

MID-CENTURY MODERN ARCHITECTURAL TOUR OF SCOTTSDALE 60TH ANNIVERSARY EVENT

Script by Don Meserve, Scottsdale's Historic Preservation Officer, 4/11

This architectural tour provides an introductory tour to mid-century modern architecture in Scottsdale on a driving route approximately 15 miles long with twelve destinations. A variety of uses are represented by the architecture including; civic buildings, townhouses, churches, industrial, commercial, and hotel uses. The architects or builders are well known in the Valley and include; Bennie Gonzales, Ralph Haver, Ed Varney, Cartmell & Rossman, T. S. Montgomery, and Dell Traylor. Some of the buildings are already on the Scottsdale Historic Register for their historic and architectural significance and some are candidates for future consideration for being listed on the local register. The self-guided tour begins and ends on 75th Street adjacent to City Hall and the Civic Center Mall. People driving themselves may be able to complete the route in roughly 1-hour. This tour script and attached map were prepared and posted on the internet so people interested in modern architecture can take a tour of mid-century modern architecture in Scottsdale if they are unable to join in the guided bus tour on Saturday, May 21, 2011.

START 1. CITY HALL/CIVIC CENTER, 3939 N. DRINKWATER BLVD., BENNIE GONZALES, (1968+)

The Scottsdale City Hall building was designed by Bennie Gonzales and opened in 1968. The City Hall and Civic Center Library buildings and their landscaped setting were the beginning of the larger government campus of public and private building called the Civic Center Mall. In 1964 Scottsdale citizens volunteered to talk about the future of their city as part of the Scottsdale Town Enrichment Program (STEP) committees. The town was incorporated in 1951 and became a charter city in 1961. A selection committee picked Bennie Gonzales to develop the Civic Center plan. His model helped get a bond approved to fund the campus. City Hall was designed to be very accessible to the public and to have several entrances. The three heavy block columns by the main mall entrance have since been enclosed with glass between the columns for increased security. The interior was very open and had few office doors – part of his design to make government inviting to citizens. The double thick concrete block walls till inward to give the building a similar look to old adobe buildings. The lush landscaped setting and pond also make the building more inviting. Bennie Gonzales had his own distinct style that was definitely Modern but that used Southwest elements like stucco walls with narrow window opening for a hot desert climate.



2. ROYAL GARDENS TOWNHOUSES, 72ND WAY, S. OF RANCHO VISTA, DELL TRAILOR, (1970)

This Modern style townhouse development from 1970 has homes facing a two-block street with a landscaped median down the middle of the street and a pool and bathhouse at the south end of the cul-de-sac private street. There are two style homes by two different unknown architects in this Dell Traylor housing development. The project is small for a townhouse development with just 44 homes but the home sizes were comparable to single



family detached homes of the period – about 2000 square feet average. Parking for residents is in the rear of the homes off alleys. The Historic Preservation Commission considers the project an excellent candidate for local register designation due to its outstanding design, architecture and layout. The scalloped concrete roof over the bathhouse or clubhouse illustrates how architects were experimenting with thin-shelled concrete forms in the 60s. Dell Trailor built several townhouse developments in Scottsdale and the Valley. The lamps on the entry walls were also used at other Dell Trailor projects.

**3. VILLA MONTEREY, TOWNHOUSES, MILLER & CHAPARRAL RDS
DAVE FRIEDMAN, PENDING LOCAL REGISTER LISTING (1961+)**

The Villa Monterey “Casita Colony” was a very large age-restricted townhouse development by Dave Friedman and his Butler Homes company in the 1960s, one of the first large townhouse developments in the Valley. Unlike many projects by other developers at the time, he borrowed elements from several older styles for the facades of the homes to give buyer a variety of styles to choose from. The homes used architectural



elements of several period revival styles including Spanish Colonial, Territorial, Mission, Monterey, Mediterranean, and Pueblo. Ornamental ironwork is seen in early and later plats but is more prevalent in later units along Chaparral Road. Decorative concrete blocks were also used for at the top of parapets and for applied reliefs. Friedman made sure buyers knew he was selling townhomes on their own lots and NOT condominiums. Each Unit had their own community pool, clubhouse, ramada and other amenities. Units 1-7 are proposed to be designated on the Scottsdale Historic Register as a historic district. The one- and two-story homes use a variety of simple details to differentiate each home. By 1975 one out of every four homes in Scottsdale was a townhouse. The percentage of townhouses today is lower.

**4. GLASS AND GARDEN COMMUNITY DRIVE-IN CHURCH,
8620 N. MCDONALD DRIVE, E. LOGAN CAMPBELL (1966)**

This church by E. Logan Campbell was a definite departure in design and concept from other places of worship. For one it was a drive-in church with speakers on posts like a drive-in theatre in the eastern parking lot. People could observe the service through the large glass wall on the eastern façade. The architect was not satisfied with a plain concrete cylinder or dome, but felt compelled to add more southwestern details to the structure including sculptural columns with green aggregate, ornamental ironwork on the cross tower over the dome and an ornamental freize/border of colored sculptured concrete along the top of the cylinder – what Robert Venturi would probably call a decorated cylinder and dome. Venturi liked to describe architecture as a box or a decorated box. Like the City Hall and Library buildings by Bennie Gonzales a couple of years later, this building is Modern with southwestern details added to the structure, a style referred to locally as Southwest Modern.



5. ST. MARIA GORETTI CATHOLIC CHURCH, 6261 N. GRANITE REEF
ROSSMAN ASSOC , ARCHITECT, JOHN PARSONS, ENGINEER (1967)

Unlike the nearby Glass and Garden Community Church, this thin-shelled concrete building lets the shape of the building speak for itself without much ornamentation. This very sculptural style is often called Expressionist by academics or architectural critics. The 60 foot hyperbolic arched roof resembles two intersecting saddles with a dome on top. This sculptural concrete style is related to the work of a Spanish architect, Felix Candela who built several thin-shelled concrete churches in Mexico in the 1950s using curving or hyperbolic forms. Scottsdale and Valley churches from the '50s and '60s demonstrate an acceptance of new styles of building and provided opportunities for architects to express their concepts of sacred space for worship using a variety of construction techniques. Expressionist architecture was often the result of a collaboration between an innovative architect and engineer. The same architect and engineering firms were responsible for the thin-shelled concrete Los Arcos Methodist Church south of McDowell Road.



6. MOTOROLA GOVERNMENT ELECTRONICS DIVISION,
8201 E. MCDOWELL RD, VARNEY, SEXTON, SYDNOR ASSOC (1957)
TOWER ADDITION BY PETER LENDROM ASSOC (1970)

When the Motorola electronics plant opened along McDowell Road in 1957 it stimulated new residential development in this area of Scottsdale and Motorola contributed to a high growth rate in Scottsdale's population in the post WW II era. The Valley had other defense or government related industrial plants during and after the war. The long low building with a tower feature is reminiscent of the "Garden Industrial" style buildings in the east surrounded by landscaped lawns. It gives the appearance of a 'clean' manufacturing plant as opposed to older steel mills or 'dirty' industries. The grass lawn along McDowell Road has recently been replaced with desert landscaping, taking away visually from the broad lawn in front of a long horizontal building. The decidedly Modern building by Edward L. Varney Associates with no applied ornamentation has an International feel like the more vertical steel and glass skyscrapers and the work of architect Mies van der Rohe. The 1970 tower addition by Peter Lendrom departs from the flat steel, glass and aluminum panels in order to have some added depth to the buildings skin. The original 1970 building is the best example of an intact Garden Industrial building in Scottsdale if not the state.



7. VALLEY NATIONAL BANK (CHASE), 7345 E. MCDOWELL RD
CARTMELL & ROSSMAN (1962)

This branch bank building looks a bit lonely at 74th and McDowell Road today but the diagonal concrete struts holding up the broad overhanging roof would have surely have attracted the attention of passing motorists when it opened in 1962. Walter Bimson of Valley National Bank liked to use prominent local architectural firms for his bank branches around the



Valley. Like other projects by Cartwell and Rossman architects, the structure of the building form is emphasized. Other Valley National Banks by prominent firms around the Valley are also worth preserving and being recognized for their unique designs. The style of this Modern building is difficult to classify as a sub-style but it can be related to Expressionist style buildings for the dominant diagonal struts that make the primary facade look a bit like a snare drum.

**8. TOWN AND COUNTRY SCOTTSDALE, 74TH/OAK, RALPH HAVER
LISTED ON LOCAL, STATE AND NATIONAL REGISTERS (1958+)**

Like other Valley neighborhoods with homes designed by Ralph Haver, this gem by Coronado High School of 62 homes by Woody Woodworth is getting the attention the home designs deserve. Using four house plans, the subdivision has varied materials for walls to provide a semi-custom appearance for modest size homes with a Contemporary style. The irregular 'Klinker' bricks on some of the facades make for an interesting front façade. The low pitched gable roofs with the ends facing the street and tall walls of window are often a feature of Ralph Haver designed homes. The Modern style of the homes was a departure from the predominant Ranch styles house being built in Scottsdale in the '50s. The neighborhood is now listed on the National Register and many homes have retained their original features.



**9. FIRST CHURCH OF CHRIST SCIENTIST,
6427 E. INDIAN SCHOOL ROAD, T. S. MONTGOMERY (1962)**

The architect uses a screen wall of concrete blocks on the north façade of the sanctuary and along the side of the building, reminiscent of screen walls used by architect Edward Durrell Stone in several buildings during this time period. T. S. Montgomery used copper with raised seams for the fascia and tower, and he used burnt adobe bricks for the solid walls. This Modern style architecture features local materials from the southwest and Arizona like copper and burnt adobe bricks. The gate on the driveway is often closed so the bus tour will not stop at the church but a car could park between the street and the closed gate. Doug Sydnor featured this church in his book on Scottsdale Architecture and said: "The structure epitomizes an innate understanding of an appropriate scale, which is accomplished with natural materials and great skill." It seems that architects appreciate the design of this understated modest sized church more than the general public.



**10. HOTEL VALLEY HO, 6850 E. MAIN ST, ED VARNEY,
LISTED ON SCOTTSDALE HISTORIC REGISTER (1956/1958)**

Fortunately this declining historic hotel was bought from the prior owners by Westroc. Keenly interested in rehabilitating the three historic hotel buildings by Edward L. Varney, they added some new construction to make the project financially viable. The original design contemplated having a multi-story tower built as an addition over the lobby and restaurant areas – the foundations and support columns were designed and constructed to

be oversized to accommodate this future tower addition. However instead of building the tower, the hotel owners added the two separate two-story guest room buildings in 1958 towards Indian School Road. The city placed the Hotel Valley Ho on its local register when it was for sale and fortunately the buyer wanted to save the building designed by Ed Varney. Like other Modern buildings of this period in the Valley, the architecture also added ornamental elements of the pre-cast sculptural railings and cladding for the columns in the lobby area. The long two-story hotel wings emphasize the horizontal lines with an added tower feature by the entrance, similar to the Garden Industrial forms of Motorola by the same architectural firm. Each guest room had floor to ceiling windows and arcadia doors with screens between the patios or balconies of each unit. The new owner and architects added the tower element, a health club and spa, meetings rooms, a new 2-story guest room and brought the Trader Vic's restaurant to Scottsdale. A similar vintage hotel in Scottsdale by Al Beatle called the Safari Hotel was demolished.



**11. CRAFTSMAN COURT, 7121-7141 E. 5th AVENUE,
T. S. MONTGOMERY, LISTED ON SCOTTSDALE HISTORIC REGISTER (1955)**

This seven building retail complex on 5th Avenue was designed by T. S. Montgomery, the same architect as the one for First Church of Christ, Scientist. Craftsman Court, now called Kiva Centre, is associated with Scottsdale's development as an arts colony and tourist destination. A number of prominent artists were associated with this arts center when it opened such as Lloyd Kiva New, who was a champion for the emerging Indian crafts movement in postwar Scottsdale and nationwide. The Modern architectural design of the complex blends with the desert landscape and uses a dignified western design motif adopted by downtown businesses in the fifties for marketing "The West's Most Western Town". The stores have low-pitched gable roofs and floor to ceiling glass walls like other Modern buildings of the period. The large panels of stained glass in the rear building on the courtyard have been removed but the original tile panels remain. Craftsman Court is on the local register.



**12. TRIANGLE BUILDING, 7120 E. INDIAN SCHOOL ROAD,
RALPH HAVER (1962)**

This two-story commercial building is included on this tour because the city leased the building for city offices before the City Hall was built. It is also a Ralph Haver design with his signature low-pitched gable roof with the gable end facing the street. Glass globe lights are a very '60s feature of the design along with the large expanses of glass and a block screen wall by the stairs. The Modern design is fairly simple but elegant. Fortunately the property has not been the target for redevelopment –yet. I encourage you to compare the design and materials for this building to the earlier 1953 Pima Plaza building on 1st Avenue and Brown by the same architect, Ralph Haver. In keeping with the Western theme for the Old Town commercial district he used different materials like board-and-batten siding on the 1st Avenue building.

