



OHS Warehouse
214 E. Douglas St.,
Bloomington, Open
Wed., Fri., Sat., 8-5



Dana Thomas House
Group Tour
April 21, 11:15-12:15
\$10 donation suggested



SAVE THE DATE!
OHS HOUSE TOUR
June 9, 10 am - 4 pm
Franklin Park,
Bloomington



MID-CENTURY ARCHITECTURE
IN BLOOMINGTON
March 15, 6 - 7:30 pm FREE
Wesley United Methodist Church
502 E Front Street



OLD HOUSE SOCIETY NEWSLETTER

Mid-century Modern Architecture

Mid-century Modern architecture, with its flat planes, expansive windows that invite natural light into its space, and low-profile structural design that seems to hug the ground, is recognized and applauded by baby boomers and millennials alike. “Mid-century Modern” is a term that describes more than just the architecture of the mid-20th century...it also refers to a broader evolution that includes design of all types: home interiors, furniture & accessories, graphic products & artwork, and more. The look of mid-century modern style is distinguishable in a delightful way, and the social philosophy that spurred its creation makes it even more so.

The Origins of Mid-century Modern

The exact beginning and ending years that encompass Mid-century Modern design vary with opinion, but most agree that this period contains, at a minimum, the years following the end of World War II through the late 1950s. It was during this time that soldiers were coming home from the War, getting married and settling into family life. This swelling demand for the production of affordable, efficient housing combined with two factors to create the new Mid-century schema: 1) the introduction of new building materials and technology, and 2) the shift to a more simple modern design that valued functionality and harmony between home and outdoor space over the ornamentation of the past.

Mid-century Modern style took inspiration from two design movements that began in Europe and progressed into the United States: Germany’s Bauhaus style, which valued simplicity and functionality in design, and the International Style, which valued lightness in form (forgoing the heavy structural components of the past), with no added embellishment. *(Continued on page 2)*

Mid-century Modern was also inspired by the organic design of prairie-style homes, which fluidly blended home and nature.

The mass production of Mid-century Modern homes started in California and is credited to a real estate developer named Joseph Eichler. Eichler created expanses of affordable tract housing that utilized the basic elements of Mid-century Modern design. The concept of transparently transitioning indoor space into usable outdoor areas greatly appealed to Californians, whose lifestyles (and weather) made these extended living zones usable year-round. This style eventually extended across the US.

Trademarks of Mid-century Modern Homes

There are several recognizable features to Mid-century style:

- 1) Simple, clean lines: visible in exterior structural design (i.e. roofing) and in the interior. A call for simplicity results in the decline of the use of ornamentation.
- 2) Open floor plans: allows easy movement and flow from one living space to the next. These plans put an emphasis on flexible functionality.
- 3) Harmony of the home with the outside environment: implementation of landscaping focal points that are viewable from the inside, the use of natural light and shade to benefit the home’s ambient temperature in summer and winter, even consideration of how the home affects the view and lighting of the houses surrounding it.
- 4) Design that allows flow from the indoors to the outdoors: sliding glass doors encourage entry into patio spaces, use of large windows maximizes sun exposure, intentionally positioning patios/terraces creates entertaining spaces (making an “outdoor room”).
- 5) The addition of attached garages: cars had become a necessary part of modern life, so garages were now cozier up to houses to make it easier to transition from home to mobile.

Mid-century Modern Style in 2018

Some of the basic principles of Mid-century design appeal particularly to the causes of modern society: the “green design” of using natural shade and sunlight to control home temperature, the selection of sustainable elements that are easily maintained, and the consideration of organic architecture that brings us closer to the harmony of mother nature. - *By Tara Henry*

See full event information on page 6, and an article by Todd Bugg on page 3.

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WAREHOUSE FINDS:
FACEBOOK.COM/
OLDHOUSESOCIETY**



Calling for nominations!!!



If you are the proud owner of a home or building fifty years or older or know someone who is, consider nominating a home for the OHS Gift to the Street Award.

The Old House Society has been giving an award since 1989 to owners who have taken the time to lovingly preserve, maintain, or restore their own homes to their original architectural characteristics. To date, the award has been given to 68 such buildings.

These owners are given a beautiful commemorative plaque which identifies the year the structure was built. owners can then affix the plaque to the exterior façade to proudly signify the home’s or building’s place in local architectural history.

A complete list of previous award winning homes, and the application to apply for the award, can be found on the Awards page of the OHS website and the completed application can be dropped off or mailed to the Old House Society warehouse at 214 East Douglas Street, Bloomington, IL 61701.

The Old House Society welcomes your interest!

Mid-century Architecture in Bloomington

Architecture is the art or practice of designing and constructing buildings. Architecture does not happen without those who engage in this art or practice, the architects who make public ideas and private plans reality. As I prepare for my upcoming lecture on Mid-Century buildings, I have noted two architects who shaped the public face of Bloomington-Normal in the 20th century, Joseph Orme Evans (1923-2007) and Eugene Asbury (1926-2012).

Evans was born in Normal, fought for the U.S. Army in the Battle of the Bulge, and earned degrees from the University of Chicago (1947) and Harvard (1953). During his career, he concentrated on public buildings, especially schools. His work transformed Illinois State and Illinois Wesleyan Universities. He is responsible for every “tower” dormitory on ISU’s campus except Watterson Towers. Hamilton-Whitten and Atkin-Colby (now sadly demolished), Tri-Towers, Manchester Hall, and Hewitt Hall, for example, all originated on Evans’ drafting table. Evans also designed two of the finest modernist homes in the community, his own home at 1305 Stephens, Normal, and a home at 25 Norbloom, Normal, designed for his mother. Never one to rest on his accomplishments, Evans left architecture in 1978 for cattle ranching and other real estate interests in Colorado.

Gene Asbury graduated from the University of Illinois School of Architecture in 1949 and joined the local firm of Lundeen and Hilfinger the next day. Some of his earliest work involved drafting designs for Oakland School and Wesley United Methodist Church. After a stint serving in Korea, Asbury began an incredible stretch of design in the community. He is directly responsible for several wonderful mid-century churches, including Moses Montefiore Temple, Unitarian Universalist, St. Matthew’s Episcopal, and St. John’s Lutheran. He also designed Wood Hill Towers and the McLean County Law and Justice Center. Asbury’s hand is on many of the familiar modernist buildings in our community. Like Evans, Asbury also embraced his modernist tendencies in his own home, a complete remodel of an existing house at 1226 E. Empire, Bloomington, into a modern tour de force.

Without these two individuals, our community would not look as it does today. John Shaw, minister of Second Presbyterian Church, wrote to Evans in 1957 to congratulate him on becoming a partner in his architectural firm. In the letter, he stated “I have no illusions to think that your imagination will not go untrammelled by the ‘folksie’ ones of us who remember the colonial and the gingerbread with idolatrous zeal. Nevertheless, you may capture our age in design and help set us free to think again.” With each design created and structure built, Evans and Asbury certainly captured their age in Bloomington-Normal. - *by Todd Bugg*

OHS Board Member Opening:

Are you passionate about old buildings and want to be a part of celebrating and preserving their history in our community? Old House Society has an opening for a Board Member!

Old House Society's mission statement is to promote and preserve buildings, landscapes and neighborhoods more than 50 years old, and the communities and heritage they foster. We are looking for a dedicated person who can use their passion and skills to plan and execute agendas to help us achieve this mission statement.

OHS's Board Member Application can be accessed [on the OHS website here](#): If you'd like more information or would like to speak with a current Board Member who can provide more detail on this role, please email tarahenry@gmail.com and we will get you connected.

Mid-century Furnishings

What Americans think of as Mid-century Style really started in the 1930s in Scandinavia. The Scandinavians developed a philosophy of unity of form & function in architecture and furnishings, which rejected ornamentation and adopted new production materials. The bleached wood or teak furniture of Danish designers is as immediately recognizable as a Pearsall chaise lounge. (See Fig 1)



Fig 1

Prior to 1940, Americans had little influence over furniture design. Tastes were set in Europe and exported to the U. S. But WWII interrupted the creation and production of furnishings in Europe, setting the stage for the geographic center of design to shift to the United States. While Europe was distracted with a world war, America came into its own as a design center (and as a world power). During this

time, important Scandinavian architects came to the United States and influenced American tastes. Among those was architect Eliel Saarinen, who came to Michigan and taught at the Cranbrook Academy of Art. His son, Eero Saarinen, became acquainted with Charles Eames, a student of architecture in St. Louis, Missouri and suggested Eames come to Cranbrook when Eames was dismissed from the architecture school in St. Louis.

Eames and Saarinen entered the “Organic Design in Home Furnishings” competition of 1940 at the New York Museum of Modern Art as a team. Their designs introduced Americans to furniture made of molded plywood and won the competition. (See Fig 2)



Fig 2

Molding plywood was a technique that had been adapted by a Finnish architect, Alvar Aalto, a decade before. This furniture was startlingly different from that of the Art Deco period that had recently passed and must have stunned the American public.

It may seem surprising that a designer who created the designs we admired in Mad Men was a product of the Midwest, but even the factory that mass produced these designs and



others, was based in the Midwest. The Herman Miller company of Zeeland, Michigan has been producing furniture designed by Charles Eames for decades. The other overwhelming influence over Mid-century design was the Cranbrook Academy of Arts in Bloomfield Hills, Michigan.

Fig 3 Central to the idea of the modern Scandinavian design movement was the idea that furniture design should be affordable for the general public and that good design should not be available only to the elite. Their designs were meant to make life easier and happier and reflect the way modern life was lived – without the pretensions of life prior to World War I. The furniture also fit the open plan lifestyle of the new architecture.

Mid-century furnishings are typified by simple, unornamented design made with modern materials. Tubular steel, plastic and molded plywood (See Fig. 3, Roger Sterling’s molded plastic desk and tables!) are the materials that allowed designers to create flowing organic shapes and unexpected means of support. Manufacturers could mold these materials, which were cheaper than solid wood and far more pliable, into mass-produced products. Efficient production methods and cheaper materials made contemporary furniture more affordable and widely available.



Fig 4

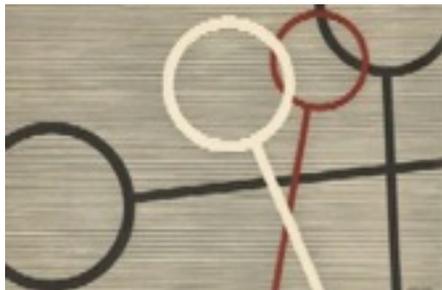


Fig 5

Mid-century textiles were also distinctive. American Jack Lenor Larsen was one of the most famous. (See Fig 4) The variety of fabric designs went beyond the well known “atomic” designs. Angelo Testa was an Italian designer who was influential. (See Fig 5) British designer Lucienne Day’s “Calyx” was an especially famous design and is still available on Ebay!



Fig 6

Mid-century furniture has stood the test of time. It is almost impossible to avoid seeing some example of this design in public spaces. Waiting rooms typically have some variation on a mid-century design chairs, and the school chairs of our childhood were certainly influenced by mid-century design. No school of furniture design has emerged since that had the same impact on our lives as did the Scandinavian design of the 1930s and the Mid-century design of the 1940s.
- by Rochelle Gridley

Mid-Century Modern Architecture in Bloomington

March 15, 6 - 7:30 pm
Wesley United Methodist Church
(east door)
502 E Front, Bloomington
FREE Event
Presentation by: Todd Bugg



In this presentation, we explore the architecture of Bloomington-Normal during this Mid-Century period, beginning in 1950 to around 1975. We discuss the changes that led to the design ethos of the time, and look at the public buildings—churches, schools, and buildings—

which grew in one community in Mid-Century America.

Todd E. Bugg has many personal interests and few specialties. When he can, he enjoys mid-century design and architecture, bird identification, art, ISU athletics, the Cubs, and the New York Times crossword puzzle. A graduate of Illinois Wesleyan University and the University of Illinois College of Law, Todd is a partner in the firm, Dunn Law Firm, LLP, having practiced law in the community for more than 27 years. He concentrates his practice in the areas of real estate law (residential and commercial), estate planning and administration, and business law and is a guest lecturer at several real estate continuing education classes each year.

Dana Thomas House Group Tour

April 21, 11:15 am - 12:15 pm
\$10 Donation Suggested



Old house fans love the architecture of Frank Lloyd Wright, and we have a fantastic example of his work just south of us in Springfield: the Dana Thomas House (see below for more info). OHS has booked a group tour of this landmark for Saturday, April 21st at 11:15am. The tour lasts an hour and the suggested donation is \$10 per person. If you would like to join us on this tour, please email tarahenry@gmail.com so we may provide an accurate count of how many will be in attendance. We may be able to facilitate carpooling for those driving over, so if you would like to rideshare, please indicate your desire to do so in your reservation email and we will connect all interested parties.

The Dana-Thomas House is one of the most unique and lavish structures designed by Frank Lloyd Wright during his early Prairie period. The home was built for Springfield socialite Susan Lawrence Dana. She was known for her hospitality, unforgettable parties and concerts as well as community, social and political involvement. Perhaps the most complete of all early Wright dwellings, it was never significantly altered and has over 100 pieces of original Wright-designed oak furniture, 250 examples of art glass light fixtures and lamps. The barrel-vaulted dining room and gallery/ ballroom are two of the most photographed spaces in the history of American architecture. Connecting the main living quarters to the gallery and library is a sixty-foot long pergola hallway beneath which is a bowling lane, billiard room and walk-in vault.

There are many other historical sites in Springfield worth visiting, if you would like to make a full day of your visit. The Abraham Lincoln Presidential Museum, the Illinois State Museum, and Lincoln's Home are just a few of the sites that are certainly worth seeing if you're interested in learning more about Lincoln and the history of our state. If you have a membership to the McLean County Museum of History, the "Time Travelers" benefits of your membership provide discounts at several of these locations.