

THE ART OF ARCHITECTURE

MODERNISM IN MEMPHIS

1890-1980

The early propagandist of Modern architecture were convinced that a century-old problem had been solved in their own times, that a genuine modern style rather than a revival of past forms had at last been achieved. The revolution in sensibility, which affected all the arts around the turn of the century, constituted a profound reorientation in ways of thinking and seeing forms. Since the forces of modernization in the early 20th century tended to obscure local, regional and ethnic differences, it was a truly "international" style.

Others see Modern architecture as primarily driven by technological and engineering developments, and it is true that the availability of new building materials such as iron, steel, and glass drove the invention of new building techniques as part of the Industrial Revolution. It was not until the early 1830s that the section beam was introduced, leading to widespread use of iron construction, this kind of austere industrial architecture utterly transformed the landscape of northern Britain, leading to the description of places like Manchester and parts of West Yorkshire as "Dark satanic mills".

The Crystal Palace by Joseph Paxton at the Great Exhibition of 1851 was an early example of iron and glass construction; possibly the best example is the development of the tall steel skyscraper in Chicago around 1890 by William Le Baron Jenney and Louis Sullivan. Early structures to employ concrete as the chief means of architectural expression (rather than for purely utilitarian structure) include Frank Lloyd Wright's Unity Temple, built in 1906 near Chicago, and Rudolf Steiner's Second Goetheanum, built from 1926 near Basel, Switzerland.

Whatever the cause, around 1900 a number of architects around the world began developing new architectural solutions to integrate traditional precedents (Gothic, for instance) with new technological possibilities. The work of Louis Sullivan and Frank Lloyd Wright in Chicago, Victor Horta in Brussels, Antoni Gaudi in Barcelona, Otto Wagner in Vienna and Charles Rennie Mackintosh in Glasgow, among many others, can be seen as a common struggle between old and new. An early use of the term in print around this time, approaching its later meaning, was in the title of a book by Otto Wagner.

A key organization that spans the ideals of the Arts and Crafts and Modernism as it developed in the 1920s was the Deutscher Werkbund (German Work Federation) a German association of architects, designers and industrialists. It was founded in 1907 in Munich at the instigation of Hermann Muthesius, the author of a three-volume "The English House" of 1905, a survey of the practical lessons of the English Arts and Crafts movement and a leading political and

cultural commentator. The purpose of the Werkbund was to sponsor the attempt to integrate traditional crafts with the techniques of industrial mass production. The organization originally included twelve architects and twelve business firms, but quickly expanded. The architects include Peter Behrens, Theodor Fischer (who served as its first president), Josef Hoffmann and Richard Riemerschmid. Joseph August Lux, an Austrian-born critic, helped formulate its agenda.

In their celebrated show, *The International Style: Architecture since 1922*, held at the Museum of Modern Art in 1932, architectural historian Henry-Russell Hitchcock and architect Philip Johnson, articulated the International Style's three principals. The architecture emphasized volume as opposed to mass; regularity as opposed to symmetry, and outlawed arbitrarily applied decoration.

The modern movement was a revolution in social purpose as well as architectural forms. It tried to reconcile industrialism, society and nature, projecting prototypes for mass housing and ideal plans for new homes and even cities. Modernism held the architect responsible for overseeing everything from the smallest to the largest articles of design. This element of Modernism will be demonstrated in this show by such diverse items as architect-designed furniture, public housing and house catalogues.

The arrival of the Modernism in Memphis parallels the rest of the nation. National and even international advances in technology and design were known and practiced by architects and engineers working in Memphis by 1890, an impressive achievement given the relative cultural isolation of the South before World War II.

Modern technology arrived in 1890 with the construction of a steel frame bridge spanning the Mississippi River. That technology was then combined with design to produce the skyscrapers and factory buildings of the early twentieth century. The modern movement's social purpose appeared locally in city planning and public housing projects. During the economic downturn of the 1930s, here as elsewhere, architects looked to government for patronage. While the Great Depression was alleviated by the entry of the United States into World War II, that event also halted domestic construction projects unless they were war related.

Modernism in Memphis took on a new life after World War II. Bereft of faith in the possibility of transforming the world, the earlier utopian dreams of the Modern Movement were supplanted by affirmation of the power of capitalism. Memphis architects, patrons and clients embrace Modernism wholeheartedly. So much so, that some older buildings were abusively altered to make them appear "modern".

By the mid-1960s, the issues facing architecture and architects emerged as minimal and unimaginative replicas of modern architecture's seminal works; city planning by planning bureaucracies rather than thoughtful architects; and functional discipline of Modernism was co-opted by profit-driven real estate developers. About 1965 marks the advent of Late Modernism, exemplified by experimentation by the young Turks who were educated after World War II, and by the mature practitioners pushing the limits of Modernism.

Modernism is still with us today, certainly the principal of Architecture as Volume. Surfacing materials continue to be the subject of experimentation. Certainly, the underlying classical principals of good aesthetics are still imbued in the best buildings of any style, any time. Like other history, architectural history is best viewed from the perspective of time. This show will allow the viewer to better understand and appreciate Modernism in Memphis.

I. The Roots of Modernism in Memphis 1890 to the First World War

Heavy emigration from Northern European countries such as England, Scotland, Germany and Ireland combined with the growth of the cotton industry made Memphis Tennessee the fastest growing city in the United States between 1850 and 1860. By 1860, 37% of the city's population was foreign born. The Civil War halted the heavy emigration but the aftermath of the Civil War brought continued economic prosperity to Memphis.

The new prosperity was made possible in part by two engineering feats of the mid-nineteenth century: ferroconcrete and iron metallurgy. Ferroconcrete was invented in 1849, the first true advance since the Romans had invented it in the first century A. D. Buildings were radically improved by the use of concrete as a structural building material, facilitated by the invention of reinforced concrete, whereby iron rods were inserted to increase strength.

Although iron metallurgy was introduced in the eighth century B. C., standardized iron components were first used in building construction in the 1850s. Although iron has great strength, it is a very brittle material because of the carbon in it. In 1856, Henry Bessemer invented a process that converted iron into steel by burning out impurities with compressed air. Because steel is hard, strong yet malleable, this freed up form and created new engineering rules. The steel girder was the unit from which much of the industrial world of the late nineteenth century was crafted. Railroad cars, tracks and steel girder bridges all opened the way for economic change in Memphis.

Memphis was poised to be one of the birthplaces of modernism in the United States but circumstances conspired against that. After a series of devastating epidemics in the 1870s and the loss of the city charter due to financial burden, the population dropped from around 50,000 to about 32,000 and economic growth was stunted as the city tried to recover. Except for the Yellow Fever epidemic of 1878, Memphis could be the site of Adler and Sullivan's 1890 Wainwright Building.

Memphis began to come back from the dead with the installation of the Waring sewer system and the discovery of a large artesian aquifer in 1887. With potable water and modern sanitation practices, Memphis regained its city charter and began a slow steady population growth.

The modern steel bridge constructed by the Kansas City, Fort Scott and Memphis Railroad in 1892 heralded the arrival of Modernism in Memphis. George S. Morison of Chicago was the engineer of the cantilevered span. At construction, it was the first bridge to span the Mississippi River below the Eames Bridge at St. Louis. The opening day festivities drew unprecedented crowds. With imagination, the vertical steel girders of the nineteenth century skyscraper can be thought of as vertical railways with the elevators replacing the trains.

Skyscrapers emerged as a radically new building in the vast, sun drenched plains of the American Midwest. Like towering divas, skyscrapers command the urban stage. Deemed both manifestations and destroyers of civilized life, they have been praised as efficient space savers and denounced as rapacious consumers of light and air. Skyscrapers are a uniquely American art form. The first true American skyscraper was born in Chicago, Illinois where the partnership of John Wellborn Root and Daniel Burnham produced the 1890-94 Reliance Building,

a sleek, truly modern building emerges from the masonry and reveals all the later precepts of modernism, architecture as volume with its skeleton of supports; regularity; and the avoidance of applied decoration. The bay window becomes an object in its own right, a perforated membrane with faceted sides for ventilation, a fixed central pane for illumination and slender vertical mullion, the "Chicago" window. The Reliance boasted the aesthetic potential of skeleton construction: ordered repetition, lightness, and a network of visual stresses.

The only steel-frame skyscraper punctuating the Memphis' skyline at the turn of the twentieth century was the eleven-story Continental Bank (D. T. Porter Building) constructed in 1895. The building was sold to the heirs of D.T. Porter who renamed to honor of him, a former mayor during the difficult yellow fever

epidemic and taxing district times. The Porter Building was the first building in Memphis to boast an elevator.

The population of Memphis topped 100,000 by the turn of the century. Most of this growth resulted from annexation and in-migration from farm to city so many of the new immigrants came from Northern Mississippi, Eastern Arkansas, West Tennessee and Alabama. Historically, travelers reached the city by traveling on the steam packet boats, now many of these newcomers arrived via the railroad. As the railroad supplanted the steamboat, Memphis turned its back on the river that had spawned it and faced east to Main Street.

Beginning in 1900, the nineteenth century structures on Madison, Main and Second Streets and Union Avenue were replaced by up-to-date office buildings as a demand for business space increased. These early steel frame buildings owe a great deal to the Chicago school architects and their innovations. The construction of the 1902 Gayoso Hotel and the 1902 Goldsmith's Department Store on South Main Street affirmed faith in the future of the streetcar and the electric carriage. Both buildings were steel frame construction and Goldsmith's displayed modern Chicago-style windows.

The banking business was particularly competitive and so the many banks constructed during this period took advantage of steel framing such as the 1904, 1914 Commerce Title Building (Memphis Trust Company). This skyscraper, complete with bay windows on the older south side, celebrates the transparency allowed by its steel frame construction.

By 1914, the central business district was transformed with the new towering skyscrapers that were the physical evidence of Memphis's industrial and commercial wealth. Accompanying the urban growth was suburban expansion, fueled by the growth of the streetcar systems and the development of new subdivisions such as Estival Park, Central Gardens, Annesdale Park, and Annesdale-Snowden filled with speculative housing. These middle-class communities of new money desired suburban residences possessing modern styles, high quality materials and large yards. Elegant detailing and spaciousness in these modern homes supplied a soothing domestic world, a space of calm and retreat from the bustle of downtown Memphis.

Frank Lloyd Wright's 1922 Guiding Principles for Domestic Design states the Eighth principal is to incorporate as organic architecture, as far as possible, furnishings, making them all one with the building and designing them in simple terms for machine work. Local developers such as Bayard Snowden and William Cullen Chandler tended to reflect the taste of conservative Memphians so most of the homes and cottages were built in Colonial Revival or Craftsman styles. However, a few local homes are in the Prairie School style with deep

overhanging roofs, horizontal lines and bands of wood casement windows are reminiscent of Frank Lloyd Wright's Prairie House ideals.

II. -The Social Aspects of Modernism in Memphis Heritage 1919 to the Second World War

During the 1920s, Memphis' industrial buildings and city planning embodied the ideology of Modernism. After the economic downturn of the 1930s, the tenets were embodied in government sponsored projects such as public utilities and housing projects, as well as ideal plans for new homes and subdivisions. By 1941, World War II stopped what had been a brief resurgence of private sector construction in the late 1930s and instead promoted defense-related construction.

Surprisingly, this Modern ideology came to Memphis via automobile maker Henry Ford, a man who embodied the expression of confidence in the energies and significance of modern life. A staunch capitalist, Ford glorified the notion of mechanization as a positive force by his mass production of automobiles. As a Modernist, Ford believed in the necessity of standard elements for design amenable to mass production of use to society. He needed a commercial building designed to ennoble "industrial civilization" so he chose European trained Albert Kahn.

Architect Albert Kahn (1869-1942) was a German immigrant who devoted much of his life to the design of factories. Kahn refined and popularized the reinforced-concrete factory between 1905 and the late 1910s. He then developed innovative steel-frame factory designs in the 1920s and 1930s. He achieved most of his design breakthroughs in the United States while working for Henry Ford and other automobile manufacturers. While taking on a large volume of factory commissions, Kahn revolutionized the operation of his architectural office. Kahn's office became an architectural assembly line, a "plan factory" for the mass production of factory buildings.

A 1924 Ford assembly plant on Riverside Drive was Kahn's first industrial building in Tennessee. The steel frame construction and industrial windows created airy open workspaces with better lighting to provide a good working environment for his Memphis workers to produce the Model "T" and later the Model "A". Constructed in 1928, Kahn's second Memphis building was a one-story structure covering 35 acres. It was used to produce wooden wheels and automobile bodies for Ford.

Another idealistic vision promulgated by the Modernist movement was city planning. It was also an idea whose time had come in Memphis. The search for new ways of life basic to so much modern architecture in the 1920s was also manifest in idealistic blueprints for the re-planning of the nineteenth century city.

The astonishing increase of automobile ownership and the unbridled economic growth of the 1920s caused Memphians to welcome intervention and zoning in the form of a city plan to guide growth and they voted for local zoning regulations for the first time in 1922. Impressed with Harlan Bartholomew's 1916 *City Plan for St. Louis*, Memphis' city government engaged the planner-engineer to prepare such a plan for Memphis.

The 1924 Bartholomew Plan offered up a grand (though never realized) new waterfront, and for the first time, areas of the modern city were designated as residential, commercial or industrial. The new plan included height restrictions for buildings. No doubt influenced by the 1916 New York zoning ordinance to restrict oppressive mass, Bartholomew was adamant about his suggestions for restricting building heights to 150 feet or twelve stories. This sage advice was obviously ignored by the developers of the 22-story 1924 Columbia Mutual Tower and the 29-story 1930 Sterick Building (the tallest building in town until after WWII). Sadly, the developers of the Sterick Building demonstrated bad timing because the stock market crash of 1929 precipitated the worst economic depression in the history of the United States and ended the political career of President Herbert Hoover.

Locally, both the D. T. Porter and the Sterick Buildings experienced foreclosure. Most of the architects in Memphis were out of work and more importantly; the nation's economic crisis confirmed some local practitioners' doubts about the future of architecture. These doubts were accentuated by the knowledge a new architecture was emerging in Europe. A new, austere architecture with no apparent reference to historic styles and forms but one that was accompanied by prophetic statements about the changing nature of industrial production and the new order of society.

When Democrat Franklin D. Roosevelt was elected in 1932, he promised economic relief in the form of federal relief and reform programs known as the "New Deal." The fact that one third of the jobless were in the Memphis building trades spurred the creation of policy that addressed several different areas of housing activity locally.

Roosevelt never wavered in his commitment to home ownership. The first and one of the most important measures of his administration were the programs to stabilize mortgages by the establishment of an elaborate bureaucracy to regularize the practices and procedures of lending institutions. The National

Housing Act of 1934 established the Federal Housing Administration and created a federally backed loan insurance program for the first time in subdivisions such as Vollintine Hills and Edwin Circle.

New deal city planning influenced the design of the 1938 subdivision of Vollintine Hills, former farmland that had been north of the city limits since the annexation of 1899. The cul-de-sac egresses and the sinuous design of the streets were the added incentives for consumers to buy the first significant residential construction since the Depression began. An even more compelling incentive was the government-backed FHA mortgages offered here for the first time in Memphis in Vollintine Hills.

A second area of housing activity was the direct promotion and construction of low-cost projects for those whom private enterprise did not provide. The housing programs undertaken by the federal government in 1932-34 set the pattern of the architectural design of housing projects in many cities throughout the nation for the rest of the decade. Of all the Public Works Administration (PWA) the Carl Mackley Houses in Philadelphia was conceived with the most advanced architectural and programmatic ideas. In addition to housing, it contained recreational facilities, a laundry and stores. Its creators designed a series of parallel walk-up apartment blocks in scale with the surrounding neighborhood.

The 1930s public housing projects in Memphis are all based on Modernist principals for site organization and design. Modernists consider a housing project not merely a collection of dwelling units but a basis for a way of life for its inhabitants. Beginning in 1934, the Public Works Administration (PWA), which undertook slum clearance and low-rent housing in the cities, was the most widely know of the government's early public-housing efforts. The task became impossible in 1935 when the courts ruled the federal government had no right to condemn private land for low-cost housing because it was not considered a public purpose.

Since the states and municipalities did have the right to purchase and raze property, PWA officials set up local housing authorities named the United States Housing Authority (USHA), which were then responsible for deciding where to situate public housing and whom to place there. This localization restricted the federal government's ability to promote integration of blacks and whites, of poor and non-poor. The PWA allocated half its housing for blacks, stipulation that this would not change existing relations between races. The agency required that housing for blacks have the same amenities as that for whites.

Locally the Memphis Housing Authority, established by the United States Housing Act of 1937, chose as the first two sites for the segregated housing projects two of the most overcrowded and impoverished areas of Memphis. The 26 acre for

the white public housing project, called Lauderdale Courts, was in the eastern portion of the original settlement of Memphis, known as the “Market Square slums,” containing some housing stock dating as far back as the 1820s. Many buildings lacked indoor running water, plumbing, and electricity. Of the over 315 poor white families living in this area, most could not even afford to pay the modest rents set by the housing authorities and so were displaced to other substandard housing.

Constructed simultaneously by the USHA at a cost of over six million dollars, Dixie Homes and Lauderdale Courts were designed by a partnership headed by architect J. Frazer Smith with Anker Hansen, Walk C. Jones, Sr., and Edwin B. Phillips. Structural engineers were Gardner & Howe and Harry B. Hunter; Robert M. Hoshall was the mechanical engineer and John F. Highberger was the landscape architect. Unlike the Carl Mackley Houses, the size and style of Dixie Courts and Lauderdale Homes precluded a sense of continuity in the areas where they were built.

J. Fraser Smith (1897-1957) was born in Canton, Mississippi. He attended Mississippi A & M. College and the Georgia Technical Institute. In 1917, he entered the Naval School of Architecture. After the war was ended in 1919, he finished his architecture degree and moved to Memphis. He then worked for the firm Mann and Gatling where he designed 35 buildings in his first year. He later practiced with Smith and Burnham and worked independently as well. A complex person, he wrote a history of the early nineteenth-century plantation architecture of the Middle South, *White Pillars*, and simultaneously designed housing projects sensitive to recent international developments in housing design. During the Depression, Smith was also the regional chief of the Historic American Building Survey (HABS). Ironically, he would order the city’s original nineteenth century building stock located in the Market square slums surveyed by HABS before he demolished it for the construction of Lauderdale Courts.

Ankar Hansen (1896-1958) was born in Racine, Wisconsin. He graduated from the University of Illinois. In Memphis, he was first employed by the firm of Pfeil and Awsumb and became an independent in 1921. In addition to designing many prestigious Memphis residences, he also designed schools, churches, hotel and apartment buildings. His commercial works include service stations, retail stores, factories, and a hydraulics laboratory for the Corps of Engineers at Vicksburg, milk plants, the Union Bus Terminal, shops and warehouse, as well as Dixie Homes, Lauderdale Courts and Lamar Terrace housing projects.

Walk C. Jones, Sr. (1874-1964) was born in Memphis, Tennessee. As a boy he worked in the firm of Mathais H. Baldwin, the architect of the Fontaine and Lee Houses in Victorian Village and received instruction from him. He also worked as an office boy, pupil and employee of Burke, Weathers, Shaw, Alsup and Hain. In

1908, he established Jones and Furbringer with Max Furbringer. This successful partnership lasted until 1935. Among the structures they planned are the University of Tennessee Medical Units, the Shelby County Courts building, the Shrine Building, Temple Israel on Poplar Avenue and several pumping stations. A civic minded man, Mr. Jones was an original member of the City Planning Commission and chair of the Memphis Housing Authority from 1935-1940.

Edwin B. Phillips (1889-1957) was born on St. Simons Island, Georgia. He received a B. S. in architecture from the University of Pennsylvania in 1913. After working on residences and schools in Pennsylvania and North Carolina, he relocated to Memphis in 1919. From 1919-1921, he was a partner in Allsup and Phillips designing residences, schools, factories and hotels. He was a partner in Spencer and Williams from 1925-27. Later he practiced independently in Memphis and did much work in Arkansas.

Smith and his design team reflected the Modernist design principals in the site plans. Lauderdale Courts have a reduced Colonial revival Style, with the one-, two- and three-story group houses organized in an attractive planned arrangement. The organization and physical delineation of this framework constitutes site planning. The site plan provided solutions to the technical problems of dwelling unit design, such as the location of utilities, location relative to circulation, privacy, sun and air circulation, access and a pleasing arrangement. It was designed to serve the needs of a group-needs for social contact, active and passive leisure time activity and common service

Lauderdale Courts contained 66 buildings with 449 units consisting of two, three, four and five bedroom apartments. The basement of the three story units housed central laundry rooms along with recreational rooms for children in bad weather. Housed in the administration building were a large and a small assembly room, a clubroom, toilet facilities and a kitchen for community activities. Buildings cover less than a fourth of the total ground area. The remainder is devoted to lawn and gardens landscaped to conform to the natural slope of the land, and to equip play space.

The most predominate site feature of Lauderdale Courts is the Mall, a walk that bisects the entire area. The mall is a result of the design principal known as the superblock. The superblock was regarded as a primary principal of low-rent housing project design. It contains one or more common open spaces bounded in whole or in part by through traffic streets but not intersected by such streets. Directly related to the superblock are two corollary principals. The first involves the design and construction of streets and walks to serve particular functions, a through traffic, local traffic, service lanes and pedestrian walks. This results in economy in paving and utility costs as well as desirable privacy from residential areas and freedom from traffic hazards.

The purpose of public housing back then was to provide the poor with decent housing until they could afford it for themselves. Because the management was able to vigorously screen occupants and evict them at the slightest infraction of the myriad of rules, these public housing projects were able to meet their purpose in the bustling economy of the 1940s and 1950s. They really were the first step up the ladder of the American Dream for the “worthy poor” such as Elvis Presley’s impoverished family. Migrating north from Tupelo, Vernon and Gladys Presley with son Elvis lived in a two-bedroom unit at 185 Winchester Avenue, Apartment #328, Lauderdale Courts from 1949-1952. The Presleys were forced to move because some temporary income pushed them a few dollars over the cut-off level. Two years later, in 1954, he would record his first record at Sun Studios.

Living conditions were even worse at the site where the black housing project, Dixie Homes, was to be located. Some 550 black families were living in the shacks, built on sticks that straddled the Quimby Bayou in the area known as the “Queen Bee Bottoms.” There were no city water or sewerage connections so typhoid was rampant. Although a few managed to move into the projects, most original residents were ultimately displaced by the slum destruction.

Constructed for blacks in a high quality Modern style, the superblock plan is also evident at the Dixie Homes housing projects. The axis of Pauline Street enters the complex and then bends off either side to form a curve of Pauline Circle. From the geometrical center point of the circular drive, walkways radiated outward to bisect two courtyards and to establish the axes on which diagonally placed buildings are set. All the brick two-story apartment buildings are surrounded by wide lawn, to allow plenty of sunlight and air between them, and plenty of play area for the children. Some of the apartment buildings have reinforced concrete balconies with curvilinear corners. All of the new public housing was equipped with modern indoor plumbing and running water.

In the 1930s, Memphis was still trying to improve its tarnished national reputation for public health and sanitation first badly sullied during the epidemics in the 1870s. Even after the formation of the Memphis Artesian Water Company and construction of the Waring plan sewer lines, breaks in the pipes allowed re-occurring typhoid fever epidemics to continue until at least 1919. Even with the most up-to-date method of water and waste management in the country by the 1930s, many Memphians remained justifiably leery of their water supply.

Consequently, even during the Depression, Memphis taxpayers were willing to fund water treatment facilities-beautifully landscaped and architect designed. The Board of Water Commissioners of the City of Memphis Water Department commissioned the Sheahan Pumping Station in 1931 to be constructed east of the campus of the University of Memphis at the terminus of a street aptly named

Grandview. A grand view it is, the main building situated majestically in the middle of the site with auxiliary buildings such as aerators situated pleasantly around it in Beaux-Arts fashion.

Max Furbringer (1879-1958) was born in St. Louis and attended Washington University and the Beaux-Arts Society in addition to technical courses in architectural drawing, theory, design and construction. His early work career found him first in St. Louis, then Buffalo and New York City. He came to Memphis and collaborated with Walk Jones by 1901. His surviving works include the North Memphis Savings Bank, (E. H. Crump Building), and the Congregation Children of Israel Temple (Mississippi Boulevard Congregational Educational Building) on Poplar, and Elvis Presley's last home, the National Register listed Graceland. His partnership with Jones dissolved in 1935 when he re-organized as Furbringer and Ehrman, which produced the Modernistic Mid-South Coliseum, his last building. Furbringer wrote the building code for the City of Memphis, chaired the City Planning Commission for ten years and served on the board of both the Housing Authority and the City Board of Adjustment and a Fellow with the AIA.

Walk Jones, Jr. (1904-1972) had studied at the University of Illinois School of Architecture for four years before obtaining a BFA from the Yale University School of Architecture in 1928. He had also spent a year traveling and studying architecture in 1930 before joining the firm of Max Furbringer and Walk Jones, Sr. in 1931. He and his father formed Walk Jones and Walk Jones, Jr. in 1935.

The third aspect of the recovery was the construction of new towns in rural areas such as Greenbelt, Maryland. Here in the South, the Tennessee Valley Authority (TVA) was created in 1933 to undertake the planning and development of the Tennessee River basin, an area of 41,000 square miles with a population of three million. The closest TVA dam to Memphis is Pickwick Dam.

Throughout the 1930s architects and engineers worked on plans to rationalize construction and therefore lower the price of houses. A local group of Memphis architects headed by J. Frayser Smith developed a program emphasizing strong government control, modern design and rational planning by pooling their talents to produce plans for inexpensive home. Memphis was the first city in the country to originate such a program to get better quality homes at reasonable prices. In 1936 they produced the Small Home Builders Association Catalogue with over 100 exterior designs and floor plans to select from for homes in the \$2500-\$6000 range. Local architects also offered their services at a reduced fee.

In 1937, as evidence the domestic economy was on the upswing, The Firestone Tire and Rubber Plant (no longer extant) opened a local plant in 1937 at the old Murray Wood Corporation Plant designed by Albert Kahn. In addition, a modern two-story steel girder building designed by Walk Jones, Sr. and Walk

Jones, Jr. was constructed to enlarge the operation on Moorhead Street in 1938. The light filled building further enhanced the production process.

Because the International Style was not really heralded in the United States until 1932 during the nadir of the Depression and because Memphians have conservative tastes in housing, there was one Modern style private home built in Memphis before World War II. That is the 1938 Frederic Thesmar House, a baked porcelain enamel prefabricated International style building located at 273 Windover Cove. According to his son, Mr. Thesmar was a salesperson for these structures and constructed one for use as his own home as a sales sample. The venture failed but the building remains today.

The decade of 1940 began with hope that economic recovery was at hand but the war in Europe caused great local concern. With the December 1941 bombing of Pearl harbor, the United States entered World War II. During the war, the only new construction was for war effort. Many local architects and engineers saw military service or became deeply involved in defense construction projects. Because all metal was designated for the war effort, locally even more emphasis was now placed on the use of wood and concrete as building materials.

Further local evidence of the continuing role of the government as patron is the Walk Jones and Walk Jones, Jr., Tennessee Guard Armory at 2525 Central Avenue. Constructed in 1941 as the country was gearing up for the war effort, the proto-Brutalist armory is of poured concrete construction.

III. 1945 to 1965-Aesthetics, Technology and Capitalism

The Second World War had eroded some of the impulses that had brought modern architecture into existence. The horrors of the Holocaust and the atomic bomb discredited technology and Modernist Utopia. At the very least, Modernism became domesticated.

Beginning in the late 1930s, Modernist architects such as Walter Gropius began experimenting with local materials such as wood, stone and stucco. This revival of vernacular forms reflected a revitalization of tradition.

Locally, a 1948 International style residence designed by George Awsumb exhibits this use of vernacular materials. Awsumb's 1948 Walker Wellford House was actually designed in 1938 but the materials shortages caused by the Second World War delayed construction until after it had ended. The building's owner, Walker Wellford, was an engineer and personally designed the building's heat pump system, heated driveway and pump house. This private residence has a steel-frame structure, reinforced concrete floors, a third floor roof terrace

and vernacular fieldstone wall cladding, a perfect example of “the domestication of the modern.”

George Awsumb (1880-1959) was born in Norway. After his parents emigrated to the U.S., he was reared in Wisconsin, started working in barn construction in 1898 and then graduated with an architecture degree from the University of Illinois in 1906. After working for J. C. Llewellyn of Chicago for two years, he was the recipient of a traveling scholarship, which sent him to study the architecture of France and England. He moved to Memphis from Chicago in 1919 after partnering with Charles O. Pfeil to win the competition to build the Municipal Auditorium and Market House. Awsumb was a very well respected local designer of houses of worship including Idlewild Presbyterian Church.

Awsumb is also responsible for designing the 1948 Baron Hirsch Synagogue (NR 2007). The Baron Hirsch Congregation was established in Memphis in 1864. Their first synagogue was a former black church located at Fourth and Washington in the Pinch area and they built a sanctuary in 1915. Since their Orthodox religion prevents operating an automobile on the Sabbath, the congregation of Baron Hirsch realized they needed to move further east after World War II.

They purchased a large former golf course on Vollintine Avenue east of Evergreen and constructed a new synagogue. Congregation president Phillip Belz “The Temple Builder” oversaw construction of the \$1.6mil, 2,000-seat rectilinear International style building with powerful gray limestone wall cladding enhancing its clean modern lines. Artisan Jac Grue designed the stained glass windows. When it was completed in 1957, the main sanctuary of the synagogue was the largest in the United States, according to the Union of Orthodox Jewish Congregations of America. Although the synagogue was vacated in 1984 when they moved to a new location farther east in Memphis, the original building still stands and in 1992 was sold to the Gethsemane Garden Church of God in Christ.

Houses within the district are a largely intact and homogeneous building stock constructed 1946–1957 in conjunction with the synagogue, and are within walking distance of the former synagogue. They originally served to house its orthodox Jewish congregation." The district has been singled out for its unity by both its historic building stock and contiguity to the former synagogue. Vollintine Hills is notable as a clearly definable geographic area, whose physical development, "defined by the needs of a religious community," is "readily distinguishable from surrounding properties." Vollintine Hills is roughly bounded by Vollintine Avenue, Brown Avenue, McLean Boulevard, and Evergreen Street and was listed as a district on the National Register of Historic Places in 2007.

Also appearing in Memphis during the late 1940s was the "house of the future", the Lustron House, a solid steel home composed of 3000 parts stamped out in a converted aircraft factory. The Lustron Home is a tribute to Modernism's faith in factories and mechanization since they were literally built like a Ford automobile. Carl G. Strandlund manufactured Lustron Homes in his million square foot factory in Columbus, Ohio. Strandlund had prior manufacturing experience making prefabricated commercial buildings such as Standard Oil gas stations and White Castle restaurants.

All of the numbered Memphis structures are a two-bedroom, one-bath, 1200 square foot deluxe model. The exterior has two-foot square panels with a baked-on porcelain enamel finish and a metal roof stamped with a shingle pattern. The metal interior has built in bookcases, a pass through counter between the galley kitchen and dining room, and built in vanity, closets and cabinets in the bedrooms. The Lustron is virtually maintenance free except for lubrication of the rubber gaskets joining the major parts such as exterior walls and window frames. A furnace pipes hot air into a cavity between the roof and ceiling, causing ceiling panels and upper interior walls to radiate heat. Less 2500 were made before the company went into bankruptcy in 1950, partially caused by their own inefficiency and only a handful remains locally.

In the decades after the end of the Second World War, Memphis was all but remade. The federal "Urban Renewal" programs cleared huge district of supposedly substandard buildings in the inner city including huge areas surrounding Beale Street and immediately north of downtown. At the same time, the interstate highway program linked the downtown to sprawling areas of sparsely settled land. The legal and administrative machinery necessary to implement these steps had been established during the 1930s but the Depression and the Second World War had largely postponed these necessary changes. The prosperity and the baby boom of the postwar decades offered local architects an unprecedented opportunity to build government centers and corporate headquarters and expand cultural centers downtown such as the Ellis Auditorium and the Cossitt Library. The eastern, northern and southern

suburbs were quickly filled with tracts of houses, shopping centers, and schools. Industrial parks were created and the Municipal airport was expanded.

By the 1950s, in Memphis as in every place in the United States, Modern Movement aesthetics: sleek, machine-like and unornamented, converged with the steel frames and glass curtain walls to produce cost-effective skyscrapers and suburban office parks. Reduced costs and speedier construction made Modernist buildings appealing to developers and city administrators alike. By this time it was also becoming apparent that there was not a unified modern style or approach to architecture. Modern architecture was quickly becoming a broad term that encompassed many attitudes towards design, some of which were irreconcilable.

The population of Memphis was 396,000 in 1950 but Memphis was still emerging from regionalism so long established local firms such as Jones and Jones, Jr. dominated the field but talented newcomers were hired by these firms to offer a breadth of vision for the increasingly cost driven clients. Locally firms such as A. L. Aydelott and Associates and the partnership of Bill Mann and Roy Harrover were some of the 1950s architects stretching their design muscles beyond the rigidities of the inherited International style.

Alfred Lewis Aydelott (1916-2008) was the elder statesman of Memphis Modernism was Arkansas-born. His formal education included a Bachelor of Science in Architecture from the University of Illinois. Moving to Memphis, he worked with Lucian Minor Dent from 1938 until 1941. Returning from service after World War II, he began his own firm lasting until 1973 when he moved to another state. Aydelott is responsible for bringing many talented designers to Memphis including Francis Mah. He was the architect for numerous government buildings, commercial buildings, the U. S. Embassy in Manila and a hospital in Lima, Peru.

An early Aydelott design was the no-longer extant 1952-1953 Hurt Village, a North Memphis white public housing project badly placed on an extremely busy and dangerous intersection and bisected by a state highway. Only the first four buildings situated on the north-west corner of Auction and Danny Thomas were actually designed by Aydelott. He used ramps in the design of the three-story buildings to provide access for elderly and handicapped tenants. The project won an award sponsored by *Progressive Architecture Magazine* in 1951.

The descent from idealistic beginnings of the public housing program is most starkly realized here. Hurt Village ultimately grew to 51 low-budget fire proof masonry buildings with 450 units on a 32 acre site plan not very conducive to inspiring the resident's higher aspirations. Perhaps this complex reflects a new spirit of the times that the artist/architect was now an elitist professional who provides services rather than working for "every man".

Compounding the problem was passage of anti-discrimination legislation in the mid-1960s that meant the housing authorities were no longer able to screen out undesirable residents. Instead of the working poor, the residents were too often the disturbed, debilitated and dispossessed. Crime soared, and for too many residents of Hurt Village, what should have been the first step up the American Dream, become the last stop on the road to hell. Hurt Village is a low-rise local version of the ill-conceived Pruitt-Igoe Towers, a 1950-54 St. Louis housing project designed by Minouri Yamasaki so unlivable that it was finally imploded.

The 1952-56 Immaculate Conception High School Building on Central exemplified Aydelott's Modernist precepts. This building is designed in the spirit of Mies van der Rohe and Eero Saarinen but is an ironic choice for the faith that gave the world Chartres Cathedral. Had World War II shaken the tenets of religion as well as Modernism? The school was given a first place design award for catholic institutions in 1958 and Priscilla Presley is one of its alumni.

For years art classes had been held in an outmoded nineteenth century house on Adams Street. As the G. I. Bill and the baby boom created an increased demand for artistic training locally, the Memphis Academy of Art (Memphis College of Art) was offered land in Overton Park to build a new school. The city then asked Modern architects Philip Johnson and Paul Rudolph to act as jurors in a national design competition for the new building. Philip Johnson had been a curator of the watershed New York Museum of Art's first exhibition of architecture and subsequent book. Johnson was also instrumental in Mies van der Rohe's receiving a commission to design the Seagram's Building in New York City. Paul Rudolph is perhaps best known for his 1958-62 Art and Architecture Building at Yale and the 1955 Jewett Arts Center at Wellesley College.

The competition winner was the newly formed partnership of William Mann and Roy Harrover. The design for the 1956 Memphis Academy of Art building is an amalgamation of the Wrightian importance of roof as a character-giving feature and the patterned grills that provided ornamentation for the New Formalism style of which Philip Johnson was a prominent practitioner. This building received a *Progressive Architecture* award.

William Mann (1924-1961) was born in Memphis. Mr. Mann earned Bachelor of Science and bachelor of architecture degrees from Georgia Institute of Technology. He served in World War II and joined the firm of his uncle, Estes W. Mann in 1948. He became a full partner in 1951. He and Roy Harrover established Mann & Harrover in 1956 where he remained active until his death in 1961. In addition to the Academy of Art and the Memphis Municipal (International) Airport, he also designed Richland Elementary and Junior High Schools, the Fine Arts Center, the Memphis Speech and Hearing Center and

Goldsmith's Department Store at Poplar Avenue and Perkins. In addition to the Airport and the Art Academy, the Fine Arts Center and Richland Elementary School design also won *Progressive Architecture* good design awards.

Roy Harrover (1929-) was born in Dayton, Ohio. He was raised in Nashville where he worked in the office of architect Edwin Keeble while still attending high school. After serving in the Marines in World War II, he enrolled in Yale to study architecture. After graduating with honors, he relocated to Memphis in 1955 and joined with William Mann in 1956. After Mann's death in 1961, he created the firm of Harrover and Associates, which designed the Academy of Art and the Memphis Municipal Airport. He is responsible for designing the NBC Bank Tower, the First Unitarian Church/The Church on the River, University of Tennessee, Memphis Child Development Center and Cecil Humphreys General Education Building and Mud Island Park and Mississippi River Museum.

After World War II ended, the owners of Goldsmith's Department Store on South Main Street valiantly fought the suburbanization of Memphis retail business in a variety of ways. In 1948, they purchased the Gayoso Hotel for more than \$1,000,000 and in 1953, they constructed a huge 600-car garage located on Front Street between McCall and Wagner and connected to the store via an underground tunnel. In 1957, they reaffirmed their commitment to downtown and decided to remodel the 1902 building. They chose local Modern architect William Noland Van Powell. However, by now, Modernism had triumphed and the historic building was encapsulated in marble to mimic the new buildings being constructed further east.

Finally capitulating in 1961, Goldsmiths constructed its first suburban store at Poplar and Perkins Street, directly south of the new Sear, Roebucks department store at Laurelwood, a white Meisian box designed by Mann & Harrover. In 1962, they closed down the historic Gayoso Hotel to provide expansion space for the downtown department store. Goldsmiths finally ceased their downtown operations in the early 1990s and Belz Enterprises purchased the entire block. Today the entire block has been restored as a mixed used development of housing, retail stores and offices.

William Noland Van Powell (1904-1977) was born in Memphis. He returned to Memphis in 1937 after practicing architecture in St. Louis for 4 years. He was the architect of the Art-Deco Farnsworth Building (Memphis Business Journal), Fairview Junior High School (NR 1990), the Aquarium at the Memphis Zoo, and many private residences. He was also an expert watercolorist whose paintings were collected internationally.

Modernist aesthetics drifted from the margins to the mainstream as the world came to terms with the imminent possibility of nuclear destruction. This was a

special threat to Memphians since in a nuclear confrontation the Manhattan Project in Oak Ridge, Tennessee was a natural target for Communist retaliation. Tennessee school children were shown films depicting what one should do during a nuclear attack, air raid drills complete with automobile evacuation were practiced and school children wore special dog tags so they could be identified. In the face of nuclear annihilation, the population continued to increase and school construction began in earnest in the new suburbs.

The first truly modern design school in Memphis was Richland Elementary School constructed in 1957 and designed by the firm of Mann & Harrover. This school exemplifies certain architectural motifs that sprang from the Bauhaus in the 1920s. These included a flat roof, sunscreens, concrete block corridors and an invisible entrance. This motif would appear repeatedly as other suburban schools sprang up.

In the same year, Modernism arrived at the medical center when the Memphis and Shelby County Health Department constructed a large new building to house all their operations. The Office of Walk Jones, Jr., constructed the Health Department Building at 814 Jefferson in 1957. It was a rectilinear, two-story steel frame & glass wall building with a barrel vaulted pavilion for the auditorium on the north side. This modernist structure has a two-story courtyard in its center that allows natural illumination of the interior rooms. The building has a north facing 1972 addition in red brick in a Brutalist style that mars the lines of the earlier structure.

Following Le Corbusier and Frank Lloyd Wright's examples of the architect as a city planner, the Memphis Civic Center Plaza was the brainchild of the Memphis chapter of American Institute of Architects. The League of Memphis Architects was formed in 1959 as a non-profit corporation to prepare a master plan. The city of Memphis paid the \$30,000 overhead cost of the project office and the Architects donated their services free of charge. The project office included a full-time project manager, Peter B. Andrews, and John M. O'Brien, assistant manager and chief designer working under the supervision of a 10-man design team chosen by the League.

The design team included eight architects, a land planner and landscape architect, and a representative of Harland Bartholomew & Associates, the city planners who prepared the Public Building Plan. The design team consisted of: Merrill G. Ehrman, Thomas F. Faires, Francis Gassner, Roy Harrover, Walk C. Jones, Jr., W. D. McKinnie, Jr., Robert Day Smith, Tom A. Windrom, Walter A. J. Ewald, William Pollard, Jr., and Zeno Yeates. They worked under the League's Executive Committee: Thomas F. Faires, President; Francis Gassner, vice-president; Raymond Martin Secretary; Robert Goforth, Treasurer; Wells Awsumb, Director; William H. Norton, Director; and Dean E. Hill, Ex-Officio. Members of the Civic

Advisory Committee were: Robert E. Galloway, Chairman; Everett R. Cook, Vice-Chairman; Robert Day Smith, Secretary; Harry C. Pierotti; Walter P. Armstrong; Walter Chandler; Roy M. Marr; I. L. Myers, William R. Kent and F. T. Thayer.

The genesis of the redesign was the 1955 Bartholomew Plan for Public Buildings commissioned by the city government. The plan called for a Civic Center with five new buildings and an underground parking garage in a four block area bounded by Third Street east to Lauderdale, between Poplar and Adams Avenue. By 1959 this plan had evolved into a pedestrian plaza to be surrounded by a new City Hall, new Federal and State office buildings, parking facilities, and tourist information center, and the remodeled city auditorium and police headquarters. The focal point of the plaza would be a reflecting pool and from this plaza, a view would be opened up to the riverfront.

“This would be a completely urban place...freed for once from the distractions of motor traffic”, says the statement of the designers. Creation of the pedestrian plaza as envisioned would require re-routing motor vehicle traffic from three blocks of Main Street and Washington Street. Immediately west of the Civic Center proper, planners envisioned a river front development based on two levels of parking structures built into the side of bluff. A proposed 350-foot observation tower would be constructed at the corner of Front Street and Washington Avenue as a symbol of Memphis and its historic ties with the Mississippi River. Carl Awsumb who had designed such a tower in his 1924 plans of the Ellis Auditorium had first posed the idea of a river observation tower although neither one of these were ever realized.

It was felt that this river front treatment would be an appropriate foreground for the public buildings of the Civic Center when interstate traffic approached Memphis across a projected Mississippi River bridge just north of the Civic Center. At that time there were also proposed plans for a Great River Road which would have traversed the length of the Mississippi at bank side.

By now the 1955 Bartholomew Plan had grown to eleven new buildings, restaurants, concessions, and the observation tower. The proposed cost was a staggering \$32,764,200 with a projected completion date of January 1969. The architects said the Civic Center “is not to be considered an isolated entity. It is conceived as an integral unit of a revitalized central business district. Its enactment will generate other positive action and lead the way to a dynamic and realistic Downtown for Memphis.” In 1962, the Urban Renewal Administration authorized a \$4,500,000 grant and a half million-dollar loan to the City to buy and clear the land in the Civic Center area.

While the League of Memphis Architects refined their Civic Center Plan, the Shelby County government got a jump start on the plan when it commissioned

the Shelby County Office Building at 157 Poplar Avenue. This Modern style government building was constructed in 1959. The architects were Alfred Aydelott and Associates and associated architects were Zeno Yates and Associates. The building design combines Le Corbusier's pilotis to raise the building off the ground and the New Formalism's aluminum screen ornamentation to produce a very striking design. Zeno Yates (1915-) was born in Starkville, MS, received a degree in engineering from Mississippi State University and a Masters degree in architecture in Pennsylvania. He arrived in Memphis in the early 1950s.

Émigré Modernists Walter Gropius and Mies van der Rohe grappled with residential construction. Gropius attempted to reorient modern architecture in a vernacular direction. Mies' American houses were glass walled boxes with no dividing walls on the interior, rather it was zoned by carefully placed furniture and the location of bathrooms and kitchen service walls. By the late 1940s, a California-based magazine, *Arts and Architecture* sponsored a series of Case Study Houses, which produced a very influential house by furniture and industrial designer Charles Eames in 1948.

It was 1959 before any Memphis residences were designed in the Miesian manner. The first is a one-story, steel frame and glass curtain structure by O. T. Marshall, located on a hilly site above the Wolf River on Homewood Cove. Designed as the architect's residence, this Memphis structure pays direct homage to that seminal work of Modernism, Ludwig Mies van der Rohe's German Pavilion at the Barcelona Exhibition, Spain, 1929.

O. T. Marshall (1931-) was born in Tipton County, Tennessee. He studied mechanical drawing in high school and worked as a contractor. Moving to Memphis, he apprenticed himself to architect Lucian Minor Dent for eight years. He established his own architectural firm in 1957 which continues to operate today.

A second house, constructed in Midtown during 1957-59 was by the firm of Buddy Martin, with two young architects, Charlie Jen and Francis Mah as the designers. The two-story steel frame and glass curtain wall residence was designed to accommodate a space that had been where the Poplar Avenue trolley turned around across from Overton Park at 2073 Poplar Avenue. The building had a pilotis feel on the bottom floor because an incised carport was originally incorporated into the first floor. The interior boasts a freestanding central stairwell, interior walls constructed of panels of rice paper and a suspended copper fireplace in the living room.

Exemplary as these houses are as individual works, they did not make a substantial impact on the design and construction of the ordinary local

developer's house. Perhaps because steel always seemed an inappropriate material for a house; nor was it as malleable as wood for small-scale construction. Modernism was never embraced for speculative residential development anywhere in the United States

Francis Mah (1929-1998) Born in Honolulu, Hawaii, he completed his undergraduate work at the University of Hawaii and got his degree in architecture from Yale University in 1952. He served in the Army during the Korean War and moved to Memphis after his discharge. He worked for A. L. Adylotte and Robert Thomas (Buddy) Martin before joining the firm of Walk Jones, Jr. in 1958. He later became partner and principal in charge of design. The firm later became Jones, Mah, Gaskill and Rhodes. Mr. Mah served as president and director of the Memphis chapter of the American Institute of Architects. Among the buildings he designed are First Tennessee Bank; the Southern College of Optometry, Buckman Labs, Baptist Memorial Hospital East, a 1972 addition to the Brooks Museum, and the Memphis Publishing Company.

In a towering show of commitment to the downtown area, in 1961, the First National Bank of Memphis commissioned the Office of Walk Jones, Jr., to design their new corporate headquarters to be located at 165 Madison Avenue. The First National Bank Building (First Tennessee) was the first building in downtown Memphis to epitomize the ideas of the modernist movement and to define the essence of modern architecture. The Miesian inspired building was an early project for the Yale educated duo of Francis Mah and Walk Jones, III. Lifted off the ground on square piers or *pilotis*, this essentially classical building includes a glass-enclosed lobby, raised tower, and slab marquee. It is set back on a plaza, however it never inspired a local zoning regulation ending full-site setback towers as the Seagram's Building did in New York City in 1961. The glass and anodized aluminum 25-story building contains approximately 14,000 square feet of usable lobby space.

Walk Jones, III (1933-1998) Born in Memphis, he earned a history degree from Washington & Lee University and a master's degree in architecture from Yale University. He served in the Army from 1954-1956. In 1961, he joined the family firm founded by his grandfather. He was president of JMGR, Inc. before retiring in 1997. Under his leadership, the firm became an international firm. He oversaw development of buildings for First Tennessee Bank, Baptist Memorial Hospital, Buckman Laboratories, Southern College of Optometry, as well as buildings in Germany, Japan, China and Mali.

By the early 1960s, local businesses were adopting Modernism but some were now going out of town to find architects. One such business was WHBQ Radio and Television that began as a local radio station in 1925, broadcasting from the basement of St. John's Methodist Church. They then moved to the Demon

Building on Third Street and by 1932, they established offices in the Hotel Claridge on North Main Street. In 1942, they relocated south to the Hotel Gayoso. When they began their television station, Channel 13, in 1953, they moved further south to the old Hotel Chisca where disk jockey Dewey Phillips broadcast his immensely popular Red, Hot and Blues radio show. Phillips was responsible for the early local promotion of new comer Elvis Presley's recordings. Another WHBQ disk jockey, Wink Martindale, later became a nationally known television star.

When WHBQ decided to relocate out east into their own building on South Highland Street, they hired the Princeton, NJ architectural firm of Fulmer and Bowers to design the new studios. It is a two story Miesian rectangle with Post-modern touches including dark-panels decorating the top half of the white concrete structure and a beautifully defined offset entrance. This 1962 building still serves as their studios today. O. K. Fulmer (1904-1985) graduated from Carnegie-Mellon in 1926 and Harvard in 1930. This firm specialized in designing radio/television stations throughout the country including WGBH in Boston, WBAL in Baltimore, WTAE in Atlanta and in Denver.

The first local hospital to use a Modern design was built for Hollywood entertainer, Danny Thomas in 1963. Trying to fulfill a religious vow he had made to St. Jude to build a hospital for children stricken with childhood cancer, Thomas asked his friend Paul Williams, a California architect with Memphis roots to design it for him. The prestigious African-American architect designed the original St. Jude Memorial Hospital building in the late 1950s and donated it to the cause. The design, consisting of five wings radiating off a central core, was so powerful that Danny Thomas sold the idea of the hospital and raised the construction money from this sketch.

Paul R. Williams (1894-1980) was born in Los Angeles of parents who migrated from Memphis, Tennessee to Los Angeles. His training includes studying at the Polytechnic High School in Los Angeles, the Beaux-Arts Institute of Design, and a degree from the University of Southern California in architectural engineering and studied at the firm of John C. Austin. Mr. Williams was architect to the rich and famous in Southern California. His clients included E. L. Cord; Jay Paley; Lucille Ball and Desi Arnez. Other clients included the Palm Springs Tennis Club; W & J. Sloane Department Store and the city of Los Angeles. He also designed commercial buildings; hotels; military bases and public housing.

The original Memphis Municipal Airport was an 1937 WPA project that included a 5,000-foot runway. By the late 1950s, the facility was terribly outdated and the city leaders commissioned the firm of Mann & Harrover to design a new terminal building. In the style of New Formalism, steel umbrellas columns are used to economically span huge areas with Gothic delicacy at the Memphis

International Airport, 1959-1963. Other hallmarks of New Formalism here include smooth wall surfaces, a level skyline and a heavy projecting roof slab. The terminal won a Progressive Architects Award in 1961.

Modernism arrived at the Mid South Fairgrounds when the Mid-South Fair Association and the City of Memphis and Shelby County governments decided to build The Mid-South Coliseum on the former horse racing grounds at East Parkway and Southern Avenue.

The northern edge of the old Dadrick Plantation had formerly been the site of the 1884 Montgomery Park and the Memphis Jockey Club founded by businessman Henry A. Montgomery. The spring racing season featured stakes races as the Tennessee Derby, the Gayoso Hotel Derby and the Peabody Hotel Derby. Racing ceased there in after 1900. In 1912, the city purchased old Montgomery Park for \$250,000 as a permanent home for the Fairgrounds.

In the late 1950s they commissioned a plan designed by Art Linkletter's firm, which called for a large multipurpose building to be constructed to serve various community needs including an ice-skating rink. The firm of Merrill Ehrman and Max Furbringer designed the Mid-South Coliseum, a \$4,250,000 finally building erected in 1963 and 1964. However, Max Furbringer had passed away in 1957 leaving Merrill Ehrman to design this local example of Lugi Nervi's famous Coliseum with its clear span roof and unity is achieved by continuity of form rather than proportion or geometric means. The Coliseum is arguably the first local facility to be designed for integration, as there are no separate facilities labeled black or white. It was also the site of integrated events including concerts, revivals and political rallies.

In 1963, the black community embraced Modernism when the local firm of Francis Gassner, Thomas Nathan and Robert Browne was hired to design the Hollis Price Library on the LeMoyne-Owen Campus located at 807 Walker Avenue. LeMoyne-Owen College traces its beginning to 1862 when the American Missionary Association founded it as the Lincoln School after the city of Memphis surrendered to Union forces. The Hollis Price Library was designed in the tradition of the Barcelona Pavilion, and is a floating cube of masonry and glass strip windows set in a concrete frame. Set on the urban campus, this beautiful library houses a Ben Shahn mosaic celebrating unity.

Dr. Francis Julius LeMoyne, a prominent Pennsylvania physician, rescued the Lincoln School from financial difficulties when he contributed \$20,000 to found a school in Memphis on Orleans near Beale Street. In 1901, a secondary school was added; this was the only black high school in Memphis until Booker T. Washington High School was founded in 1923. A year later, it was named LeMoyne Junior College and in 1932 LeMoyne College, now a four-year

institution awarded its first bachelors degree. They acquired the land at Walker Avenue and McDowell Street c. 1913 and constructed their first building. Many of the other buildings on campus are in the Colonial Revival style. The entire campus was placed on the National Register in 2005.

Francis Gassner (1927-1977) was born in New York City and began architectural business in Memphis in 1955. He designed or helped design Shelby County Office Building, C & I Bank main office, the State of Tennessee Office Building, the Memphis State University Fine Arts Complex, Temple Israel, the Wassell-Randolph Student Alumni Center at University of Tennessee Memphis, the administrative headquarters of Plough, Inc., the Hollis Price Library and Alma Hanson Student Center, at LeMoyne-Owen College, and the UT Winfield Dunn Dental Clinic Buildings. He was a Fellow of AIA, and president of local chapter in 1969. He served on advisory panel of Tennessee Arts Commission and instructor at Memphis Academy of Arts Memphis College of Art.

As the various entities continued to build the various components of the Civic Center Plaza plan, Gassner's firm along with the firm of Haglund & Venable was selected to design the Donnelly Hill State Office Building. The design earned a national design citation in the *Progressive Architecture Magazine Design Awards Program* for 1965.

When the state office building bids exceeded the available funds in August 1964, revision of plans was begun. During the period of revision, the Shelby County government found urgent need for additional space as they had already outgrown their 1959 building. Since adequate land, suitably located for county needs, the county requested and was granted the privilege of sharing the state property. Once the site details were settled, the architects were faced with the objective of relocating the State Office Building without completely redesigning it or sacrificing intended open space. This dilemma was solved by moving the state office building from its original location to a more northwest location towards Poplar and Main.

The tower rises 192 feet above ground level with about 10,000 square feet in each of its eleven column free floors. The twelfth floor houses offices for visiting state officials. All services were to be located in a 36-foot central core and mechanical equipment is on the top floor. Two structural systems were employed to gain the desired monumental impact required for such buildings. It has an exterior bearing wall and super frame, which relieves the bearing wall at every fourth floor and transfers the load to eight massive exterior columns. The exterior wall cladding is a salt and pepper granite aggregate. The ground floor pilotis are a nod to the Seagram's' Building.

The year 1965 is a watershed date because it marks the birth of the postmodern style exemplified by experimentation by the young Turks who were educated after World War II, and by the mature practitioners pushing the limits of Modernism. Would that self-consciously referential style be viewed, by the founders of the Modern movement, as regression into eclecticism? On the other hand, would they just see the sleek machine surfaces supporting the oversized cornice?

Although its time has passed Modernism is still with us today, certainly the principle of Architecture as Volume. Surfacing materials continue to be the subject of experimentation. Certainly, the underlying classical principles of good aesthetics are still imbued in the best buildings of any style, any time. It is the architectural style too often not understood or admired. As an architectural historian, I want to see it preserved and recognized for its importance.

About the author-Judith Johnson is an architectural historian located in Memphis, TN. This essay was originally written c. 2000 for an exhibition of Memphis Modern architecture that was never mounted. It has been revised in the summer of 2014 to reflect changes that have taken place in the time since it was first written.