



Bay Area Houses

NEW EDITION

Edited by
SALLY WOODBRIDGE

Introduction and Foreword by
DAVID GEBHARD

Photographs by
MORLEY BAER, ROGER STURTEVANT,
and
OTHERS

Architectural drawings by
RANDOLPH MEADORS
and
FLOYD CAMPBELL



P E R E G R I N E S M I T H B O O K S
S A L T L A K E C I T Y

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Introduction: The Bay Area Tradition

DAVID GEBHARD

A DISTINCT REGIONAL TRADITION

The public became conscious that there was a Bay Area tradition of architecture towards the end of the 1940's. Lewis Mumford pointed to a "Bay Region Style" in a symposium held at the Museum of Modern Art in 1948.¹ Early the following year, nine Bay Area architects were asked by the editors of the *Architectural Record* whether there was indeed such a style.² All nine of these practitioners squirmed a bit, were vague and evasive, and ended up answering no. But the illustrations accompanying their comments indicated that these buildings represented a reasonable example of just what historians generally mean when they talk about style in architecture. Their rejection of the idea that a style existed was simply "prompted by a concern lest the term become so widely accepted that they would find themselves prematurely forced into a style. . . ."³

A somewhat more objective presentation of what the post-World War II Bay Area Tradition, as it will be called in this book, was about was contained in the catalogue accompanying the exhibition "Domestic Architecture of the San Francisco Bay Region," which was presented in late 1949 at the San Francisco Museum of Art. In his introduction to that catalogue Lewis Mumford emphasized the fact that here we were indeed dealing with "the existence of a vigorous tradition of modern building, which took root in California some half century ago."⁴ And he went on

to gently slap the hands of the Bay Area practitioners and others for their childish unwillingness to realize that self-awareness, self-consciousness, and critical evaluation (i.e., the awareness of a style) are the prices which any movement must pay for its maturity.⁵ By the beginning of the fifties the phrase "the Bay Area Style" had become nationally and internationally accepted.

If we look back, we can see that there actually had been a strong self-consciousness in the architecture of the San Francisco area for a long time. As early as 1906 Herbert D. Croly, the associate editor of the New York-based *Architectural Record*, looked beneath the surface of the Mission Revival and Craftsman houses then being built in California and concluded that a unique architecture was slowly coming to the fore there—an architecture which he felt represented a radically new approach to design.⁶ He looked back into California's nineteenth-century past and discerned what he felt to be the sources of this new architecture—the Hispanic adobe houses and the later Anglo board-and-batten and clapboard houses. "Rudimentary as these buildings [the adobes] were and simple to the verge of attenuation, they reached, both by what they avoided and by what they effected, the essentials of good domestic architecture." And the rural wooden board-and-batten houses of the mid to later nineteenth century were such "that the easiest



WURSTER, *Grover house, San Francisco, 1939* (Sturtevant)

and most economical way to build happened to make a tolerably pleasing building, and by the same happy chance, even the barns thrown together as they were in the hastiest flimsiest way frequently had a good curve or angle to their big roofs and a certain symmetry in the arrangement of their fronts."⁷ Croly argued that the new regional architecture was drawing on these two nineteenth-century traditions.

There was a surge of awareness of the architecture of the Bay Area during the thirties and at the beginning of the forties. One of the effects of the Depres-

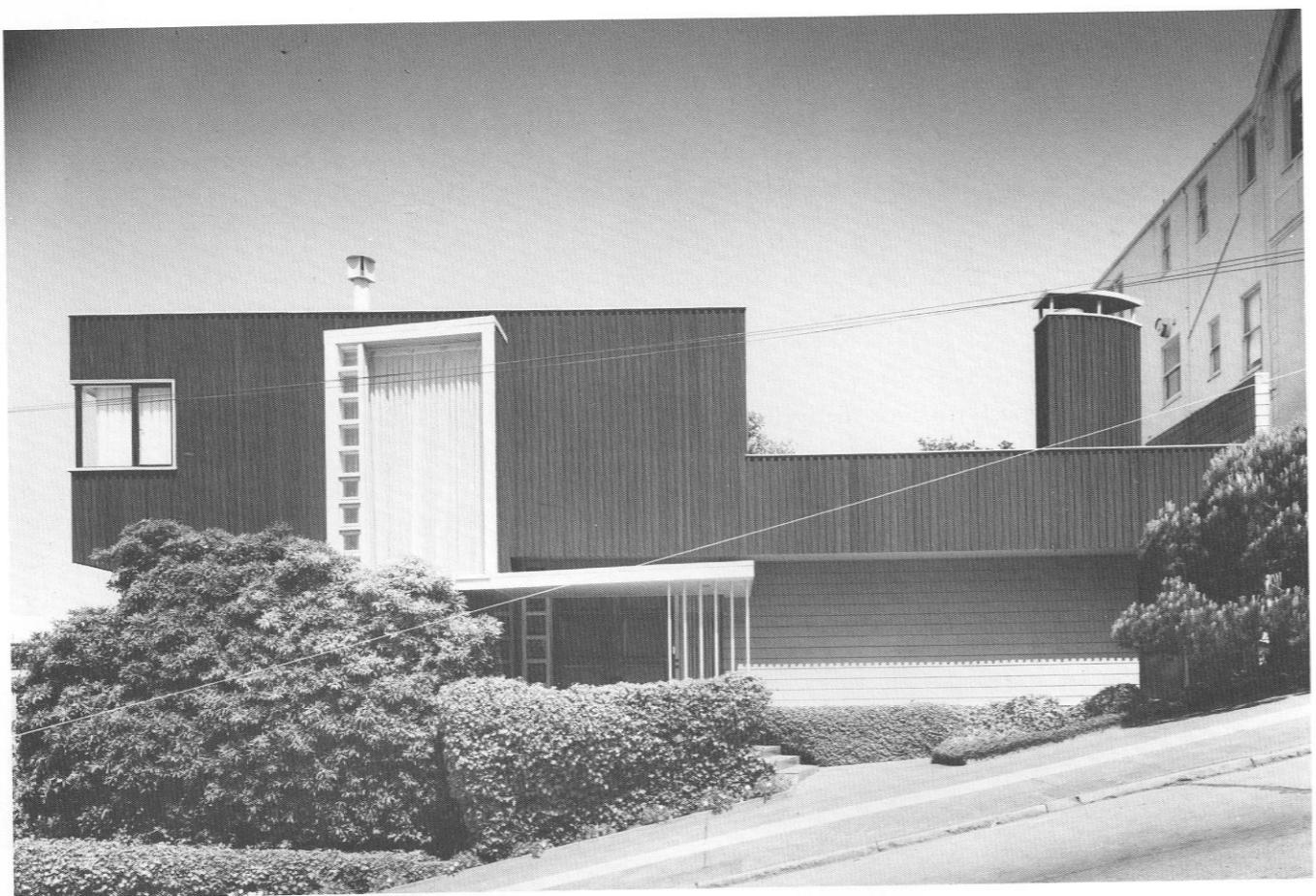
sion was a renewed nationalism which sparked a resurgence of Colonial revival architecture throughout the U.S., and California was no exception. The Monterey Style was an architecture which was national (based upon the Federal and Greek Revival styles) and at the same time unique to California. The "American Scene" of the thirties was staunchly rural and anti-urban; for the West Coast this meant that the untutored architecture of the mid nineteenth century could most accurately reflect the virtue of the simple, honest life, firmly attached to the soil. Bay



DAILEY, *house in Woodside, 1940* (Baer)

MAYBECK, *Boke house, Berkeley, 1902* (Baer)





DINWIDDIE, Roos house, San Francisco, 1938 (Baer)

Area architects tended to emphasize the “Anglo-ness” of this nineteenth-century rural California tradition much more than their Southern California counterparts. And one of the hallmarks of the Anglo was wood—board-and-batten and clapboard walls, shingle roofs, long porches supported by simple thin square wood columns, wood-framed double-hung windows and other details.

The dominant Bay Area figure in this borrowing was William W. Wurster. Like Coxhead, Polk, and Maybeck before him, Wurster used the nineteenth-century visual language in a soft and really urbane fashion—somewhat like the poems of the thirties by Carl Sandburg. Wurster was not rural and untutored—he simply used the visual language of the rural vernacular to create his specifically American forms

of the thirties. The editors of *Pencil Points* in 1938 wrote well of the Gregory farmhouse, “Forms natural to materials and uses, undistorted by any faint suggestion of ‘artiness,’ give this house the charm of honesty that might have been produced by a carpenter endowed with good taste.”⁸

During the thirties the work of the Bay Area designers was illustrated more and more frequently in the national home magazines and the national professional architectural journals. By the late 1930’s no discussion in them could be complete without reference to the work of Wurster, Dailey, Dinwiddie, Funk, Goodman, McCarthy, and others.

In 1940 Henry-Russell Hitchcock visited the West Coast and in looking at the work of these designers, especially that of John Dinwiddie, sensed “a pro-

nouncedly regional quality.”⁹ As an apologist for the Modern, Hitchcock had some serious reservations about Wurster’s and Dailey’s continued use of historic imagery, and being a European-oriented urbanist he was continually disturbed by the “unexpected harshness” of Wurster’s buildings.¹⁰ In 1939 and again in 1941 another Easterner, Talbot F. Hamlin, focused attention on San Francisco and particularly the domestic architecture of the Bay Area in a series of articles published in *Pencil Points*.¹¹ In his article “California Fair Houses,” Hamlin pointedly emphasized that what was occurring in the Bay Area was the continuation of a regional tradition derived from the nineteenth-century California Ranch House and the turn-of-the-century California Bungalow.¹² And he went on to observe that although many of the houses were modern they succumbed to “International Style clichés.”¹³ By 1941 the regional professional journals (*The Architect and Engineer* and *California’s Arts and Architecture*) were fully aware that the Bay Area architects were creating something out of the normal.¹⁴

In a review of a local exhibition of residential architecture, the San Francisco architect Ernest Born noted that the Bay Area had the “extraordinary good luck of having a highly talented group of architects living here to interpret and to give life to a regional viewpoint.”¹⁵ This mood filtered down to popular magazines—*Sunset* in its March 1941 issue, for example, illustrated two woodsy houses, one by Wurster, the other by Dailey, under the title “More Sources in Western Living”—the source in this case being the California board-and-batten barn, illustrations of which accompanied those of the two houses.¹⁶

In 1944 Wurster published an illustrative article, “San Francisco Bay Portfolio,” in the *Magazine of Art*.¹⁷ Through his brief text and above all through his selection of illustrations he sought to show how he and his contemporaries were carrying on the earlier Bay Area Tradition of Polk and Maybeck.¹⁸ Later in the same year New York’s Museum of Modern Art organized its highly influential exhibition “Built in USA, 1932-44,” which included a hefty sampling of

WURSTER, Le Hane house, Palo Alto, 1937 (Sturtevant)



Bay Area buildings designed by Wurster, Dailey, Funk, and others.¹⁹ Elizabeth Mock (Wurster's sister-in-law), who had organized the exhibition, noted in her introduction to the accompanying catalogue that "it was suddenly discovered that California had been enjoying a continuous but curiously unpublished tradition of building. . . ."²⁰

Though the Museum of Modern Art in its 1952 architectural exhibition "Built in the USA: Post-War Architecture" pretty well turned its back on the Bay Area Tradition, the Tradition continued to be discussed and written about both in the U.S. and abroad.²¹ The *Architect's Yearbook* of London (1949) contained an article by Walter Landor in which he wrote about the "California School" of architecture; and other English and Continental journals discussed the work of the Bay Area architects as if everyone was fully aware that a separate distinct school had been and was in existence.²²

GENERAL CHARACTERISTICS

What did these writers of the late 1940's really mean when they employed the term "Bay Area Tradition"? As with most descriptive architectural terms it is not at all easy to pin down what it meant, either as an abstract concept or descriptively in relation to an aesthetic style. Though the term is imprecise, we do tend to conjure up certain specific images when we are confronted with it—perhaps a narrow high-pitched gable-roofed house in the Berkeley hills, designed in the early 1900's by Bernard Maybeck, or a boxy wood-sheathed city or suburban house of the late thirties produced by William W. Wurster. Whenever we think of these characteristic buildings we end up with certain common denominators—they are always houses, they are almost always small in scale, they are above all woodsy, sheathed in redwood (often inside as well as outside), they suggest a visual mode which is vernacular and anti-urban, they seem to be related to their respective "place" in the landscape (urban or suburban), and they are generally filled with visual and ideological contradictions.

The national and international impact of houses such as these has—since 1945—been immense and long lasting. On the popular level, features of this tradi-

tion were amalgamated in the turn-of-the-century California Craftsman bungalow, one of the first "great" exports from the West Coast, and later in that second resounding export, the post-World War II California Ranch House.²³ Among architects the products of the Bay Area Tradition have served as a source for borrowing for almost three-quarters of a century.

Ironically those buildings which most accurately reflect the Bay Area Tradition have never been the characteristic buildings of the urban environment of the Bay Area. Only in suburbia—the residential section of the East Bay communities, in parts of Marin County and in a few residential portions of San Francisco—will one discover a predominance of buildings which reflect this woodsy tradition. The usual urban buildings which one encounters in and around San Francisco and Oakland have been, especially since the mid 1890's, reasonably sophisticated interpretations of national architectural styles. San Francisco versions of turn-of-the-century City Beautiful government buildings, Gothic Revival churches, or "New Brutalist" buildings of the late fifties and sixties are basically no different from Boston and Minneapolis versions. The dominant architecture of the Bay Area from the 1890's through the mid 1970's has not been regional. If the general architecture of San Francisco or Oakland has exhibited a local tendency, it has been in its up-to-date, "correct," and somewhat dry interpretation of the latest national fashion. The typical Bay Area client and architect would seem to have been more concerned with reserve and respectability than with the formation of a local tradition.

So the term "Bay Area Tradition" represents an elitist view of the architecture of the region. It is closely associated with two segments in Bay Area society—the intelligentsia (would-be or otherwise) and a segment of the area's upper middle class. Bay Area Tradition architecture has never been really popular, even though in their homes the middle-middle and lower-middle classes have been perfectly willing to accept and adopt certain of its features. In this it is not unique. Like all of the other major twentieth-century traditions of European and American architecture, the Bay Area Tradition has been the province of an exclusive and small but dominant segment of society, and in the long run this is just as

it should be. The do-it-yourself houses of the "Wood-Butchers" in the late sixties and the seventies are as much an expression of exclusiveness (they being, almost to the last woman and man, products of the upper middle class) as the early Maybeck houses of 1900 were for academicians and camp followers of the University of California.

Bay Area Tradition buildings, whether they are to function as firehouses, churches, schools, or houses, always end up being domestic, anti-urban, and often picturesque. The buildings are inevitably woodsy in atmosphere; they express a self-conscious delight in using "natural material"; traditional materials—redwood, brick, stone, even stucco and plaster—are lovingly manipulated as both texture and structure. Architects and their clients appear to have appreciated these materials for their unique qualities. And because the materials and the structural forms tend to be traditional, old-fashioned, and earthy, the buildings convey a sense of belonging to their respective sites.

Self-conscious contradiction is another long-enduring quality found in these Bay Area Tradition buildings. The ordinary day-to-day builder's vernacular is purposely played off against highly sophisticated spatial arrangements, surfaces, and details of design, and against a learned understanding of past historic architectural history. Interior spaces which are open and flowing at one moment become closed and boxy at the next; and plans which appear logical, simple, and direct turn out to be highly complex and even in some cases idiosyncratic.

Fragments from the past and even from the present are yanked from their traditional places in the hierarchy of a building and are presented in new and unlikely contexts. The scale of these fragments is often bizarre: gigantic columns placed in the small-scaled world of a dwarf, or windows placed and designed so that it becomes difficult or even impossible to "read" what the building is all about. The proponents of the Bay Area Tradition seem to have taken a continual and almost perverse delight in creating volumes, surfaces, spaces, and details which are just plain ugly or ungainly, then ranging them alongside elements which are refined, delicate, and sophisticated.

Most vernacular and high art architecture is deadly serious, but the Bay Area Tradition designers have

obviously enjoyed countering this prevalent attitude with humor and satire—sometimes in a manner very subtle and light, at other times more directly. Elements of humor and satire have often helped to suggest the world of romance, of the storybook, as opposed to the realities of the present, even of the past; and they have helped to suggest the images of our childhood. For, as these architects realized, the conceptual reality of the world of the child can make the down-to-earth reality of the adult world appear ridiculous, even unreal.

Behind these many elements which make up the Bay Area Tradition has been an awareness upon the part of the architect of whom he is addressing. To "misuse" historic detail, to employ the out-and-out uncultured vernacular, would hardly appeal to the normal red-blooded San Franciscan, let alone American. For this new and complex language to work, i.e., to be read and understood, demanded that the architect and his client both know what the "correct" architectural verbiage is for the Classical, Medieval, or Renaissance; and equally they must be aware of the vagrancies of the uncouth vernacular world of low art. Only after he has acquired a familiarity with the historic language of architecture (including all of its traditional value judgment) has it been possible for the artist (in this case the architect) to extract here and there these historic elements, refine them, and then constitute a composite whole which lends itself to a new subtle reading.

HISTORY

A rather artificial ordering suggests that this tradition has three expressive phases.

The First Phase

The suburban shingle architecture of Ernest Coxhead, Willis Polk, A. C. Schweinfurt, John Galen Howard, and others.

The Bay Area's version of the Craftsman building; the early work of Bernard Maybeck, Julia Morgan, Louis Christian Mullgardt, Henry Gutterson, and John Hudson Thomas.

The Second Phase

The Hansel and Gretel cottage world of the twenties; the work of John Hudson Thomas, W. R. Yelland, Henry Gutterson, W. H. Ratcliff, Jr., Carr Jones, and Clarence Tantau.

The thirties wood imagery of rural California; William W. Wurster, Gardner Dailey, John Funk, and Francis Joseph McCarthy and others.

Carry-over of approach from the late thirties, the redwood post and beam box; Wurster, Bernardi & Emmons, Gardner Dailey, Henry Hill, Joseph Esherick, Mario Corbett, and others.

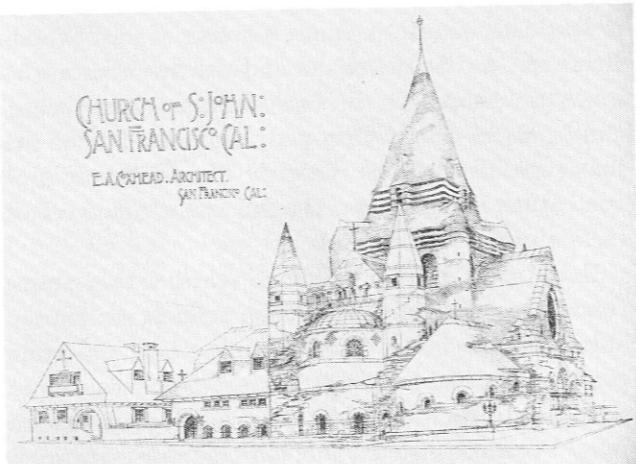
The new self-conscious historicism of the later fifties and the sixties; Charles W. Callister, William W. Wurster, and others.

The Third Phase

The wood-sheathed vertical box—Charles W. Moore, William Turnbull, Donlyn Lyndon, Richard Peters, Joseph Esherick, George Homsey, and Dmitri Venedensky. A new borrowing from the vernacular, this time from the builder.

THE FIRST PHASE

The English expatriate Ernest Coxhead reduced his various churches in Northern California to a size and scale which is barely believable. One could easily believe that his Byzantine/Romanesque St. John's Episcopal Church in San Francisco (1890), with miniature entrance and side isles and a peculiar, almost sinister, tower of immense bulk pressing down, had emerged from the pages of a late Victorian volume of fairy tales. His St. John's Episcopal Church in Monterey (1891) carries its surface pattern of straight and wavy shingles down over the roof and the eaves onto the walls, and, like the bark of a tree, right down to the ground. In his St. John's Episcopal Church in Petaluma (c. 1890) he created an entrance screen composed of a pair of tiny Ionic columns, set on a single one below, and above the arched entrance is a curved broken pediment (Baroque?) in the middle of which he set a Mission Revival quatrefoil window. Now all of these historic rummaging which Coxhead used



COXHEAD, St. John's Episcopal, San Francisco, 1890
(California Historical Society, San Francisco)

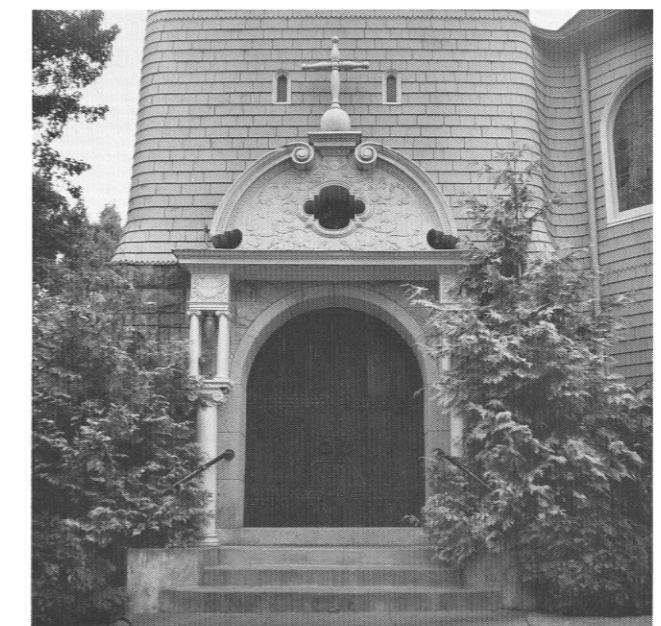


COXHEAD, St. John's Episcopal, San Francisco, 1890

COXHEAD, Holy Innocents, San Francisco, 1890 (David Gebhard)



COXHEAD, St. John's, Petaluma, 1890 (David Gebhard)





POLK, *Polk-Williams house, San Francisco, 1892* (Baer)

But very early they began to mix these elements with Medieval fragments and with surface and volume reminiscent of Medieval town houses and rural Medieval cottages. Before 1900 specific Hispanic elements crept in—Mission Revival, and then Mexican and Spanish; and finally these Bay Area designers, like their counterparts elsewhere in the country, became enamored of the Neo-Classical forms of the City Beautiful Movement.

Coxhead's younger contemporary, the Beaux-Arts-trained Bernard Maybeck, had a similarly catholic taste. On the surface Maybeck's Berkeley houses of the early 1900's might be thought of simply as idiosyncratic examples of the last gasp of the Shingle Tradition, or of the newly developing version of the American Craftsman Movement. And yet they do not really represent either one of these modes—though he certainly freely used their vocabulary.

Maybeck's exposed wood structure, board-and-batten walls, and enormous rough brick fireplaces never seem to end up as being either within the late Shingle Style or within the confines of the Craftsman movement.

Their space is abbreviated and condensed—tending to denote the unreal; and, both internally and externally, these houses strongly suggest a storybook illusion (the romance of the past, not scholarly historicism). The high peak hall of the Faculty Club of the University of California at Berkeley (1902; 1903-

4) creates the sense of a Viking hall. Like the turn-of-the-century English architect Charles F. A. Voysey Maybeck brought the “realism” of our childhood experience into the physical environment of our adult world. Maybeck transformed the wood surface and structural vernacular of Northern California into an illusion of a distant mythical Golden Age—suggestive of a Medieval past in the Keeler house (Berkeley, 1894) and in the 1913 Chick house (Berkeley) with its quatrefoil balcony and pointed elliptical arch, or suggesting the Classical past in his 1915 Palace of Fine

MAYBECK, *Kellogg house, Palo Alto, 1899* (Baer)



Arts. Like Coxhead's, Maybeck's visual language of contradictions ran the full gamut—playing one historicism off against another: finely crafted windows and staircases situated next to rough exposed floor joints and rafters; axial sequences of space ending (or starting) in a maze of seemingly confused, mysterious space. Maybeck's language was even more varied and erudite than Coxhead's and Polk's before him; he added new ingredients, among which were a highly selective version of Swiss architecture and a highly selective version of the California rural vernacular, especially that characterized by redwood board-and-batten construction. But Maybeck's work differed from that of his older contemporaries in two marked ways—first, he was much more open and inventive in his willingness to mix new and older materials and structural forms; and second, his brilliant inventiveness as a designer made it possible for him to evoke the dreamy romanticism of a Classical or Medieval past—not through historic fragments which are experienced as separately removed elements, but through the integration of all these elements into a total composition.

The third generation of Bay Area designers continued the tradition, some with really deep and intense conviction, like John Hudson Thomas. Others, like Julia Morgan, Henry T. Gutterson, Clarence Tantau, or W. H. Ratcliff, dabbled in the tradition, but eventually settled down to a more traditional use of the then-popular architectural idioms. Thomas' early buildings (pre-1915) are in several instances the most unbelievable designs to be produced within the Bay Area Tradition. We have only to look at his Locke house (1911), his Dungan house (1915), or the Peters house (1915) to sense the oddity of his designs. He attempted to create forms and spaces that should never have been. He seems to have gathered on his drafting table a Sweets catalogue of samples of every avant-garde movement which was then being practiced in Europe and America; Austrian and German Secessionist forms and details; a hint of Voysey's Alice in Wonderland cottages; MacIntosh's personal version of the Art Nouveau; Wright's Midwestern Prairie Style; the American Craftsman interest in North American Indian art (especially America's own indigenous Pueblo art); the forms and details of the turn-of-the-century Mission Revival; and

elements of Maybeck's rich and varied work available right at his doorstep. The strength and fascination of these early buildings of Thomas lie in the fact that by the time he had finished manipulating these sources they ended up as a strange and unusual parody (of a sort) on the original. Maybeck's visions succeeded because of his ability to capture the romance of the past—as a childhood experience—in the completeness and totality of each of his buildings. Thomas succeeded for just the opposite reason—his buildings give the appearance that they never should have been; they are purposely left incomplete, abrupt, awkward, fragmented—impossible.

MAYBECK, detail of Goslinsky house, San Francisco, 1909 (Baer)



THOMAS, Peters house, Berkeley, 1907 (Baer)

THOMAS, plan of Dungan house, Berkeley, 1915



THE SECOND PHASE

The Bay Area Tradition of the twenties tended to employ a more limited historical architectural imagery and to refrain from emphasizing a variety of past historical fragments in one single building. Polk, Coxhead, and Maybeck—all of whom continued to work during the twenties—employed the prevalent Spanish Colonial Revival images, but they also used historical styles which were loosely Medieval—usually English or French Norman. The younger designers, Thomas, Gutterson, Ratcliff, W. R. Yelland, Carr Jones, and Hugh Comstock, were almost exclusively committed to suggesting the Medieval, especially in the image of the Cotswold cottage or the Norman French farmhouse. The styles in which these architects clothed their buildings did not differ from those being used in the Southland of California and throughout the U.S., though the Colonial Revival enjoyed only a marginal popularity on the West Coast. What set the work of these men apart was their peculiar way of using these historical forms and details; the complexity of their forms and spaces; their desire to miniaturize; and their desire fully to exploit the site as a major ingredient in creating a romantic aura. One's traditional sense of scale is denied in such buildings as Thomas' Hume house in Berkeley (1928); it appears to be a distant, not quite believable stone castle (it is actually built of exposed concrete blocks) high on a mountainous crag; its walled courtyard and great hall should resound to the sounds of armor and knights and ladies of the court (the twenties Hollywood variety). But all has been so reduced in scale that we feel we are outsiders peering into a child's vision of the past.

Thomas' contemporary W. R. Yelland created in his Thornberg Village (Berkeley, 1928) a stage-set version of a whole French Norman village which even today suggests that this vision of the past has more meaning than the day-to-day reality of the present. And Henry H. Gutterson and others sprinkled the Berkeley hills with numerous highly fanciful small-scaled Hansel and Gretel cottages hidden away from the trespassing eyes of the modern world in their dense thickets of trees, shrubs, and flowers.

While the use of Medieval imagery was by no means abandoned by Thomas, Maybeck, and others

in the thirties, Bay Area Tradition architects looked elsewhere for their visual sources—at first to the Monterey Revival style, then to the wooden board-and-batten and clapboard California rural ranch house and barn, later to a stripped version of the Regency, and finally to a domesticated and much softened interpretation of the Modern (the International Style). By the early thirties William W. Wurster had emerged as the major figure of this aspect of the Second Phase. Wurster's typical buildings, like Polk's and Gutterson's, were purposely low-keyed. On first encounter they seem anonymous, even pedestrian, and in some cases just plain dull. Actually, these very qualities of anonymity and blandness were highly important elements of his visual language; and

THOMAS, drawing of Hume house, Berkeley, 1928



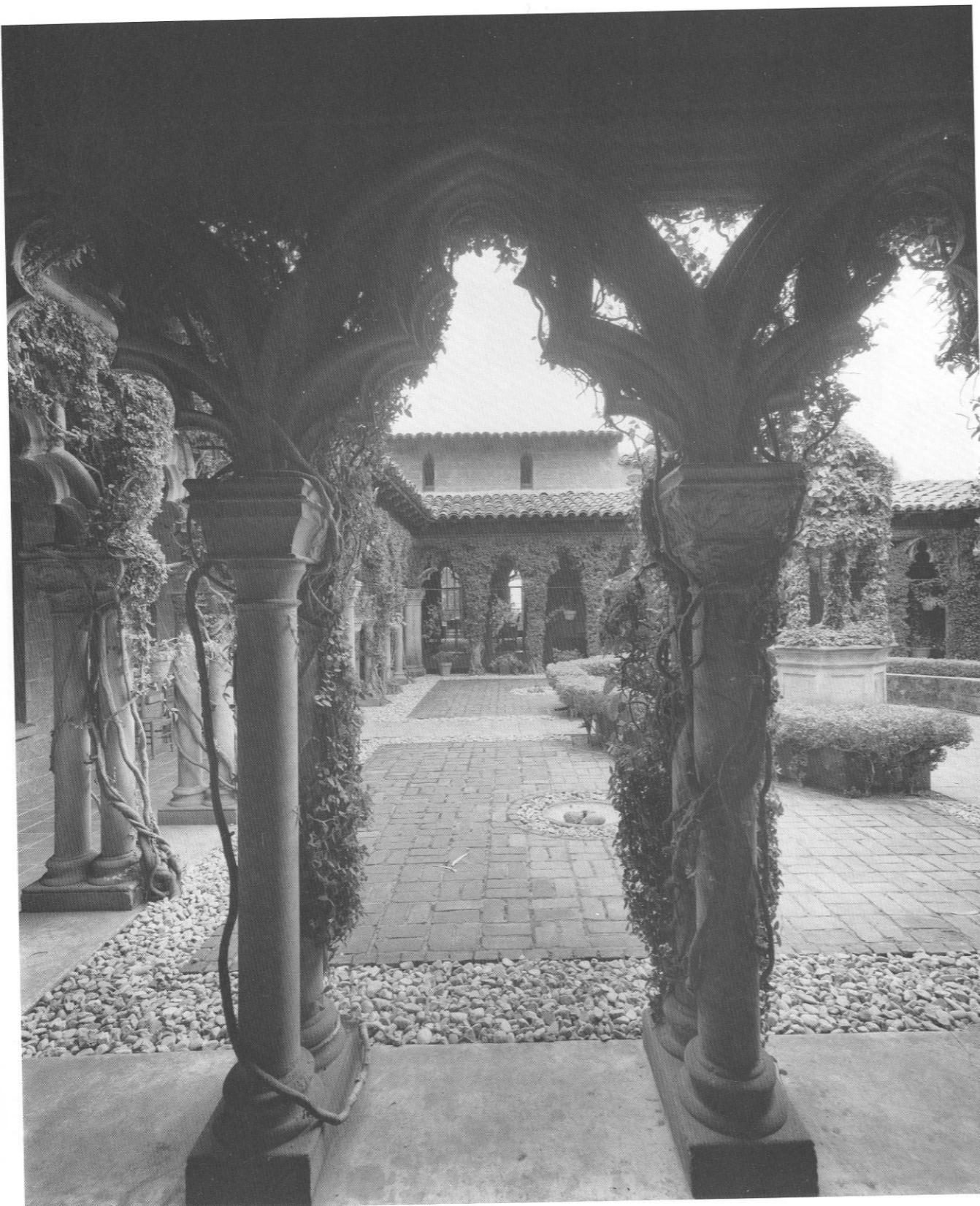
THOMAS, Hume house (Baer)

if we are patient we will find that his spaces and forms represent a concoction of traditional, modern, and builder's vernacular elements which no well-trained, self-respecting architect would ever have thought of using.

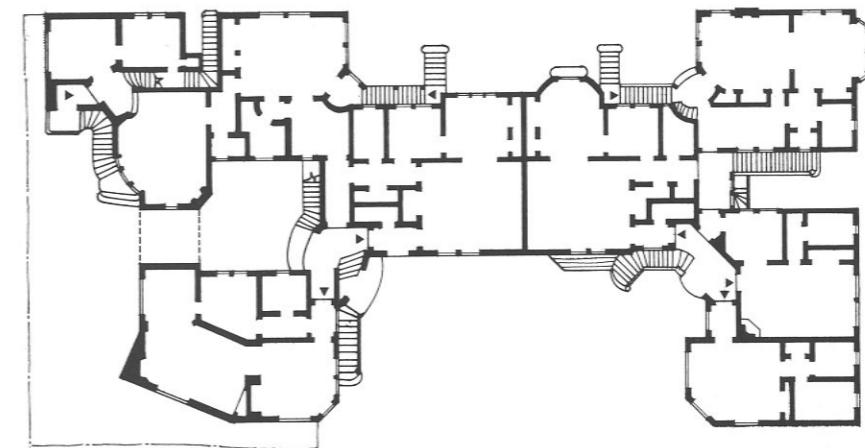
From his 1928 Gregory farmhouse, or ranch house, as it is so often called, near Santa Cruz to his 1938 Van Deusen house in Berkeley, he contrasted and played off everything imaginable—space which conveys a Classical order is juxtaposed with space which ap-

pears casual, placement of windows and doors seems to deny the hand of the architect, and so on. By the late thirties Gardner Dailey (and to a considerable degree the younger designers in his office such as Joseph Esherick), John Funk, Clarence Mayhew, John Dinwiddie, Hervey Clark, Michael Goodman, and Joseph McCarthy had taken up and begun to play the game of countering the modern with the traditional and the vernacular.

After the Second World War the Second Phase



Hume house, interior of court (Baer)



YELLAND, plan of Thornberg Village, Berkeley, 1928



WURSTER, Gregory farmhouse, Santa Cruz, 1926-27 (Sturtevant)



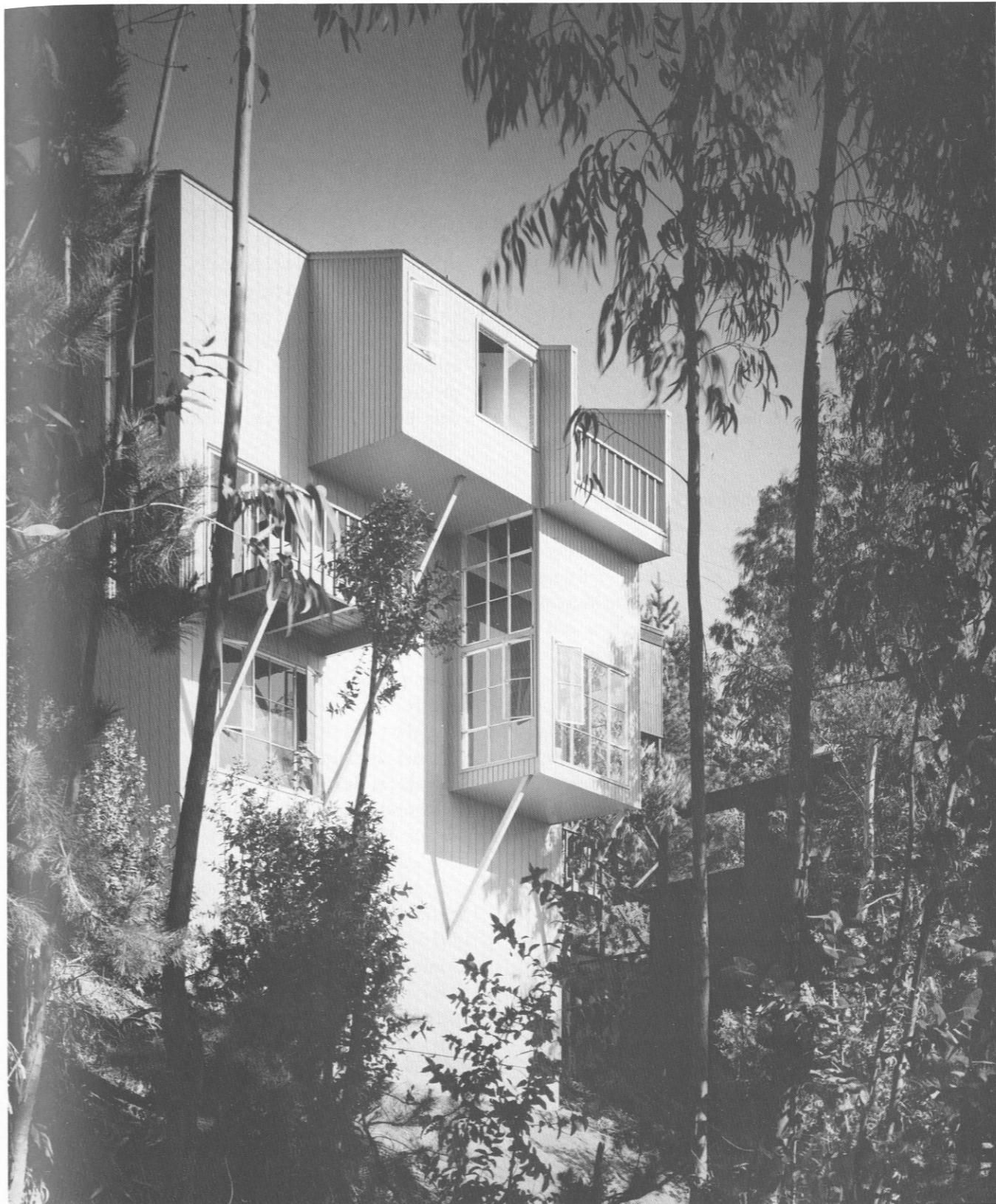
CORBETT, house on Wolfback Ridge, 1948 (Baer)

continued in the hands of Wurster, Dailey, and Funk, who were joined by Joseph Esherick (now on his own), Mario Corbett, Roger Lee, and Henry Hill. The Second Phase was now both at its weakest (within the tradition) and at its strongest in terms of popular and professional acceptance. By the late fifties it was evident that the practitioners of the tradition were groping for new images which could revitalize what had become tired. Formalism with a tinge of structural exoticism came to the fore in the elegant designs of Jack Hillmer and others, but this proved to be, as far as the Bay Area Tradition was concerned, a dead end. Another possibility which presented itself was to go back to the styles of the First Phase and rework the imagery of Maybeck and others. Although several designers, including Charles W. Callister, tried it, occasionally creating beautiful details, this self-conscious artsy craftism seldom produced really convincing buildings.

THE THIRD PHASE

The major turning point came in the early sixties with the emergence of Charles W. Moore, William Turnbull, Donlyn Lyndon, Richard Peters, and George Homsey, and with the changes which took place in the designs of the Esherick office.²⁴ From the contemporary world these designers plagiarized (in the best sense of the term) the work of the Philadelphian Louis Kahn and of the Finnish designer Alvar Aalto. They countered these new high-art images by borrowing from the California rural tradition, especially the wood sheathed outbuildings and barns, with a renewed pop art appreciation of the constructor/builder's vernacular. In their buildings they tended to turn the horizontal Second Phase buildings on end and to introduce vertical spatial complexity. Picturesqueness once again entered the scene—internal as well as external picturesqueness.

The buildings of Moore and his contemporaries



M/L/T/W, Talbert house, Oakland, 1962 (Baer)

were from the beginning as exclusive in their language as were the buildings of Coxhead, Maybeck, Thomas, and Wurster. It could well be argued that the Bay Area Tradition had at last arrived at a point where its visual language must be accompanied by written language. Even the erudite needed help in "reading" and responding to the sophisticated vagaries of this visual language.

The critical reactions to the Third Phase changed radically during the sixties. To a marked degree this was due to the major shift occurring worldwide in the rejection of the precepts and imagery of the International Style. It was equally an outcome of two local changes: the emergence of a new imagery, the vertical "mine-shaft" box; and the coupling together of visual and verbal ideas in the writings of several Bay Area designers, especially those of Charles W. Moore. By the late sixties the vertical shed-roofed

box, generally sheathed in wood, had caught on as the new fashion, and by the mid seventies variations on the shed-roofed vertical box were to be found all over the U.S., some designed by architects, most produced by designers working for builders and developers on condominium projects. So the Third Phase has become as popular an export from its natural habitat as the Second Phase was. Only, once again, the richness of language—of contradiction and conflicts—has been smoothed over and disguised. What is left is a mellow "style"—occasionally striving toward the pretense of High Art; generally, though, of a low-art nature. Also cast aside has been the rich verbal imagery (the wealth of caption material) which is an essential element in a Moore, Esherick, or Turnbull product. The packaging of this exported product has thus become pure Style, totally devoid of its other implications.

The Bay Area Tradition 1890-1918

JOHN BEACH

California's architecture is the record of a series of responses, some of them unconscious but many self-conscious to an extreme degree, to a certain set of myths and realities. There is the myth of a Spanish California devoted to luxuries and fiestas. There is the myth of instant riches for all. There has been an aura of almost Tibetan exoticism fostered by California's early remoteness and the perils of the journey there. The realities are those of the climate (which is mild and generally benign) and the landscape (which is spectacular and, when adequately watered, fantastically fertile). In the late 1880's the realities also included a frontier society just beginning to transform itself into something else. The population of this society had been brought here primarily by the gold rush. The gold fever infected equally all social, cultural, and economic classes, and the society which resulted was uniquely rich and varied: it was simultaneously cultured and ignorant, brawling and refined.

A nearly legendary California was created, an idyllic land where anything was possible and where the rules of conventional society did not necessarily apply. It was a place where man's mark on the environment demanded the emphatic, the extravagant, the fabulous. This challenge was, of course, not always met: the architecture of California, like the architecture of other places, ranges largely from the negligible to the dreadful. In fact, the generation of archi-

tects brought to California by the gold rush did not seem to recognize the challenge at all; they built, as closely as frontier technology would allow, the buildings they would have built had they stayed in St. Louis, Manchester, or Stuttgart.

But at the end of the 1880's and the beginning of the nineties a group of designers appeared in California who were attracted by both the opportunity and the challenge. Arriving at the perfect moment, Ernest Coxhead, Willis Polk, Bernard Maybeck, A. C. Schweinfurth, and A. Page Brown encountered a situation exactly suited to their talents and ambitions: a society with adequate means just beginning to realize a desire for more permanent buildings, a clientele with aspirations but without esthetic prejudices. These designers brought with them stylistic and philosophical luggage from a wide range of backgrounds. They used fragments of the past as well as fragments of the present and juxtaposed them in a manner which expressed the complexities, the myths, and the realities of the California experience. The local building vernacular, the straightforwardly utilitarian wood frame buildings of the mining and boom towns of the second half of the nineteenth century, provided the ideal neutral base upon which to impose preferences of space, style, and form.

The Bay Area Tradition represents not a style, but a process of synthesis and transformation: a design