

FLORAL PARK ARCHITECTURE

THE DEPRESSION YEARS



Hungry OC residents line up at a WPA breadline in Santa Ana during the Great Depression. Up to 16.2 percent of the county relied on this assistance monthly.

W

hen the U.S. stock market crashed in October of 1929, it brought hard times to California, the nation, and the world. For businesses and millions of individuals, fear and failure became as commonplace as optimism and prosperity had been before the eco-

by David Ko

nomic collapse. The Great Crash soon became the Great Depression. Owners of manufacturing plants could not sell their goods, so they laid-off workers. Unable to find employment, workers lost their savings and could not afford to make purchases. Other businesses closed and

BILLIONS LOST AS STOCKS CRASH

Pantages In Jail A

GUILTY SAYS SENATE "FARM JURY AFTER BATTLE FOR HOURS

STATE PLANS TO ROUND UP TAX DODGERS

Friend Brings Man To Jail On Rum Charge

Booster Man Declares He Got Fair Deal And Did Not Expect Home Owners

Friend Brings Man To Jail On Rum Charge

Many Other Stories Inside

in the downward spiral, society was devastated.

To make matters worse, one of the worst droughts in history struck the nation in 1930. On a half-million farms from Virginia to Oklahoma, crops vanished and livestock died of thirst. It was inevitable that Orange County – like the rest of the world – would suffer in the ensuing Great Depression. Luckily, Orange County's two biggest industries at the time, citrus and oil, helped buffer the blow, thanks to exports to Asia, primarily Japan and China. The US invented the science to extract and process petroleum, a monopoly over the rest of the world. Good orange crops selling at reasonable prices, along with continued demand for oil, helped stave off the full impact of the Great Depression in Orange County. While construction came to a halt elsewhere, Floral Park had ongoing construction throughout the Depression years.

Then in 1931, war came to Asia and China could no longer afford citrus imports. The US placed an embargo on Japan, which halted exports of oil and citrus and sent Orange County into recession. Profits from oranges and other crops plummeted. For an agricultural county, this was devastating, causing farmers to default on their land. The banks repossessed their property and sold it off to home builders to develop an endless sea of tract homes in

SANTA ANA DAILY REGISTER, SATURDAY EVENING, DECEMBER 11, 1938

REAL ESTATE

TRACT OPENED IN SANTA ANA BY NEW FIRM

Launching of an exclusive residential subdivision in northwestern Santa Ana with the formation of the co-partnership of Ball and Honer, a construction and development firm, is announced today by Harry T. Ball and Allison C. Honer. The new firm has opened headquarters with offices at 103 East Third street.

Floral park is the name of the firm's large realty development, which embraces 150 acres situated on the hillside made by Mr. Ball. He asserts that the \$12,000 paving project approved by the city council recently lies within Floral park. The tract embraces Flower street north from Seventeenth street to about 2000 feet north of Seventeenth street; Greenleaf street north from Seventeenth street to Santa Clara street; and Heliotrope drive north from North seventeenth street some distance running parallel to and equidistant from Flower and Greenleaf streets. Heliotrope drive is a new thoroughfare and it is anticipated that it will later connect with the southern extension of the street of the same name in North Broadway park.

Flower street is to be an 8-foot paved highway with a central brickpavement, ornamental lights, and profusely landscaped with flowering shrubs and trees, the first reports. Heliotrope drive will have a 10-foot paved roadway and will be beautified with ornamental lights and landscaping. Greenleaf street, already paved, will have the additional improvements of street lamps and shrubs to make it uniform with the rest of Floral park. It is indicated. Curbs, sidewalks, gas, water and sewer lines will be installed throughout the tract.

CO-PARTNERSHIP FORMED

Left, Harry H. Ball, and Allison C. Honer, who have opened headquarters for transaction of a realty and construction business here.



Flower street is to be an 8-foot paved highway with a central brickpavement, ornamental lights, and profusely landscaped with flowering shrubs and trees, the first reports. Heliotrope drive will have a 10-foot paved roadway and will be beautified with ornamental lights and landscaping. Greenleaf street, already paved, will have the additional improvements of street lamps and shrubs to make it uniform with the rest of Floral park. It is indicated. Curbs, sidewalks, gas, water and sewer lines will be installed throughout the tract.

Development of the Greenleaf section of the tract has been going forward for some time. Honer and Ball have collaborated in sales and construction. Homes for Charles Marble, William W. Ross, Dr. McVicker Smith, F. W. Bush and a half dozen others having been completed on that tract.

Floral park, now of Laguna Beach, is nearing completion in

H. R. Van Horn, now of Laguna Beach, is nearing completion in

Floral park, at Nineteenth and

Flower streets.

Mr. Honer also reports that he has under construction a \$15,000 home for Dr. N. K. Waller of Albu-

the subsequent decades. Accordingly, most of the fifteen local bank failures occurred in 1932.

One in four became unemployed. Many raised rabbits, fished or even turned to native plants as food sources. Cash-strapped artists in Laguna Beach,

including such notable as William Wendt, bartered paintings for food or other necessary goods and services. Dust Bowl refugees lived in homeless encampments along the beaches of Newport and Huntington. And even the flourishing affluent community of Floral Park was, like many others, awash in foreclosures, having just purchased a new home a few years prior.

In Floral Park and its vicinity, Allison Honer, a builder, bought foreclosed farmland to expand his portfolio. Distressed land and low overhead allowed him to weather his risk of ongoing construction throughout the 1930s despite building permits being down by 90% compared to the decade of the roaring twenties.

Honer saw an opportunity to take advantage of a favorable construction labor force and bottomed architectural fees. Eager architects and framers worked

diligently. First-rate architects were finally within his reach. For Allison Honer, his crowning achievement was the distinctive iconic houses he built in Floral Park in the 1930s, including the house he built for the Maharaja of Indore, an Indian Prince seeking safety

SANTA ANA DAILY REGISTER, THURSDAY EVENING, DECEMBER 15, 1938

Maharaja's \$50,000 Palace To Be Built In Santa Ana



Pictured above is Architect Donald Beach Kirby's conception of how the \$50,000 home being built for "M. I. Holkar", the Maharaja of Indore, India, by Allison Honer at the southeast corner of Heliotrope Drive and Santa Clara avenue, will look. Of frame and stucco construction, the "palace" that will house the Maharaja's five-year-old daughter and her friends will be surrounded by a masonry wall, and is reported to be one of a number of establishments in various parts of the world owned by the wealthy Hindu prince. The house will contain 12 rooms with a living room 35 by 32 feet, and bedrooms 18 by 22 feet. An 80 foot deck, enclosed with glass will be one of the unusual features of the house. Windows of the home will be of plate glass and will have iron grilles that will be ornamental as well as protective. Double floors will be installed in the house and these covered with sheet rubber. The house itself will cost \$40,000, with an additional \$10,000 being added in special features that will include a tile pool at the rear of the establishment.

Floral Park developer Allison Honer built this Streamline Moderne home for the Maharaja of Indore (on the corner of Heliotrope and Santa Clara) who was at that time the richest man in the world.

abroad from the Japanese invasion and looming WWII.

Honer collaborated with Balboa Island architect Donald Beach Kirby in the design of the Maharajah's Floral Park palace. Kirby, a University of Pennsylvania graduate, had been taught by Paul Cret, a master in Beaux Arts architecture. He also apprenticed with Gordon Kaufmann, a residential architect with a diversified skill set on many landmark projects, including Scripps College, Cal Tech and the Hoover Dam.

Kirby was a destined stellar architect who could design in any style. He visited the 1933 Chicago World Fair Century of Progress Houses of Tomorrow exhibitions. The Streamline Moderne-style model homes inspired Kirby's Maharajah house, including the first standardized kitchen an innovation at the Chicago exhibit that set universal dimensional standards for kitchen countertop height, depth, upper cabinets, and appliances based on human body proportions.

Although the period between 1900 and 1929 had been the heyday of the American country estate, few built sprawling mansions during the Depression, and the rare private house became more modest. Architects who adapted to the new budgetary reality reduced construction costs and designed homes that were not only smaller but also more straightforward and less elaborate. They designed with cheaper materials, less demanding craftsmanship, and more simplified details. This paradigm shift in Floral Park signaled the end of Craftsman, Storybook, Tudor, and Spanish Colonial Revival houses. Those architects who were unwilling or unable to change, had trouble finding clients after the Crash. Many took refuge in drink or changed careers. When their legacy ended and their firms shuttered, there was no one left to advance the cause of beautiful revival architecture.

Some architects sought new markets for their skills. Robert L. Stevenson published a compilation of



C. C. Hillis, head of the OC Fruit Exchange and owner of the first home built in Honer's Floral Park development, was forced into foreclosure after citrus profits plunged during the Great Depression.

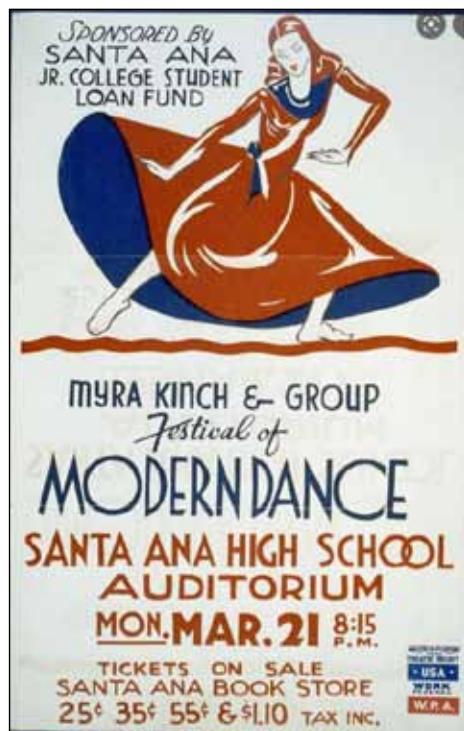
modest house plans titled *Homes of Character*. The American Institute of Architects organized the non-profit Small House Service Bureau, which employed out-of-work architects to prepare designs for tiny, affordable houses. The collection of plans got published as *Small Homes of Architectural Distinction* in 1929. A set of construction blueprints for a typical three-bedroom house cost as little as thirty dollars. Many Floral Park

homes built in the '30s reflected this design trend geared for affordability.

Royal Barry Wills, who opened his office in 1925, specialized in designing tiny houses for the middle class and popularized the Cape Cod cottage. In 1932 he received a gold medal from President Hoover for the best small home of the year. Wills's designs, practical and resolutely traditional, were featured in his book, *Houses for Good Living*, which became a reference manual for the development of 1940s colonial houses in Floral Park.

Franklin D. Roosevelt, who promised a "New Deal for the American People," soundly defeated incumbent president Herbert Hoover in the 1932 election. Roosevelt instituted several economic measures. He pushed for a banking reform bill to restore confidence in financial institutions, regulated the stock market and devalued the currency so that borrowers could more easily repay debts. He "primed the pump," spending public money through newly-created programs such as the Civilian Conservation Corps and Public Works Administration, which undertook projects that put people to work and money into circulation.

To stimulate the economy, President Franklin Roosevelt's "New Deal" was brought to bear in Orange County through various government-sponsored programs. However, most of the new federal make-work jobs in Orange



Franklin Roosevelt's W.P.A. funded not only construction projects but also the arts, such as this Festival of Modern Dance in Santa Ana.

County came through the Works Progress Administration (WPA). Millions of dollars were spent locally on construction projects which employed both white- and blue-collar workers who designed and built interstate highways, bridges, reservoirs, dams, storm drain channels, parks, schools, police stations, libraries, post offices, and notably, the Art Deco-style Santa Ana High School and Santa Ana City Hall. Other projects included the Spanish Mission Revival-style Bowers Museum, Santiago flood control, and the Art Deco-style headquarters of the Orange County Title Company (which later became the American Title Company.)

Government funded projects offered jobs sewing clothing for the poor, landscaping Irvine Park, repairing the Santiago Creek flood channel, and building roads, storm drains, and sewage systems. WPA artists decorated public buildings with murals and mosaics.

By mid-decade, more than a hundred thousand Americans who had lost their farms and homes in the Dust Bowl were arriving in California each year, many of them joining the ranks of migrant farm labor. Their presence increased the interest of the general public in the plight

of farmworkers, a consciousness further raised by John Steinbeck's classic book *The Grapes of Wrath*, published in 1939 and released on film the following year.

These WPA projects met with many protocols: buildings must be a place of refuge, a shelter if America were under attack by foreign aggression or a natural disaster. The design must be monumental but straightforward, elegant, stately but not ostentatious, fireproof, constructed from steel and reinforced concrete, built to last but most importantly, inviting, light in appearance, and warm. The design and construction must generate jobs for many trades to embellish the building. Designers wanted to implement lavish Art Deco styles, but had to do so in a smart, practical and budget-friendly way.

The ideal WPA prototype included a pour-in-place concrete wall where the surface textures were exquisitely detailed. First, finish carpenters built the forms and a reverse mold reflective of the finished design. Art Deco was among the preferred idiom that fits all of the stringent criteria to accomplish all of the above within the wall thickness of 10" having intricate patterns and shadows. No other materials other than concrete could hold



such a subtle surface movement in such a shallow depth.

Other mandatory features incorporated into the design included metal alloy, steel, copper, bronze, casting, wrought iron, sculpture, statutes, mural, mosaic tiles, marble or granite cladding, custom hardware, built-in seating, custom light fixtures, and public arts. The construction process was not only tedious but complicated, requiring frequent supervision and coordination among various trades.

The 1925 Exposition Internationale des Arts Décoratifs et Industriels Modernes in Paris officially launched the Art Deco movement. The roaring '20s was a prosperous decade that afforded Americans European travel. There they found architectural inspiration, particularly for the entertainment industries' elaborate silent movie palaces. These movie palaces offered exotic themes from far away lands for the masses who could not afford overseas travel. The discovery of the Egyptian tombs in 1922 and the intricate carvings found on tomb walls inspired geometrical and pyramid forms in architecture and product design. Over 15,000 artists, architects, and designers displayed their work at the Paris exposition. During its seven months, over 16 million people toured the many individual exhibits and the



The Works Progress Administration (WPA) sponsored many stimulus projects to keep people employed during the Great Depression, including these women making garments for the needy in Santa Ana.



The Art Deco-style, Santa Ana City Hall, built in 1935 with funds from a city bond and a grant from the W.P.A., still stands proudly at the southeast corner of Main and Third Streets.

Art Deco movement began.

Hollywood was the first to embrace this showmanship in the creation of the Art Deco style signature marquees for many “talkie” cinemas. In the second generation of theaters, pipe organs were replaced by a modern wonder, the sound system. Elaborate neon and motion lighting in Art Deco shapes was used to compliment the silhouette of the motion picture theater marquees.

Art Deco was a direct response aesthetically and philosophically to the Art Nouveau style’s curvilinear and free-form organic lines found in trees, flowers, and nature. Although beautiful, this intricate style was impossible to mass-produce. Art Deco also paid homage to nature, except in a way that was less whimsical and more practical.

The onset of Art Deco coincided with the beginning of the Great Depression. Austerity might be the core aesthetic for this development of Art Deco. Whereas architecture, for instance, had been vertically oriented with skyscrapers climbing to lofty heights, the later Art Deco buildings symbolized sturdiness, quiet dignity, and resilience. During the worst years of economic disaster, from 1929 to 1931, American Art Deco transitioned from following trends to setting them.

Art Deco emphasized vertical columns, stacked windows, symmetry, repetition, and intricate surface reliefs. Institutional buildings and skyscrapers were well suited to this style and ideal for commercial use.

In the U.S., the reception of the Art Deco movement developed on a different trajectory. Herbert Hoover, the U.S. Secretary of Commerce, decreed that American designers and architects could not exhibit their work at the 1931 Exposition Internationale in

Paris. He contended that the country had yet to conceive of a distinctly American style of art that was satisfactorily “new enough.” As an alternative, he sent a delegation to France to assess the offerings at the Exposition; and then to apply what they saw to a contemporary American artistic and architectural style. In secrecy, this era of America elevated the Art Deco style to new heights, surpassing the French predecessor with iconic New York skyscrapers and, locally in Southern California, with buildings such as Bullocks Wilshire. Before the notions of super-power, space exploration, and war technology, countries strived for superiority through architectural progress.

The Art Deco style was predominately used in buildings and commercial spaces. As such, there aren’t too many homes that were built in the Art Deco style, and none in Floral Park. However, Honer did incorporate Art Deco elements into some of his homes. For instance, barrel ceilings were terraced with horizontal lines, and archways were given deco ornamentation.

Streamline Moderne, or Art Moderne, overcame the limitations of Art Deco and was much friendlier



The Art Deco-style marquee of the West Coast Theater on Main Street in Santa Ana. The interior has been described as Art Morderne meets Streamline, utilizing a mix of heavy Art Deco and light rococo forms of gilded ornamentation, with monumental ornament and heavy use of drapery.



A section of the Art-Deco Orange County Title Company building, built in 1931 at the corner of 5th and Main Streets, will be preserved and incorporated into the design of a new development.

to residential adaptation. Devoid of ornament, the style featured clean curves, long horizontal lines (including bands of windows), glass bricks, porthole-style windows, and cylindrical and sometimes octagonal and nautical forms. More so than ever, there was an emphasis on aerodynamics and other expressions of modern technology.

This style replaced more expensive concrete wall construction and often exotic materials of Art Deco with wood frames, smooth plaster, glass, and chrome hardware. Architects chose neutral colors sparingly as off-white, beige, and earth tones to replace the more vivid colors of Art Deco. Streamline Moderne architecture mimics the aesthetic of locomotives, bullet shape trains, and ocean liners, particularly the extensive expression of the open corner and wrap-around decks with steel railing, corner windows, curved exterior glass walls, or a porthole window. Whereas Art Deco emphasized the vertical, Streamline Moderne emphasized the horizontal. Asymmetrical massing composition, offset cubic shape, and a horizontal band of windows. To create defying gravity, architects removed or diminished the size of columns from the corner of houses to receive a mitered corner glass effect.



The Orange County courthouse in downtown Santa Ana experienced massive damage during the earthquake of 1933.



The Yost Theater in downtown Santa Ana was completely demolished during the 1933 earthquake.

As if the economy wasn't enough trouble, other woes also befell Orange County throughout the 1930s. Local natural disasters included the Long Beach earthquake of 1933, massive flooding in 1937 and 1938, and a major heatwave and hurricane in 1939. On the world stage, the threat of war loomed large.

By this time, the population thought the period revival designs too extravagant and wasteful when most lived in hunger and did not have a roof over their head. A new attitude of functional efficiency dictated architecture. Again, residential trends followed inspiration from Hollywood.

Amid the Depression and desolation, Hollywood flourished. In drowning the sadness of unforeseeable prospects, people escaped their miseries by going to the cinemas. Hollywood's perfect "feel good" recipe was musicals, dancing, and happy endings. Unlike the decade before when amateur directors filmed slapstick films on locations under unpredictable conditions, directors now filmed these impeccably choreographed musicals in precise settings with beautifully cinematographic sets in studios and soundstages.

Born to Dance, MGM's big musical for the 1936 holiday season, offered audiences laughs, excellent Cole Porter songs, and great dancing from Eleanor Powell. It also gave audiences a glimpse of things to come in interior design. Cedric Gibbons, head of the studio's art department,

never shied away from modern, cutting-edge sets. Gibbons's designs helped introduce a style to the American public. By the mid-1930s, contemporary interior design had undergone a seismic change. The era of the crazy angles and geometrics of the late 1920s was over. The Depression brought in streamlining, with its chrome accents and speed lines offering a machine-age aesthetic. Concurrent with facilitating, another style started coming into vogue, Hollywood Regency.

In the studio, set design, glossy Bakelite, an early plastic resin, and floating platforms via curvilinear stairs were an impressive presentation, capturing an ascending row of dancers performing jumps, lifts, and synchronized dance steps. Honer was a master in cherry-picking iconic elements from Hollywood and then incorporating them into home foyers such as a curved staircase. Cedric Gibbon's Streamline Moderne sets often mimicked an ocean liner nightclub with polished floor, chrome accent, horizontal lines, and plenty of spotlights.

Gibon's later set displayed a wide range of colors, from vibrant to pastels, metal and glass accents, white

plaster frames, and mirror-covered furniture and walls are hallmarks of this style that exemplifies luxury. Although Hollywood Regency, a term coined by Paul R. Williams, actually emerged in the late 1920s, it didn't reach its peak of popularity until the 1940s. Both the Ambassador and Beverly Hotels epitomized the glamour of Hollywood Regency, an exclusive style indigenous to Southern California.

Hollywood Regency featured lots of chrome accents. The underside of the balconies were fluted and decorated with the same crossed heart motif as the railings. Because chunky columns on set blocked the actors from the cameras, they were replaced by lacy iron columns. Of course, the furniture features chrome as well with its tube frames. The Bakelite floor also helps to make up the glamour. Like Hollywood sets, Honer also frequently used metal lattice to replace a wood porch post.

The shift had clearly begun away from Streamline Moderne to Hollywood Regency. And although a new, modern style, it still adapted to classicism and traditional methods. One standout feature of the set was lots of white plaster for frames, furniture, and lamps. Dark colors contrast lighter colors, and one wall features a large mirror surrounding the fireplace. The effect of the design was elegant, luxurious, and sensual. The grand statement occurred at the entry doors highlighting the Hollywood Regency style. The outside of the door might be black lacquer, while the inside was a mirrored surface. The one place in homes where Hollywood Regency shone was the checkerboard floor which imitated terrazzo and continued the dark and light color scheme.

When Art Deco ended, Hollywood Regency was only one of the style trends to replace it. Other more traditional and conservative techniques once again came into vogue. And movie set design would forecast and reflect these changes.

As the decade ended, Hollywood



TOP: Cedric Gibbons and wife Delores del Rio; MIDDLE: The Art Deco home of Diana Medford, played by Joan Crawford, in Our Dancing Daughters. Set designed by Cedric Gibbons. BOTTOM: Eleanor Powell in 1936's highly stylized sing & dance extravaganza Born To Dance.



Art Deco door at 1815 N. Flower



Streamline Moderne at 1815 N. Heliotrope



Streamline Moderne at 1932 N. Heliotrope

was enjoying its Golden Age, producing films such as Frankenstein, King Kong, Gone with the Wind, and The Wizard of Oz that took moviegoers' minds off the troubles of the times.

As the decade ended, a world war loomed on the horizon. The Golden Gate International Exposition of 1939, which celebrated the comple-



Hollywood Regency at 1809 N. Heliotrope



Hollywood Regency at 1926 N. Heliotrope



Streamline Moderne at 2105 Heliotrope

**HOMES of
....Personality**

In the Santa Ana of tomorrow you will be proud of your home and its neighborhood if you build in —BEAUTIFUL—
Floral Park

We have helped more than 500 families in Orange County put their dreams and ideas into substantial homes.

When you are ready we will do our best to shape your ideas into a home within the range of your dreams.

We think we understand enough about houses that we can assure you the correct interpretation of your fundamental idea of architecture and design.

We give the same careful attention to the smallest details and the finest materials.

Builder of Artistic Homes Anywhere

ALLISON HONER
Owner and Designer of *Floral Park*
103 E. THIRD ST. PH. SANTA ANA 1807



Hollywood Regency at 1912 N. Heliotrope

tion of the Golden Gate Bridge and San Francisco-Oakland Bay Bridge, was enjoyed by large crowds on Treasure Island. FDR's New Deal failed in bringing America out of the Depression, but it paved the way with new infrastructure just in time to confront the outbreak of World War II. The nation's most challenging economic times would soon be over.



Streamline Moderne at 2215 N. Flower



Hollywood Regency at 1920 N. Heliotrope



Hollywood Regency at 1915 N. Flower