There are a number of works of modern architecture in New Mexico which demonstrate obedience to well known principles of design developed elsewhere. According to the author's knowledge, these works have been neglected and their aesthetic importance ignored.

It has been possible to identify three types of contemporary architectural expressions that exist around Albuquerque. Although these works are limited in numbers, they deserve special attention because they appear to represent breaking points, or pioneering attempts, in New Mexico's architecture. The three groups or types of this architecture may be classified as follows:

1. Art-Deco (Art décoratif) Modern New Mexico Architecture (figure 1).

2. "Prairie" principles architecture as developed by Frank Lloyd Wright and further adjusted and used in California by men such as Schindler, Richard Neutra and their followers (figure 3). (Singling out the principle of horizontality in the composition).

3. International style - Bauhaus-Le Corbusier oriented New Mexico modern architecture.

There are not many examples of the first and second types, while there are a number of edifices that belong to the third category. This may suggest that the first and second categories experienced difficulty in competing with the popular trend towards a local regional architecture and the following of traditional forms. The third category of architecture, which demonstrates definite similarities to the international style, was able to compete, up to a point, and, thus, leaves a strong mark of the attempt for the adoption of a new architectural vocabulary in this land. This may also suggest that the language of the international style was closer to that of New Mexico's regional architecture prototypes, thus making it easier for adaptation and survival (or, at least, a certain survival). The existence of these works suggests that there apparently has been a definite period in the history of
New Mexico's modern architecture when an attempt was made to create a new regional architectural form. This new architectural expression would incorporate the new international principles based on the use of modern materials, technology and function.

The presentation that follows is concerned with the visual architectural evidence of the third category. It is hoped that in later articles it will be possible to elaborate on buildings suggesting architecture of the first and second categories.

The International Style
in New Mexico

Whether the architectural works presented here are works of one man, as they may very well be (this is suggested by the similarities and the consistency of the vocabulary of these works) or whether they are projects of different architects or builder/designers, has been impossible to establish by means of existing written evidence. Detailed research about these projects pertaining to plan, section and evaluation, measurement and study has not been undertaken. Hopefully, this will be done in the near future by architectural students who would be interested in documenting these buildings for publication. This research might give answers to questions such as: 1) the architects or builders who created those works, 2) the architectural beliefs of this man—or men, 3) the planning and spatial properties of these houses and whether the power and consistency of the facades are reflected by the plans and interiors.

Further, we might learn about the economics of this type of architectural aesthetic in New Mexico, as well as learn something about the occupants of these houses: the way they use the space and whether the space fits and satisfies their needs.

Let me justify a few of the points or hypotheses for investigation that are suggested. All projects are massive in appearance. This is a characteristic of New

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Fig. 2. A pair of International Style homes along Ridgecrest Dr. N. E.

Fig. 3. The "Prairie" influence of horizontality.
Mexico's traditional architecture, and suggests the case for an attempt to create a regional style. Of course, it may be suggested that except for the house at 1205 Ridgecrest Drive (figure 4) this "regionalism" may be an accident in that there is a similarity of the existing tradition and the Schindler International style.

The solids overpower the voids; in most instances the glass of these voids is thick, diluting the light, cutting the glare from the inside, thereby creating harmonic and gracious relationships with the solids.

The massiveness of these works has been very considerably established. All works present a definite concern of the designer for the relationship of volumes, which creates a play of shadows and gives to the works an ever changing rhythmic life. Rectangular volumes pivot around curving ones, thus making use of certain curving elements typical for all the houses presented here. This ingenious way of moving from one system of plan coordinates to another has been used frequently by LeCorbusier, the Bauhaus people and their followers. Thus, these works may be classified as examples of the international style of architecture.

There appears to be no accident in the design of these houses. A definite consideration and excess sensitivity for the use of the details, consideration for site location and view exploitation are common to all.

The house on Girard Boulevard (figure 5) is a good example of a timidity in scale work, which, however, demonstrates a very severe vocabulary and shows concern for a definite formal elegance. The placement of the corner windows, the proportion of the laly column and the contradiction that exists between this uniquely linear element and the massiveness of the rest of the house, a "Venturian" quality, makes the edifice acquire a voice of its own and elevates it above the level of the "ordinariness" of the surroundings.
The linear emphasis above the main entrance offers an ornament to the facade, while at the same time helps to create a balance in the visual consideration of solids and voids, and to create a total coherence of elevation. The elevation of this simple house, besides the qualities of the "Venturian" contradictions that it possesses, has the very severe vocabulary of "Mondrianic" or "Miesian" synthetic order. It is a very small house, suggesting great discipline, the work of some really dedicated and principled creators.

The house on Hermosa and Coal streets has other qualities (figures 6, 7); it is a more affluent work, yet its aesthetic vocabulary remains the same as in the Girard house: simple, strict, consistent. The influence of the site, a hilltop site with an excellent easterly view to the Sandia Mountains, has been exploited and enriched through ingenious land use and volume locations; the plurality of ornament, and excess architectural "guimiguezy" has been totally avoided. There is richness in simplicity, and this house is a good example of this principle. Moreover, of the works presented it is the best example of volumetric success. Surrounded by well planted vegetation, the house site and general landscaping form a very strong and consistent whole. The author suggests that this house is one of the best works of early modern architecture in New Mexico.

The houses on Ridgecrest Drive (figures 2, 4) appear to be less successful than the Girard and the Hermosa ones. Although the architectural vocabulary seems to be the same, the form appears to have lost control of the elements of "speech." This is to be seen mainly in the weakened proportional relationships. To what is this loss of control due? Do these homes represent weak periods in the architect's or builder's life? Do these works represent works of other architects who tried to speak the same vocabulary, but not as successfully as the first, or were they just works of financial compromise?

All these reasons are possible. But whatever the reason might have been, the vision of these houses suggests a consistency of design principles and suggests further the possibility that a strong creator passed through New Mexico and left his stamp here; or, who knows, maybe he is still with us.

But if men of principles come and go, their works remain as silent witness to their efforts in the process of evolution. If there are some special readers to whom this essay is addressed, they are the architectural students and the young, (at least in spirit) architects, the most promising sources of hope for evolution. New Mexico needs architecture based on principles; it needs a rational regional vocabulary. But before all that, it needs elevation of architecture to a new, refreshing, dedicated way; a way void of the trivialities of rush to become an architect, to make a dollar, to have a building designed. Rather, a new humanistic and intellectual attitude is necessary. Then the effort that belongs to solitude, to the searching and the intellectualizing about architecture by individuals today will become the preoccupation of the group tomorrow, then evolution and "Architecture" will arise.

It has not been possible to verify the identity of the creators of the edifices under consideration. The files of the Building Department of the City of Albuquerque provided inadequate information. No building permits were issued prior to the 1950's and the information that does exist pertains to permits obtained for later additions, (1950 permit issued to H. B. Horn, 1207 Ridgecrest Drive, 324 Hermosa, 1950 addition, Ted Robert, owner), plumbing installation, and remodelings (213 Girard SE, permit for remodeling, 1953). The key to our further discussion is the residence at 1203 Ridgecrest Drive SE. This edifice was the only one of the group of buildings concerned in this study to have on record the name of a certain T. W. Benton as the owner. It has been established that T. W. Benton was a contractor working in Albuquerque.
que at that time. Through conversations with certain senior architects, building department employees and the Albuquerque contractor, P.G. McHenry, it may be suggested rather safely that the original owner of the 1203 Ridgecrest, T.W. Benton, was possibly the designer-builder of all or most of the buildings under discussion, and that Benton was building his houses for speculative residential development. Mr. McHenry believes that these houses were all the work of Tom Benton. It is not McHenry’s knowledge that Benton was aware of the international style of architecture or of the theories upon which the modern architectural movement was based. Tom Benton, McHenry said, was “...a simple builder. He trained Navajo Indians and they learned to do everything. Benton went to the reservations during the depression and taught his workers to do plumbing and everything else necessary in construction... Knowing Tom Benton, it was all a good work of an uneducated but talented and skillful builder.”

If Mr. McHenry’s statements are true, then the hypotheses as stated initially by this author in the present paper are wrong. However, it has been impossible to further verify McHenry’s statements.

In any event, it all may have been a historical coincidence and the New Mexico builder may have been one of the many unknown talented designers.

Thus, it is possible that these buildings, residential and commercial, were works of the same creator, or that they were speculative developments, built by a contractor’s firm, yet designed by an architect. Further, it is possible that the contractor himself designed these houses and in that case a very careful study of plans, sections, elevations might suggest that the person under consideration was a man of either considerable intuitive design and construction genius, or might have been a person directly copying examples of fashionable architecture of the
time as developed elsewhere. It is suggested by Don Schlegel, Chairman of the Department of Architecture at UNM, that the real intellectual creator of these designs might have been Architect Ed Stone whose house designs were often published in home magazines, and were, possibly, copied or adapted by the builder or builders concerned.

It is also possible that there might have been a number of architects who designed these houses. However the visual similarities of these works may easily eliminate this hypothesis.

In spite of any of the previous possibilities the works as built speak for themselves. Whether the creator was a qualified architect or not, whether he was a contractor with design talent and awareness or not, whether he really created or copied it is open to further research. Designers are often forgotten. City codes have not always required building permits; thus they did not help these people's names stay alive. But even if that is the case and the real identity, background and intellectual make-up of the creator or creators of the buildings of our concern are to follow the fate of oblivion, the buildings themselves will not. They have been built and they are distinctive examples of the early modern architecture of New Mexico.

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