“OUTDOOR” LIFE IN CALIFORNIA HOUSES, AS EXPRESSED IN THE NEW ARCHITECTURE OF IRVING J. GILL: BY ELOISE ROORBACH

In the West the court is the center of the home life. It is usually considered the first essential of a home plan, and when people who live in California begin to put on paper their cherished dream of a home, nine times out of ten they first draw a square, saying: “This is to be the court.” Then around the square they add as many rooms as their fancy suggests or purse permits. But they must have opportunity for outdoor life, a sequestered place in the open air where they can serve their meals, receive their guests, sleep within sight of the stars or take a midday siesta.

In the friendly climate of the Pacific Coast the blossoms, vines and fountains that are considered essential parts of the court form a fairyland setting for children. Delightful opportunity is afforded for an open-air kindergarten and schoolroom, a sewing room and a study. Around the sides often runs a pillared walk, suggesting the cloistered paths of monasteries and reminiscent of earlier times in the history of California.

It would be difficult to imagine a more interesting example of a house built around a court than one recently completed in San Diego for Henry H. Timkin. This house

ENTRANCE TO MR. TIMKIN’S HOUSE, SHOWING THE VERY INTERESTING CONSTRUCTION OF THE WALLS AND A CERTAIN PICTURESQUE QUALITY GAINED FROM ENTIRE SIMPLICITY OF DESIGN AND FINISH.
sets a new standard for home-building. It embodies the most advanced ideas of design and construction. The desire of some home-makers for perfect simplicity of design, combined with a substantial form of construction, has in this house been fully realized. Not a single ornament mars the pure symmetry of its lines.

A home like the Timkin house would be full of suggestion to any community. Even the people who at the first glance scoff because of its unusual simplicity come to see that it is a sincere expression of the architect’s purpose; its lines are classic and pure, dignified and rare, and most home-lovers soon grow to prefer it to the more ornate
structures to which they have been accustomed. A house of this type helps to form the taste of all who behold it, whether they are aware of it or not, and its influence cannot easily be estimated.

There are several points about the construction of this particular house that deserve especial attention. In the first place its deliberate simplicity cannot possibly be overlooked. It compels attention. It calls to mind Schiller’s observation that “The artist may be known rather by what he omits.”

The architect, Irving J. Gill, with pioneer courage resolved to go back to certain fixed principles like the line, square and cube, and to build from them with as little deviation as possible, omitting everything useless from a structural point of view. He came to see great beauty in straight lines. He grew to love them, to combine and recombine them, and to merge them. He studied the charm that lies in perspective and applied it to his lines of roof, walk and wall. He saw that ornament was a non-essential. So he determined to make his houses depend for their beauty entirely upon the relation of line to
“OUTDOOR” LIFE IN A CALIFORNIA HOUSE

line, of surface to surface, proportion to proportion, and then plant vines and flowers to furnish decoration.

The simplicity of design embodied in this unusual house is equaled only by the unpretentiousness of its construction. It is almost indestructible and withstands successfully the devastating forces of time, water and fire, and the unwelcome inroads of rats, mice and other vermin. The interior construction helps to solve the dust problem, for all the woodwork is finished flush with the walls and all the doors are made without panels and hung flush with the casings. The drainboards and the sink back are of magnesium, a material that can be given a very smooth finish and is impervious to water. The sink is sunk into this magnesium, which is in turn sunk into the cement walls; all the corners and joints are rounded, so that it is perfectly sanitary. There are no cracks where grease or dirt can collect, no exposed woodwork to become sour and unwholesome. The floors and wainscoting of the porches, toilets and bathrooms are also made of magnesium. The bathtub is boxed and covered with this same material up to the porcelain, so that in the bathroom as in the kitchen there can be no unpleasant dampness and decay, and it can easily be kept clean. The floors of the loggias and the inner court are laid in 12-by-12 red brick tile with wide mortar joints. Girders of gas pipe support a copper wire screen overhead, which protects the court from the intrusion of flies and other winged insects.

The construction of this house also makes possible a much-needed return to home privacy. A wall built as part of the house completely encircles the garden and lawn; the dust of the street is kept out to a great extent, and the garden is protected from sweeping winds. In this land, whose history is so romantically colored with Spanish and Mission influence, a walled garden is especially at home.

Several views of the court which reveal the delight of this feature as a home center are given here. The full light of day brightens it, the stars look in at night, the moon floods it with mystery. The windows of the upper rooms look down into its center, where a fountain splashes musically and flowers exhale sweet fragrance. Creeping vines which will soon trace delicate patterns of green around the concrete pillars have been planted, and potted plants are placed here and there, and changed as they pass the time of blooming. Ferns grow on the shady side, sun-loving plants on the other sides. Through the south windows of this court the lawn and garden with the lily-pool and fountain in the center can be seen. On the west side of the garden, separated from the lawn by a hedge of green, is a kitchen garden. The stepping-stone paths are made of four 8-inch tiles set together with wide mortar joints, making 18-inch squares, which are laid far enough apart to permit the grass to grow between and form a frame of green for each square.

The garden wall is of concrete, for the architect has planned to make the house and every detail of it as harmonious and as permanent as possible. The large buttresses are hollow and filled with soil in which trailing vines and blossoming plants are growing. The white wall reflects the

SHOWING ONE VIEW OF MR. TIMKIN’S HOUSE AND THE GARDEN WALL BEYOND: IN TIME ALL THE WALLS OF THIS BEAUTIFUL STRUCTURE WILL BE DECORATED WITH VINES, AND COLOR WILL BE FURNISHED BY THE PATCHES OF FLOWERS AT THE BASE OF THE WALLS AND IN WINDOW AND VERANDA GARDEN BOXES.
colors of the surrounding flowers, the blue of the sky, the green of the grass; there is always a lovely play of color on its white surface as the sun passes over it. It makes an ideal background for flowers of many hues, blue delphinium, scarlet hollyhocks, feathery cosmos, pink or yellow roses. Against the south wall is a cold-frame for the growing of rainy-season dainties.

A glance at the floor plan shows another interesting feature of this home—the children’s court. Here they may have their own garden and their outdoor nursery. In this sheltered nook the baby takes his nap. On stormy days he plays or sleeps in the inner court, so that his life is practically spent out of doors. The floor plan also shows that the dining and sitting rooms are almost a continuation of the court, so open are they to its sunshine. Both of these rooms have the added comfort and cheerfulness afforded by open fires.

THE VALUE OF GOOD ROADS TO THE NATION

The National Highways Association of Washington, D. C., is now proposing a plan to take the matter of highways out of the hands of the townships and counties, and even the States to a great extent, and to make it a matter of national endeavor. The Association has outlined a general plan, as a starting-point, which it frankly states is merely tentative and will have to be more carefully worked out according to the needs of the territory the roads cover. This is to be done by competent engineers, who will work in relation to the problems presented by the States through which the roads pass. In this general plan provision is made for six Main National Highways,—Northern, Central, Southern, Atlantic, Mississippi and Pacific; thirteen Trunk National Highways and forty Link National Highways, thus forming a network of roads connecting each section of the United States with a Main National Highway or one of the lesser roads leading to it. The projected highways will cover about fifty thousand miles and will make every State comparatively easy of access from all the other States. As many as possible of the existing roads will be made use of, and they will be improved and extended in every feasible way.

The Association has issued a bulletin which sets forth its arguments for a good roads movement by the nation. To quote from the bulletin:

"It is universal experience that one mile of good road breeds another mile. Put a State-wide good road down anywhere in