadorned units. The same facade materials, combined with more commercial and less industrial fenestration, and enlivened by free standing Art Deco letters mounted on a horizontal canopy and intersecting vertical pylon, created an exuberant variation of the court's theme for its roadside restaurant structure. Built at a triangular intersection to the front of the court property, the restaurant's front facade, which overlooked the Gulf of Mexico, was appropriately "suggestive of a ship's deck." This demonstrated that images or iconography of location could, at the roadside at least, be overlaid on "modern architecture." This combination of strict, rational, modernism, and commercially driven, image-laden--sometimes exuberant--roadside architecture continued in the architectural journal's coverage of the motor court, ultimately becoming the hallmark of motels of the following era.

Anouncing in 1941 that "architects at last have been called in" to design tourist courts, in contrast to the imitation homes that lined the American roadside, the Architectural Record proudly presented the expressively modern St-Elmo-Tel Tourist Court\(^5^8\) (illustrated, pages 107-108). Designed by architect, Arthur Fehr, this technologically exuberant extravaganza featured paired free standing brick and glass

\(^{57}\)Ibid., 98.

boxes with multiple exposed steel columns supporting extended concrete roofs, which stood independent from the walls. Often, large expanses of glass created the walls. Its ultra-modern, clearly expressive integral architecture not withstanding, the St-Elmo-Tel remained, in overall site plan configuration, a traditional "U-shaped" tourist court. The motor court's entry, however, was defined by what the Record referred to as a "many windowed lounge" with concrete slab roofs dramatically extending horizontally beyond the glass walled office to form a canopied auto entrance which "greets arriving guests."59 The court's modernist architectural vocabulary was dramatically composed to create an architectural tour-de-force visually enticing the passing motorist.

The changes in architectural treatment notwithstanding, the tourist court tradition lived on. Two courts published in the early 1940s by Architectural Forum illustrated the tourist court's evolution and the tentative site plan development of the highway hotel, which ultimately emerged as the motel. In 1940, Architectural Forum published a retrospective examining the effect of the machine on the contemporary environment.60 Not surprisingly, the automobile as a manifestation of industrialization was found to have considerable impact, changing the way we lived, worked and played. Finding that travel had been affected by the machine driven changes on the landscape, Forum commissioned young modernist architect, Harwell Hamilton Harris, to design a highway hotel (illustrated, page 110) that provided "the same degree of elegance in accommodations as a good hotel."61 The result was an adaptation of the tourist court. The image of hotel was conveyed primarily by a new

59Ibid., 63.

60"Design Decade," Architectural Form 73 (October 1940): 217-221.

roadside structure housing a restaurant and hotel style motor court lobby. The gently curving structure created a semi circular mini-court visible from the road which harkened to the tradition of the open court. The structure provided a "baffle to the highway," ensuring privacy for guests while simultaneously establishing a major hotel-like presence on the road for the tourist court. The structure, which was intended to "become a signboard . . . visible from the highway," was in certain ways a sophisticated and commercially viable version of the street wall proposed in architect, John Hocke's, cabin camp of a decade earlier.\footnote{Ibid., 248.} Entered through the baffle-building, the tourist accommodations consisted of interlocking cabins which, lining a loop road, featured integrated carports. The individually articulated guest rooms were accessed directly from the carports. From the initial highway view to auto parking conveniences within the complex, this project’s design responded directly to its motorist guest, representing a departure from the traditional motor court.

If architectural sophistication was the hallmark of Harris’ design, technological advances were the focus of a motor camp design by Ernest Payer (illustrated, pages 112-113) published by Architectural Forum in 1943.\footnote{American Builder and Building Age 5, no. 1, (April 1931): 88.} Several aspects of this project drew on the motor court’s previous evolution. Arranged in a picturesque, natural looking site plan, the motor camp’s overnight cabin units consisted of linear rows of rooms alternating with carport bays under continuous roofs, as did the free standing vacation cabins dispersed to the site’s perimeter. The units and cabins, however, were anything but traditional; they combined simple, 

\footnote{"Motor Camp," Architectural Forum 78 (May 1943): 120-122.}
standard construction practices, new, yet readily available materials, and technologically advanced pre-fabrication techniques. The cabin's carport like roof structures were to be built "from standard blueprints" in accordance with traditional building practice. "The cabins themselves would arrive as manufactured sections requiring assembly only"; the units would subsequently be "clipped or snapped to the underside" of the roof structures, according to the article. ⁶⁵ Although in many ways a traditional court, this project encompassed many concepts that were to be introduced early in the motel era, and to find general acceptance in the later by motel chains.

The tourist court era came to a close in architectural journals in 1945, ironically, with the publication by the Architectural Record of its first "Building Type Study" devoted exclusively to what it still referred to as "Highway Hotels." ⁶⁶ Prepared in collaboration with Hotel Management, this issue put lodging in America in the context of an increasingly auto-oriented and rapidly decentralizing landscape. The highway hotels featured ranged from lavish, aesthetically traditionally decorated boxes to high-tech industrially produced visions of futuristic travel accommodations. Elements of both appeared in the motels of the late 1950s.

The master plan for the Outpost Inn (illustrated, page 115), was proposed by Frances Keally to capture the "tourist traffic [which] has been running away from the hotel." ⁶⁷ The architecturally conservative luxury complex "was conceived as part

⁶⁵Ibid., 120.


of a comprehensive hotel program moved out into the country." The master plan included a baffle building with porte-cochere that had grown to a single story, sprawling, full scale hotel facility. This roadside structure included a hotel lobby and lounge flanked by a variety of eating facilities including public and private dining rooms, a bar, as well as a less formal lunch counter. An adjacent wing included 32 "hotel bed rooms." Individual cabins (illustrated, page 117) were located to the rear of the complex, behind a terraced swimming pool and outdoor dining area. These cottages, the most architecturally developed component of the master plan were mini Cape Cod Cottages. These solid wood frame shingled structures were ornamented on the exterior by their multi-paned colonial windows with flanking shutters, and on the interior by knotty pine wood panelling, both of which reinforced the rustic theme. All units featured patios, full garages, and screened sleeping porches. The Outpost Inn, with all its proposed amenities, was in concept the decentralized hotel that become the relaxed, resort type motor lodge that would set the standard for motels of the 1950s.

The future form of roadside lodging was predicted by Charles Wiley and Norman and Jean Bodman Fletcher's proposal for a Motor Traveler's Hotel (illustrated, pages 118-119). In many ways a very traditional tourist court, this project was given a futuristic aesthetic by the manner in which it accommodated the automobile. In this sense, the project picked up Harwell Hamilton Harris' theme of designing for the car. In what the Record termed a "car-to-bed" sequence of spaces, the hotel made it possible for one to drive from the auto lobby, with its drive through registration, up a ramp to an internal parking court. "From his car the guest crosses

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68Ibid., 69.

69"Motor Traveler's Hotel," Architectural Record 98 (July 1945): 75-77.
the glazed corridor and ascends or descends half a level to his room.\textsuperscript{70} The rooms themselves featured futuristic built-in living and dressing units, in place of traditional furniture, not unlike those designed for Ernest Payer’s pre-fabricated camp units. The project depended on the conversion of war time technology to peace time construction. Explaining that “engineering has advanced beyond brick on brick and lintel on post structures”\textsuperscript{71} the architects proposed an arched structural framework from which the roadside hotel’s separate units were hung. While this scheme proposed no baffle building, its lower court, or auto lobby level, featured a series of commercial conveniences including a drug store, book shop, valet, and beauty shops as well as a series of small stores “where they can be directly reached by the motorist.”\textsuperscript{72}

While the post war adaptation of the technology upon which the proposal for the Motor Traveler’s Hotel depended was not as swift as its architects’ hoped, the concept of designing for a drive-in culture quickly gained acceptance. As decentralization progressed and auto dominance of the post war American landscape became a reality, the design of the roadside was profoundly affected. The combination of elements of the proposed highway hotels with many aspects of the tourist court adapted to a fast moving, auto dominated environment became the motel.

\textsuperscript{70}Ibid., 75.

\textsuperscript{71}Ibid., 75.

\textsuperscript{72}Ibid., 75.
CHAPTER IV - MOTELS

The emergence of the motel in the late 1940s marked a shift to roadside lodging as the country’s primary form of overnight accommodation. A post World War II phenomenon, the motel evolved in response to America’s decentralized growth spurt of the 1950s; as the nation became increasingly auto dependent, motels became the dominant form of travellers’ accommodations. During the motel era, the involvement of architects in the design of lodgings substantially increased. In the late 1940s and early 1950s, owners of individual, small scale facilities seeking efficiency of construction and operation combined with the visual appeal that would give them the needed competitive edge turned to architects for assistance. These early motels, the successors to the tourist court, typically consisted of twelve to twenty units, usually arranged about a central court.

By the mid 1950s, architects were required to design the increasingly large new breed of super-motels or motor inns and lodges that emerged on the rapidly decentralizing landscape. These sprawling fifty to two hundred unit complexes offered all the amenities and services of the downtown hotel combined with the relaxed informality of a country resort. As the number of units increased, the single block containing eight to twelve rooms gave way to multiple rows of units, which could be arranged to relate directly to each other and to the site, often defining exterior spaces. While the units of the cabin camp had been objects in space, and the tourist court’s room clusters began to define or enclose a court or exterior space, the motel’s linear units began to define a more relaxed and natural looking exterior space. The combination of the new attention to the outdoors, often taking advantage of natural site amenities, with room size limitations posed by financial constraints led to the establishment of a relationship between the room’s interior and the exterior. The integration of outdoor spaces in many ways represented a return to the basics of
the roadside lodging tradition with its roots in motor camping. Often decorated with evocative palms, kidney shaped swimming pools and decks, the motel complex provided the 20th century counterpart to Victorian country resorts. The era of the plush, individually owned motel, however, was short lived; it was to be eclipsed by the emergence of nation wide motel chains.

As the automobile became increasingly integrated into American life, its adoption began to alter the American landscape. By the post World War II era, the widespread adoption of the automobile had mobilized Americans. At the same time, consumerism continued to grow. Business began to offer services that took advantage of consumer mobility. The auto, once seen as a simultaneous agent of both centralization and decentralization, emerged as a powerful decentralizing force.

Decentralization was fueled by a combination of economic and social factors, many of which were government supported. The automobile became the key to realizing American social and spatial ideals. Suburbanization, as realized through the Federal Housing Administration’s (FHA) and Veteran’s Administration’s (VA) efforts to address post-war housing shortages, was stimulated by the automobile. The resulting dispersal of population established living patterns outside urban centers. These auto-dependent suburbs created a new context for, and in turn re-created, a variety of new buildings offering formerly urban services.

In addition, revisions to the tax code in 1954, promoted new construction on undeveloped suburban commercial sites by providing for rapid depreciation for new construction. Expanding to outlying areas therefore became a financially viable, attractive option for many businesses. An added level of financial security, further stimulating decentralized growth, came with the construction of the nation’s system of Interstate highways that provided nodes or spines along which the newly decentralized developments could be located.
Industry and commerce moved to the outskirts of town. Sprawling industrial structures were often located near lines of highway transportation. A new generation of retail facilities ranging from roadside drive-ins to satellite department stores responded to the new demands, providing buildings that catered to the fast moving consumer. The challenge of a new design problem, which opened a new market for architects, resulted in architectural periodicals providing coverage of this new field of practice for architects. Commenting in the mid 1950s on the impact of a landscape changed by mobility on the practice of architecture, Progressive Architecture noted, "We are only beginning to realize [the automobile's] effect on architecture and planning."¹ A major area of endeavor within the broad field of roadside architecture was motel design. In fact, Lewis Mumford's article, "The Highway and the City," was all but overshadowed when first published by Architectural Record in April 1958 by the issue's main feature, "Motor Hotels as Architecture for Business."

The decentralized landscape, fostering a series of new demands, spawned the growth of the roadside lodging industry. Motels were the first form of roadside lodging to accommodate more travellers than traditional hotels. In 1939, tourist courts housed only 29% of those travelling, while 46% of the country's traveller's patronized hotels. By 1950, motels accommodated 59% of America's travellers, surpassing hotels that by then captured only 36% of the market. The radical shift of lodging to the roadside was also demonstrated by a marked increase in the number of roadside facilities offering overnight accommodations. In 1940, the country had 20,000 motor courts; ten years later it was estimated that more than 40,000 motels lined its roads. Estimating its 1950 income to be $450 million, Fortune magazine

noted, "the motel business is fast becoming an industry of respectable size, and sizable respectability."² By the mid 1950s, with 4,000 new motels appearing annually, an estimated 60,000 motels dotted the landscape.³

The lavish motels of this era were horizontal hotels, offering, in a relaxed setting, more amenities than were available at luxury downtown hotels. Describing the evolution to this stage of motel development, architect Morris Lapidus, known for his lavish resort hotels of the post war era explained, "First they wanted a restaurant on the premises, then a bar, then conference and banquet rooms, and then they wanted everything else."⁴ By 1960, an investment of half a million dollars was required to build a motel that met the standards of the day.⁵

Spawned by decentralization, the proliferation of the new type of roadside lodging accordingly emerged as the focus of much attention in architectural periodicals. A 1950 issue of Architectural Record set its coverage of the new type of roadside lodging against a backdrop of information on new post-war driving habits that supported the growth of the motel industry. A wide variety of travellers constituted the expanded market for roadside lodging. In addition to traditional automobile tourists, the number of people vacationing by car grew significantly. Architectural Record noted an increase in long distance vacation travel for trips of 1,500 miles or more. The overwhelming majority of business travellers reported use


⁴"The Motel Free For All," Seymour Freedgood, Fortune LIX, no. 6 (June 1959): 164.

of automobiles for overnight trips. They increasingly turned to automobile travel instead of rail, in large part because it offered them the convenience of proximity to a wide range of facilities that, especially in the post World War II years, were migrating from the city center to its outskirts. It was increasingly common for facilities, such as hospitals, industrial plants, and offices served by business travellers, to be located in outlying areas. Similarly, other new forms of travel such as commercial airlines, generated new facilities, which, by virtue of their space requirements, were outside urban centers. Finally, *Architectural Record* noted that by 1950 "satellite motor hotels" constructed by downtown hotels to accommodate their overflow of guests had become the accommodation of choice. In what it termed "a reverse flow," the magazine noted, "Guests too late to stay in [the] motor hotel went reluctantly to [the] big hotel."6 On a decentralized landscape, the motel offered conveniences and amenities that surpassed those available at traditional downtown hotels.

Perhaps an even more significant aspect of decentralization affecting the motel is its integration into everyday life not only by travellers, but even by those who remained at home. As decentralization caused Americans to be on the road even when not travelling, the motel began to serve social functions in increasingly physically dispersed communities. The motel emerged as a convenient meeting and gathering place, often for civic functions that previously would have only occurred in a community’s downtown hotel. As *Architectural Forum* noted, "the Rotary, Kiwanis, and Elks clubs in our smaller cities, now drive to the outskirts for their

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weekly luncheon meetings instead of dragging into the middle of town."\textsuperscript{7} The motel surpassed the downtown hotel, not only in accommodating travelling guests, but in fulfilling the hotel's symbolic role as the community's civic and business meeting place. This evidences the realization of the motel's serving certain civic and commercial functions initially envisioned in the unrealized tourist court projects published during the 1940s by the architectural media. By the 1950s, the motel came to be what one architect's design guide referred to as the "symbol of up-to-dateness, of informality, and modern planning.\textsuperscript{8} The motel, initially a response to a new American landscape, with its attendant use of and dependence on the automobile, came to represent a new way of daily life, reflecting this new decentralized landscape.

The increasingly sophisticated roadside lodgings of the motel era emerged as a fledgling area of practice for architects. The design of motels, now an accepted, yet novel business and building type, required significant capital expenses. As the new form of roadside lodging, which was no longer a farmer built cabin, nor a family and contractor designed court, nor a hotel spin-off, achieved a newly elevated legitimacy, the design of motels became part of the architectural mainstream.

Designs for this new breed of roadside lodgings, however, continued to be commissioned by "Ma and Pa" roadside entrepreneurs. As traditional tourist court operators were joined by semi-retired couples, \textit{Fortune} magazine referred to motel managers of the 1950s as "Mr. and Mrs. Ex (ex-almost anything)."\textsuperscript{9} Although the

\textsuperscript{7}The Change In Motels," \textit{Architectural Forum} 100 (February 1954): 111.


motel industry was rapidly growing, paradoxically, it remained run largely by amateurs. Faced with the need to compete in an increasingly sophisticated marketplace in a field in which visual impressions from the road were critical to success, these amateurs sought professional design assistance.

The architect, therefore, was no longer viewed as an expensive luxury. While high visibility was needed, loud and garish designs were associated with the previous, less sophisticated, and salutary era in roadside lodging. The architect was seen as a professional who could deliver a refined version of what the Tourist Court Journal had termed "roadside eye appeal." Referring to this all important quest for customers, Architectural Record noted, "the architect can help in this by providing the sales appeal of good design and planning, which the operator has approached only in a tentative, inexperienced fashion."

Beyond conveying a favorable first impression to the motorist, who now often stopped during daylight hours, architects were called on to infuse their designs with unique qualities that would be appropriate to roadside lodging's respectable elevated status.

With travellers stopping earlier and selecting motels during daylight hours, not only did the motel's roadside appearance become increasingly consequential, but the motel's recreational facilities and related outdoor spaces became correspondingly more significant. The architect's abilities to provide a plan for the site's complete development, fully exploiting the site's potential while employing natural features to best advantage, also became critical.

The architect was also perhaps the best equipped to deliver "state of the art" motel rooms, often featuring built-in furniture, which made use of new war related

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technology. When delivered as part of the overall design package, this furniture could be scientifically and efficiently placed within the room, which, in conjunction with window sizing and placement, could be used to help establish interior-exterior spatial relationships. This was often a mechanism for making a motel room seem larger and more spacious than it was, while reinforcing the relaxed, resort image of the motel.

With the sudden flood of motel commissions came recognition of this fledgling area of practice for architects by the architectural media. As Architectural Record noted, with the emergence of the motel, roadside lodging had indeed "reached the point of architectural importance."\textsuperscript{11} By the mid 1950s, Architectural Record confirmed its assessment of five years earlier, declaring, "the progeny of the stripped-down cabins have acquired elaborate respectability." The result, it continued, "should create a bumper business for architects."\textsuperscript{12} Not only had the motel become integrated into the American landscape, it had become an integral part of architectural practice as well.

With architects designing motels frequently, the building type was increasingly show-cased in a variety of architectural publications, which not only featured design case studies and examples in periodicals, but often included design standards in a series of design handbooks. These books provided architects with the information needed to pursue this newly popular area of architectural practice as they designed for this new roadside industry. Typically published by architectural journals, a wide

\textsuperscript{11} "Motels Move Into Select Circle," Architectural Record 103 (May 1948): 95.

\textsuperscript{12} "Highway Hotels: Building Type Study Number 200," Architectural Record 114 (July 1953): 159.
variety of such books appeared in the 1950s and 1960s. These books combined hard and soft data. Basic standards, such as dimensions for newly required room components, and relationships such as entry alcove, storage, closet, and bath/vanity arrangement were presented alongside more subtle design concepts. The latter included methods of maximizing a room’s apparent size by visual design strategies such as the juxtaposition of small scale furniture against a backdrop of large, oversized windows. The implementation of these concepts was often illustrated with design folios of executed projects. Often, works illustrated had been previously published in architectural periodicals. Previously, trade publications features, such as the Tourist Court Journal’s design articles and handbooks, served to give the roadside entrepreneur design ideas with which the “courter” could design and build the facility by himself. In the motel era, the architectural media filled the demand for information by architects who were increasingly called upon to design motels.

The architectural qualities of the motel derived from two divergent design traditions or sources. The architectural journals usually featured designs that strove for an integral architecture; one in which rational expression of structure, often utilizing state-of-the-art building technology and materials, such as steel, metal, and glass, was inherent to the design. The other tradition, that of solid, traditionally constructed structures bearing evocative ornament was featured in building and tourist trade journals. With motel design increasingly in the hands of architects, the

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architecture of the building type evolved, drawing on two divergent design traditions, in the process creating a new building tradition uniquely suited to the roadside. Architects had in fact learned from traditional roadside buildings, while striving to maintain a clean "modern" aesthetic. The result was a wildly exuberant and expressive new form of modernism that burgeoned on the roadside.

This new phenomenon is perhaps unwittingly noted by Architectural Record, which, while proclaiming roadside lodging to have "left behind its era of backyard design" noted the presence of a "bright, gay informality" in current motel design.\(^{14}\) The informality seemed to be replacing the more rigid "space age" technologically driven design trends with which architects had experimented toward the end of the tourist court era. Gone was the strict, modern, bold expression of technology and structure that, promoted by an almost blind faith in technology, characterized the futuristic tourist court projects of the 1940s. In place of the polemic statements of modern architecture, the new commercially driven roadside architecture combined the structural expression of modernism with the lyrical qualities conveyed by evocative ornamentation of otherwise undistinguished, solid structures.

When structure or technology was expressed in the modern architect designed motel, it was often in an lively, effervescent fashion rather than in a rational scientific one. The result was an architectonic, yet often playful, rendition of structural expression that abstractly reflected and substituted for the qualities of traditional applied architectural ornament. The resulting roadside Modernism thereby conveyed some of the lyrical qualities of "backyard designs" while adapting them in scale and detail to the fast moving motorist. This blending of the two traditions, combining elements of structural expression with ornamentation of solid vernacular

\(^{14}\)"Motels Move Into Select Circle," Architectural Record 103 (May 1948): 95.
structures, marks the beginning of the reconciliation of the two apparently contradictory forces. The union of the integral or architectonic, with the decorated or ornamented vernacular, marks the influence of the roadside and the nature of American space on the emergence of a new American architecture.

Site design played a key role in motel’s evolution. Achieving a fit between the motel and its site became a critical tool in creating a pleasant, and therefore economically successful motel. This was highlighted by Architectural Record’s inclusion of a Site Planning and Landscaping section in its motel building type study of 1950. Landscaping, it explained "should be exploited for its attraction value."

Perhaps most significantly, however, the newly emerging type of roadside architecture, which combined elements from the conflicting decorated and integral architectural traditions, contributed to making site plan issues all the more important in motel design. This perhaps best embodied in the advice given by the same issue of Architectural Record that stated, "variety will occur automatically in any adequately landscaped site." The article continued, "attempts to achieve it by architectural or stylistic methods are soon dated and lose interest." Site design elements emerged as practical and theoretically acceptable substitutes for applied architectural ornamentation.

A variety of site plan types reflected the state of flux that characterized roadside building and site design. Harkening to various stages of roadside lodging, these site layouts co-existed in time as the mature motel complex emerged. The diverse site plan options used at the outset of the motel era demonstrated influences

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16Ibid., 117.
of previous forms of roadside lodging. Reinterpretations of the simple cabin camp in which individual units or groups of units existed as objects on the landscape appeared along with reinterpretations of the tourist court in which exterior space is fully defining by rows of rooms in addition to variations on both of these approaches. Virtually all of the new roadside lodgings often conveyed the qualities of a relaxed, yet luxurious resort.

Cottage cluster site plans drew on both the cabin camp and tourist court traditions. These freely dispersed groupings of units usually responded to the site’s contours, heightening each room’s interior to exterior relationship. Although typically designed in a contemporary architectural idiom, these complexes hearkened to the cabin camp era, when cabins were dispersed as free standing objects in rural space.

Short rows of units arranged in much the same fashion as cottage clusters emerged as a more practical and up-to-date variation of the site plan type. This configuration offered the efficiency of the tourist court’s rows of rooms combined with the cabin camp’s rustic, individual cottages dispersed on the landscape. These banks of rooms, often individually articulated, were arranged in groupings, usually around a winding drive and a cul-de-sac. A sense of order of the tourist court was achieved, while the sense of being in a natural, yet tamed environment was simultaneously preserved. This duality was often reflected in floor plans that featured rooms with double exposures; most rooms had an entry from a more formal or structured car court on one side and an exposure to a dramatic unspoiled view on the other.

The trend was toward groupings, usually in rows of units. As Architectural Record noted, "Individual cottages are more expensive to build than rows and may give an unsubstantial appearance compared with 4, 6, or 8 unit buildings that provide
more imposing architectural masses."\textsuperscript{17} It was not long before these groupings of rooms typically took the configuration of banks of units, defining a court. The court was either open, usually exposed to the road, where it served a dual recreational and promotional function, or it was closed, offering amenities sheltered from the road for motel guests.

The courts that were open to the road featured banks of rooms. Units were sometimes staggered, reflecting the individual nature of the tourist court's individual units, in which rooms alternated with car parking spaces. Alternatively, unified rows of continuous rooms provided a backdrop to the lawn that faced the road, inviting guests to pull in.

When separated from the road, the court was often sheltered from the outside by a screening or baffle building, which served as an architectonic type of advertising. The courts beyond often became lavish fantasy oases, complete with lush vegetation and wiggly pools. As \textit{Architectural Record} noted, the motel "has become a full blown resort hotel, complete with luxurious rooms, expensive restaurants, swimming pools, tennis courts, private patios . . . and so on."\textsuperscript{18} Sometimes, the court provided an ordered counterpoint to the natural, unspoiled site beyond the formal motel's perimeter. Ultimately, as a more flamboyant architecture emerged with the super motel, a sequence of smaller, somewhat simpler courts evolved as the motels' multiple outdoor spaces each housed a different type of activity.

Proclaiming roadside lodging to have "left behind its era of backyard design" the \textit{Architectural Record} for May of 1948 presented an in-depth look at the motel.

\textsuperscript{17}Ibid., 118.

\textsuperscript{18}"Motels Move Into Select Circle," \textit{Architectural Record} 103 (May 1948): 95.
The new roadside phenomenon, it explained, "now has its own stature, and is asserting it in a new architectural consciousness." Having "left behind garish imitation and amateurish staginess," the motel design schemes had entered the architects' purview. In fact architects began to reconcile the applied and the integral on the roadside; the old, somewhat crude applied design of previous eras of roadside building enlivened the calm integral modern architecture, making it appropriate for the American roadside. The article, offered design advice for architects facing the challenge of planning the new building type, as well as four case study designs, which dramatically demonstrate the simultaneous presence of the two opposing design traditions.19

The Tropic Palms Motel, built before the end of World War II in Los Angeles, California, was a modern motel strongly tied to its tourist court predecessors.20 Adjacent units set at a 45 degree angle to the court they enclosed were at once individually articulated and contiguous. As Architectural Record explained, this arrangement "gives each apartment a great deal more privacy than would be possible with any other placing, and each gets a private balcony."21 A sense of privacy and connection with the outdoors, harkening to the cabin camp era, is achieved, while the rooms are neatly arranged in rows about a small common area. The orthogonally oriented open and free flowing balconies, which unify the individual units about the court, shelter the solid, traditionally constructed structure beyond, which forms the core of the units. Supported by clearly exposed groupings

19Ibid., 95.


21Ibid., 112.
of posts, the balconies serve to create the illusion of an open and flowing composition in the modernist tradition; in fact the motel remains a piece of traditional, solid construction. On the front or street facade, the structural support for the balconies appears as an overscaled garden trellis. The elements of modernism, therefore have, themselves, in effect become the new system of ornamentation.

Carl's Sea Air Motel in Santa Monica, California,\textsuperscript{22} (illustrated, page 136) depends on its baffle building's massive, yet gracefully curving pylon tower to create a strong visual presence and eye appeal from the road. Adjacent to this visual anchor are a series of angled room units defined by continuous glass curtain walls made up of industrial, metal window sash. The structural system of lolly columns supporting the flat roof springs from a solid horizontally oriented white mass, which at once serves to shelter cars beneath the units while elevating the rooms above eye level, providing privacy while affording exposure to the Pacific Ocean view beyond. The solid opaque tradition of building and the transparent, modern industrial inspired aesthetic are juxtaposed in a pragmatic fashion.

A similar juxtaposition of the solid and transparent building materials is exhibited in the Carousel Motel.\textsuperscript{23} In this case the corners, precisely the areas where traditional construction would dictate the placement of solid walls, are replaced by multi-paned window panels, which give the illusion of a non-structural curtain wall. The adjacent, solid areas of exposed stone masonry suggest chimneys, thereby invoking images of "hearth and home" without resorting to literal, picturesque mimicry.

\textsuperscript{22}"A Multi-Service Motel at Santa Monica," \textit{Architectural Record} 103 (May 1948): 107-109.

\textsuperscript{23}"Motel Designed Not To Look Like Home," \textit{Architectural Record} 103 (May 1948): 114-117.
Carl's Sea Air and the Carousel Motel each created a relaxed composition of units that ambled across its site. While in the tradition of the cabin camp dispersed in the woods, these individually articulated yet contiguous units represent a sophisticated blending of response to site contours, need for privacy, and coherent structured parking of the tourist court.

The combination of contiguous units around a court, albeit sometimes irregularly configured, and a casual "resort" atmosphere is perhaps best demonstrated by the Carmel Valley Inn in Monterey, California.\textsuperscript{24} In plan, a "y-shaped" arm of units traverses the site. The rows of simply constructed solid room units are accessed through a court on one side and by porches that face open undeveloped areas on the other. This exposure is designed to "draw the eye of anybody in the room until the porch area is effectively added to that of the room." In conjunction with scaled down furniture within the room, the floor plan employed the sensibilities of the architect to create a lavish, country club atmosphere on a motel's modest construction budget.

As motel design became a regular part of the practice of architecture, and the design of the building type required that specific design concerns be addressed by architects, a comprehensive overview was featured by some journals. This offered a broader perspective than that garnered by architects from the presentation of single specific motel projects. \textit{Architectural Record}'s "Building Type Study Number 159"\textsuperscript{25} is the first comprehensive piece on motel design as it emerged in the post World War II era. As a new building type, graphic standards, such as room size and

\textsuperscript{24}"Vacation Hotel in the Motel Manner," \textit{Architectural Record} 103 (May 1948): 102-106.

\textsuperscript{25}"Motels: Building Type Study Number 159," Frederic Arden Pawley, \textit{Architectural Record} 107 (March 1950).
necessary room and spatial adjacencies, upon which the architect relies, were not yet formulated. The presentation of this information, in both text and a series of diagrams and photographs, is an indication of the degree to which motel design had become a part of architectural practice. The necessity for this information perhaps explains the journal’s departing from tradition; rather than featuring a portfolio of individual designs, this Architectural Record Building Type Study utilized photographs of a variety of motels to illustrate its design standards. Many of these illustrations appear without attribution to architects; many of the motels appear not to be architect designed. Perhaps the architect, who may have had much to contribute to this "multi-million dollar industry," has something more to learn from "Ma and Pa" who still ran it.

Record’s "Building Type Study Number 159" begins with a discussion of a motel’s location, site, and plot plan, stressing the importance of the relationship of the motel complex to automobile traffic. In terms of general planning information, the article underscores the need to provide for future expansion while stating that the current state of the art motel, consisting of ten to twenty rental units, can still successfully be run by "a husband and wife team." The need for an anchoring "baffle" building that marks the entry is emphasized, as is the desirability of a covered automobile portico at the office/registration desk. The article suggests contiguous cabins, arranged either in rows or in more creative, site dictated, resort-like arrangements. While explaining that in addition to initial construction cost savings, the close proximity of one room to another will result in more efficient housekeeping, it notes the importance of maintaining each room’s individual identity. Concluding with unit construction, materials, finishes, and colors, there are also

\textsuperscript{26}Ibid., 110.
notes on construction.

The visual presentation is dominated by a four-page spread featuring seven photographs of modernist architect John Lautner's Contentment House at Bubbling Well, Desert Hot Springs, California (illustrated, page 140). A rhythm of solid and void is created by the alternating enclosed solid wood sheathed rooms and private patios with recessed carports. Scarcely canted roofs, supported by exposed steel frame structures served to articulate each unit, providing a counterpoint to the solid masses below. *Architectural Record* characterized this powerfully architectonic motel as a "motel-resort-cottage group." 27 Its powerful architecture, dramatic setting, and sensitive siting obscures the fact that this composition has more in common with the tourist courts of the past than it does with the motel of the future. The combination of modernist structural expression, especially at the roofs, with elegant, yet simple solid cabins portends the future of roadside architecture that accommodated the diverse applied decoration and integral building traditions simultaneously. The combination was serving a commercial purpose, providing visibility on the highway. This lyrical use of technology was to fully emerge on the roadside later in the 1950s.

The July 1953 issue of *Architectural Record* featured "a client's eye view of changing conditions encountered in the motel field by owners and operators throughout the country." 28 It presented an overview of the current state of the art of motel design, placing emphasis on "considerations of site planning and selection." 29 Returning to its project oriented format, the Building Type Study,

27Ibid., 120.

28Highway Hotels: Building Type Study Number 200," *Architectural Record* 114 (July 1953): 159.

29Ibid., 160.
following the brief overview, consisted of a folio of fourteen executed projects, twelve motels, and two motel related restaurants, which, Record noted, were "favored by some motel operators to increase revenue, and therefore were part of the motel complex." In each case, some specific aspect of the design was highlighted. In keeping with the overview, however, the common thread in the presentation of these various projects was the inclusion of their site plans and presentation of site plan issues. Other issues ranged from structural innovations to interior detailing and furniture arrangement.

The presentation of the Springer Motel in New Orleans, Louisiana, demonstrates, through its evolution, the end of the cluster approach and the return to rows of units. The design originally consisted of a series of four-unit cottages, which were dominated by canted roofs with large overhangs. At patio areas the roof planes were broken and stripped of their sheathing, revealing a trellis of structural framework that shaded the enclosed gardens. Exposed steel lolly columns that supported the roof articulated each unit’s private carport. Prior to construction, the clusters were merged to form a saw tooth patterned row of rooms covered by a continuous flat roof. Only five of these simplified unit clusters were built at the motel’s entrance. As the article explains, "the need to provide more units eventually forced the adoption of more conventional row-type units, eliminating garages and combining recreation and office areas into one building." As ultimately realized, the scheme had only the vestige of a traditional court at the site’s entry.

A major addition to the previously published Jack Tar tourist court in

30Ibid., 160.

Galveston, Texas, (illustrated, page 143) consisted of clusters of units in a series of staggered rows. While picking up the theme of the previous design and employing the material similar to those found in the original, the new motel addition made use of changes in materials to articulate individual units within the saw toothed unit rows. The new units, rather than appearing to be objects in space, defined two sides of a new triangular court. The new resort-like court, which featured a kidney shaped swimming pool, was enclosed on its third side by a structure housing facilities designed to "attract small conventions, sales meetings and club activities." This addition to an already substantial tourist court facility demonstrated how a tourist court could subtly be transformed into a state of the art resort motel.

A Richmond, Virginia, motel featured two arms of staggered, yet contiguous units defining the edges of an open court facing the route between Richmond and Washington, D.C. The focus of this project was the site and architectural response to acoustical and visual disturbances from the road. The staggering of the units within the rows, as well as the placement within the room of the bath and closet to either side of the entry vestibule creates a baffle that, with the support of "insulation blocks," appears to address these concerns.

Casa Mana, San Antonio, Texas, (illustrated, page 144) represents a cross between the clusters of units of the resort-type roadside lodgings, and contiguous rows defining a court. Consisting of five eight-unit rows dispersed along a winding

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32 "Expansion to Boost Year-Round Occupancy," *Architectural Record* 114 (July 1953): 175.

33 Ibid., 175.

34 "Motel for Max Alpert," *Architectural Record* 114 (July 1953): 163.

35 "Expanding Motel: Stage One," *Architectural Record* 114 (July 1953): 164-166.
cul-de-sac road system, the composition creates an enclave with a resort-like atmosphere while benefiting from the construction economies and conveniences of rows of units. Within the rows, each unit is "angled for privacy" and is articulated by a staggered entry wall with recessed porch. These "crisp buildings," with their solid concrete and plywood side walls and fully fenestrated angled walls, create units, which, while open to the outside, are actually within the realm of solid traditional construction.

The Terrace Motor Hotel in Austin, Texas, consisted of groups of units dispersed across the site. The unit clusters, "no two of which are alike" were repeated in combinations, which responded to the site. Stone, red brick, vertical board and batten siding, and wood shakes were all combined to create a composition that was dictated by the contours of the site. The effect created was of a series of cottages that were dispersed across the site. The 102-unit motel consisted of super clusters that were linked by trellis-like structures that echoed the cottages' roof line. The solid, decorated cottages were linked by an open, clearly expressed skeletal roof structure. The opposing traditions of solid, vernacular building and clearly articulated structure were simultaneously employed; each was altered in the creation of a complex that was at once "applied" and integral in its architecture.

The presence of a second floor in the El Patio Motel was the focus of the *Record*’s coverage of this Denver, Colorado motel.

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37 Ibid., 172.

38 "Second Story Enlarges Compact Motel Scheme," *Architectural Record* 114 (July 1953): 168.
Defining an open court, two rows of units featured domestic, gently pitched gable roofs that were supported at the entry/office by a series of clearly expressed posts and beams. This clearly expressed structural framework provided a counterpoint to the structures’ otherwise completely glass walls.

The Shalimar Motel in Miami, Florida, demonstrates the least connection to its site, and tells us perhaps the most about the future direction of increasingly highway oriented motel design. The imposing mass of this two-story motel maintains its presence without depending on its site to convey its image. The structure’s architecture and the restatement of the architectural theme in the motel’s signage conveys the resort atmosphere without any meaningful site development. Contiguous double rows of rooms, with both side to side and back to back adjacencies present a series of economies of construction. A continuous bathroom core at the rooms’ rear provided economy of plumbing. Room adjacencies minimized expensive exterior surfaces while making it possible for rooms to be "combined into apartments of one, two, or three rooms to accommodate overnight guests, commercial travellers, or families on holiday." The minimal site development was offset by a large angular fieldstone pier that incorporated a flamboyant sign. The signage, along with the glass enclosed triangular office, visually marked the entrance, and contributed a resort quality to the entire structure.

The Red Horse Motor Inn, in Dayton, Ohio, was a similarly straightforward

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40Ibid., 169.
block of rooms that was featured for its "carefully studied . . . interior layouts." Rooms featured an entry alcove, conversation area, and a continuous wall of built-in furniture. This single wall unit efficiently integrated areas for garment and luggage storage, writing area, and a T.V. without utilizing a single piece of traditional furniture.

*Architectural Forum* for February 1954 featured a comprehensive examination of the state-of-the-art of motel design. This coverage, consisting of a series of articles, accompanied by a folio of six designs, broke *Forum*'s eleven-year silence on the building type. The issue offered a brief look back and a prescient look forward in the form of a detailed answer to the question of, "What an architect (and his client) should know about motels."  

Noting the continued accelerated growth of a business that tripled since World War II, the 1954 issue of *Forum* commented that the motel industry was clearly of major importance to any building professional. Published the same year as revisions to the federal tax code made substantial investment in new construction attractive, the feature article addressed a series of economic issues, focusing on their design implications. An accompanying article by hotel accountant, C. Vernon Cane, underscored the economic underpinnings of this relatively new-found area of architectural practice. The importance of quality design and construction was demonstrated by a break-down of the overall motel capital investment that allocated 70% of the budget to building, 10% to land, and 20% to furnishings.

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41 "Red Horse Motor Inn, Dayton, Ohio," *Architectural Record* 114 (July 1953): 162.


The physical growth of the typical motel, was powerfully demonstrated by Forum's comparison of the early post-War 20 to 35 unit motel with the recent trend toward 75 to 150 unit motels complete with hotel facilities, which, it reported, was gaining momentum. This growth prompted Forum a look toward a future in which the realization of the "highway hotel" was accompanied by what it termed the "rattle of the oncoming chain operations." The construction, maintenance, and management of the large scale motels that Forum envisioned would necessitate significant input of capital; money available to corporations. These serious investment requirements reinforced the articles' general theme that economic concerns would have a large, and ultimately controlling, influence over future motel design.

Commenting on the building type's "particularly long architectural adolescence," Forum's historical overview of roadside lodging was illustrated by vignettes of flamboyant, highly decorated solid vernacular structures, seldom, if ever before published in architectural journals. Noting "architectural allure has always been of essential importance to the successful motel," the overview cites a range of motifs that "compete for the eye of the motorist by building highly emotional architecture." The wide range of themes bestowed upon simple structures by the application of ornament, according to Forum, included "western, colonial, barn, and southern mansion." While not directly acknowledging the relationship of this crude sort of architectural allure to the contemporary motels featured in the accompanying case study, the magazine found, "emerging signs of maturity." The mere appearance of such crude facilities in an architectural periodical demonstrated their influence on the "more mature" architect designed products. When confronted with the problem of designing a motel, it appears that architects indeed studied the current building types' progenitor.

The same issue's case study of motels demonstrated that in penetrating the
field, architects indeed learned from the building types' adolescent antecedents. They borrowed from the solid, often crude, but evocatively ornamented tourist court and cabin camp structures, long featured in building and lodging trade journals and now an integral part of the everyday built environment. The architect's results were crosses between the rationally modern structures that made use of "high-tech" materials and fully expressed and often celebrated their structural systems and the more traditionally constructed, evocative, ornamented structures. This mixture usually occurred by expressing, to a limited degree, the structure, while maintaining traditional materials, such as wood, which were often evocative in their own right.

The Milroy Motel in Catskill, New York, 44 (illustrated, page 150) is notable for its site, building, and sign design. The Milroy's designers simultaneously drew on the tourist court tradition while experimenting with certain informal design elements that anticipated future motel design. Although a rigid, traditional tourist court in site plan, the site's natural features were exploited to create a resort atmosphere. The unit's placement directly on the hilly terrain created facade groupings of various heights that reflected the site's contours. Respecting the site's topography contributed to the complex's natural, yet controlled, country club atmosphere. This duality was further emphasized by the contrast between the court, a self contained communal space from which the rooms were entered, and the views of natural unspoiled wooded areas that the rooms overlook.

The rationally expressed modernism of the buildings, while powerful, also yielded to the site. The rooms' view of the surrounding woods was maximized by large expanses of glass. These window walls were punctuated by clearly articulated

wooden posts that supported exposed beams, which were spanned by a flat, wood plank roof deck. The extensive use of wooden structural members reinforced the composition’s natural, rustic qualities without compromising the building’s clearly articulated modern character.

The motel sign contained the same repertoire of structural elements employed in the rationally composed motel rooms. At the roadside sign, however, these elements were manipulated to create a visually explosive extravaganza, which, according to Architectural Forum, was designed to "accost motorists." Four splayed columns created an open and dynamic square tower from which a dramatically cantilevered wood plank projection bore the "Milroy" name in raised white letters. The sign is as ambiguous and dramatic as the buildings are clear and rational. This modern yet dramatic composition is an architecturally expressive adaptation of the commercial roadside building tradition. It foretells the flamboyant modern architectural tour-de-force to come not only within the decade, as technological and modern imagery became increasingly important, but also forty years later, as modernism was given a dramatically expressive revival as deconstructivist architecture.

The Bon-Air Motel in Gatlinburg, Tennessee 45 is similar to the Milroy in its basic site plan. But the Bon-Air buildings, while modern, tend to be more conservative and traditionally constructed and are therefore less expressive of their structures. A series of flat roofed structures define a court while offering views of the unspoiled countryside at the motel’s perimeter. The solidly constructed structures make evocative use of stone and wood in a modern, abstract fashion. By

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incorporating these warm natural materials into the composition, rather than using them as applied ornament, the solid buildings are simultaneously modern and "reassuringly pleasant." Solid areas of grey mountainstone veneer are relieved by panels of naturally finished horizontal flush board siding. The wood motif is repeated in balcony parapet walls, which open the rooms to the woods beyond without resorting to structurally articulated curtain walls.

Motel Winnemucca,\textsuperscript{46} located in Winnemucca, Nevada, midway between Salt Lake City and San Francisco, combines the structural articulation and solid cladding of the two previous case study motels. Perhaps more efficiently laid, it features groupings of four motel units placed about a central utility core; ten such clusters, in turn, define a court. While half the rooms face this central space, the other half offer an exposure to the surrounding area. A gently pitched, broadly overhanging roof creates an outdoor space associated with each room. Expansive glass curtain walls, alternating with smaller solid concrete block panels, make a largely transparent edge between the rooms and their adjacent outdoor space.

While generally of the same genre, the motels published in the September 1954 issue of \textit{Progressive Architecture} exhibited two differences from their counterparts presented by \textit{Architectural Forum}. \textit{Progressive Architecture}'s motels exhibited less clearly articulated structures. While in certain ways less advanced, illustrating an association back to the more solid vernacular tradition, these structures were profoundly influenced by modernism. In this way they represented a continued reconciliation of the applied and the integral, resulting in buildings that were neither expressively modern nor solidly vernacular. In addition, these motel complexes

\textsuperscript{46}Quartets of Motel Units Around Service Cores," \textit{Architectural Forum} 100 (February 1954): 122.
displayed an increasing attention to site amenities, both in terms of responding to a site's natural qualities and creating "natural" looking amenities on often barren land.

Rickey's Studio Inn in Palo Alto, California, (illustrated, page 154) was labelled "a garden hotel."47 This was the first of a series of casual resort motels, which, building on the western and southwestern tradition of outdoor hotels, emerged as a full fledged luxury motor lodge. The relaxed wooden buildings of this complex, which appear to be a continuation of the solid, vernacular building tradition, in fact, also evidence the influence of modern architecture.

The eighty-two room motel, which was planned for expansion to 200 units, is the first super motel—resort motor lodge to be published. Its rows of units are arranged in site plan to form an ordered, yet natural looking series of exterior spaces. The resulting irregularly shaped courts, harkening at once to the cottage clusters of earlier motels as well as to the tourist courts, were defined by a series of simple wood structures containing private rooms, meeting facilities, and commercial spaces. The motel grounds, with their striking landscape attributes, contributed to the complex's lavish resort quality.

Built among the trees of a former apricot orchard, the motel's buildings and landscaped terraces created four pedestrian courts. Each court or enclave housed its own focal features, ranging from trellis covered sun decks, a dramatic oval swimming pool, to a swan pond, complete with picturesque bridge and pond side benches from which to feed the ducks. Roofed walks afforded protective passage to all parts of the complex, while their cedar shake gabled roofs added a powerfully unifying architectonic element.

The motel's buildings responded to their site, reinforcing the image of a

relaxed resort and achieving the architects' goal "to be neither too dramatic nor too intellectual."\textsuperscript{48} Constructed of redwood board and batten siding, the linear clusters that defined the courts were topped by hand split cedar shake roofs. These roofs featured broad overhangs that created semi-private outdoor spaces for each room. Extending from the rooms’ roof structures, each veranda’s timber framing was clearly expressed. While visually and practically extending the rooms’ space to exterior courtyards, these patios reinforced the complex’s resort atmosphere. The room’s connection to the exterior was reinforced, both at the front and rear, by multi-paned floor to ceiling rectangular bay windows. The multiple panes masked the shop fabricated window panels’ scale while reinforcing the structure’s casual qualities. Flanking the windows, shuttered panels served to further recall domestic imagery in a more applied fashion. The motel’s public areas sported modern double volume glass enclosed spaces that were given a rustic quality by the use of exposed heavy timber framing, which had been recycled from a historic structure.

*Architectural Forum*, for August 1956, offered a comparison of two motels on the east and west coasts.\textsuperscript{49} The pair, which bore similarities to the Palo Alto, California, complex published two years earlier in *Progressive Architecture*, implied that the relaxed, natural "woody" modern influenced architecture was not only thriving in California, but was also migrating eastward.

The east coast example\textsuperscript{50}, the Motel on the Mountain designed by Harwell Hamilton Smith (illustrated, pages 157-158) bears comparison to his tourist court

\textsuperscript{48}Ibid., 108.

\textsuperscript{49}"Two Motels: Atlantic Coast Motel has Pacific Design - West Coast Motel is a Countryside Retreat," *Architectural Forum* 105 (August 1956): 123-130.

\textsuperscript{50}Ibid., 124-127.
project of sixteen years earlier. The primary issue addressed in both designs appears to be the relationship of the lodgings to the car and road. While both complexes accommodate the automobile, the later one reflects a more relaxed integration of the car into daily life; both complexes, however, set the lodgings apart from the road. The change in the nature of this separation was probably due to particular site conditions. Instead of a flat hypothetical site that depended on a baffle building to create a separation from the road, this motel, sited on a steeply inclined site, was naturally elevated from the road. Smith’s later design sought to draw motorists up a private road ascending the hilly site. The curvilinear road was lined with four- and eight-unit cottage clusters. In contrast to his earlier units that were visually screened from the road, these motel rooms were perched on stilts that raised them above rugged rock outcroppings while creating "intriguing silhouettes" that drew visual interest from the road. In contrast to their dramatic surroundings, the buildings themselves were low key, relaxed, wood compositions. The placement of these casual structures on exposed steel beams and columns made the woodsy resort appear to be suspended in air, creating a dramatic view to and from the road below. The resort quality of the complex is reinforced by the parking, which accommodated cars casually along the private roadside. This informal treatment of the car stands in contrast to Smith’s earlier design, which, in order to accommodate the car, was dominated by driveways and car shelters. This change serves as an indication of the degree to which the automobile had been integrated into life and lodgings since his previous design. While resort-like in its atmosphere, this motel, adjacent to the New York State Thruway, also served new corporate plants that, in an auto driven move

toward decentralization, were located along this thoroughfare.

*Forum*’s west coast example, the Mark Thomas Inn, near Monterey, California\(^{52}\), (illustrated, page 160) was designed by architect John Carl Warnecke and landscape architect Lawrence Halprin. A year later, after winning a national American Institute of Architects award of merit, the motel complex was also published in *Architectural Record*.\(^{53}\) The design consisted of short rows of back-to-back rooms creating cottage clusters that formed small courts on the site. Although these courts rendered the complex’s plan a bit more formal than its east coast counterpart, *Architectural Record* characterized the design as "deliberately casual and subdued to harmonize with the character of the wooded site."\(^{54}\) With cars kept to the site’s perimeter, the courts, which included a swimming pool and other recreational facilities, were dominated by "the beauty and sculpture" of the site’s trees. The "simple wood structures," were, according to Warneke, designed to "fit quietly" onto the site, achieving the overall intent to "subordinate the structures to the great beauty of the land forms and the trees." The naturally finished board and batten sided cottages featured gently sloping pitched roofs, which, with their structurally exposed broad overhangs, created outdoor hallways, providing sheltered access throughout the site while reinforcing the buildings’ relationship to nature.

Dinah’s Motel, near Palo Alto, California, (illustrated, pages 161-162) while still of the "woodsly" relaxed resort genre, featured an element of excitement somewhat unusual for the country club motel of its time. This sense of drama came

\(^{52}\)"Two Motels: Atlantic Coast Motel has Pacific Design - West Coast Motel is a Countryside Retreat," *Architectural Forum* 105 (August 1956): 128-130.

\(^{53}\)Mark Thomas Inn, Monterey, California," *Architectural Record* 122 (September 1957): 178-182.

\(^{54}\)Ibid., 180.
primarily from the ambitious site development, and secondarily from its architectural
treatment. Attracting more attention from the architectural media than any previously
constructed motel, Dinah's received international recognition. This most vivacious
of the woodsy motels indicated the trend to follow as resort motels were increasingly
developed in non-resort environments along the roadside.

In contrast to motels that adapted or exploited their site's dramatic character,
Dinah's Motel was designed to counteract its dull, flat site. The complex's
seemingly casual and natural layout, was actually purposely planned to create vistas,
"avoiding the usual regimented motel look." A series of short rows of rooms,
containing from four to eight units, laid out in splayed and angled configuration,
declared several irregularly shaped pedestrian courts. The largest court featured a free
form swimming pool complete with poolside restaurant pavilion. The illusion of a
natural environment was most powerfully conveyed by a man-made lagoon that
meandered through and unified a series of intimately scaled, interconnected courts.
The sense of nature was augmented by strategically placed areas of lush plantings.
The "natural" courts were lined with a series of private outdoor spaces, such as
walled gardens and decks, that while actually extending each room's space to the
outdoors with their trellises and louvers, contributed to the composition's
architectural complexity.

Perimeter parking provided direct auto access to each room from the non-
court side, enhancing the "natural" aspects of the court without compromising
convenience. The result of this site manipulation is the creation of a seemingly

Architectural Design (July 1961): A7; also in "The Odds on Motels," Richard A.
natural environment, which although largely designed in response to the automobile, excludes it. A more graphic example of designing for the motorists' convenience while minimizing the car's impact is evidenced by the inclusion of the first drive-up guest registration window. One of the first published, this window draws the car to a remote side of the motel office, leaving the office entry unencumbered by automobiles. Such accommodations to the motorist, without celebrating the automobile, was the result of a design method that considered, "analytically the procedure the motorist follows as he arrives, lives in, and departs from the motel." 56 Similarly, the motels' buildings were systematically designed, drawing simultaneously on the solid, ornamented applied building tradition and the open, structurally expressive integral modern mode, creating "an air of gaiety that is not too blatant or insistent." 57 In the poolside restaurant pavilion, for instance, rough sawn hewn beams and posts supported a domestically pitched roof while frankly expressing the structural framing for an otherwise completely modern glass box. Solid California redwood and dashed stucco walls, each conveying their own sense of texture were highlighted with accent areas painted in bright, festive, yet natural looking yellows and golds. The courtside trellises and screens added an element of architectural complexity both in their own right and as a result of their shadows. The architectural treatment, in which texture, color, and shadow functioned much as the applied ornament of the previous era related this design to the American vernacular tradition of solid building. The ornament was, however, applied in an integral fashion, expressing or highlighting the buildings' forms. In a sense, this represents


57 Ibid., 216.
the next step in the resolution of the integral and the applied traditions in architecture.

By the late 1950s, a building’s technology came into its own as a visual aesthetic. The exaggeration of a structure’s technological aspects provided the drama or animation usually conveyed by applied ornament, while enabling these roadside buildings to flaunt an up-to-date, modern aesthetic. The most expressive elements of modern architecture were combined with those of ornamented vernacular building.

Scaled to the fast moving automobile, this technological image could be achieved in a number of ways. State-of-the-art structural systems could capture visual excitement through the direct "expression" of technology. Indirectly, technology could be employed to create a visual tour de force in a structure, without being overtly expressed or revealed. Pragmatically, construction techniques, such as pre-fabrication, could be developed to efficiently manufacture structures. Finally, as technologically advanced structural members like steel "I" beams and columns became an accepted part of architectural vocabulary, the use of these materials in a decorative and yet practical manner led to the creation of stylized compositions that were technologically advanced, yet calm, classical architectural statements. These were, in a sense, the "high-tech" versions of the "woodsy" resort motels of the early 1950s.

Building designs conveying the visual expression of technology directly did so by utilizing and often exaggerating what appeared to be integral structural members, making them become ornamental. With this phenomenon, a rapprochement between the applied and the integral is achieved; the structural element, itself an eye catching ornament, is at once both ornamental and an integral part of the building.

The most direct visual expression of technology was exhibited at the Nautilus
Motor Inn, at Woods Hole, Massachusetts.\textsuperscript{58} Designed by architect, Gunnar Peterson, the motel featured a geodesic dome engineered by Buckminster Fuller. The dome housed the motel’s restaurant, dining room, and bar while setting a "high-tech" theme for the entire motel complex. The fifty four foot diameter plastic surfaced dome contained individual diamond shaped hyperbolic wood frames that clearly articulated the dome’s structure both inside and out. This honesty and clarity of expression of structure, employed for dramatic effect in the dome, was echoed in the "simple unadorned expression" of structure in the motel’s guest units. In the lobby the sense of drama returns as a mezzanine intersects the double volume space; all wooden structural members are exposed, including a railing that is a metaphorical steel truss with nautical overtones. The guest units are unified by trellises that repeat the motif of the dome’s hyperbolic wood frames, forming a broad open court.

Indirectly, technology could be used to create a visual \textit{tour-de-force} in which the building, or its major components, appeared as an ornamental sculptural element. This method exploited technology, not in its clarity of structural expression, but in the bold, surprising forms that it could create. The result was also a \textit{rapprochement} with the concept of applied decoration; the new bold dynamic forms, at once decorative and integral, were also easily scaled to the fast moving automobile.

Utilizing technology, not as a visual end, but as a means of achieving dramatic sweeping forms was a hallmark of architect Victor Lundy. As \textit{Architectural Forum} explained, "the sweeping curves of this young architect do not fight straight-line functionalism but peacefully leave it behind."\textsuperscript{59} Lundy’s Warm Mineral Springs


\textsuperscript{59}“Lundy’s Personal Architecture,” \textit{Architectural Forum} 111 (December 1959): 105.
Inn in Venice, Florida, (illustrated, page 168) made use of bold parasol shaped roof forms "to lure traffic speeding down to Tamiami Trail from Sarasota to Miami." In addition to its publication by Architectural Forum in 1958, it also drew the attention of Interiors, reflecting a newly emerging focus on interior motel appointments. While Architectural Forum interpreted the soaring concrete roof forms as "parasols," Interiors provided a more organic analogy, suggesting that each structural unit, supported by a single central concrete column, "suggests the flowing upward movement of a tree; clustered, several suggest a grove."

The repeating checkerboard pattern of "parasols" or "trees" defined an L-shaped court open to the adjacent road intersection. An over-scaled parasol placed at the corner boldly extended the motel's architectural motif to the street intersection. At night, the illuminated grouping of white canopies acted as a beacon, drawing travellers. The concrete roofs were cast on-site in plywood formwork and set on pre-cast concrete stems of alternating heights. The roof structure consisted of a "small concrete shell in the shape of a hyperbolic paraboloid 14 feet 5 inches square."

The central stem, which was also said to recall either a mushroom or martini glass, allowed the roof structure to remain independent of the rooms' side walls. With no need for bearing walls, the roof could be consistently employed whether it sheltered side walls with dramatic clerestory lighting for individual rooms, or floor to ceiling glass panels for public areas. When not walled, these hovering roofs provided

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62 Ibid., 120.

shelter for the motels’ walkways or created dramatic outdoor areas such as the motels’ spectacular porte cochere.

Published the following year, Victor Lundy’s Frontenac Motel in Sarasota, Florida, (illustrated, page 170) evidenced what *Forum* termed the architect’s "personal style in modern architecture."64 In this project, his lyrical, technological elements were juxtaposed with simple, straightforward structural expression. The two-story, single-block thirty-unit motel consisted of a clearly articulated concrete frame of columns and beams that stood in contrast to the "wave shaped" scalloped edges of projecting balcony and roof that spanned the building’s length. This treatment, according to Lundy, was suggested "by the lapping of waves in the Gulf of Mexico, beside the site." The concrete waves, which corresponded to the width of the motel unit, also served to articulate the individual rooms, while providing each with its own balcony. The structure’s simultaneous lyrical and practical qualities were repeated in a series of smaller, more detail-oriented gestures such as ornamental stone inset within concrete block walls.

As the expression of structure and the drama enabled by technology gained acceptance as modes of design, other architects advocated the application of state of the art technology. This employment of technology differed from that espoused by architects toward the close of the tourist court era in several ways. In contrast to the broad polemic, celebrating the conceptual aspects of new materials and technology, this approach used primarily traditional materials, and focused on adapting assembly line techniques to building construction. The application of new techniques was intensely pragmatic, bringing technological and economic efficiencies to the motel.

Ironically, while achieving technical success, the projects resulting from these experiments visually belied their advanced assembly techniques. As a result of suppressing the reality of their technology, the manufactured prototypes looked more like the solid boxes of the tourist court era than technologically advanced motels.

The interior room layout of these efficiently factory produced motel units resulted from scientifically based spatial analysis. Applying the scientific methodology to interior planning as well as to the motel’s assembly techniques produced highly efficient and attractive room layouts. Over time, this aspect of architects’ involvement in motel design became increasingly important. This was especially so as chains, with their need for a given exterior appearance and desire for maximum efficiency, emerged.

Rufus Nims, the architect of several Howard Johnson Motor Lodges, pioneered in exploring pragmatic applications of technology to motel construction. In *Architectural Record*, Nims unveiled a motel that was to be “wholly manufactured in the plant, with all finishes, fittings, fixtures, and furnishings in place.” 65 Such a motel, the units of which could be arranged in any configuration, offered two significant economic advantages. Prefabrication, Nims argued, ensured predictability of construction or building costs. In addition, it offered a rapid and reliable construction schedule. Adopting prefabrication in place of traditional construction eliminated the need for construction financing, while allowing a motel to be in operation within one month of placing the building order. In contrast to a six month construction project for the traditional motel, this alternative afforded a savings of 5 months of construction time; a period during which the motel could be generating

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65 "Beyond Pre-Fabrication - The Manufactured Sleeping Unit Offers Startling Implications," *Architectural Record* 123 (April 1958): 221.
revenue.

Nims' proposal, while clearly embodying a variety of technological advances, focused on building pre-fabrication's economic advantages. Conspicuously absent was the rhetoric of the immediate Post World War II era, espousing the inherent virtues of high technology. Instead of celebrating technology, the finished motel camouflaged the reality of its assembly. As Nims stated, "each room is still only a nice box. We are obligated to conceal this fact from the public and probably from ourselves as well."66 Despite the 2,000 units ordered at the time of the article's publication, Nims' proposal for the motel prefabrication had only a minimal impact on the industry.

The space allocation of Nims' prefabricated rooms had a more far reaching effect, especially as his scientific and analytical method was encouraged by chains. Technologically based, the layout gained increased efficiency by focusing on a room's most standardized, fabricated elements--its plumbing fixtures. The redesign of the bathroom, in conjunction with a variation of the well established design technique of "borrowing" space from adjoining areas resulted in an extremely efficient room layout. Nims proposed a prefabricated bathroom core that resulted in a more compact bath area. The adjoining mirrored areas featured lavish sinks in space borrowed from both the bathroom and the sleeping area. This created a spacious, luxurious appearance well within the traditional room's square footage. This aspect of Nims' investigation was to have far reaching impact on the design of

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66Ibid., 222.
chain motels.\textsuperscript{67}

One of the results of the exploration of new construction possibilities afforded by current technology was the development of a calm, rational technological aesthetic. The visual influence of technology on motel design was in fact undoubtedly greater than its impact on actual construction. Featuring exposed materials, which often rationally expressed their structural functions, a modern yet stylized architecture evolved. The resulting structures were calm and rational, yet appeared to be technologically advanced. Combined with the large scale and repetitive nature of their structural elements, these buildings took on a classical aura. In a sense, these motels were "high-tech" versions of the "woodsy" resort facilities of an earlier era. They maintained their predecessor's country club resort image while sporting state of the art materials.

The Desert Motel, in Tucson, Arizona,\textsuperscript{68} made extensive use of exposed steel structural members clearly articulated throughout the complex to achieve a "clear, architectural appearance."\textsuperscript{69} The lobby and restaurant structures featured a series of steel columns and beams that were used in a fashion that extended their respective spaces to the exterior. In the office, this treatment provided an elegant car canopy or exterior lobby in which guests could register without leaving their cars. In the restaurant it created a dining terrace that appeared to hover above a reflecting pool. Banks of guest rooms defined a central garden court containing a reflecting pool.

\textsuperscript{67}As the overall building design became less customized in chain motels, the importance of the individual rooms, and the design attention they received, increased significantly. Nims was commissioned to design a series of room layouts for the Howard Johnson motel chain.

\textsuperscript{68}"Desert Motel," \textit{Progressive Architecture} 38 (September 1957) 114-122.

\textsuperscript{69}I ibid., 114.
pool and palm garden. These structures were also articulated by extending steel beams and columns that served to delineate each room's individual loggia or porch, which faced the court.

The Uplander Motor Hotel, on Route 66 in Upland, California,\(^7\) was cited as a strong counterpoint to "most facilities which cater to the hopped-up instincts of American motorists." Three flat-roofed two-story buildings defined the motel's generous court. The guest units, with their regular rhythms of verandas expressed by continuous columns with solid horizontal panels articulating the second floor balcony, provided a chaste, almost mechanically repetitive backdrop to the lavishly landscaped court. The court was given an intimate scale by a series of terraces, which, punctuating the lawns with flower beds, cascaded down toward the swimming pool at the court's center.

The "familiar, strong, elegant rectilinear planes" of Richard Neutra's work characterized his design for the Holiday House Motel at Malibu, California\(^7\) (illustrated, page 175). Two motel wings presented variations on a calm, classical structural theme. Perched on a hillside, an imposing row of units was defined by dramatic two story free standing columns, connected above by beams that delineated a partially roofed exterior space for each room. A more delicate row of units below achieved a similar articulation of exterior space with a cantilevered roof structure, which, extending beyond the building line, became a sun screen for each room terrace.

Neutra's elegant simplification of modernism was evidenced in his subsequent


\(^{71}\) "For Every Room, A Terrace: For Every Terrace, A Sea View," *Architectural Forum* 100 (February 1954): 123-125.
San Pedro Hacienda in San Pedro, California. The complex's seven linear guest room buildings consisted of simple, chaste glass boxes topped by flat roofed decks. The glass walls were continuous, uninterrupted by structural supports, and punctuated only by strategically placed window mullions. The now subdued articulation of structure and integration of mechanically produced materials in these straightforward buildings represented a simple modernism. At the same time, these minimalist buildings, laid out in rows, represented a level of sophistication that simultaneously looked back to the "woodsy" resort motels of several years earlier and forward to the modernism of the roadside chains of the future.

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CONCLUSION

The architectural evolution of roadside lodgings on the American landscape had been established by the time the Interstate Highway system was realized. From the beginning, the architecture of roadside facilities was the result of both their placement in space and their detailed physical character. Understanding the evolution of roadside lodgings in the pre-Interstate era helps us gain an understanding of the architecture of the contemporary American landscape. Given the auto driven decentralization on the landscape, most new construction today is along the roadside. An aesthetic examination of everyday roadside lodgings from the beginning of automobile travel to the Interstate era demonstrates that contemporary American architecture is a continuation of the tradition started by the early roadside entrepreneur. The conflicting forces of the applied ornament and the integral structural expression that characterized the coverage of these structures in builder's magazines and architectural journals respectively have, largely been resolved in current American buildings.

Adoption of the automobile has transformed American space. It has changed the landscape, its buildings, and ultimately it has recreated urban space. In the 1920s, as Americans began to use their auto-mobility to explore the landscape, entrepreneurs followed the path of the auto, erecting buildings to serve the motorist. The continuous horizontally radiating sprawl which characterized the nation's growth of the 1950s has given way, in the 1990s, to multiple urban cores which have followed the residential and commercial areas along the new infrastructure of the nation's Interstate Highway system. This infrastructure resulted in the roadside becoming a very different place. Rather than a place, the space along the highway is indeed the road to somewhere else.

From the earliest roadside travel accommodations to the present, the issues
of the applied versus integral architecture were evident. Roadside cabins for tourists presented in the earliest architectural periodicals revealed their structural framing, projecting a straightforward, yet modern image. The cottages of the same era which appeared in builder's journals bore applied ornament which, with their pitched roofs, shutters and window and entry trim, usually conveyed images of a traditional home. The tourist court era was characterized by a proliferation of "courter" constructed facilities which were typically dependent upon applied ornament to convey their messages. Although interested in designing courts, architects, as evidenced by their journals, were only given the opportunity to develop integral designs on a very limited basis, usually in the office/lobby area, where the court itself projected its most up to date image. In the motel era, architect-designed facilities became the norm. The combination of the applied and integral building traditions occurred as architects, while striving to maintain a clean integral aesthetic, also adapted the tradition of the applied ornament, drawing on its commercial values. While the early motel era is characterized by a reconciliation of these two modes, the era of the Interstate Highway chain motel, which is beyond the scope of this study, witnessed their actual combination.

By the late 1950s, the emergence of roadside lodging chains began to radically alter the nature of the motel. Chains were largely stimulated by the passage of the Federal-Aid Highway Act of 1958 which established a national system of roadways. The spatial character of the American roadside was significantly altered by these Interstate Highways. The new system of roads fixed routes of vehicular transportation much as the laying of rail had established routes of travel in the previous century. These limited access highways resulted in motorist's travelling faster, and covering greater distances in a more controlled, uniform landscape. In this new environment, the decision to pull off the road had to be made from a
distance, judging the accommodations by a building which loomed on the horizon, rather than as a complex that could be closely examined from the curbside. At the same time, the Interstate roads instantly established primary routes of travel. With the financial risk of a poor location significantly reduced, and demand for roadside lodging increased as a result of continued decentralization, large capitol investments in motels became increasingly attractive and necessary; the result was the formation of large motel chain operations.

Lodging chains had been proposed as early as the cabin camp era and the realization of the concept was rooted in the loose and often informal affiliations among cooperating cabin camp and tourist court entrepreneurs. The motel era saw the chain emerge as a corporate enterprise which set standards of operation and often design for its affiliates. As a result, individuality on the roadside was overshadowed by standardization. Chain affiliation provided a motel with instant name recognition. The chain name eclipsed that of the individual motel. To maintain the value of the chain’s prime commodity, its good name, it dispatched inspectors to insure that individual motels were maintaining the chain’s standards. As a result, a guest came to expect a uniform level of services and amenities from a given chain. Room appointments and layouts were standardized; ultimately, the building design was standardized as well.

The chain and Interstate phenomena both influenced the motel’s appearance, affecting both site and building design. The new Interstate roadscape resulted in bigger buildings, much more akin to those we associated with urban environments.

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While the structure became more imposing and more important, the level of its architectural detail was less important. In many ways, these conditions generated the architectural corollary to Holiday Inn’s "the best surprise is no surprise at all." The site plan of the chain motels sought to combine elements of the country club, resort style elegance of the super motel with the efficient site plan of the traditional court. Often a series of small courts, usually featuring suggestive landscaping and amenities, resulted. The visual excitement created by palm trees gracing tennis and shuffle board courts, boomerang shaped swimming pools or sun bathing decks, each as a focus of a given court, made a uniform and modern style of motel building design viable.

Initially the building’s design employed the tradition of the applied ornament. An architecturally ornamental element, enlarged in scale and abstracted in form, linked the building with a corporate chain and dominated the structure’s appearance. The orange roofs which hovered above simple glass boxes of Howard Johnson’s motor lodges of the late 1950s and early 1960s are a good example. If such an architecturally fashionable, yet simple style of design was repeated across the landscape, the motel guest could be at home in a building which he or she had never entered before.

Over time, as more of the Interstate system was constructed on the landscape, the architectural ornament chosen to adorn the structure conveyed a clean, modern appearance associated with integral architecture. This design approach, perhaps best demonstrated by the Holiday Inns of the 1960s, pushed motel building design to a
minimalist, modern architectural vocabulary. These clean facades which appeared to be integral were in fact often applied, and did not express the building's structure. Ultimately no more than a simple glass, steel and concrete building was needed on the roadside. The more direct and rationally modern the motel structure could be made to appear, the more suitable it became for the ornament that mattered most - the motel chain's corporate logo. The applied and the integral merged to create a new corporate architecture along the new American space - the Interstate highway.

The applied tradition has existed in America since Colonial days. Applied ornament initially provided a symbol which communicated civic authority. The integral approach, appeared in America more sporadically. Along the roadside, early entrepreneurs chose between the applied and the integral techniques. Some cabin camps and tourist courts sported added-on trim; others appeared as buildings whose exposed structural systems provided the only decoration.

Architects' designs for roadside lodging structures, which became prolific during the early motel era, evidenced both the integral and applied tradition in the same building. For example, clearly expressed columns and large expanses of glass would be visible under a steeply pitched domestic roof. Appointments would include a series of applied ornaments such as shutters and window boxes. The co-existence of these two traditions occurred before Interstate highways ushered in a new phase of auto driven change to buildings on the American landscape.

\(^2\)Roadside lodging facilities were no longer designed by their roadside entrepreneur owners, nor by architects, but by computers. One of the earliest applications of "computer drafting," as it was then called, was for the Holiday Inn chain. The firm of William W. Bond & Associates of Memphis, Tennessee used "the only machine application of its type in the U.S." to create drawings for Holiday Inn. "Computer Drafting Speeds Motel Design," *Progressive Architecture* 49 (September 1968): 150-153.
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CHAPTER I - THE AUTOMOBILE AND AMERICAN SPACE (Continued)


CHAPTER I - THE AUTOMOBILE AND AMERICAN SPACE (Continued)


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CHAPTER V - CONCLUSION
