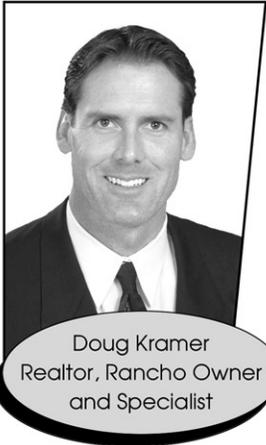


Doug Kramer's Rancho Style

Dedicated to the owners of Cliff May Ranchos

January 2004



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Cliff May
Ranchos
of Long Beach

- Built in the 1950s
- Modernist styling
- Indoor-Outdoor living
- Open floor-plans
- Lots designed for privacy
- Adjacent to 800 acre park
- Tree-lined parkways
- Casual, relaxed living

What Makes the Ranchos Unique

Indoor-Outdoor Living

First and foremost, the Cliff May Ranchos are unique in their relationship to the outdoors. The Ranchos are Californian, built for individuals who wanted to erase the lines between indoors and outdoors and embrace the spectacular Southern California climate. And in an environment where the sun shines 300 plus days a year and the average high temperature is 75 degrees, why would anyone want to live differently?

It is not uncommon in the Ranchos to find that almost every room in the house has a connection to the outdoors. Floor-to-ceiling glass takes the place of walls to bring light and nature in, creating a relationship to the outdoors that is as much a part of the home as the decor. Perhaps the San Diego Union put it best when it featured an original Cliff May design under the heading: "Home with a garden in every room."

Modernism Meets the Ranch House

The Ranchos were certainly inspired by the Western ranch house, but they are unique in their modern interpretation of this California design. The Ranchos were built in the early 1950s and reflect the modernist

influences of the time with open floor plans, exposed post-and-beam ceilings, and floor to ceiling windows.



Casual, indoor-outdoor living is reflected in this Cliff May design.

Lot Design

Many Ranchos are L- or U-shaped and are positioned to the back of their lots, a design layout which Cliff May envisioned would provide for more open outdoor space and an enhanced relationship between the homes' interior and yard. This placement, which was seen in many of Frank Lloyd Wright's Usonian homes, is revolutionary, and to this day there are few communities like it. Moreover, because of the generous "set-back" rules within the Rancho community, owners are able to fence these areas and create compound-like environments for more private enjoyment of their garden or pool.

Historic Preservation

Now that the Ranchos have turned 50 there has been more discussion in the neighborhood about historic preservation. To better educate myself on this issue I recently contacted Ruthann Lehrer, Historic Preservation Officer for the City of Long Beach. Ms. Lehrer was nice enough to forward to me an overview of historic districts, and I would like to summarize some of the key facts below for your awareness.

What is the process for nominating and designating a historic district?

A historic district is usually initiated by a neighborhood organization and a cultural resources survey is done to inventory structures in the area. An area potentially qualifies if it contains a concentration of intact and original vintage architectural styles, and if property owners are interested in protecting those structures as valuable assets to the neighborhood. The Survey findings are presented to the Cultural Heritage Commission (CHC), which then makes a recommendation based on the survey and consultation with property owners. A recommendation from the CHC is forwarded to the Planning Commission, and if the Planning Commission recommends approval an ordinance is drafted for City Council approval.

What is the planning rationale for historic district designation?

To qualify for historic district status, a neighborhood must contain a concentration of vintage architectural styles that have not been extensively remodeled or altered. Buildings in the historic districts are usually over 50 years old. The concentration of historic buildings should be approximately 2/3. An architectural survey compiles this information, and research on the history of the neighborhood provides a historical context. Buildings are evaluated architecturally and are categorized as “contributing” or “noncontributing.” Contributing buildings are architecturally significant to the historic value of the neighborhood and are targeted for preservation; noncontributing buildings are nonhistoric intrusions, which are outside of the historic preservation goals.

What are the benefits of being in a historic district?

Historic District status encourages neighborhood pride by confirming that vintage homes in the district are valuable assets. The regulations help to protect the value of each owner’s investment by ensuring that all development will meet certain architectural quality standards. The preservation and restoration of historic homes tends to attract homeowners who appreciate the qualities of craftsmanship and design in older homes. Historic restoration is encouraged, which enhances the physical attractiveness of the neighborhood. Real estate studies in various cities across the country have shown that property values in protected historic districts tend to be higher than comparable neighborhoods that have no architectural regulations.

It is important to note that all physical conditions which exist at the time a district is designated are “grandfathered in.” Also, interior remodeling is excluded from review.

What is the downside?

Property owners making changes to their homes have an extra step of City review before a building permit can be issued. They need to obtain a Certificate of Appropriateness from the CHC or from staff prior to the issuance of the building permit. There are small fees charged for this review.

My thoughts on historic preservation in the Ranchos.

More discussion needs to take place with the City to determine if Historic Preservation will be a benefit to our neighborhood. On the one hand it would have the positive impact of protecting vintage Cliff May designs. On the other hand it may limit creativity and use of modern materials that enhance some home restorations. Historic preservation aside, most of us seem to agree on one point: sensitivity to the original Cliff May designs is critical to the value and character of our neighborhood.

If you would like to express your opinion on this topic, or if you would like to get more information about Cliff May and related design and architecture, I encourage you to contact me.

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Reconnected

Rancho owners Todd and Jeanette Barker recently completed a kitchen remodel that gave their favorite room a renewed relationship to the rest of the house. "The kitchen is the heart of our house," said Jeanette. "The previous kitchen was disconnected, divided off by a seven foot wall. We were eager to open it up."

This spacious Rancho had been extensively remodeled by a previous owner, but when the Barkers purchased the property in 1998 they knew it had to be altered to fit their tastes. Mexican pavers were replaced with elm hardwood floors, and natural wood ceilings were painted off-white for a lighter, more open feel. Finally, the kitchen was completely reworked to allow it to be part of the expansive living space.

Above: Walls of glass and skylights allow light to flood into the open-plan great room. "We are now able to enjoy our landscaping and courtyard as we cook," Todd points out. Below: The kitchen's island serves as a casual dining area and opens the kitchen to the living space. The area is further brightened by floor to ceiling glass to the left of the kitchen and a skylight.

If you have a remodeling or interior design project that you would like to share with your Rancho neighbors, we'd love to hear from you. Please contact Rochelle Kramer at 562.627-1001 or rochelle@ranchostyle.com.



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Enter to Win!

- Please contact me for a free market evaluation of my property.
- I am interested in buying a home or property.
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- I know someone who is interested in buying or selling a home.
- Please enter me in the February 15, 2004 drawing to win "Western Ranch Houses by Cliff May."

Details on back. Participants need not be present to win.

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Dear Rancho Neighbors,

I hope your 2004 is off to a happy and promising beginning. One of my New Year's resolutions has been to publish this newsletter, dedicated to us, the owners and residents of the Cliff May Ranchos of Long Beach. I am very pleased, therefore, to deliver to you this first edition of our community newsletter, *Rancho Style*.

The primary purpose of *Rancho Style* is to serve as a communication tool for the interests of our neighborhood. Now that the Ranchos have turned 50 there is much to reflect on and much to look forward to; *Rancho Style* endeavors to do both, to embrace the history of our architecture and community, and to discuss the future of our neighborhood.

I hope you will take a few moments to read this first edition of *Rancho Style*. And, if you are so inclined, I would welcome your feedback and suggestions – simply send me a message at doug@ranchostyle.com or call me at 562.627.1001.

Best Regards,

Doug Kramer

In This Issue

- What Makes the Ranchos Unique
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- Cliff May Design Book Giveaway

Douglas Kramer

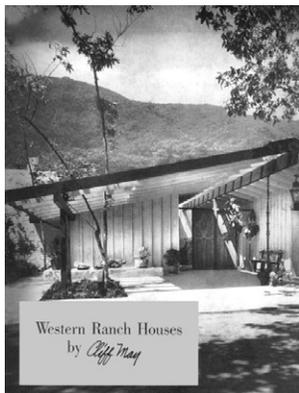
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Enter to Win!



Register to win a free copy of
"Western Ranch Houses by Cliff May."

This Sunset Publishing book was a best seller in the late 50s and early 60s and has been beautifully restored to detail May's innovative blend of the Ranch House with modernist influences. Register for your opportunity to own this fascinating perspective into Cliff May's vision and its impact on Southern California living.

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Entry form on back.