The Country House and Its Style
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In all architectural design the careful study of style is a most important element; but in country houses the consistent development of style may be carried to a very high state of perfection: there is greater opportunity for doing so, and there are fewer obstacles in the way than in any other department of house architecture.

Style, in this instance, is not necessarily chosen from the accepted classic and Renascence periods, but a style that is a frank expression of locality and the material at hand.

The country house that may be built in either Virginia, or Maine, or California, should express distinctly in its character every dominant feature of its locality. Style would then really be synonymous with locality, and the locality of a country house would be an expression of local traditions, local necessities, limitations and possibilities of climate and landscape.

A strict observance of this principle would give us country houses that were as much a part of the country in which they stood as the very trees and rocks of that country.

This feeling of locality should be expressed in the treatment of both the interior and the exterior of such a house. For the reason that interior arrangements must, of necessity, conform more or less to personal requirements, the designer may find the expression of locality here a rather harder task than in the treatment of the exterior. But the outside, the inside and the surrounding country all should strike the same note.

The evidence of a sincere effort to apply this principle of locality may be observed in a country house recently built at Menlo Park, California; this place is about thirty miles south of San Francisco.

The conditions under which the work was done were in most respects ideal; inasmuch as the client, after expressing his special needs, placed the development of the work wholly in the hands of his architect. Even to the extent of consulting him as to the site. The amount of money allowed for this work was thirty-five hun-
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dred dollars; the building actually cost, when completed, thirty-three hundred, sixty dollars: including all fixtures, in fact everything, except landscape gardening. The site that was chosen is a level, ten-acre field, with roadways along the east and south sides. About one hundred and fifty feet back from each of the roadways stand four splendid elm trees, forming a nearly square enclosure, approximately ninety feet each way. In the center of this, and facing the southeast, stands the house.
The conditions which give this building its locality are an expression of the local climate and building materials. In this section of California, the cold is quite severe from about the beginning of December to the end of February, therefore, the houses must be built to withstand low temperature. California is an earthquake country; this requires that its buildings should be low. During certain months there are terrific wind storms which come out of the northwest; this feature of the climate necessitates that important rooms be protected by location on the southeast, south and southwest sides of the buildings; and another prominent reason for an observance of this arrangement is the great value of sunshine in California, even at some distance south. On warm days, during midsummer, one is compelled to avoid shady spots, and seek the sunshine, or run the risk of colds and aches. The need of direct sunlight is so great that, in some sections of California, lots barren of trees are considered most choice building sites. In view of this, the reason for avoiding also covered verandas is obvious. So much for climatic necessities, limitations and possibilities. As to the architectural traditions of California, whatever is left of them were of Spanish origin, and the low, gable-roofed mission houses, built of tile and clay, were the exponent of their style. It therefore follows that to preserve traditions, the Californian country house should be a one-story building, and to be still further consistent, tile and clay, or cement, which has replaced clay, should be used as materials; though the materials must always be selected subject to the builder's financial condition, and where economy is a consideration, timber construction is of course the necessary choice.
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Of the various woods used in building the one most distinctly Californian is redwood. This is a wood of many peculiarities uncommon to others. Its most important characteristic is its resistance to fire; it burns very slowly, and for this reason alone is an invaluable building wood. Weather affects it slowly; therefore, it is an excellent material for outside work. In both grain and coloring it is equal to mahogany, and capable of similar finish, though much softer. This makes it suitable for interior finish, and the fact that it shrinks laterally with the grain instead of transversely, is a reason why sections of it, placed edge to edge, make panels that are less likely to separate at the joint, than those made of any other wood, unless they are first carefully kiln dried. It is apparent from these features of redwood that it ought to be the very first selected for Californian houses. Oregon pine or Douglas fir is the usual timber used in framing. Given these features of climate, tradition and materials, the country house at Menlo was designed and executed with the purpose of expressing them.

As already stated, the building was located within a natural enclosure of trees, in a level ten-acre field. It is a one-story structure about fifty feet wide and forty feet deep, and the trees stand a sufficient distance from the building to allow the sunlight to reach it.

The arrangement of the rooms was contemplated with strict consideration of symmetry. Entering the building, one passes from the entrance porch, which is open in summer and enclosed with glass in winter, into a room, eighteen feet wide by twenty feet deep, which serves as a living room, reception hall, library and music room. These separate uses are clearly demonstrated in the work of the interior decorator, as will be described in a later article.

At the north end of this room, facing the entrance doorway, is an arrangement of three arched recesses, formed by eight-inch square redwood posts. The centre one of these recesses contains a wide-mouthed clinker brick fireplace, above the opening of which is laid a heavy redwood log, that forms a shelf. This log is fastened against the brick work with iron bolts having ornamental wrought
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iron heads. In the recesses, on either side of this fireplace, are two broad seats.
The frieze of this room is pierced by windows, three on each side, which open above the level of the main roof; thereby allowing sunlight to reach this room, during the entire time between sunrise and sunset.
Notwithstanding that this is a room sixteen feet high, with windows close to the ceiling, there is a minimum of draughts, which condition is partly due to the fact that the room stands practically in the middle of the building.
All the interior wood work is of rough hewn redwood, showing adz marks. The structural ceiling beams are exposed, being covered on top with narrow redwood boarding.
On the right of the living-room are the main bedchamber and bathroom; these have a southeast exposure. Herein also is redwood used, with the ceiling treated like that of the living-room. This same treatment is carried out in the dining-room, which opens at the opposite side of the living-room and has a southwesterly exposure. The fireplace in the dining-room is of clinker brick. These brick, by the way, are selected from those that lie closest to the fire in the brick kiln, and are consequently baked very hard and burned black in places.
Double windows open to the south and west from the dining-room.
North of this room are a hallway and butler’s pantry; directly beyond, the pantry, is the kitchen, and, again, beyond that, the laundry, which stands at the northwest corner of the building. Along the north side are the servant’s bath and bedroom, a guest chamber and a small back porch. On the east side of the house, between this porch and the main bathroom, is another guest chamber. In the centre are corridors and a staircase which leads to the roof. These corridors and staircase hall are lighted through a sliding skylight, placed over the stairs. The roof of the building is what is generally known as a deck roof. It is covered with heavy boarding laid over building felt, and protected by coarse canvas tacked in place, and painted with three coats of rich white lead. The entire roof is surrounded by a closed railing.
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The purpose of the owner was to cover this deck with awnings supported by a framework, which, when out of use, could be folded out of the way, and to use the roof as a veranda; since it is very large, it was also his idea to serve suppers there, on the occasion of lawn parties; for this latter use, a dumb waiter from the roof to the kitchen is provided.

It is evident that this general scheme has resulted in a building which is strictly peculiar to all the needs and virtues of Californian climate and building material; the fact that the building is but one story high removes part of the danger of collapse from earthquake. Covered verandas are avoided and every effort made to let the sunlight into the building, as may be noted particularly in the living-room, which continues through the roof and has windows above it. This room also has windows opening to the south, but being under the entrance porch, they seem hardly adequate.

The distinctive feature of the plan, beside its symmetry, is the grouping of its various parts. The service quarters, with the laundry and kitchen are grouped about the northwest corner, which by reason of the northwest winds, is the least desirable part of the building. These rooms, since they are most of the time provided with heat, could naturally be placed at this point of the plan with greater good results than any of the other rooms. The guest rooms are located at the northeast corner, which is, by a few degrees, more desirable than the northwest. The very important rooms of the house: namely, the living-room proper, the dining-room, and the main bedchamber, have been placed on the south, southwest and southeast sides of the building. These rooms, with this arrangement, would seem to be very nearly ideal. In the morning, a sleeper in the bedchamber is greeted by the sunlight as the sun rises. All day long, the sun shines into the living-room and, at evening, one sits at dinner in the peaceful glow of its setting.

Reverting again to the principle of locality, we may observe that this principle has been followed in this country house, not only in respect to the selection of the site, the use of local material, the respect for local necessity, the appreciation of local possibilities,
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but also in the arrangement of the plan which definitely locates every department of the scheme at the point where local necessity demands that it should be placed. The general construction of the building may be of little or no interest, except perhaps the fact that no plaster has been used at all. The 2-inch by 6-inch wall studding, which stand three feet on centres, are sheathed both sides with heavy sheathing. This is covered with building paper and over this paper, on the outside walls, cedar shingles are nailed. All the interior walls are covered with burlap and heavily painted canvas. The latter being used on the laundry, kitchen and bathroom walls. All redwood is finished in wax. The roof is shingled with oil-dipped redwood, which turns a splendid deep brown color as it weathers; while the cedar shingles turn white.

The foundations are made of six-inch redwood posts, covered with asphalt and standing upright in half-barrels of concrete. The general layout of the property, detailed plan of the house, and perspective drawing, which accompany this article, may assist the reader to a fuller appreciation of the working-out of the principle of locality attempted in the Menlo house. I would better say: the careful study of style.

GOD MADE THE COUNTRY AND MAN MADE THE TOWN

COWPER