

**ASPEN'S TWENTIETH-CENTURY  
ARCHITECTURE:  
MODERNISM 1945-1975**

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SEPTEMBER 2010**



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*“Restore the best of the old, but if you build, build modern.”*  
Bauhaus founder Walter Gropius, Aspen town meeting, August 29, 1945<sup>1</sup>

## INTRODUCTION

As in much of the United States, modern architecture made its first appearance in Aspen after World War II. While Aspen’s image, to the public and perhaps to itself, largely identifies with its heyday as one of the most prosperous Victorian mining towns in Colorado, its postwar modern architecture is significant: it represents a mother lode of the two competing camps of modernism, and it reflects modern architecture’s dominance in 1950s and 1960s America.

Modernism’s iconic monuments—Frank Lloyd Wright’s Guggenheim Museum, Mies van der Rohe’s Farnsworth House in Illinois, Eero Saarinen’s General Motors Headquarters, and New York’s Seagram Building and Lever House—went up in the 1940s and 1950s. By the mid-1960s, there were rumblings of a backlash. Robert Venturi’s *Complexity and Contradiction in Architecture* (1966) signaled that modernism’s authority was being challenged by a new generation, although most architects and clients continued to value modernist buildings through the 1970s. Thus, for modernist buildings in Aspen, the period of historic significance, a term that encompasses architectural, historical, or geographical importance, is between 1945 and approximately 1975.

The paper first examines the origins of the modernist movement in America and Europe. It then looks at modernist architects working in Aspen between 1945-1975 whose contributions to its built environment continue to influence its character. Thirdly, it describes Aspen’s modernist buildings, organized by two eras: 1945-1960, when Aspen entered the ski and tourist industries, and 1960-1975, when growth and development accelerated. Fourth, it delineates the characteristics that make a structure eligible for designation as a modernist building that contributes to Aspen’s history.

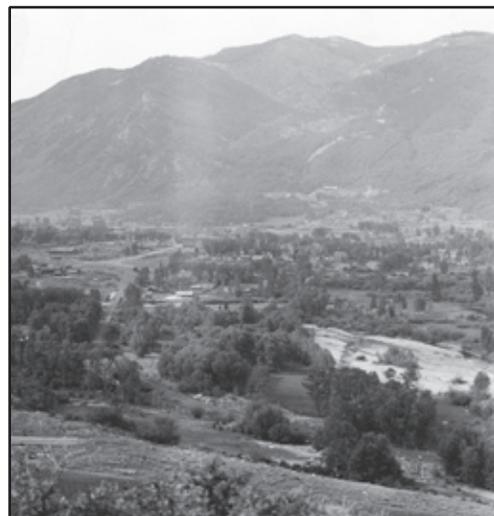


Figure 1: Looking toward Red Mountain. Courtesy Aspen Historical Society (AHS).



Figure 2: Looking toward Aspen Mountain from the Wheeler Opera House. Courtesy AHS.

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1 Gropius quoted in James Sloan Allen, *The Romance of Commerce and Culture: Capitalism, Modernism, and the Chicago-Aspen Crusade for Culture Reform* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1983), 135-37; Thomas J. Noel, *Buildings of Colorado* in series, *Buildings of the United States*, Society of Architectural Historians (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997), 488.

## CHAPTER 1: THE MODERNIST MOVEMENT: WRIGHTIAN/ORGANIC AND BAUHAUS/INTERNATIONAL STYLE

Modern architecture rejected the historic styles of the past. It began in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, but followed two different paths: American modernism was rooted in the organic design of Louis Sullivan and Frank Lloyd Wright; and European modernism was based on the utopian socialist ideals of the French architect Le Corbusier, among others, and the teachings of the German Bauhaus (1919-1933), founded by Walter Gropius in Weimar.

American modernism, also known as “organic” architecture, started around 1900 in Chicago and the Midwest, where Louis Sullivan coined the phrase “form follows function” to express his rejection of historic styles. Frank Lloyd Wright emulated Sullivan’s radical rethinking of architectural form and went on to develop highly individualistic designs such as the 1902 Ward Willlets House in Highland Park and the 1909 Frederick Robie House in Chicago. Wright’s “Prairie” houses reflected Arts & Crafts ideas. The architect designed “in the nature of materials,” which, for Wright, could be stone or brick or steel and glass. He reconfigured the traditional “box” of a house into a series of interlocking geometric units or “modules”—90 degrees (square/rectangles), 30-60 degrees (triangles/hexagon), and circles or segments thereof—that governed both plan and elevation. Wright transformed traditional floor plans to create simplified flowing spaces and integrated the house interior with the exterior setting to redefine the suburban house. As Alan Hess, the major scholar of Organic Architecture, writes, Wright and others embraced both “contemporary machinery and ageless natural landscape.”<sup>2</sup> Buildings reflecting an organic philosophy don’t necessarily look alike, but they share a notion of design as growing from a germ of an idea and particular to a specific setting. According to the Wright approach, “First, pick a good site . . . a site no one wants—but pick one that has features making for character: trees, individuality, a fault of some kind in the realtor’s conventional mind.” Organic modernism has a complexity of line, form, structure, textures, and materials such as natural stone and woods or machine-made glass, concrete, and, later, plastic.

Wright achieved such acclaim that his Robie House and other “Prairie” designs were published in an avant-garde portfolio for European audiences in 1914. Yet interest in the Midwestern architect and organic architecture declined in the 1920s. His career and design theories languished, while attention to European modernist architects, such as Gropius and Le Corbusier, increased. In the late 1930s, Wright’s claim as the original modernist regained momentum with two major projects—Fallingwater in Bear Run, Pennsylvania, which combined a European modernist use of geometric concrete forms with an organic use of natural stone quarried on the site, and the Johnson Wax Company Headquarters in Racine, Wisconsin. His postwar practice and reputation soared with the visibility of the Guggenheim Museum and other public projects; and his small-scale Usonian houses created a new standard for domestic architecture across the country.

Wright had kept the American organic architecture movement going, just barely, by creating the Taliesin Fellowship in 1932. Although he was opposed to official academic institutions, the reality of Depression-era economics and his lagging practice led him to formalize his ongoing apprentices into a fellowship. He envisioned Taliesin as an ideal community where aspiring architects would pay a modest tuition and could live and work with a “master” architect. Wright proclaimed that he was not a teacher, though the fellows could learn from him. Young apprentices, such as Aspen’s Fritz Benedict and others, were required to engage in physical labor—in the garden and household and on construction projects—for six months before getting into the drafting room. Taliesin was to be self-sustaining, and Wright believed that “growing things” was important to an understanding of “organic architecture.” The fellows also participated in the related arts of music, painting, and sculpture and ongoing maintenance of the complex. Wright and his wife Olgivanna lived a rather abundant and culturally rich life with small means supported by a large group of apprentices—some 45 in 1939, increasing after the war to 50-60, including foreign-born fellows.

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<sup>2</sup> Alan Hess, text, Alan Weintraub, photographs, *Organic Architecture: The Other Modernism* (Salt Lake City: Gibbs Smith, Publisher, 2006), 6.

Wright's extended "family" worked and lived in two enclaves. They spent the summers in his hereditary homeplace in Spring Green, Wisconsin, and, after 1939, passed the winters in the desert camp near Phoenix, Arizona. Moving the entire operation from Wisconsin to Arizona in November and then back to Wisconsin in the spring was Wright's way of "breaking up" the routine.<sup>3</sup> In the desert, the fellows were expected to design and build their own dwellings. As his practice revived during the 1930s and 1940s, the fellows were essential to his productivity. They worked in the drafting rooms, supervised construction projects, and aided the venerable architect in promoting organic architecture through publications and exhibitions.

European modernism, or the International Style, also rejected the past—its technologies, its architecture, its ornament, its societal structures—and embraced modernity, industrialization, urbanization, and the machine. European architects and designers believed that, by embracing the new industrial technologies, they could improve the physical and psychological environments for the mass of people and create a new society. Its premise was that modern design could transform society by applying industrial methods to housing and creating a "total art," including buildings, furnishings, interiors, clothing, and signage. Characterized by the absence of references to past historic styles, the European modernists used industrial materials such as steel, reinforced concrete, and glass to give the buildings a sleek, mechanistic look.

Not only did the International Style avoid decoration or historic styles, it revolutionized interior space by reducing the building to metal frame and glass walls. As architectural historian Spiro Kostof wrote: "Architecture was seen primarily as volume and not mass. So the stress was on the continuous, unmodulated wall surface—long ribbon windows without frames, cut right into the wall pane, horizontally or vertically disposed; flush joints, flat roofs. Corners were not made prominent. Technically, the argument went, materials like steel and reinforced concrete had rendered conventional construction—and with it cornices, pitched roofs, and emphatic corners—obsolete. There would be no applied ornament anywhere, inside or out." Le Corbusier proclaimed in his 1923 manifesto, *Towards a New Architecture*: "A house is a machine made for living."<sup>4</sup>

A few European modernists arrived in the United States in the 1920s, but the major influx occurred in the late 1930s as Hitler rose to power. In 1937, Ludwig Mies van der Rohe, who had succeeded Gropius at the Bauhaus, arrived in Chicago to head the School of Architecture at the Illinois Institute of Technology; that same year, László Moholy Nagy led a reincarnation of the Bauhaus at Chicago's School of Design. In 1939, Walter Gropius took charge of the Harvard University Graduate School of Design. In 1938, Herbert Bayer, head of the typography workshop and one of three young masters under Gropius at the Weimar Bauhaus (the others were Joseph Albers and Marcel Breuer)<sup>5</sup> moved to New York City, where he created three exhibitions ("Bauhaus 1919-1928," "Road to Victory," and "Airways to Peace") for the Museum of Modern Art and worked as an art director designing books, exhibitions, and posters for major corporate clients and advertising agencies.

American's postwar embrace of European modern architecture reflected important changes: there was no longer a cheap source of labor; modern building codes replaced the old rule-of-thumb; and new construction materials—concrete block, glass, steel, and aluminum—were increasingly available.<sup>6</sup> Furthermore, the public's concept of architecture now included an "international" component. Americans were first introduced to the international avant-garde in 1932 by the influential Museum of Modern Art exhibition, *Modern Architecture of Europe*. By the 1940s and 1950s, European modernists, such as Mies, Gropius, Joseph Albers, and Eliel Saarinen, dominated architectural and design schools and professional architectural publications. Through the 1950s and 1960s, young American architects were trained in the Bauhaus curriculum and enthusiastically disseminated

3 Curtis Besinger, *Working with Mr. Wright. What It Was Like* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995).

4 Spiro Kostof, *A History of Architecture: Settings and Rituals* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1985), 701.

5 Albers and his wife Annie found refuge in 1933 at Black Mountain College near Asheville, North Carolina, thanks to MOMA curator Philip Johnson, who was also instrumental in bringing Mies to America. Breuer joined Gropius at Harvard and The Architects Collaborative (TAC), and Bayer came to Aspen.

6 Robert Frankeberger and James Garrison, "From Rustic Romanticism to Modernism and Beyond: Architecture Resources in the National Park," *Forum Journal, Journal of the National Trust for Historic Preservation* (Summer 2002): 8.

it in flat-roofed, austere glass and metal-framed buildings across the American landscape. Modernism gained widespread acceptance as the most appropriate architecture for the new era, especially in major metropolitan areas. The International Style appeared in office buildings, airports, corporate campuses, housing, schools, churches, shopping centers, restaurants, and lodging. In 1955, when the National Park Service launched its Mission 66 campaign to update its rustic image, it adopted modernist designs for its new type of park structure, the visitor center.

In its emphasis on individuality, Wright's organic architecture lacked the broad institutional base of the International Style. Wright famously advised Oklahoman Bruce Goff, who was clearly talented in expressionistic and organic design, not to study architecture and lose his unique gift. Frank Lloyd Wright had been America's most famous modern architect for decades, and many more Americans knew his name than those of Le Corbusier or Walter Gropius. Popular shelter magazines of the time, especially *House Beautiful*, promoted "American" modernism in the 1940s and 1950s, as represented by Wright, Goff, and the Taliesin Fellowship. In 1953, Wright mounted a major exhibition of his work in New York City as the Guggenheim Museum was going up—characterized by one of his apprentices "as part of the present war in Architectural circles between the 'organic' and the 'international'."<sup>7</sup> Significantly, Wright's way of thinking about a building as organic, as something that grows according to its function and is specific to its site, along with his use of natural materials, fit the postwar mentality of the individualistic architects attracted to the nascent ski community of Aspen.

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7 Besinger, *Working with Mr. Wright*, 251.

## CHAPTER 2: MODERNISM IN ASPEN 1945-1975 - THE ARCHITECTS

Aspen is unique in that the widespread acceptance of modernism in America coincided with its postwar reinvention as an international resort. Two significant practitioners of the competing modern approaches, Taliesin alumnus Frederic



Figure 3: Elizabeth and Walter Paepcke. Courtesy AHS.

“Fritz” Benedict and Bauhaus master Herbert Bayer, arrived immediately after the war to establish their imprint on the mountain community. Rather quickly, other young modernist architects educated at Cornell, Colorado, Illinois, M.I.T., and Taliesin moved there. Aspen had little new construction in its “Quiet Years” between the 1893 Silver Crash and the end of World War, hence no need for architects. This status changed when Friedl Pfeifer saw the potential in developing a major ski resort akin to his native St. Anton and Chicago industrialist Walter Paepcke envisioned the mountain town as an ideal setting for a community of intellectual engagement and cultural institutions.

The modernist Aspen architectural community began with a few pioneers and several prominent designers and grew rapidly, with some architects designing a single building or two, and many establishing their entire careers there. Fritz Benedict arrived in 1945, and Herbert Bayer in 1946. Gordon Chadwick and Charles Gordon Lee stopped in briefly in the winter of 1946-1947. Samuel Caudill first visited in 1947 and settled permanently in 1952. Charlie Paterson came in 1949, Ellie Brickman in 1951, and Rob Roy by 1953. Robin Molny was in town by 1955, and Jack Walls by 1957. Ellen Harland appeared in 1958, and Ted Mularz in 1959, along with George Heneghan, and Dan Gale. Richard Lai stayed from 1960 to 1965. Bob Sterling was part of the scene from 1956-1960, got his architectural degree, and returned in 1963. Tom Benton arrived in 1963. By 1969, Art Yuenger, among others, lived and worked in Aspen. Bauhaus founder Walter Gropius advised on town planning in 1945, thanks to benefactor Walter Paepcke who also had ambitious plans for a modernist architectural village, cut short by his death in 1960. Through the auspices of the Goethe Bicentennial and the Aspen Institute, Paepcke and his wife Elizabeth commissioned signature buildings by several “name” modernists, such as Eero Saarinen (Music Tent, 1949), Buckminster Fuller (Geodesic dome, 1952), and Harry Weese (Given Institute for Physics, 1973). Second home owner and Chicago architect Francis Stanton designed a residence and church (1954, 1963), and Texas

(also Florida and New York) architect Victor Lundy designed and built his own elegantly modern vacation home in the West End in 1972.



Figure 4: Creating the scraffito wall at the Aspen Institute, from left - Ellie Brickham, Masato Nakagawa, Herbert Bayer, and Fritz Benedict, Courtesy Ferenc Berko Photography.

Most of the pioneer architects arrived in the first decade of Aspen’s rebirth, 1945-1956, but did the majority of their work after the mid-1950s, when growth and development accelerated. Educated at the top architectural programs of the time, they articulate either a Bauhaus/International or Wrightian/organic esthetic—frequently, a creative blending of the two. Their architecture communicates both a distinct sense of place—the extreme high country environment—and a high level of design. As a group, they were attracted to

the adventure and promise of Aspen. Most loved to ski, knew one another socially, worked in one another's offices, collaborated on projects, and immersed themselves in the community, often serving on the city planning and zoning commission and other local and regional boards involved with environmental concerns and urban issues of growth, traffic, and affordable housing.

It's important to remember that Aspen, though dilapidated, was a viable town when the newcomers started arriving in 1945. Before President Grover Cleveland returned the United States to the gold standard in 1893, devaluing silver in the process, Aspen had boasted 12,000 residents, six newspapers, four schools, three banks, a hospital, three theaters, an opera house, sixteen hotels, a courthouse, stores and office blocks, a race course, a literary society, a glee club, two railroads, public electricity and water, and a brothel district. Its civic leaders had erected impressive public and commercial buildings of red sandstone and brick and laid out broad tree-shaded streets in a regular grid pattern. Prosperous merchants and mining elite had built Second Empire and Queen Anne houses with mansard roofs, multiple gables, wrap-around porches, and fancy ironwork; ordinary miners lived in small clapboard cottages, the better ones often decorated with bargeboard trim on the gables. Once the silver market collapsed, the town fell into decline so quickly that much of its urban fabric remained intact.



Figure 5: Aspen looking toward Smuggler Mountain. Courtesy AHS.

Thus the new architects and developers worked within a Victorian townscape with a residential district in the West End and a commercial core at the foot of the mountain. Generally, postwar construction follows a geographic pattern, with Bauhaus modernism in the West End and nearby Aspen Institute campus; commercial, lodging, condos, and public buildings inserted near Shadow Mountain and into the downtown core; and the large Wrightian condo complexes and residential growth to the east of town.

FREDERIC "FRITZ" BENEDICT AND HERBERT BAYER

Frank Lloyd Wright disciple Frederic "Fritz" Benedict (FAIA, 1914-1995) and Bauhaus-trained Herbert Bayer (1900-1985) represent the first generation of postwar architects in Aspen. They arrived at about the same time, though they came under circumstances that underscore their different architectural traditions—one, American, anti-establishment, individualistic, organic,



Figure 6: Herbert Bayer poster. Unknown Source.

and nature-oriented; the other, European, establishment, collaborative, corporate, and machine-oriented. Just as the town of Aspen was to reconcile the dynamic tension between ski resort and cultural center, both men, dramatically different in their training, worked well together and helped shape the town's rebirth in their designs for the ski, cultural, tourist, and hospitality industries and the scores of people who relocated to be part of the new Aspen scene.



Figure 7: Fritz Benedict, bottom center, with fellow 10th mountain division soldiers. Courtesy AHS.

Benedict, thirty years old when he mustered out of the 10<sup>th</sup> Mountain Division, was the first trained designer to arrive in Aspen after the war. Born in Medford, Wisconsin, he had earned a

Bachelor's Degree and a Master's Degree in Landscape Architecture at the University of Wisconsin in Madison before joining Wright's Taliesin in Spring Green in 1938 as head gardener. He appreciated Wright's philosophy of integrating architecture and landscape, and, along with the other apprentices, he migrated between the two Taliesins for the next three years. On one of those Arizona-to-Wisconsin drives, in 1941, he first saw Aspen. An avid skier, he stopped for the National Skiing Championships and decided that the mountain town would be a good place to settle. That first impression was later confirmed when he was stationed with the US Army's 10<sup>th</sup> Mountain Division, an élite group of skiers, at nearby Camp Hale, north of Leadville, and visited Aspen on the weekends.



Figure 8: Herbert Bayer. Source unknown.

In 1945, Benedict purchased a 600-acre ranch on Red Mountain for \$12,000, which he scraped together from his army pay, a loan from his mother, and selling his car. A self-described "hippie," Benedict planned to live in a small cabin and operate a subsistence ranch, then a dude ranch, saying that the mystique of ranching appealed to him as much as skiing. Eventually he added odd-carpentry and designed one house a year, rustic houses that evoked the organic architecture of his mentor.

In 1946, Austrian native Bayer was forty-six years old and an internationally famous designer who had been avidly recruited by Walter Paepcke and his wife Elizabeth to help implement their vision of Aspen as a special community organized around art and culture, a Kulturstaat. An innovator in typography and graphic design, photography and exhibition design in Weimar and Berlin, Bayer designed the universal type font (1925), which was credited with "liberating typography and design in advertising and creating the very look of advertising we take for granted today."<sup>8</sup> He moved to New York City in 1938, where he was a sought-after art director and designer. By 1946, all of his work was for Paepcke, head of the Container Corporation of America (CCA) and Robert O. Anderson, president of the Atlantic Richfield Corporation. A lover of nature and skiing, Bayer had considered returning to his native Austria after the war to open a "little ski hotel." Instead, Paepcke enticed him with the challenge of remaking the "ghost town" of Aspen, arranged for his purchase of a Victorian cottage in the West End, guaranteed annual consulting fees from both the CCA and Aspen Skiing Corporation, and provided a steady stream of design work on his numerous Aspen properties. A 1955 Rocky Mountain News article stated, "Even in competition with millionaire tycoons, best-selling novelists, and top-ranking musicians, Herbert Bayer is Aspen's most famous resident."<sup>9</sup>

Although Bayer and Benedict frequently collaborated, each made his own mark on Aspen. Bayer's was Bauhaus modern and sleek like a machine; Benedict's exuded Wrightian principles, naturalistic and organic, even funky. In addition to designing numerous buildings, both men served on the Aspen Zoning and Planning Commission and other local boards, their lives and careers irrevocably bound with Aspen's rebirth as a resort town.

Benedict married Fabienne, the sister of Bayer's wife Joella, in 1949, and she convinced him to quit ranching and pursue architecture. He was awarded a license in 1956 under a grandfather clause that allowed licensure based on experience, rather than testing. On April 1,



Figure 9: The Copper Kettle Restaurant. Courtesy AHS.

8 Joanne Ditmer, "Schlosser Gallery Host to Major Bayer Show/Sale," *Denver Post*, October 1, 1997.

9 Robert L. Perkin, "Herbert Bayer Changing the Town's Face," *Rocky Mountain News*, September 27, 1955.

1960, Bayer, who had no formal training in architecture, also received a license to practice in Colorado, without examination.

#### HERBERT BAYER

Bayer's architectural work spans approximately two decades, from 1946-1965. His clients were primarily the Aspen Skiing Corporation, the Aspen Company (Paepcke's real estate firm), and the Aspen Institute for Humanistic Studies, where he, with Frederic Benedict as the associated architect through the 1950s, designed the Seminar Hall and its sgraffito mural (1953, the first building on the campus), Aspen Meadows Guest Chalets (1954, since demolished and reconstructed), Central Building which housed the Copper Kettle restaurant (1954), the Health Center (1955), Grass Mound (1955, which predates the "earthwork" movement by ten years and was one of the first environmental sculptures in the country), Marble Sculpture Garden (1955), Walter Paepcke Memorial Building (1962), Institute for Theoretical Physics Building (1962, since demolished), Concert Tent (1964, removed in 2000), and Anderson Park (1970).

Bayer also spearheaded Paepcke's restoration of Victorian buildings in town, including the Wheeler Opera House and Hotel Jerome, and selected the paint colors for certain Victorians that Paepcke's Aspen Company decided should be restored in the 1940s. A strong blue, known locally as "Bayer Blue", has persevered for some fifty years, but is disappearing. His choice of a bright pink for the Paepcke's West End residence, Pioneer Park (442 W. Bleeker Street) and a bold paint scheme for the Hotel Jerome are local legends. In his twenty-eight years in Aspen, Bayer lived at 234 W. Francis Street, a Victorian house in the West End, and an apartment in a downtown commercial building (501 E. Cooper Avenue). He then moved to Red Mountain where he built his studio and home (1950 [Gordon Chadwick, architect] and 1959, demolished). He designed other modernist residences (1957, 240 Lake Avenue; 1963, 311 North Street) in the West End, located adjacent to the Aspen Institute campus. After his productive career in Aspen, Bayer moved to Santa Barbara, California, where he died in 1985.



Figure 10: Pioneer Park with Herbert Bayer paint scheme. City of Aspen files.

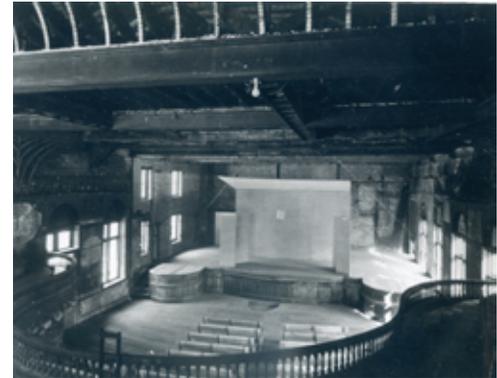


Figure 11: Wheeler Opera House interior designed by Bayer. Courtesy AHS.

Influenced by Bauhaus and International Style principles, Bayer's architectural designs have simple rectilinear shapes, generally flat roofs, expanses of glass, cantilevered balconies, basic geometric shapes, industrial materials such as steel frames and cinder blocks, and use primary colors, whites, and grays. Bayer believed in the Bauhaus concept of designing the total human environment, that art should be incorporated into all areas of life, and he designed logos and posters as well as landscapes and buildings that brought high modernism to Aspen.

#### FREDERIC "FRITZ" BENEDICT

Benedict's architecture extends from the 1940s into the 1980s. His earliest projects were residences, such as a cabin at 835 W. Main (1947); a private dwelling for novelist John Marquand (1950, demolished) on Lake Avenue in the West End overlooking Hallam Lake; modern chalets at 625 and 615 Gillespie (1957, demolished); and the Edmundson House (1960, demolished), also known as the Waterfall House, after Wright's famous Fallingwater. In 1967, Benedict created Ski magazine's first "ski home of



Figure 12: Aspen Highlands Base Lodge. Courtesy AHS.

the month,” in what was intended to be a regular feature on affordable well-designed vacation homes. One of his modest “Hillside Home” designs, built at 1102 Waters Avenue by Bill Geary, still remains in the Geary family.

As Aspen’s economy revived, Benedict also designed numerous commercial and public buildings. In addition to early Aspen Institute buildings through the 1950s, he and Bayer collaborated on the Sundeck warming hut (1946, demolished). Benedict also designed the Bank of Aspen (1956, 119 S. Mill Street), Bidwell Building (1965, E. Cooper), the original Pitkin County Library (1966, 120 E. Main Street), Benedict Building (1976, 1280 Ute Ave), and the Pitkin County Bank (1978, 534 E. Hyman Avenue). He designed the base lodge at Aspen Highlands (1958, demolished) and planned the entire ski area at nearby Snowmass (1967) as well consulting at Vail (1962) and Breckenridge (1971). In the 1960s, he greatly influenced Aspen’s condominium development and residential shift from downtown to the east,



Figure 13: Sundeck atop Aspen Mountain, designed by Benedict. Courtesy AHS.

designing the Aspen Alps (1963); Aspen’s first large-scale urban condo, Aspen Square on Durant and Cooper Avenues (1967); Aspen’s largest condo complex, the Gant (1972); and the Crystal Lake condos (1976), at Aspen Club. In total, Benedict designed and renovated more than 200 buildings in Aspen and Snowmass.<sup>10</sup>



Figure 14: Edmundson House designed by Benedict. City of Aspen files.

The prolific architect was known for setting buildings into the landscape in a harmonious way, which reflects his landscape training and Wright’s influence. At Taliesin East, he had been in charge of the gardens, while, at the Arizona camp, he worked with the natural desert landscape, even moving cactuses. He

pioneered in passive solar and earth shelter design, exemplified in the Marquand house (1950) and his own solar and sod-roofed residence at Stillwater Ranch (1958). His masterwork, the Edmundson Waterfall House, an homage to Wright’s Fallingwater, shared many of the characteristics of Wrightian design—dramatic cantilevered structure, massive chimney as the anchor, strong horizontal emphasis, low-pitched roof with deep overhangs, mitred windows in the corners, and, above all, an intimate and specific relation to its site.

Benedict’s office played a critical role in Aspen’s emerging architectural scene, launching Ellie Brickham, Jack Walls, Robin Molny, Ellen Harland, Theodore Mularz, George Heneghan, Dan Gale, John Rosolack, Robert Sterling, Janver Derrington, Dick Fallin, Dierter Zenker, Tom Duesterberg, Bruce Sutherland, Arthur Yuenger, and Harry Teague, among others. Molny set up his own office in the late 1950s and later hired Yuenger. Mularz opened his practice in 1963 (employing Aspen’s third woman architect, Jean Wolaver-Green), leaving on such good terms that his wedding reception (to Bayer’s secretary, Ruth) was in the Benedict greenhouse. Walls and Sterling became partners in 1968. Heneghan and Gale were partners from 1966-1969. In the 1960s, when Benedict took on large-scale ski resort planning and design, his firm increased to thirty-five.<sup>11</sup>

Benedict also embraced the traditions of the Taliesin Fellowship; both his home and workplace welcomed young architects. In 1946-1947, Taliesin fellows George Gordon Lee and Gordon Chadwick lived and worked with him on his Red Mountain ranch, and Chadwick, a licensed architect, designed several Aspen residences and Bayer’s Red Mountain studio (1950) with him in the late 1940s. Curtis Besinger returned to sojourn with the Benedicts

10 Mary Eshbaugh Hayes, Dedication plaque on “The Benedict Suite,” Little Nell Hotel, Aspen, Colorado.

11 Brian Clark, “Ski Country Style,” *Ski Area Management* 25 (March 1986): 55-57, 78-81.

regularly each summer, starting in 1956. After his years at Taliesin (1949- c. 1954), Robin Molny started his Aspen career in Benedict's office, then set up his own practice. Benedict encouraged Boomerang Lodge- owner Charles Paterson to spend three summers in Spring Green (1958-1960). Des Plaines, Illinois, architects Donald Erickson and Arthur Stevens, who designed the North of Nell (1968), were both Taliesin alumni of the early 1950s.



Figure 15: Bank of Aspen, now Wells Fargo Bank, designed by Benedict. Courtesy AHS.

Aside from his architectural contributions, Benedict influenced the Aspen environment in other ways. He served as the first chairman of Aspen's Planning and Zoning Commission, developing height and density controls, open space and preservation policies, a City parks system, a sign code, and ban on billboards. He played a significant role in the founding of the Aspen Institute and the International Design Conference and served on the board of the Music Associates of Aspen for 35 years. He was the father of the 10<sup>th</sup> Mountain Hut System, established in 1980, and he and his wife donated more than 250 acres of land within Pitkin County for open space.

Benedict and Bayer received innumerable honors for their contributions to Aspen. In 1995, Bob Maynard, former head of both the Aspen Ski Company and the Aspen Institute, stated: "Aspen was fortunate fifty years ago to be wakened from her sleep by visionaries. The trio of Benedict, Bayer, and Paepcke combined dreams and hope and reality uniquely to restore a community ravaged by mining, trapped in poverty—yet willing to follow the dreamers."<sup>12</sup>

#### GORDON CHADWICK

Princeton graduate (1938) and Taliesin fellow (1938-1942), New Jersey-born Chadwick (1916-1980) spent part of the winter of 1946-1947 in Aspen with Benedict where he designed several houses, most notably, Bayer's studio on Red Mountain (1950). Before the war, Chadwick supervised the construction of the Fellowship's Loren Pope house (1939-1940) in Falls Church, Virginia, and, after the war, the residences of Arnold Friedman, Pecos, New Mexico (1946) and David Wright, Phoenix, Arizona (1951-52). During World War II, Chadwick served in the US Army monuments, architecture, and fine arts section. Afterwards, he designed at Colonial Williamsburg and was the partner of famed industrial designer George Nelson.

#### CHARLES GORDON LEE

Penn grad (1940) and Taliesin fellow (1940-1941 [Taliesin East]; 1947-1948 [Taliesin West]), Kansas-born Lee (1918-1966) spent part of the 1946-1947 winter in Aspen with Chadwick and Benedict, although it is unclear exactly what he may have designed. He served in the US Air Force as a Captain from June 1942 to January 1946, returned to service from May 1951 to September 1952. At Taliesin, he worked on drawings for a Pittsfield, Massachusetts, housing project and a Pittsburgh civic project. Briefly in partnership with former apprentice Kelly Oliver in Denver, he later was the Taliesin representative for the Rocky Mountain National Park Administration Office, a role Oliver assumed when Lee died in 1966. His papers are in the Western History Collection, The Denver Public Library.

#### SAMUEL JEFFERSON CAUDILL, JR.

Oklahoma-born, Kentucky-bred, Cornell-educated, Sam Caudill (FAIA, 1922-2007) was working for Denver architect Tom Moore in January 1947 when he skied the newly opened Aspen (Ajax) Mountain. Five years later, in 1952, attracted by Aspen's potential and his future wife, Joy Maxwell, Caudill moved there permanently, married, and started his own architectural firm. He had interrupted college to serve in the Army's Office of Strategic Services, graduating in 1946 from Cornell, the only Ivy-League school to offer a bachelor's degree in architecture. Caudill

<sup>12</sup> Robert A. Maynard, Remarks Given at Fritz Benedict's Memorial Service.

has the distinction of being Aspen's first licensed architect to establish a practice (Benedict and Bayer were licensed by grandfathering, and Gordon Chadwick moved on). Although he started as a single practitioner, Rob Roy worked with him in the early years. Richard Lai joined Caudill's firm from 1960-1965, when he left Aspen to teach architecture and planning at the University of Texas.



Figure 16: National Bank of Aspen, now US Bank, designed by Caudill. City of Aspen files.

An avid outdoorsman and environmentalist, Caudill said that his designs were “usually inspired by the outdoors” and reflected the “same elements as the mountains which frame the valley,” as in the curving brick walls of his Aspen High School.<sup>13</sup> His first job in Aspen was adding a gymnasium and three classrooms to the Red Brick School in 1949-1951 when he was working for Moore.

Caudill and his various firms designed a number of modern buildings in the city's downtown core that exhibit strong geometric shapes, dramatic massing, planar emphasis and consummate use of brick, as in his 1954 First National Bank of Aspen at 420 E. Main Street. Aspen Sports (1970) at 408 E. Cooper, a yellow brick cube, has a dramatic oversized arched entrance on the ground floor that evokes the Midwestern banks of Louis Sullivan. In addition to his modern designs, Caudill gave a nod to Aspen's ski culture with traditional “chalet” details in the Viking Lodge (1963) on 832 E. Cooper Avenue. He also designed many of the retrofitted and new facilities at Snowmass, including the plaza, conference center, and Silvertree Lodge. In 1986, with his firm Caudill, Gustafson, Ross, and Associates, he undertook another restoration (after Bayer's) of the Jerome Hotel and combined historic adaptation and modern design at the Aspen Art Museum, 590 N. Mill Street (1987). In 1991, they designed the new Pitkin County Library on the corner of Mill and Main Streets. Caudill led the successful campaign to force the state to build a more environmentally friendly highway project limiting the amount of asphalt through Glenwood Canyon.

#### ROBERT OLIVER “ROB” ROY

In the 1955 Aspen telephone directory, Rob Roy (1926-1992) and Samuel Caudill are the only two architects listed (Benedict and Bayer, neither yet licensed, list themselves as designers). Roy was the second licensed architect in Aspen, after Caudill. Receiving his degree in architecture from the University of Illinois in 1947, he spent a brief time in Boulder, and then Grand Junction, where he interned to get his license. Once he and his wife saw Aspen, they loved it, and moved there, prior to 1953. As Cindy Roy remembers, “Mom and Dad were both eccentric, and Aspen was a perfect place for young, bright adults.” Roy learned to ski well and in the winters, when architectural work was scarce, taught skiing at Buttermilk. He worked as an independent architect from 1956, generally from home. He was also associated with Caudill and Benedict, although it is not clear exactly how. Roy loved the design process, appreciated Buckminster Fuller and Frank Lloyd Wright, and attended the summer international design conferences at the Aspen Institute. Bob Sterling, who quit school to ski bum for a while, remembers working as a drafter for Roy and then Jack Walls between 1956 and 1960 before going back to school. Roy's Aspen work dates from the 1950s into the 1970s, and he moved to Paonia, Colorado,



Figure 17: Stern Residence, designed by Roy. Courtesy AHS.

He was also associated with Caudill and Benedict, although it is not clear exactly how. Roy loved the design process, appreciated Buckminster Fuller and Frank Lloyd Wright, and attended the summer international design conferences at the Aspen Institute. Bob Sterling, who quit school to ski bum for a while, remembers working as a drafter for Roy and then Jack Walls between 1956 and 1960 before going back to school. Roy's Aspen work dates from the 1950s into the 1970s, and he moved to Paonia, Colorado,

<sup>13</sup> Jennifer Davoren, “A Presidential Honor for Coondog,” *Aspen Times*, May 26-27, 2001.

around 1975.

A number of Aspen landmarks are associated with Roy, including the Mountain Chalet, Snowmass Mountain Chalet, Prospector Lodge, the Heatherbed, and Cortina Lodge, and residences for Friedl Pfeiffer and Edgar and Polly Stern, the latter structure universally admired. He designed his family's house on Castle Creek, later owned by Jack Lord, and then Barbara Walters and Merv Adelson. Roy designed the multi-family modern chalet at 608 W. Hopkins Avenue (1962), the modern chalet for Pietro and Dorothy Danieli at 232 McSkimming Road (1963), and the shake-shingled, dramatically mansarded multi-family at 700 W. Hopkins Avenue (1968).

#### CHARLES PATERSON

Charles Paterson represents another aspect of Aspen modern architecture. In 1949, Paterson (b. 1929), born Karl Schnazer in Austria, arrived in Aspen after a dramatic escape from the Nazis with his sister through Czechoslovakia, France, and Portugal. They were finally adopted in Australia. He had finished high school and started engineering studies in New York City. Disappointed with eastern skiing, he moved, first to Denver, then to Aspen, where he landed a job as a bellhop at the Hotel Jerome and became, in his words, "a ski bum." Within a month of his arrival, he purchased three lots on W. Hopkins Avenue, shortly followed by another three that comprised a half block between Fifth and Sixth Streets. There, he built a one-room cabin from left-over lumber.



Figure 18: Boomerang Lodge, designed by Paterson. Courtesy of Sheila Babbie.

Paterson followed a circuitous path from that initial construction project that eventually led to Taliesin and his Wrightian lodge in downtown Aspen. He returned to New York for two years to resume his studies at City College, then moved back to Aspen, became a ski instructor, and began expanding his cabin. After a stint in the mid-1950s with the 10<sup>th</sup> Mountain Division (Camp Hale's "Second Generation"), he added more units to his cabin and, in 1956, opened the Boomerang Lodge (recalling the Australian "boomerang," he hoped guests would return). Fritz Benedict encouraged him to study architecture, and Paterson spent three summers, from 1958-1960, at Taliesin East, the GI Bill paying his tuition. He started out gardening, like the other apprentices, but discovered he was good at plastering and became the "official plasterer." Surprised at the quality of the plasterwork, Wright thought the Fellowship had hired a professional plasterer. Although Wright died on April 9, 1959, before Paterson returned for his second summer, he went back that summer and the next. Through the years, he maintained strong ties to his Taliesin colleagues. In addition to Aspen locals Benedict and Molny, he encouraged other apprentices to stay at the Boomerang Lodge on their twice yearly trips between the two Taliesins.

At Taliesin the fellows were encouraged to work on their own plans, after hours, in the evenings, and during breaks, and Paterson drew the plans for the Boomerang Lodge as it exists today. It continued to evolve organically. Twelve rooms, a lounge, and a pool were added in 1960. The novel underwater window, featured in a 1960s Life magazine, allows guests in the lounge to look into the pool. Other expansions took place in 1965 and 1970. Paterson described its Wrightian features—walls and fireplace of "concrete battered blocks, windows with 'corners of glass' . . . sort of a Frank Lloyd Wright signature." Though Paterson designed other structures, he never listed himself as an architect in the Aspen directory. The Boomerang Lodge is his life's work. Its distinctive façade with windows organized into a horizontal band just under the extended eaves provides a direct connection to Taliesin that inspired much Aspen design.

## ELEANOR “ELLIE” BRICKHAM

Ellie Brickham (1923-2008) moved to Aspen in 1951 after attending the University of Colorado’s School of Architecture from 1941-1944. Construction was a family business, and her motivation to become a designer began as a child. She was attracted by the skiing, but found herself the only female architect in town until Ellen Harland arrived in 1958.

Early in her career, Brickham worked in Fritz Benedict’s office and collaborated on projects with both Benedict and Bayer, participating in work going on at the Aspen Institute. Like Benedict, she had a strong interest in passive solar techniques. During her time in that office and, later, in her own practice out of her home, she designed a number

of residences and commercial buildings in town, including houses for several Music Festival artists in Aspen Grove, the elegantly simple brick Strandberg Residence (1973, 433 Bleeker Street-demolished) and the Patricia Moore Building (1963, 610 E. Hyman Avenue). In Pitkin County, she designed numerous homes in Pitkin Green and Starwood, on Red Mountain, including her own house (1955), with south and west walls made completely of glass. Her works, which total at least sixty in the Aspen area, are generally characterized by spare, simple forms and minimal detailing. Brickham’s projects focus on an “impeccable sense of proportion and feeling of lightness.”<sup>14</sup>

## ROBIN MOLNY

Robin Molny (1928-1997) apprenticed at Taliesin for some five years, from 1949 to c. 1954, before moving to Aspen in the mid-1950s. While passing through Aspen on trips back and forth between Wisconsin and Arizona, he met Benedict, who later called and offered him work in Aspen. Molny worked for him for a year and half, then became a registered architect, and started his own practice. Born in Cleveland, Ohio, Molny attended the Carnegie Institute of Technology in Pittsburgh before Taliesin.

His Taliesin years were pivotal, coinciding with the postwar resurgence of Wright’s architectural practice and planning for the construction of the Guggenheim Museum. In September 1953, Molny was one of three apprentices who traveled to New York City in the Fellowship station wagon to help to set up “Sixty Years of Living Architecture,” an exhibition of Wright’s architectural drawings and models. The exhibit had traveled to many cities worldwide and was going up in a temporary pavilion on the site of the new museum—sort of Wright’s shot across the bow to signal New Yorkers that he was on the scene. Wright typically put an experienced apprentice in charge of constructing the Fellowship-designed Usonian houses, greatly in demand; and Molny supervised the Maurice Greenberg residence in Dousman, Wisconsin, and was working with another Taliesin apprentice in Park Ridge, Illinois, when he left for Aspen. Despite Wright’s appreciation for Molny, he and Mrs. Wright did not get along, and he left Taliesin with some hard feelings.



Figure 19: Strandberg Residence, designed by Brickham. City of Aspen files.



Figure 20: Hearthstone House, designed by Molny. Courtesy Irma Prodingler.

<sup>14</sup> Bill Rollins, “Brickham: Simplicity, Lightness, and a Sense of Proportion,” *Aspen Times*, December 22, 1977.



Figure 21: Pedestrian Malls, designed by Molny.  
Courtesy AHS.

In Aspen, Molny designed several notable buildings, including the Hearthstone House (1961, enlarged 1963, 134 E. Hyman Avenue) and the Aspen Athletic Club (1976, 720 E. Hyman Avenue, with Art Yuenger). He designed area residences, including the W. Ford Schumann House, an Architectural Record house of 1975—a geometrically complex composition of stucco-battered walls that stepped up the side of the mountain. Wright told Molny, “If you understand the principles of my architecture, then your buildings need not look like mine.”<sup>15</sup> Molny’s best known contribution to Aspen’s “townscape” is the transformation of Cooper and Hyman Avenues into a pedestrian mall (1976) on which he collaborated with veteran Taliesin fellow Curtis Besinger.

#### CURTIS WRAY BESINGER

Besinger (1914-1999) received his B. Arch degree from the University of Kansas in 1936 and joined the Taliesin Fellowship in the summer of 1939. He was to stay for 16 years, from 1939-1955. A conscientious objector, he took a break from 1943-1946 to undertake “work of national importance under civilian direction.” After leaving Taliesin, with some angst and misgivings, he taught architecture at KU for 29 years, served as dean, and retired in 1984.

From 1956 on, Besinger spent his summers in Aspen with Fabi and Fritz Benedict, working with their architectural practice. Although he undoubtedly worked on many projects, he is specifically associated with the design of the Aspen Music School and Cooper-Hyman pedestrian mall. He was also connected to House Beautiful magazine, which was strongly pro-Wright. In his account of his years at Taliesin, *Working with Mr. Wright* (1995), he mentions architects associated with Aspen—Lee, Chadwick, Benedict, and Molny. He notes that Benedict organized ski trips for the Taliesin fellows when they were in Arizona in the winter of 1941-1942.

#### ELLEN HARLAND

After graduating in 1956 from the M.I.T. School of Architecture, Ellen (née Dirba) Harland (b. 1934) worked for Denver architect C. Francis Pillsbury. On May 1, 1958, she moved to Aspen to accept a job with Benedict, and Robin Molny was the only other architect in the office. Though not a skier, she loved the town of Aspen. She worked as a drafter and designer for Benedict for twenty years, taking time off when she married and her children were young. She worked on Benedict projects, such as the Pitkin County Library, from her home, and then returned to the office full-time when her children got older. Harland chose architecture as her career “because it seemed like a good profession for a woman—sort of an arty-mathematical thing.”<sup>16</sup> Even as a sixteen-year old, she knew she wanted to combine a career and family—architecture proved a good fit for her talents and goals.

Harland and her husband Irwin left the valley in 1977 for Santa Fe, which reminded them of Aspen in the 1950s, and she established a practice. Eventually she moved to Washington, D. C., where she drafted guidelines for the Americans with Disabilities Act for the Department of Justice. An impeccably trained modernist, she designed several Aspen houses, including a residence for herself and her family. She designed the sleek, one-story, flat-roofed residence defined by its simple rectilinear form and copious use of glazing for Benedict controller Pat Maddalone at 1411 Crystal Lake Road in Aspen Club in 1976.

#### JOHN MORRIS “JACK” WALLS

Born in Oklahoma (b. 1925) and educated at the University of Oklahoma (B. Arch '53), Jack Walls’ schooling

<sup>15</sup> Bruce Berger, “Robin Molny and the Taliesin Fellowship,” unpub., und .

<sup>16</sup> Joan Lane, “Aspen’s Women Architects Aid Building Boom in Town,” *Grand Junction Sentinel*, January 16, 1965.

would have overlapped with Bruce Goff's tenure as chair of Oklahoma's architecture school (1947-1955). After working briefly in Oklahoma City, he moved to Aspen because he liked the town and felt it sympathetic to his organic approach to architecture. He learned to ski after moving there. In 1957, only three architects were listed in the Aspen directory—Roy, Caudill, and Walls. Walls had a single practice from 1957 until 1968, when he became partners with Robert Sterling, a colleague in Benedict's office who had also worked as a drafter for him in the late 1950s. In 1958, Walls designed Buttermilk's dramatic glass and plywood base lodge. In 1970, Walls & Sterling (partners, 1968-1975) designed Aspen's first modernist gas station (435 E. Main Street), among other buildings. After leaving Aspen, Walls and his wife traveled and served in the Peace Corps in Honduras. He currently resides in Durango.

#### ROBERT "BOB" STERLING

In 1956, when Ohio-born Sterling (b. 1933) arrived in Aspen after dropping out of the University of Colorado to ski bum for a while, Benedict, Bayer, Caudill, Roy, and Walls were the architects in town who had studios. Between 1956 and 1960, he worked as a drafter for Rob Roy, and then for Jack Walls before returning to school. He graduated with a BFA (1962) and B. Arch (1963) from Utah. Returning to Aspen, he worked three years with



Figure 22: Villager Townhouses, designed by Sterling and Dagg. City of Aspen files.

Benedict, who was then designing the Mountain Plaza, the Gant, and Snowmass lodges. In 1965, Sterling and a fellow Benedict employee, Bob Dagg, designed and developed a condo project, the Villager Townhouses (1001 E. Cooper). He and partner Wall (1968-1975) designed the Conoco station (435 E. Main Street, 1970), and Courthouse Plaza Building, among other buildings. As a single practitioner, he designed numerous residences and the original layout for the Roaring Fork Club in Basalt. Currently Sterling lives in Glenwood Springs and is involved with disaster housing in Kenya and Haiti.

#### GEORGE EDWARD HENEGHAN, JR.

Missouri native Heneghan (b. 1934) received his B. Arch from Washington University in 1957. He worked in Benedict's office where he met Daniel Gale, his partner from 1966-1969. The last year of their partnership, 1969, was busy: they designed the Hannah Dustin commercial building (300 S. Spring), the Aspen Interfaith Chapel of the Prince of Peace on Meadowood Drive, and the Cottonwoods Condominium, as well as residences for the Guggenheim and Horowitz families. Heneghan left Aspen and Colorado to establish his practice in Hawaii.



Figure 23: Prince of Peace Chapel. Courtesy AHS.

#### THEODORE L. "TED" MULARZ

Born in Chicago, Illinois, Mularz (FAIA, b. 1933) served in the Coast Guard (1953-1955) and graduated with a B. Arch from the University of Illinois in 1959. He and Molny had worked together in Park Ridge, Illinois, and after Molny moved to Aspen and started working for Benedict, he called and said they needed help for the summer. At that point, Mularz didn't have his degree and didn't know where Aspen was. He spent the summer of 1958 working in Benedict's office for \$1.75 an hour, went home to complete his undergraduate program and a semester of graduate work, and then returned for a permanent position in June 1959, starting at \$2.00 an hour. Mularz remembers working on projects for Bayer, whose office was around the corner, when things were slow in

the Benedict office. Though not a skier when he came to Aspen, he became an avid skier afterward.



Figure 24: Berko Studio, designed by Mularz. City of Aspen files.

In November 1963, he established his own practice. He was briefly associated with Benedict in a corporate firm as Benedict-Mularz Associates, Architects, from 1978-1981. Among his designs are the modern studio adjacent to the West End cottage of Aspen photographer Ferenc Berko (1964); the Manor Vail and Lord Gore Club (1965), Fasching Haus Condominium (747 S. Galena, 1966), and the Scott Building (400 W. Hopkins, date) and numerous residences. Active in the community, he chaired the Historic Resources Committee in the 1960s, and he and his wife were founding members of the Aspen Historical Society. In 1990, Mularz left Aspen for another attractive, culturally oriented community, Ashland, Oregon.

#### THOMAS WHELAN “TOM” BENTON

Almost twenty years after Bayer and Benedict, Tom Benton (1930-2007) arrived in Aspen in 1963, as the ski town’s growth and popularity were shifting into high gear. Serving in the Navy during the Korean War, Benton used the GI Bill to study architecture at the University of Southern California (B. Arch, 1960) and worked in southern California for a time. Though trained as an architect, he really wanted to be a “working artist.” A ski trip to Aspen convinced him that it was where he should be. Bringing a California sensibility that fit well with Aspen’s growing image as a counter-culture mecca, Benton designed his studio and gallery—“unique, a clean and sharp blend of wood and cinder block” (heavily altered today) —at 421 E. Hyman Avenue. He collaborated with Hunter Thompson and others to create “images that helped to define Aspen’s tempestuous political and social upheavals” in the late 1960s. More interested in graphic art than in architecture, he still designed the occasional building, including a residence for actress Jill St. John. His funky, organic, California esthetic was in sync with Aspen’s Wrightian tradition. His designs, such as the Patio Building (1969), a flat-roofed commercial building at 630 E. Hyman (1969), exhibit a similar interest in natural materials, simple geometric shapes, deep overhangs, horizontal emphasis, and orienting the building to frame views toward the mountains.



Figure 25: Patio Building, designed by Benton. Courtesy AHS.

#### RICHARD TSENG-YU LAI

Born in 1937 in Beijing, China, Lai garnered several prestigious awards from Princeton University and received two degrees, a B. Arch (magna cum laude) in 1958, and an MFA. Arch in 1960. In 1960, he moved to Aspen, where he worked for five years for Samuel Caudill. In 1965, he left to join the faculty at the University of Texas to teach architecture and planning. During his Aspen years, he chaired Aspen’s Committee for Experimental Pedestrian Mall (1960) and served on the City Planning and Zoning Commission (1963-1965). After more than 40 years, Joy Caudill remembers Lai as a key person in her husband’s architecture practice.

#### ARTHUR “ART” YUENGER

After receiving his B. Arch. from Illinois in 1962, Yuenger (b. 1939) worked first for his father’s Long Island, New York, architectural woodworking company and then interned with Paul Rudolph, Ulrich Franzen, and Victor Lundy in New York City, obtaining his New York license in 1968. During the 1960s, he skied in Vermont, but he

decided that he had to master the sport and so moved to Aspen. He arrived in 1969 and worked with Benedict and Molny (Aspen Athletic Club, 1976) before establishing his own practice. He designed a number of residences, including the striking concrete block house at 54 Shady Lane adjacent to Hunter Creek (1971). Living in Fairfield, Iowa, since 1999, Yuenger participates in World Peace Assemblies, an important aspect of his career, but continues to design houses in Colorado and Aspen.

In addition to local architects with practices embedded in the community, out-of-state architects and second-home-owners Francis Rew Stanton, Harry Weese, and Victor Lundy also added to Aspen's modernist legacy.

#### FRANCIS REW STANTON

In November 1950, Paepcke's Aspen Company sold an historic West End house to Chicago brothers Edgar and Francis Stanton and their wives, Rose and Louise, all four of whom would contribute significantly to Aspen's economic and cultural life. Later, Edgar sold his half interest to his brother and in 1954 moved to a modern house designed by Francis on Red Mountain



Figure 27: Christ Episcopal Church, designed by Stanton. Courtesy Denver Public Library archives.

(0223 Placer Lane). Architect Stanton (1910-1995) also designed Christ Episcopal Church in the West End in 1963. Both of his Aspen structures had distinctive parabolic arched shapes. From 1948-1964, he was a partner in Stanton and Rockwell of Chicago and then practiced independently until his retirement in 1989. He had a Yale BFA in Architecture (1935) and spent two summers at the Ecole des Beaux Arts Americaine at Fontainebleau, France. From 1948-1954, he served with Eero Saarinen, Joseph Albers, George Nelson and other on the Yale University Subcommittee on Architecture, Painting, and Sculpture to update the three departments' curriculum.

#### HARRY WEESE

The distinguished Chicago modernist Harry Weese (FAIA, 1915-1998) of Harry Weese and Associates designed the Given Institute for Pathobiology for the University of Colorado in 1972 on 100 E. Francis Street (located in Elizabeth Paepcke's garden, with supervision by Aspen's William Lipsey). The concrete block building has been described as "one of Aspen's finest modernist works [which] gives a playful rigor to a simple circle with angular extensions."<sup>17</sup> Weese was educated at Yale (1936-1937), M.I.T. (B. Arch, 1938) and the Cranbrook Institute of Art (1938-1939) with Eliel and Eero Saarinen before working at Skidmore, Owings, and Merrill. He establishing his own firm in 1947. Renowned for a number of significant projects throughout the United States and the design of the Washington D. C. Metro System (1976), Weese had a home in the West End for many years and also designed vacation houses at Vail and Snowmass.



Figure 28: Given Institute, designed by Weese. City of Aspen files.

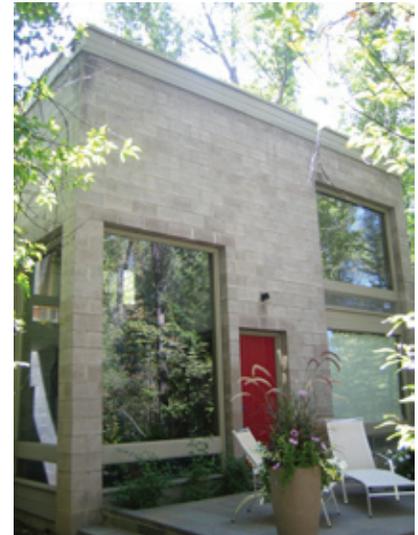


Figure 26: 54 Shady Lane residence., designed by Yuenger. City of Aspen files.

<sup>17</sup> Noel, *Buildings of Colorado*, 493.

## VICTOR LUNDY

Victor Lundy (FAIA, b. 1923) was a renowned modernist architect at the time he built a second home for his family on 301 Lake Avenue in the West End in 1972. A Harvard-educated (B. Arch, M. Arch) World War II veteran, Lundy had a successful career designing notable government, commercial, and educational buildings in Sarasota, Florida; New York City; and Houston and Dallas, Texas. At Harvard, he studied under Gropius and Breuer, with whom Bayer was also associated in 1920s Germany. The Lundy family was in Aspen in the late 1950s but left and then returned. Lundy's vacation home is located next door to a Bayer design (1963, 311 North Street). Known for his dramatic roofs, Lundy cantilevered the roof to extend over the floor-to-ceiling windows that frame the 20'-high great room.

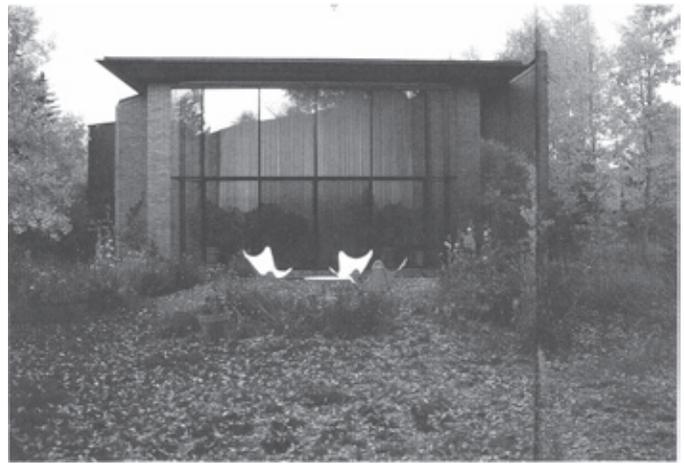


Figure 29: 301 Lake Avenue, designed by Lundy. Courtesy Victor Lundy.

Other out-of-town architects designing modernist buildings in Aspen include Wheeler and Lewis of Denver (The Yellow Brick School, 1950s), Texan Donald W. Kirk (Shadow Mountain Condominiums, 809 S. Aspen, 1965), Eric Friis of Eagle River, Wisconsin (Tom Cleary family modern chalet, 219 S. Third Street, 1965), Brown Brokaw Bowen of Boulder (Coors family modern chalet, 1960s), and Erickson and Stevens of Des Plaines, Illinois (North of Nell, 1968).

## CHAPTER 3: MODERNISM IN ASPEN 1945-1975 - THE BUILDINGS

A significant amount of Aspen's postwar architecture represents either a Bauhaus Modern or Wrightian Modern esthetic, reflecting the training of the young architects moving to town, the taste of the clients, and the general acceptance that modern architecture is appropriate for modern times. Aspen's modern architecture shows a range of building types that articulate its three pronged identity—mountain resort, county seat for the Roaring Fork Valley, and cultural enclave. Examples will be organized by type, location, and chronology—downtown core, West End, east. During the years the resort town emerged, 1945-1960, relatively few new buildings went up; after 1960, the amount and scale of new construction increased dramatically.

### 1945-1960 ASPEN ENTERS THE SKI AND CULTURAL TOURISM INDUSTRIES

Aspen saw little new construction in the period between the 1893 Silver Crash and World War II, known as the "Quiet Years." In the early 1940s, no architects or contractors/builders were listed in the telephone directory. Many of the town's Victorian structures had become dilapidated or vacant and were available for modest sums or back taxes. Still intact were such major public buildings as the Hotel Jerome and Wheeler Opera House, numerous businesses and residences, and a street grid that dictated the orderly placement of buildings between Ajax Mountain to the south and Red Mountain to the north. In 1945, the lives and livelihoods of Aspen's 600 inhabitants revolved around one working mine and scattered ranches.

Those years of inactivity caused economic hardship but also enabled the area's natural environment, degraded by mining operations, to recuperate. It attracted Friedl Pfeifer and other 10<sup>th</sup> Mt. Division veterans eager to create a ski resort and Walter and Elizabeth Paepcke, hoping to create an ideal community of cultural, spiritual, and intellectual renewal. In her history of Aspen, "Re-creation through Recreation," historian Annie Gilbert writes, "As with other ski areas and other ski towns, Aspen joined the ski industry when ski enthusiasts teamed up with willing investors to build a ski area that would attract destination skiers (through staying for a week or more) as well as local skiers and competitors." Paepcke's ambitious plans for Aspen's rebirth as a cultural center, Pfeifer's dream of creating a ski resort equal to St. Anton, and the hopes of 10<sup>th</sup> Mt. Division veterans like Fritz Benedict to create new lives where they could continue to ski and make money doing so—were facilitated by the extraordinary resource of Aspen's existing urban fabric. Local residents, for the most part, adapted to the new tourist economy and formed a connection between Aspen's mining past and tourism future.

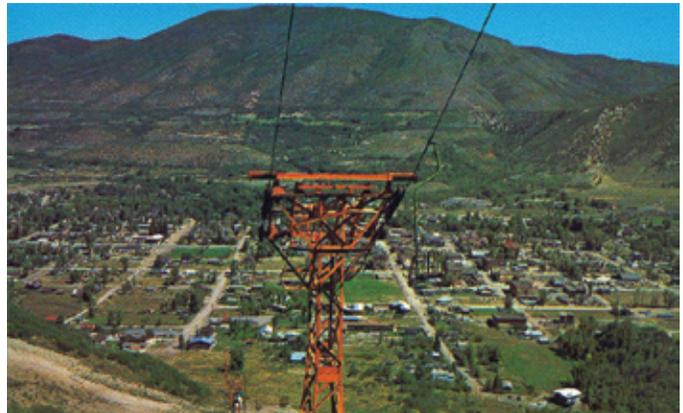


Figure 30: Lift 1. Courtesy AHS.

Paepcke wanted to encourage particular sorts of people to come to Aspen. "We want writers and scientists and artists and businessmen and we want them to be [permanent] citizens of Aspen, not seasonal visitors." He acted quickly, buying up properties from the summer of 1945 and convincing Bauhaus master Herbert Bayer, who shared his views of the inextricable and important connection between modern design and consumer culture, to relocate to Aspen in 1946. Bayer, Paepcke, Paepcke's Chicago architect Walter Frazier, and other intellectual, artistic, and business elite renovated Victorian houses in the West End near the campus where the Bayer- and Benedict-designed modern buildings of the Aspen Institute would take shape over the years. In 1950, Bayer spearheaded the establishment of the International Design Conference, which further linked high design and high mindedness in Aspen. The "Aspen Idea", combining mind, body, and soul, began to take shape.

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The skiers wanted their new ski resort in the Rocky Mountains to attract as broad a clientele and accommodate as

many people as possible. On December 14, 1946, two lifts opened unofficially for business on Aspen Mountain, with No. 1 lift ending at the Sundeck, Aspen's first new building in years. In January 1947, the mountain opened officially. It was slow going, but by 1956, the stalwart Hotel Jerome was joined by new lodges, the Prospector, the Boomerang, and three or four other places, competing for the skiers' dollar. Still, according to Fritz Benedict, Aspen "was so dead and starting to be a resort so slowly that there wasn't much to do in way of design. . . . Everybody who lived here was just eking out a living." "They just loved the place and didn't want to leave."<sup>18</sup>

By the early 1950s, Aspen was entering the tourist business full-time, year-round, resulting in a growing economy, new residents, and "a general feeling of optimism."<sup>19</sup> From 1950 to 1960, Pitkin County increased its population by 44 percent. Bayer and Benedict had arrived in the mid-1940s; by 1955, Elli Brickham, Sam Caudill, and Rob Roy brought the number of architects in town to five; and by 1962, some ten architects and designers provided architectural services. In 1955, there were two contractors and two lumberyards; by 1957, a third contractor was listed. By 1960, 55 lodges and motels (2500 beds) had been erected, many with alpine motifs reflecting Aspen's emerging ski town identity—Swiss Alps being more identified with skiing than the Rocky Mountains—in a style that Elizabeth Paepcke, who preferred either the look of the Victorian mining era or Bauhaus modern, dismissively termed "bastard Tyrolean."<sup>20</sup>

### SKI INDUSTRY

In December 1946, the Sundeck warming hut opened on Aspen Mountain. Designed by Bayer and Benedict, the wood and glass lunch restaurant was sited at 11,300 feet, a hundred yards from where the new lift ended. Combining Wrightian and Bauhaus innovation, the hut had an inverted roof that slanted toward the center so the central fireplace would melt the snow and the run-off drain to tanks in the basement to provide water. Offering a 360-degree panorama of the surrounding mountains, the octagonal restaurant provided shelter and conviviality. It also signified Aspen's challenge to Sun Valley's new Roundhouse facility—Aspen would be a player in the growing Colorado and national ski industry!

Some 10 years later, in 1958, two new ski areas, Aspen Highlands and Buttermilk Mountain, opened near Aspen. Both featured spectacular modernist base lodges (demolished). Friedl Pfeifer's Buttermilk Mountain, geared toward novice-intermediate skiers, had a dramatic base lodge with a sweeping hyperbolic paraboloid roof cantilevered over a glazed base. As architect Jack Walls remembers, he placed a large glass square oriented to the mountain to spotlight the downhill skiers and spanned the entire interior space with two buttresses at the end points. Whipple Van Ness "Whip" Jones's Aspen Highlands, offered a challenging mountain similar to Aspen Mountain but with new terrain, ski school directors Stein Erickson and Fred Iselin, and lower rates.

Benedict developed a theme of multiple and overlapping A-frame shapes for Aspen Highland's wood and glass base lodge and created a roofline that he compared to "an interpretation of an unusual nearby mountain called the Maroon Bells."<sup>21</sup>

18 Adele Dusenbury, "When the Architect Arrived after the War," *Aspen Times*, July 31, 1975, 1-B.

19 Annie Gilbert, *Re-creation through Recreation*, Aspen Historical Society, 1995.

20 Elizabeth Paepcke quoted in Annie Gilbert Coleman, *Ski Style: Sport and Culture in the Rockies* (Lawrence: University of Kansas Press, 2004), 250, fn. 21.

21 Benedict quoted in Noel, *Buildings of Colorado*, 487.



Figure 31: Sundeck atop Aspen Mountain, designed by Bayer and Benedict. Courtesy AHS.



Figure 32: Buttermilk Base Lodge. Courtesy AHS.

## LODGING

To provide lodging for ski-tourists, Aspen quickly erected a number of lodges—in alpine, pan-abode, rustic,



Figure 33: The Smuggler Lodge. Courtesy AHS.

and make-do styles. The Boomerang Lodge (500 W. Hopkins Avenue), which opened in 1956, was true Wright Modern. The Smuggler Lodge (c. 1960, demolished), a two-story, flat-roofed lodge with a continuous balcony cantilevered over the ground floor and dramatic diagonal details, was a project by developer Hans Kantrup that brought a “Googie”, or playful, modernism to Aspen’s mountain setting.

## COMMERCIAL

As Aspen’s economy began to revive in the late 1940s and 1950s, so did the need for financial institutions. Two modernist bank buildings appeared in the mid-1950s among the Victorian commercial structures that had defined Aspen’s downtown. In 1954, Sam Caudill designed the First National Bank of Aspen on 420 E. Main Street, a striking modernist essay in brick with strong curved and rectilinear shapes, dramatic massing, and planar emphasis. Two years later, in 1956, Fritz Benedict designed the Bank of Aspen (119 S. Mill Street), an one-story, flat-roofed structure of salvaged brick that evokes Wright’s influences in its rectilinear massing of the chimney, walls, and piers, horizontal emphasis, and the dramatic cantilevering of the roof over the porch.

## PUBLIC

Aspen’s economic revival also encompassed the construction of public and private education institutions. In the 1940s, a red brick school building using brick salvaged from the Victorian-era Lincoln Street (where the Yellow Brick School now stands) went up at 110 E. Hallam Street. Sam Caudill’s wife Joy remembers that his first job in Aspen was designing an additional gymnasium and three classrooms for the school. Now reconfigured as the Red Brick Arts Center, it features the original steel casement windows and later additions at the east end. In 1951, Benedict adapted 1880s mining-era buildings on Castle Creek Road in Pitkin County to create the Aspen Music School. Besinger has been cited as a collaborator, though he was immersed in the Taliesin Fellowship until 1956, when he did begin regular summer stints in Aspen. The simple frame and shake-shingled buildings got low-pitched roofs and balconies overlooking the creek to give the campus “a Japanese tranquility prized by both Bauhaus and Wrightian schools.”<sup>22</sup> In 1960, the yellow brick school at 215 Garmisch Street was designed by the Denver firm of Wheeler & Lewis. A typical postwar school building—long, low, and horizontal, as in Miesian architecture—the classrooms have extensive bands of glazing and direct access to the outside. Caudill remodeled the structure in the mid-1960s.



Figure 34: Red Brick School. Courtesy AHS.

<sup>22</sup> Noel, *Buildings of Colorado*, 498.

## RESIDENTIAL

Only a few modernist residences were built in Aspen between 1945 and 1960. Paepcke encouraged his friends to purchase and restore old houses in the Victorian West End and led off with his restoration of Pioneer Park (1885), home of former mayor Henry Webber. Chicago architects Walter Frazier and Francis Stanton and their wives, Western novelist Luke Short, and designer Herbert Bayer all moved into the existing West End cottages.

By 1950, modernist residences, Wright- and Bauhaus-inspired, began to appear on Aspen's streets and Red Mountain. Flat roofs and white stucco walls signified the 1920s Bauhaus style and the 1930s and 1940s International Style. After 1950, the American adaptation of the International Style held to flat roofs and minimal decoration but usually replaced the stark white stucco surfaces with various combinations of wood, stone, brick, or concrete block, the latter a favorite of Herbert Bayer.

Attracting an artistic and literary clientele, many of these avant garde structures—such as Benedict's Hallam Lake residence for novelist John Marquand, and his "Waterfall" house for D. V. Edmundson on Castle Creek Road—have been demolished. In 1950, Bayer designed, with Benedict and architect Gordon Chadwick, his own Bauhaus-inspired studio of cinder block, wood, and glass on Red Mountain and, in 1959, a simple and economical two-bedroom pavilion nearby which he and his wife Joella decided to use as their permanent home (both demolished). Other Red Mountain modernist houses include Ellie Brickham's residence, its south and west prospects of glass (1955); and the house known locally as the "bonnet" house because of the parabolic shape of its roof, designed by Chicago architect and Aspen homeowner Francis Stanton in 1954 for his brother and sister-in-law, Edgar and Rose, two stalwart Aspen benefactors.



Figure 35: "Bonnet" house, designed by Stanton. Courtesy AHS.

Starting in the late 1950s, West End Bauhaus modernist houses appeared, their compact rectangular shapes in keeping with the scale of its modest Victorian cottages. In 1957, Bayer designed a sleek one-story, L-shaped, flat-roofed, cinder block (now stuccoed) residence at 240 Lake Avenue, overlooking Lake Hallam. Not far away, a modest board-and-batten vacation home with modernist features, such as a flat shed roof, over-hanging eaves, and simple square windows, went up at 434 Pearl Court for a physicist affiliated with the nearby Aspen Center for Physics. At the base of Shadow Mountain, a Wrightian structure of warm wood siding, expansive prow-like roof, overhanging eaves, expanse of glass, and tiled fireplace was built on 322 W. Hyman Avenue in 1953. The four-family abode, or quadruplex, signaled another audience for modern housing in Aspen—skiers.

## ASPEN INSTITUTE

Spread across a meadow not far from the West End, near the track where local plutocrats raced their thoroughbreds



Figure 36: Koch Seminar Building, designed by Bayer. City of Aspen files.

in the town's heyday, is the distinctly modern campus of the Aspen Institute for Humanistic Studies—German Bauhaus design transplanted to the Colorado Rockies. The institute was an outgrowth of Walter Paepcke's Goethe Bicentennial; intelligentsia and élite traveled to Aspen in June 1949 to celebrate the historic, deep, and abiding philosophical ties that America and the rest of the world had with Germany, despite the aberration of Hitler and the Second World War, and to hear concerts, lectures, and, best of all, Albert Schweitzer. Its architectural centerpiece was the Big Tent, designed by famed modernist Eero Saarinen, which epitomized the festive but modern nature of the august gathering.



Figure 37: Center for Physics, designed by Bayer. City of Aspen files.



Figure 38: Anderson Park, designed by Bayer. Courtesy National Trust for Historic Places.

Everyone agreed that Aspen’s mountain setting had much to do with the festival’s success. The following June, the Aspen Institute opened the first of its summer seminars, where businessmen and intellectuals gathered to listen to such thinkers and doers as Mortimer Adler and Adlai Stevenson and to ponder universal ideas similar to those of Paepcke’s “Great Ideas” advertising campaign.

The Aspen Institute campus was designed without a master plan but loosely organized in three main areas—housing for guests, institute administration and activities, and affiliated institutes. The first permanent building was the 1953 Seminar Building, designed by Bayer with Benedict as the associate architect, a pattern that held through the 1950s. Constructed of steel frame and cinder blocks, it had a sgraffito mural on its exterior and two hexagon-shaped interior spaces designed to facilitate discussions around a central table, a large room with “star-like folded planes” on the ceiling and gray walls, and a smaller room with colorful walls.

In 1954, Bayer and Benedict designed two more institute buildings. The Aspen Meadows Guest Chalets, three flat-roofed, two-story buildings, each with colorful balcony dividers of blue, red, and yellow, respectively, were loosely grouped around a central building that housed a restaurant (known as the Copper Kettle), lounges, and offices. The Central Building—flat-roofed, two-story, clerestory-lit—combines cinder blocks and local moss stone, creating a distinctive structure at once Wright and Bauhaus. A year later, the pair’s

1955 Health Center for the Physical Therapy Program of the Aspen Institute, with the structural expertise of Otto Buehner, used pre-stressed and prefab concrete and open ends glazed for clerestory light. Sited at the junction of the Roaring Fork River and Castle Creek, the modern complex had a gymnasium; massage, sauna and steam rooms; a plunge pool; and library/sitting room. Bayer also created environmental sculptures, the 1954 Green Mound and 1955 Marble Garden, which predated the “earthwork” and environmental sculpture movement by at least ten years.

In a sense, the rigorous Bauhaus modernist environment of the Aspen Institute mirrored the high-minded thinking within its boundaries as well as effectively separating it from Victorian mining-era Aspen, ski-town Alpine, rustic eclecticism, and organic Wrightian modernism.

### 1960-1975 GROWTH AND DEVELOPMENT

Aspen’s growth and development as tourist town, ski resort, and cultural center accelerated in the 1960s and 1970s. After 1958, visitors could ski on three mountains. Skier visits at Aspen Mountain rose from 93,000 in 1958-1959, to 174,000 in 1964-1965, and Buttermilk and Aspen Highlands saw similar growth. In 1967, nearby Snowmass-at Aspen opened, a huge year-round destination resort, in development since 1961, the creation of California land and real estate developer William Janss. In its first year, it attracted twice as many visitors as planned and more than Aspen Mountain itself. It also sparked the disdain of a local writer who felt that it “exemplified qualities that Aspen itself eschewed—large-scale, efficiency, group think, and a no-nonsense



Figure 39: Base lodge at Buttermilk Mountain. Courtesy AHS.

cost-profit ratio.”<sup>23</sup> Yet as Annie Gilbert writes in her history of Aspen, “Promoters of Colorado’s economy saw ski industry growth as only positive: investments and expansions by the ski industry led to more investments by skiers as they came to the state for vacation.”<sup>24</sup>

What this meant for the community of Aspen was more visitors, more residents, and more architects and builders to respond to the demand for lodges, restaurants, bars, shops, housing, and the everyday goods and services expected of civic and commercial centers. Architect Bob Sterling remembers attending the FIS races in February 1950, which “sealed the deal”

for him—he wanted to live in Aspen. “At that time Aspen was just awakening from post-war blues and an exciting variety of US and foreign types were moving to town.”<sup>25</sup> Sterling quit college and “went to Aspen to ski bum for a while.” From 1956-1960 he worked as a lodge caretaker, waiter, and drafter for Rob Roy and then Jack Walls. After going back to school and getting his architecture degree in 1963, he returned to Aspen and worked in Benedict’s office for three years. In the five years between 1960 to 1965, Aspen’s population increased 40 percent, with ski bums and movie stars, political élite and counter-culture gurus, and increasingly affluent, ordinary people adding to the mix of old-timers (some of whom found themselves priced out of their hometown and moved down valley), 10th Mountain Division veterans, ski enthusiasts, and cultural mavens.

In 1964, the building boom reached \$3 million. Vic Goodhard, the owner of a local garbage company, recalled that “the changing of Aspen was kind of gradual until the 1960s, and then it really started popping.” Serving both Aspen and Snowmass, Goodhard constantly had to buy new garbage trucks: “All of a sudden there were new places, bigger places that demanded more service, more people.”<sup>26</sup> By 1965, Benedict and others—including Ted Mularz, who chaired the Aspen Historical Society’s Historic Buildings Committee, and Richard Lai, who chaired the Committee for Experimental Pedestrian Mall and served on Aspen’s City Planning and Zoning Commission from 1963-1965—grew concerned about unchecked growth and destruction of the natural landscape and historic resources, and urged the city to adopt an Aspen Master Plan (1966). City leaders recognized that the need to provide not only a “growth” plan but affordable housing for the teachers, policeman, and others who provided essential services for what had become a resort town with very high property values geared toward the affluent visitor.

In the autumn of 1962, Der Berghof, a new kind of tourist accommodation appeared at 100 E. Cooper Avenue—Aspen’s first condominium. That year, Colorado passed a law permitting condominiums, which would have a profound effect on Aspen’s civic character and economic base. Condominiums, in which each townhouse or apartment in a multiple-unit building is owned by an individual, was a new concept in America. Touted as an economical alternative to buying a single family vacation home, condo development soon became a hallmark of resort communities everywhere. Jumpstarted by California real estate magnate William Janss, who developed Sun Valley and Snowmass, ski condominiums became as indispensable to new ski area growth in the West as lofty mountains, powder snow, and airplane packages.

Along with other established ski towns, Aspen embraced condominiums. They transformed local real estate markets and townscapes by concentrating large numbers of people in smaller spaces but larger-scaled structures. After Der Berghof, other condo apartments quickly appeared, including the Aspen Alps, Mittendorf, Alpenblick,

23 Peggy Clifford and John M. Smith, *Aspen Dreams and Dilemmas: Love Letters to a Small Town* (Chicago: Swallow Press, 1970), 97.

24 Gilbert, *Re-creation through Recreation*.

25 Bob Sterling, email to the author, 4 June 2010.

26 Gilbert, *Re-creation through Recreation*.

Fifth Avenue, Little Nell, and Aspen Square. Condos provided a far higher return on land than individual houses or dormitories, leaving the young “ski bums” who worked at menial jobs for the opportunity to ski scrambling for places to live. Architect Ellen Harland sees the condo boom as largely responsible for a change in Aspen’s civic character; it allowed developers to finance a project through pre-selling, accelerating the pace of change and exacerbating the shift to newcomers who could more easily get into the real estate market.<sup>27</sup> By 1972, Aspen had more than 2000 condo units. As the Fifth Avenue condo manager observed: “. . . three years ago people thought condominium was something you shook on your steak. Now that’s all over. The sort of Ed’s Beds days are gone.”<sup>28</sup>



Figure 40: Aspen Square, designed by Benedict. Courtesy AHS.

Concurrent with 1960s growth and development, the architecture and building community expanded. The number of local builders and contractors grew to twenty in 1968, with down valley builders increasing as well. Pioneer architects were joined by others, many of whom got their start in the Benedict office, such as Art Yuenger, Ted Mularz, Bob Sterling, George Henegahn, and Dan Gale. Recent Princeton graduate Richard Lai joined Caudill’s firm in 1960. Snowmass was a boon: Benedict designed the master plan, and he, Caudill, and others designed all types of buildings for the new resort complex as well as for Aspen’s commercial, residential, and tourist needs. Tom Benton, perhaps a harbinger of Aspen’s shift toward anti-establishment counter-culture, arrived from southern California in 1963, his tactile wood buildings in sync with Aspen’s Wrightian esthetic. In the early 1970s, two renowned modernists, Henry Weese and Victor Lundy, each designed a distinctive building that continued Aspen’s Bauhaus modern traditions.

By the 1970s, Aspen’s success threatened to diminish the quality of life that drew people. The town tried to accommodate tourists and townspeople, workers and visitors, traffic and parking, shopping and entertainment by transforming Cooper and Hyman into a pedestrian mall and creating Rubey Park to facilitate public transportation.

#### LODGING

Just prior to the condominium explosion, two lodges went up in downtown Aspen to provide short-term accommodations for skiers. Robin Molny designed Aspen’s second Wrightian lodge, the Hearthstone. Built in 1961 and enlarged in 1963, the handsome wood structure is set deep into its site on the corner of Hyman and Aspen and has two angled wings and a sheltering shingled roof. In 1963, Caudill designed a chalet-style building, originally called the Viking Lodge, at 832 E. Cooper Avenue. The two-story, gable-roofed building has a simple L-shaped layout, with wood and stucco exterior and a balcony defining the front facades. More typically a modernist, Caudill created this ski lodge in a picturesque alpine style that was important to Aspen’s ski-town imagery at the time.

#### COMMERCIAL

Between 1960 and 1975, Aspen’s downtown commercial core reflected the economic boom, with new office, retail, recreational, and service buildings inserting new functions and a modernist presence among the extant Victorians. Two striking brick structures, dated 1960 and 1970, feature oversized entrance arches that recall the urbane commercial architecture of Louis Sullivan and Frank Lloyd Wright. At 307 S. Mill Street, the red brick building has a large arched entrance with five receding brick moldings and an off-center low parapet and pier

<sup>27</sup> Ellen Harland, telephone interview with the author, 26 May 2010.

<sup>28</sup> Burton Hersh, “Economy is a Luxury Condominium,” *Ski* 37 (August 1972):68-70; Burton Kaplan, “Condominiums—To Buy or Not to Buy,” *Skiing* 25 (November 1972):110-13, 161-63.



Figure 41: Aspen Sports, designed by Caudill. City of Aspen files.

(1960). Though the architect is unknown, the Mill Street building anticipates Caudill's 1970 impeccable yellow brick Aspen Sports on 408 East Cooper, a cube with a dramatic central arch, low parapets flanking the central entrance, and a large horizontal window set into the second-floor attic.

The E. Hyman Street area attracted several new commercial buildings in the 1960s, two of them by Aspen's first female architect, Ellie Brickham. Her two-story, flat-roofed, concrete block structure at the corner of Hunter and Hyman (606 E. Hyman Avenue, 1960) has the simple geometry, minimal decoration, ribbon windows, and cantilevered second floor associated with Bauhaus design, reminiscent of her work at the Aspen

Institute with Bayer and Benedict. Next door, 610 E. Hyman Avenue (1963), described as "a most unusual shop" for client Patricia Moore had shops and offices on the ground floor and the owner's apartment on the second floor.<sup>29</sup> Oriented to the street, the façade has six attenuated brick piers that extend from the base to the eaves and stucco arched spandrels for a more "decorated" look that reflected the 1960s evolution of modernist design, as in Phillip Johnson's Lincoln Center in New York.

In the same block is the Patio Building (630 E. Hyman Avenue), designed in 1969 by Tom Benton, a local icon known for his printmaking flair and personality. This flat-roofed building feels both Wrightian and Californian in its exploration of, and delight in, the nature of the materials—wood, concrete blocks and glass; use of geometric forms, such as the large-scale horizontal second story cantilevered over the open first floor and the prominent round central window on the Hyman Avenue façade; and its attention to its corner location, with the Spring Street façade reiterating themes and materials of the Hyman Street front.

In the next block, at 720 E. Hyman Avenue, is Robin Molny's Aspen Athletic Club of 1976, his only unaltered commercial building. A massive cube with three stories of offices above grade and an athletic club in the basement, it shares with Benton's Patio Building a Wrightian sense of materials, prominent flat roof, and massive capstone floor cantilevered over a glazed lower floor. The heavy timber construction with glue-laminated wood beams and columns contrasts with the glass atrium in the lobby, the open floor plan, and interior/exterior courtyard.

Cattycorner from Benton's building, on 300 S. Spring Street, is the Hannah-Dustin Building, designed in 1969 by George Heneghan and Dan Gale, both of whom had worked for Benedict. The flat-roofed, multistory building minimizes its scale by the artful use of planar brick panels extending above the eaves, set-back stucco spandrels, cantilevered roof and balconies, and use of natural materials such as brick, wood, and tile.



Figure 42: 300 South Spring Street, designed by Heneghan and Gale. City of Aspen files.

On the corner of Galena and Main Street is Aspen's first modernist gas station (435 E. Main Street), built in 1970, across the street from Caudill's pristine 1954 National Bank of Aspen. Designed by Jack Walls and Bob Sterling, who had both worked in Benedict's office, the award-winning gas station was commissioned by the president of Conoco Oil, who wanted a signature station in Aspen—as Walls remembers, it was just about the

<sup>29</sup> Lane, "Aspen's Women Architects Aid Building Boom in Town."

first filling station in town. The elegant rectilinear brick station is divided into two parts, a higher office/service bay/car wash and the lower gas pump area, both topped by cantilevered flat roofs. The smooth brick surfaces and rounded corners created a modern structure set back from the street with a flow around the building and unobstructed views of the station's pumps and service bays.

In the 1970s, when pedestrian malls became a popular urban concept, and Colorado laws were enacted that

facilitated their construction, Aspen attempted to resolve some of its traffic and parking problems by transforming five blocks of two major commercial avenues, Cooper and Hyman. The concept of a pedestrian mall for Aspen dated back to the 1960s, with architects, such as Ellie Brickham and Richard Lai, participating on citizen committees wrestling with the issue.



Figure 43: Hyman Avenue Mall, designed by Molny. Courtesy AHS.

In 1976, Molny collaborated with Besinger, who later consulted for Boulder, Colorado, to create Aspen's automobile-free commercial space. The Cooper-Hyman pedestrian mall maintains the town's traditional urban grid but eliminates automobile traffic so pedestrians can shop and socialize in an updated tourist-friendly environment "enlivened by native trees, sculpture,

grass-water-courses, and playground."<sup>30</sup> The newer buildings emulate, in scale and material, the older ones, some of which are Aspen's most significant, such as the Cowenhoven Block (1890) and the Red Onion, formerly the Brick Saloon (1892). The mall's proximity to Rubey Park and the newly constructed bus station facilitated public access to downtown for both tourists at Snowmass and other places and workers, who lived down valley.

Along with his Bidwell Building at 434 E. Cooper Avenue in 1965, Benedict designed other commercial projects. In 1976, he moved his architectural office from the downtown Victorian-era Bowman Building to his newly designed Benedict Building on 1280 Ute Avenue, east of Aspen's commercial core. According to the Society of Architectural Historian Guide to Colorado Architecture, it conforms to the "'Aspen style,' exemplified by well-sited, low-slung Modernist structures of indigenous materials, notably wooden beams that often seem to fade into the aspen grove."<sup>31</sup> In 1978, Benedict designed the Pitkin County Bank at 534 E. Hyman.

## PUBLIC

While accommodating tourist and commercial demands, Aspen modern architecture also served community needs. According to a 1961 *Aspen Times* article, Benedict and Bayer were selected to design a new Pitkin County Library, and Benedict drafter Ellen Harland remembers working on the design. In 1966, the library at 120 E. Main Street opened, an auspicious occasion, with CBS news anchorman Walter Cronkite participating in the dedication. Now replaced by another public library designed in 1991 by Caudill, the 1966 red brick Wrightian library had a low-pitched hip roof, overhanging eaves, horizontal emphasis, and a clerestory band of windows.



Figure 44: 120 East Main Street, originally the Pitkin County Library, designed by Bayer and Benedict. City of Aspen files.

<sup>30</sup> Noel, *Buildings of Colorado*, 495.

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*, 498.

Two very different churches contribute to Aspen’s modernist legacy. Christ Episcopal Church at 536 W. North Street in the West End was designed by Francis Stanton of the Chicago firm Stanton & Rockwell. Built in 1963, it has a parabolic arched roof that reflects the modern design technology of World War II-era Quonset huts and Eero Saarinen’s St. Louis Gateway Arch as well as the esthetic of the Red Mountain “bonnet” house Stanton designed in 1954 for his brother. Still visible in a recent renovation, the arched roof is a distinctive feature of the church. In 1969, George Heneghan and Dan Gale designed the Aspen Interfaith Chapel of the Prince of Peace, 70 Meadowood Drive, on the road that enters Aspen. Said to be inspired by “wayfarer’s chapels in the Alps,” it is a “happy wedding”<sup>32</sup> of wood, stained glass, and local “moss stone,” a distinctive feature of many of Aspen’s Wrightian buildings. (Evidently builders gathered moss rock for free on Independence Pass, which may explain its frequent appearance in 1960s Aspen structures.<sup>33</sup>)

#### ASPEN INSTITUTE & GIVEN INSTITUTE

Walter Paepcke died in 1960, and one of the ambitious plans that died with him was his 1950s scheme to build an architectural village on the outskirts of the Aspen Institute, featuring seventeen of the world most notable architects. Walter Gropius, Marcel Breuer, I. M. Pei, Minoru Yamasaki, Edward Durrell Stone, and Phillip Johnson were among those who accepted his offer to design and build houses. Eventually Henry Luce and Time magazine agreed to put up a million dollars for the “living architectural museum.” Groundbreaking was set for April 1960, but Paepcke died on April 13, and plans for the village were never realized.<sup>34</sup>

Yet the Aspen Institute continued to play a vital role in Aspen’s cultural and intellectual life and to carry on the International Style of modern architecture. In 1962, Bayer, with H. Ellenzweig as assistant architect, designed the Aspen Institute for Theoretical Physics (700 W. Gillespie Street, demolished), a one-story, terrace-roofed structure of cinder block and redwood, with offices for the theoretical physicists and a walled patio for social gatherings. An even more elaborate multi-functional structure of concrete and cinder blocks with a neoprene roof, the Walter Paepcke Memorial Building also went up in 1962. Bayer was the head architect, with assistance from F. Bates and Ellenzweig, and structural engineering by Bierbach and Horton. In 1964, Bayer designed the Concert Tent, which was demolished in 2000 and replaced by Harry Teague’s design.

Some ten years later, Elizabeth Paepcke commissioned “one of Aspen’s finest modernist works,”<sup>35</sup> the Given Institute of Pathobiology at 100 E. Francis Street, that was dedicated in August 1972. Designed by famed Chicago modernist Harry Weese, the concrete block building on a its compact site is a simple but striking example of “High Modern” design.

#### RESIDENTIAL

##### SINGLE FAMILY MODERNISM

Between 1960 and 1975, International Style single-family houses with flat roofs, planar walls, rectilinear shapes, and glass walls continued to be built in various neighborhoods scattered throughout Aspen. Such modernist houses can be found in the urban neighborhoods of the West End as well as on spectacular sites along the

32 Ibid., 497.

33 Local contractor.

34 Aspen Institute website.

35 Noel, *Buildings of Colorado*, 493.



Figure 45: Paepcke Auditorium, designed by Bayer. Courtesy Farewell, Mills, Gatsch Architects, Inc.



Figure 46: Given Institute, designed by Weese. City of Aspen files.

Roaring Fork River as it meanders east-to-west through Aspen. Occupying a small footprint compared with today's houses, these classic modernist homes are scarce.

Bayer designed three residences still standing, at 311 North Street (1963), 240 Lake Avenue (1957), and 850 Roaring Fork Road (1965), which may be a remodeling rather than an original Bayer design. Next door to the North Street residence is the truly elegant vacation home (301 Lake Avenue) designed in 1972 by Texas modernist Victor Lundy for himself and his artist wife Anstis. A studio as well as a vacation home, the roof is cantilevered to extend over the floor-to-ceiling wall of windows that frames the 20'-high great room. The proximity of Bayer's and Lundy's modernist masterpieces makes the West End corner of Lake and North an important convergence of early and late Bauhaus design.



Figure 47: 311 West North Street, designed by Bayer. City of Aspen files.

Three classic modernist houses are by two of Aspen's pioneer women architects. In 1971, Ellie Brickham designed a straightforward modernist house at 592 McSkimming Road. Closed to the road, but open to the views below, the house sits dramatically halfway up the hillside. Another Brickham design, 433 West Bleeker Street (1973) in the West End (demolished) was a simple brick cube. Ellen Harland designed a sleek, one-story, flat-roofed residence for Benedict controller Pat Maddalone (1411 Crystal Lake Road in Aspen Club) in 1976. Its rectilinear form and copious use of glazing make the most of its site along the Roaring Fork River.

At the base of Red Mountain on a spectacular site overlooking Hunter Creek, Art Yuenger designed a striking concrete block house—both muscular and elegant—in 1971. Located at 54 Shady Lane, the flat-roofed house, with blue trim and unusual clerestory windows, consists of three distinct cubes, sensitively integrated into the forested landscape. Further east but also oriented to the river is 258 Roaring Fork Drive. Although the architect is unknown, the 1974 residence has normative modernist features such as overall rectilinear massing of the L-shaped plan, flat roof, and sheer treatment of the concrete block walls.

#### MODERN CHALET

A distinctive postwar housing type in Aspen is locally termed a modern chalet. With its moderately pitched gable roof oriented to the front, it recalls traditional chalets associated with ski country, but in its expansive glass and minimal decoration, it also seems classically modernist, as if the architect and client liked the chalet idea for Aspen's emerging ski identity, but updated it and made it modern to fit the community's avant-garde tastes. Characteristically, modern chalets have low-to-moderately pitched roofs based on a 3:12 ratio; broad façades organized in rectilinear solid or glass panels; overhanging eaves, frequently with exposed roof beams; glass often extending to the eaves; minimal decoration; and sometimes stone or brick piers. The symmetrical modern chalets generally have a tripartite organization: a large central glazed area flanked by wood or masonry piers. Predominantly built between the late 1950s and late 1960s, these compact buildings were custom-designed for clients as well as erected by speculative builders. They have a rectangular footprint and fit well on the gridded streets of the older West End and Shadow Mountain neighborhoods. For the most part, their sizable window walls are oriented to Aspen Mountain.

Although some modern chalets, such as 500 E. Durant Street, served commercial purposes, most extant examples are residential. They encompass a range of options, from single family to duplexes and even quadriplexes. While evoking such contemporaneous hybrid modernist homes as Eichler in California, Honn in Oklahoma, Keck in Chicago, and Koch (Tech Built) in the East, when compared side-by-side, the Aspen modern chalets not only look different, but arise out of different circumstances. Eichler and the others were meeting the postwar demand for suburban homes that fit the American Dream of home ownership, up-to-date while still affordable. The Aspen

real estate market was geared toward affluent vacation home owners who might be attracted to Aspen for a variety of reasons—the culture of the Aspen Institute, the skiing of Aspen Mountain, the charm of an authentic western town, or the cachet of owning property in such a desirable place.

Many of Aspen’s modern chalets were built in the West End, close to the Aspen Institute and its intellectual and cultural offerings. Urban lots in this established neighborhood fitted the compact modern chalets well, yet they still offered mountain views. The modern chalets added to the West End’s rich building mix, including Victorian cottages and Second Empire and Queen Anne mansions as well as postwar traditional gabled chalets and classic flat-roofed modernist houses. Often two- and multiple-family structures, they also represent a shift in Aspen’s evolution as a vacation destination serving both winter and summer tourists.



Figure 48: 625 Gillespie Avenue, designed by Benedict. City of Aspen files.

In 1957, Benedict designed two free-standing early modern chalets side-by-side on separate lots, at 625 & 615 Gillespie Avenue (demolished). Identical, the one-story structures had a horizontal base of board-and-batten siding punctuated by two vertical windows defining the ground floor and glazing in the upper gabled section below the low-pitched roof. Simple and straightforward, they were topped by overhanging eaves and an extensive roof that encompassed a car port.<sup>36</sup>

vacation house. Many modern chalets have glass to the eaves and flanking brick piers. Projecting balconies cantilevered across the front, injecting a three-dimensional rectilinear base that hover just above the ground are also common characteristics. Not far from the Aspen Institute campus is 621 W. Francis (1965) a two-story chalet with a steeper pitched roof—not as steep as an A-frame, but not as broad as the typical modern chalet. The balconies on all three Francis Street houses, in their overall horizontality and use of simple balusters, maintain the rectilinearity associated with modern design. In 1965, two identical two-story multi-family modern chalets were built at 114 and 118 East Bleeker Street, also in the West End, but one block off Main Street. The truly dramatic overhang of the low gable roof, the exposed rafters, pilotis, usable deep balconies, and central expanse of glass reflect a hybrid modernism similar to that of tract homes, but the decorative motifs on the balconies emphasize the continuing appeal of chalet imagery in ski-town Aspen, while the massive chimneys and piers flanking the ground floor (on 114) use a favorite Aspen building material—moss stone.

Five other West End modern chalets date from 1962 to 1965 and show the range of variations within this simple



Figure 49: 114 East Bleeker Street. Courtesy AHS.

Two other West End modern chalets deserve mention. A dramatic one-story duplex at 500 W. Smuggler went up in 1970, four blocks from 949 W. Smuggler, Aspen’s first postwar chalet, built in 1946. With two massive chimneys of moss rock projecting from the glazed façade and punctuating the roof, the later vacation home is

36 Cliff May’s design of the Eichler Ranch House in Potrola Valley, California, 1958, is a similar board- and-batten, low-gable-roofed modern house. Paul Adamson and Marty Arbunich, *Eichler/Modernism Rebuilds the American Dream*. (Salt Lake City: Gibbs Smith Publisher, 2002), 28.

an intriguing modern contrast to its traditional neighbo. On 407 N. Third Street, the Coors family of Golden built a single-family modern chalet of wood and stone, now hidden from view by vegetation. Designed by Brown Brokaw Bowen Architects of Boulder, this residence suggests that a vacation home of this scale and style suited elite Colorado patrons in the mid-1960s.

A striking 1965 modern chalet sits near the base of Shadow Mountain and original ski lift No. 1 at 219 S. Third Street. The large duplex was designed as a second home for a Wisconsin family by a “hometown” architect Eric Friis (b. 1916, Copenhagen, Denmark; practiced in Eagle River, Wisconsin). It has a low-pitched, gabled roof that sweeps down to encompass flanking car ports, a façade of rectilinear glass panels and board-and-batten, and a deck oriented to the mountain.



Figure 50: 219 South Third Street, designed by Friis. City of Aspen files.

On Aspen’s east side, in the neighborhood near Glory Hole park, 1005 Waters Avenue is a modern chalet designed in 1959 (later enlarged in 1964) by Ellen Harland. The M.I.T.-trained architect planned it for herself and her husband,

local builder Irwin Harland, when they married. Close to the ground, with a low-pitched roof, it had a glazed façade (now altered) that extended up to the eaves. Harland remembers designing such structures in Benedict’s office—always “a ratio of 3 to 12”—for a “seamless” roof of tar and gravel that also shed snow.<sup>37</sup> On the same street (1102 Waters Avenue) is the vacation home built for the Geary Family of Denver following Benedict’s specifications for an “affordable” ski home based on Frank Lloyd Wright principles that was featured in *Ski* magazine (Spring, 1967).



Figure 51: 1102 Waters Avenue, designed by Benedict. City of Aspen files.

the bottom of McSkimming Road, which was developed by Fabi and Fritz Benedict, and zigzags up the mountain off Highway 82, is No. 24, built in 1960. Although the architect is unknown, the residence is similar to the West End modern chalets in its low roof, minimal decoration, and windows on the upper floor that carry through the gable end. A variation of a modern chalet is No. 232, designed by pioneer architect Rob Roy for the Danieli family in 1962. Located further up the mountain, it has typical features, but the roof projects like a ship’s prow and the balcony extends outward to enclose the carport in a dynamic thrust.

#### MODERN CHALET MULTIPLIED—MULTIFAMILY

As Aspen accommodated ever more tourists in the 1960s, architects created multi-family versions of the modern chalet. In 1962, Rob Roy designed the Madsen Chalets on 608 W. Hopkins Street. The handsome wooden complex is characterized by a low-pitched roof, deep overhangs, balconies, simple rectangular forms of glass and wood, with glazing in the gables, and oriented toward the mountain. In 1965, at 1001 E. Cooper, Benedict-employees Bob Sterling and Bob Dagg designed and developed the two-story, multi-family Villager Townhouses. Inspired by Swiss chalets and their modernist training, they set two chalets side-by-side to create



Figure 52: 608 West Hopkins Street, designed by Roy. City of Aspen files.

37 Ellen Harland, telephone interview with the author, 26 May 2010.

an extended horizontal, reinforced by the second-floor balcony that extends the entire width of the building. The project had two other partners, Gordon Forbes and Bill Dashner, and each of the four partners bought a unit when they were finished and later sold them.

## CONDOMINIUMS

Undoubtedly the major influence on Aspen's economy, built environment, and quality of life between 1960 and 1975, condominiums changed the scale of its townscape, attracted outside money and developers, and allowed even more people to own property and settle. The footprints of those built within the downtown proper adhered to Aspen's urban grid, and city zoning restricted the height to three stories. Condos frequently were "mixed use" properties, with retail and restaurants on the ground floor and apartments above. This concept was later used by "total" resorts like Snowmass, Vail, Beaver Creek, and Whistler Blackcomb, which lacked Aspen's intrinsic street life and tried to inject it a resort environment.

Aspen's condo-mania started in the western neighborhood of Lift No. 1, with Der Berghof, which had twelve units and appeared on 100 E. Cooper Avenue in the fall of 1962. The two-story, concrete block, rectilinear building evokes both the Bauhaus-inspired Aspen Meadows Guest Chalets (1954) of the Aspen Institute and a more vernacular "motel modern" represented by the Holiday Inns of the era. Rather quickly, rustic- and alpine-themed Mittendorf, Alpenblick, Fasching House, Fifth Avenue, and Little Nell condos followed.

Benedict contributed to the transformation by designing condominiums in the 1960s and 1970s, for which he was both praised and criticized. He designed four of Aspen's largest condo projects and spearheaded the residential shift ever more eastward. In 1964, he designed what are usually touted as Aspen's first luxury condominiums, the Aspen Alps, on 700 Ute Avenue. Now consisting of eight Wrightian buildings (not all by Benedict) that flank the east side of Aspen Mountain, the complex demonstrates Benedict's skill in integrating his building harmoniously into the landscape—what he had done earlier with single family dwellings, he now did with the multi-family structures. The three-story wood structures have moderately pitched roofs, with local stone used to emphasize chimneys, corners, and, in many cases, the sides, in a way somewhat similar to the encasing of local rock in concrete at Taliesin West. The large Aspen Square condominium of 1967 (617 E. Cooper) occupies the entire block defined by Durant, Hunter, Cooper and Spring, with an interior landscaped courtyard. Benedict skillfully accommodated the urban setting by breaking up the Durant Street façade into five segments of two units each, using alternating setbacks to minimize the building's impact. The Hunter, Cooper and Spring Street façades have commercial activity on the ground floor. Typical Wrightian devices include its overall rectilinearity, flat roofs, emphatic brick corners and piers, overhanging eaves, cantilevered balconies, and consummate use of materials. Even so, one ski writer compared Aspen Square to "a big city apartment house,"<sup>38</sup> and it was strongly criticized because its scale seemed out of place in Aspen.



Figure 53: Aspen Alps in the background, designed by Benedict. Courtesy AHS.

In 1972, Benedict continued his eastward movement, with The Gant, Aspen's largest condominium, at 610 West End Avenue. Its multilevel areas, staggered buildings, and use of wood break up its scale so that the complex fits naturally into its setting. Even further east, Benedict's design for 1411 Crystal Lake Condos at the Aspen Club in 1976 also incorporated site planning. With the use of stucco, broken-up wall surfaces, and numerous cantilevered balconies, these condos suggest Benedict's design work in the late-1960s on the Snowmass condos,

38 M. L. (Morten Lund), "When Biggest is Best," *Ski* 36 (August 1971): 64-66, 68.

mall, and town center.

A reiteration of Aspen Square can be seen catty-corner across Durant Street in the 1968 North of Nell (555 E. Durant). Occupying a prime location at the base of Aspen Mountain and adjacent to the ticketing and lift facilities, the large modernist condo complex has shops and eateries on the ground level and lodging above. Designed by award-winning architects Erickson and Stevens of Des Plaines, Illinois—both Taliesin fellows in the 1950s—the multi-gabled roofline extends the length of its Durant Street façade and echoes its mountain location. A 1965 project that also responds to its setting is Shadow Mountain Condominiums, located at the top of Aspen Street (809 S. Aspen) near Lift No. 1, the original skiers’ portal to Aspen Mountain. Designed by Fort Worth, Texas, consulting engineer Donald W. Kirk for a Fort Worth client, Charles Haws of Haws & Garrett General Contractors, Inc., the complex combines traditional chalet and modern variations. The buildings step up the mountain, the many gable roofs stacked like traditional chalets in alpine Switzerland. Though the Aspen Times referred to Shadow Mountain as an “instant Chinatown,”<sup>39</sup> the designer remembers that he was thinking about the Swiss chalets that characterized resort Aspen.



Figure 54: 809 South Aspen Street, Shadow Mountain Condominiums, designed by Kirk. City of Aspen files.

Other, slightly smaller-scaled, multi-family complexes also appeared in Aspen at this time, often in established neighborhoods with single-family housing. A striking “Mansard Modern” at 700 W. Hopkins, with shake shingles extending to the ground, was designed in 1968 by Rob Roy. Nearby, at 720 W. Hopkins, the Skandia Townhomes (1971) feature wood and stucco siding, ground-level garages, cantilevered balconies, and a series of gables subtly defining each unit.

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39 Aspen Times, date.

## CHAPTER 4: CONCLUSION

Although modernism has likely changed the course of architecture forever, the style in its purest form began to wane—nationally in the mid 1960s and into the early 1970s in Aspen. Its iconic monuments went up in the 1940s and 1950s. By the mid-1960s, there was a growing unease with some of the ways it had reshaped cities and the sense that flat-roofed, austere, glass and metal-framed buildings looked too uniform. Robert Venturi's *Complexity and Contradiction in Architecture* (1966) signaled that a new generation was challenging modernism's dominance. Thus, the period of historic significance for buildings of this style in Aspen is between 1945 and approximately 1975.

Aspen has been fortunate in attracting the top talents in many professional fields since the end of World War II. The architects and buildings described in this paper have made important contributions to Aspen's built environment, which continue to influence its character. While many towns in Colorado have retained some of the character of their 19<sup>th</sup>-century mining heritage, few are as enriched with excellent modernist buildings as Aspen.

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## APPENDIX I: ELIGIBILITY CONSIDERATIONS

### WRIGHTIAN/ ORGANIC DESIGN PRINCIPLES

If influenced by Wrightian/Organic design principles, a property must possess specific physical features to be considered historically significant. Aspen's examples of modernist buildings should exhibit the following distinctive characteristics:

- Low horizontal proportions, flat- or low-pitched hip roofs.
- Deep roof overhangs that create broad shadow lines across the façade. Glazing is usually concentrated in these areas.
- Horizontal emphasis on the composition of the wall planes that accentuates the floating effect of the roof form.
- Materials are usually natural and hand-worked, such as rough-sawn wood timbers and brick. Brick is generally used as a base material, wall infill, or in an anchoring fireplace element. Wood structural systems tend more toward heavy timber or post-and-beam than typical stud framing.
- Structural members and construction methods are usually expressed in the building. For example, load-bearing columns may be expressed inside and out; the wall plane is then created by an infill of glass or brick.
- Roof structure is often expressed below the roof sheathing
- Glass is used as an infill material which expresses a void or a structural system, or it is used to accentuate the surface of a wall through pattern or repetition.
- There is typically no trim isolating the glazing from the wall plane. Window openings are trimmed out to match adjacent structural members in a wood context. Brick openings tend to be deeply set with no trim other than the brick return.
- Structures are related to the environment through battered foundation walls, cantilevered floors and/or porches, clear areas of glazing that create visual connections between outside and inside, and the effect of the roof plane hovering over the ground.
- Decoration stems from the detailing of the primary materials and the construction techniques. No applied decorative elements are used.
- Color is usually related to the natural colors of materials for most structures: natural brick, dark stained wood, and white stucco. Accent colors are used minimally and mainly to accentuate the horizontal lines of the structure.

### BAUHAUS OR INTERNATIONAL STYLE DESIGN PRINCIPLES

If influenced by Bauhaus or International Style design principles, a property must possess specific physical features to be considered historically significant. Aspen's examples of modernist buildings should exhibit the following distinctive characteristics:

- Simple geometric forms, both in plan and elevation.
- Flat roofs, usually single story, otherwise proportions are long and low, horizontal lines are emphasized.
- Asymmetrical arrangement of elements.
- Windows are treated as slots in the wall surface, either vertically or horizontally. Window divisions are based on the overall idea of the building.
- Detailing is reduced to the composition of elements rather than decorative effects. No decorative elements are used.
- Design is focused on rationality, reduction, and composition. It is meant to separate itself from style and sentimentality.
- Materials are generally manufactured and standardized. The "hand" is removed from the visual outcome of construction. Surfaces are smooth, with minimal or no detail at window jambs, grade, and roof edge.

- Entry is generally marked by a void in the wall, a cantilevered screen element, or other architectural clue that directs one into the composition.
- Buildings are connected to nature through the use of courtyards, wall elements that extend into the landscape, and areas of glazing that allow a visual connection to the natural environment. This style relies on the contrast between the machine-made structure and the natural landscape to heighten the experience of both elements.
- Schemes are monochromatic, using neutral colors, generally grays. Secondary color is used to reinforce a formal idea. In this case color, or lack thereof, is significant to the reading of the architectural idea.

#### ASPEN MODERN CHALET DESIGN PRINCIPLES

If representative of Aspen modern chalet design principles, a property must possess specific physical features to be considered historically significant. Aspen's examples of modern chalets buildings should exhibit the following distinctive characteristics:

- Rectilinear footprints, classic chalet orientation to the street and/or mountain view
- Broad gabled facades organized in rectilinear solid or glass panels, generally in a tripartite organization
- Low to moderate pitched roofs based on a 3:12 ratio
- Overhanging eaves, frequently with exposed roof beams
- Glass often extending to the eaves
- Large central glazed area, flanked by brick or stone piers
- Minimal decoration

## APPENDIX II: THE ARCHITECTS

Herbert Bayer (1900-1985) Bauhaus, Weimar '21 Dessau '25-'28  
Frederic Allen "Fritz" Benedict (1914-1995) Wisconsin '38/Taliesin '38-'41  
Gordon Chadwick (1916-1980) Princeton '38/Taliesin '38-'42  
Charles Gordon Lee (1918-1966) University of Pennsylvania '40/Taliesin'40-'41,'47-'48  
Samuel Jefferson "Sam" Caudill, Jr. (1922-2007) Cornell '46  
Robert Oliver "Rob" Roy (1926-1992) Illinois '47  
Charles "Charlie" Paterson (b. 1929) Taliesin '58-'60  
Eleanor "Ellie" Brickham (1923-2008) Colorado '41-'44  
Robin Molny (1928-1997) Carnegie Institute of Technology/Taliesin '49-c.'54  
Curtis Wray Besinger (1914-1999) Kansas '36/Taliesin '39-'55  
Ellen Harland (b. 1934) Massachusetts Institute of Technology '56  
John Morris "Jack" Walls (b. 1925) Oklahoma '53  
Robert "Bob" Sterling (b. 1933) Utah '63  
George Edward Heneghan, Jr. (b. 1934) Washington U. '57  
Daniel Gale  
Theodore L. "Ted" Mularz (b. 1933) Illinois '59  
Thomas Whelan "Tom" Benton (1930-2007) University of Southern California '60  
Richard Tseng-Yu Lai (b. 1937, Beijing, China) Princeton '58, '60  
Arthur "Art" Yuenger (b. 1939) Illinois '62  
Francis Rew Stanton (1910-1995) Yale '35, Ecole des Beaux Arts Americaine '31,'34  
Victor Lundy (b. 1923) Harvard Graduate School of Design '47, '48  
Harry Weese (1915-1998) Massachusetts Institute of Technology '38, Cranbrook '38-'39  
Donald Edward Erickson (b. 1929) Illinois '48/Taliesin '51  
Arthur Dennis Stevens (b. 1930) Purdue '55/Taliesin '52  
Jean Wolaver-Green-Oklahoma '52  
Wheeler & Lewis  
Brown Brokaw Bowen  
Donald Kirk  
Eric Friis (b. 1916, Copenhagen, Denmark) Acad of Art, Copenhagen '43

APPENDIX III: ARCHITECTS LISTED IN ASPEN PHONE DIRECTORIES

1942- none

1949 Herbert Bayer in white pages

Frederic Benedict in white pages

1951 Herbert Bayer in white pages

Frederic Benedict in white pages

1955 Bayer & Benedict listed as “designers” in yellow pages

Sam Caudill, architect in yellow pages

Rob Roy “

1957 Bayer & Benedict listed as “designers”

Sam Caudill, architect

Rob Roy “

Jack Walls “

Wallace Oakes (no info) “

(Elli Brickham in white pages)

1962 Bayer & Benedict listed as “designers”

Butler-Bartosek “ (no info)

Robin Molny ‘

Jack Walls “

Sam Caudill, architect

Rob Roy “

Jack Walls “

(Elli Brickham in white pages)

1963 Bayer & Benedict listed as “architects”

Sam Caudill, architect

Robin Molny ‘

Ted Mularz “

Rob Roy “

Butler-Bartosek listed as designer (no info)

Jack Walls “

1965 Bayer , architect

Benedict “ (inc.Rosolack, Sterling, and Heneghan in his office)

1968 Benedict, architect

Caudill

Heneghan &Gale

Molny

Mularz

Roy

Walls & Sterling