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THE SOUTH AFRICAN ARCHITECTURAL RECORD

THE JOURNAL OF THE TRANSVAAL, NATAL AND ORANGE FREE STATE PROVINCIAL INSTITUTES OF SOUTH AFRICAN ARCHITECTS AND THE CHAPTER OF SOUTH AFRICAN QUANTITY SURVEYORS.

XIV

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"Stellenberg," near Wynberg, Cape Town. One of the finest of the early Dutch homesteads, erected about 1710

THE SOUTH AFRICAN ARCHITECTURAL RECORD

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DOMESTIC ARCHITECTURE IN SOUTH AFRICA.

The past twenty-five years have shown a marked development in our domestic architecture in South Africa. Prior to that time, the lack of local building materials and the excessive cost of transport, necessitated the use of shoddy and inferior materials imported from overseas. South Africa became the dumping ground for machine made articles of every description.

The attempt to reproduce the prevailing type of design in England with these materials and without due regard to our stringent climatic conditions resulted in failure. Corrugated iron for walls, ornamental wood verandahs and balconies, barge boards and finials, match boarded ceilings, sham half timber work, cast iron columns and balconies, "stock" doors and windows from Europe and America are now, however, to a large extent, things of the past. Architects have realised that in this climate, with its extremes of heat and cold, its dry and wet seasons, timber in construction and more particularly for external ornamental purposes, is a most unsuitable material unless hardwoods are used.

Pioneers like Sir Herbert Baker have paved the way for a better standard of workmanship and design and have encouraged the manufacture and use of local materials. Our main difficulty to-day lies in the fact that the standard of building in small houses is still set, to a very large extent, by the speculative builder and is consequently very low. Architects are therefore forced to lower their standard and use cheap materials in order to compete with the speculator in building and the speculative builder.

As domestic architecture plays such an important part in the practice of an architect and thereby considerably affects his reputation, the following notes gleaned from various sources and from experience are published, not with the idea of laying down any dogmatic views on the subject but rather to invite criticism and obtain further data which might be helpful to the young architect in practice. These notes appeared in a slightly modified form in a series of articles in the *Star*, to which I am indebted for the use of the blocks.

THE SITE.

The first consideration in the design of a house is its position on the site. It is therefore essential that a comprehensive survey be made of the site and its surroundings before the design is considered, even in the case of the small house on a restricted suburban site.

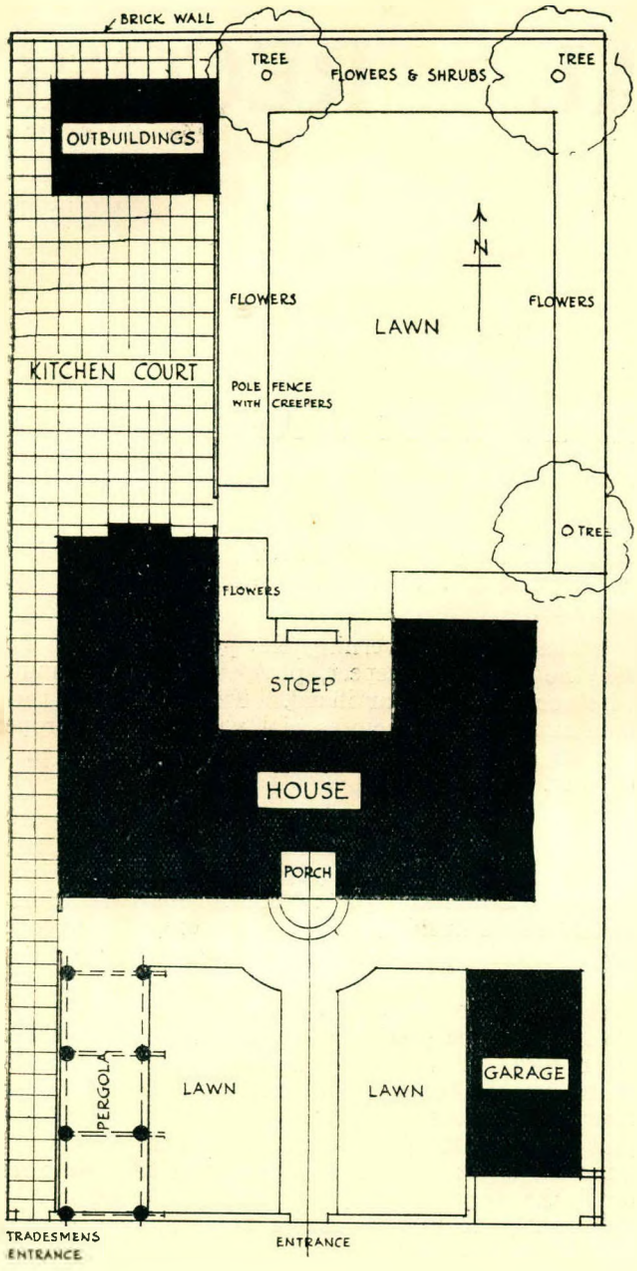
The factors governing the position of the house are the approach, aspect, prospect and surroundings, whether natural or artificial. The comfort of the inhabitants and the commercial value of the property are largely increased by care and forethought in this respect.

The late Mr. Ernest Willmott, who, as a partner of Sir Herbert Baker, built some of the most delightful houses in Johannesburg, states in his book on "English House Design": "The intimate relationship of the whole building scheme, not only of approaches and boundaries, but of the garden lay out also, makes the treatment of the site and building parts of one problem in design . . . The best results are unobtainable unless at the outset the designer forms a clear idea for the complete treatment of the surroundings of the house and is able in execution to give reasonable effect to it . . . Especially when the plot to be built upon is small is it wise not to determine the exact position and details of the house itself until the approaches, yards and gardens have been sufficiently defined to enable their main lines to be laid down."

The majority of our suburban houses are built upon the absurdly small fifty by one hundred feet stands, which, while possibly large enough for the two storied suburban house, common in Europe, are hopelessly inadequate for the bungalow type of house common to this country.

However, although restricted to this area, how much more might be made of the site than is done to-day.

It is a common practice to set the house back a few feet from the boundary and place the entrance and most important rooms on this frontage, leaving the rest of the plan to fit in as best as possible. Rarely, if ever, is the aspect considered, the bedrooms and bathroom get little or no sunlight, whilst the kitchen gets the full blast of it. The area at the back of the house is usually termed the back yard and here are placed the native quarters, clothes lines, dust bins and waste water tanks.



SITE WITH SOUTHERN FRONTAGE

Whether the frontage is North or South, East or West, the same general rule seems to apply. The expression "Queen Ann fronts and Mary Ann backs," has well been applied to many of our small suburban residences.

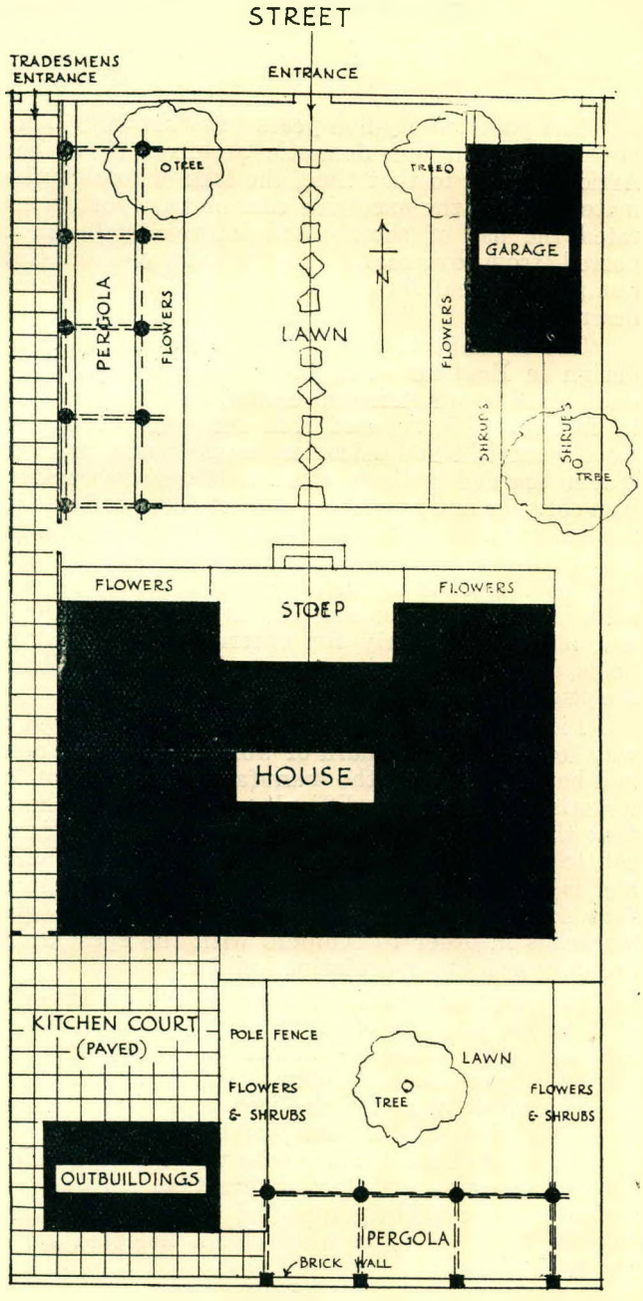
Where the street frontage is on the North the most should be made of this aspect by setting the house well back from the street boundary and getting the best out of the site by a judicious lay out of the garden. The tradesmen's and servants' entrance can always be effectively screened.

Where, however, buildings already exist on either side they must be taken into consideration and the house so placed on the site as to give the maximum amount of privacy.

When, however, the frontage is South the most satisfactory solution is to set the building nearer the street boundary and make the most of the remaining portion of the site to the North, usually devoted to the "back yard." The more important rooms can be planned to overlook it and the garden laid out to screen the outbuildings, if they must be placed here, as also the adjoining properties.

The accompanying diagrams indicate possible solutions of the problem.

Southern sites are usually avoided by intending purchasers and are sold more cheaply, but there is no reason why, if care is exercised by the Architect in the lay out, these sites should not be considerably enhanced in value.



SITE WITH NORTHERN FRONTAGE

It frequently happens in Johannesburg that the site falls steeply to the North, commanding a fine view with a frontage to the South, but invariably one finds the "back" of the house given up to the kitchen or back bedrooms, the space beneath being allocated to the servants quarters or storage for coal or lumber. How often could the positions of the rooms have been reversed and this space devoted to a loggia, cool in summer and warm in winter, overlooking a pleasant strip of lawn and getting the full benefit of the view. The ideal aspect in Johannesburg is North-East, and should never be overlooked in the siting of the house. A Southern aspect is certainly enjoyable in hot weather and has to be considered when a fine view is obtainable, but cold winds and driving rain militate against it in the majority of cases. Should the frontage be East or West the same general considerations would apply, the Western side, however, being protected by a verandah or pergola from the fierce rays of the afternoon sun.

When dealing with stands one hundred feet square or larger, possibilities of siting are very much greater but one frequently finds a plot entirely ruined because the frontage happens to be on the South.

There is no reason why the outbuildings and the kitchen should not be placed on this front and many instances could be given where this arrangement is most satisfactorily carried out. The accompanying diagram illustrates such an arrangement, the small pavilions on either side being devoted to servants quarters and garage respectively.

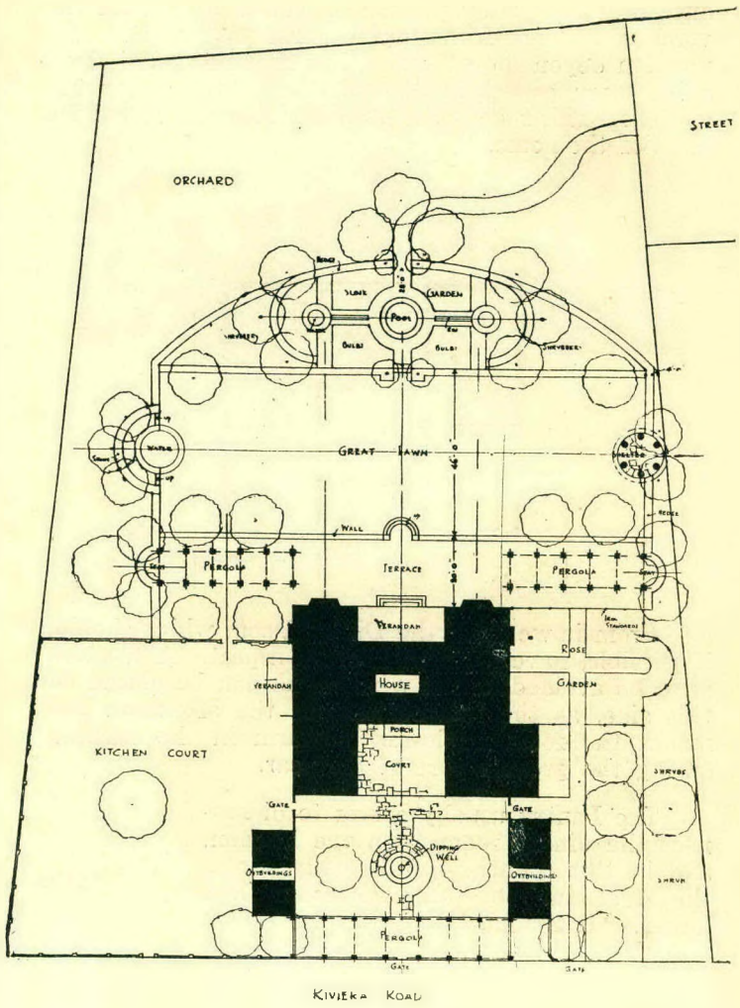
In dealing with still larger plots greater opportunities occur, for whilst it is still possible to group the outbuildings to frame in the entrance front, when the frontage is South, the site permits of their being grouped in a separate wing attached to or away from the house.

Having finally decided upon the position of the house which is governed in the first instance by the site and its surroundings, the details of the lay out are in their turn governed by the plan of the building, due consideration being given to the prolongation of axes and the placing of trees and shrubs or detached buildings to frame in the whole.

THE PLAN.

In the planning of the small house simplicity, ease of working and economy have to be strictly observed. The ideal house has yet to be planned. Every year sees some advance made in the direction of its attainment, but the means to an end are not entirely in the hands of the Architect. So much depends on the standard of public taste.

To raise this standard among Architects alone will not solve the difficulty: the education of the public in matters of taste and art must proceed collaterally or no valuable result will ensue. The early Johannesburg house usually consisted of a passage running from front to back, from which the various rooms were entered. Thus, on entering, one was immediately confronted with the mingled odours of kitchen, bedrooms and bathroom. Sir Herbert Baker was probably the first Architect in Johannesburg to introduce



KIVIEKA KOAL

the Dutch H or U plans, with the central disconnecting hall or reception room, but he soon discovered that, with the cold and dusty South Westerly winds, some preliminary entrance vestibule was required to disconnect the entrance door from this hall.

These types of plan, but without the entrance vestibule, soon became popular and were applied indiscriminately to both large and small houses. The original and essential principles, however, were lost sight of.

In this climate fresh air is essential but, on the restricted sites already referred to, it is not always possible to plan the house and give ample cross ventilation to all the rooms. Further the question of access for the native servant, who does not live in the house is important and it is equally important to disconnect the bedrooms and bathroom from the dining room and kitchen.

Before dealing with the plan as a whole it would be as well to consider the aspect of the different rooms.

The most important is usually the Lounge Hall or Living Room, as it is popularly called, used for the reception of guests and thus furnished with any valued

pieces of furniture and pictures. Owing to its importance it is invariably planned in conjunction with the verandah, which forms an integral part of it. Its position depends on the site, but it is normally given a Northern aspect in Johannesburg, overlooking the garden. This room with its cheerful aspect forms the basis of the home.

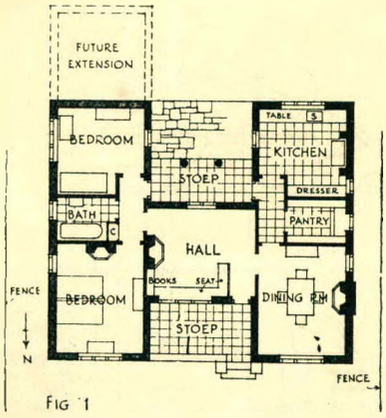


FIG 1

From it we enter the Dining Room which should, if possible, have a North Eastern aspect. A Western is to be avoided, unless a verandah can be placed on this side, as the intense heat of the afternoon sun makes the room unpleasantly warm in the evening during the greater part of the year.

The Pantry usually serves to disconnect the dining room from the kitchen, and in this country it invariably serves the dual function of storeroom and larder. It should, therefore, face South, but this is not always possible in the small house on a restricted site. When facing West the window should be protected from the sun, and the utmost care given to ensure thorough cross ventilation.

The Kitchen should always have its windows on the South and, if possible, East, and here again good cross ventilation is most essential, a point very frequently neglected.

The Bedrooms should face East or North, preferably the former. Thus they are cool in the evening and early morning for the greater part of the year, and pleasant in case of sickness. A Western aspect is almost unbearable in the summer unless well protected.

The Bathroom should face East, whenever possible, but in the small house for reasons of economy and efficiency of the hot water supply, it is often placed in juxtaposition to the kitchen.

The Verandah is, as I have said, usually planned in conjunction with the hall. Although there is a strong inclination to place it on two or three or even on all sides of the house, experience has proved that this is rarely satisfactory and portions have to be enclosed. Bedrooms and dining room, unless facing West, should not be under verandahs, unless light is obtained from another source, otherwise they become dismal and stuffy.

The freshest air is always required in these rooms, more especially in the former.

Figure 1 shows a typical arrangement of the plan for a small house on a restricted site. Service between bedrooms and kitchen is possible without crossing the living room whilst access from bedrooms to garden can be obtained without going through the kitchen, a common but unpleasant arrangement in Johannesburg. All parts are well lighted and badly ventilated and stuffy passages are avoided. Future extension of such a plan is indicated and the small lobby could be extended as a passage to give access to it.

The use of a bookcase screen provides the necessary privacy for the hall from the front door. The latter, however could be provided with a small vestibule by sacrificing a portion of the front stoep.

By reversing this plan it can be adapted to a Southern frontage when the stoep on the North, enclosed on three sides forms a useful adjunct to the hall and is, for practical purposes, another room.

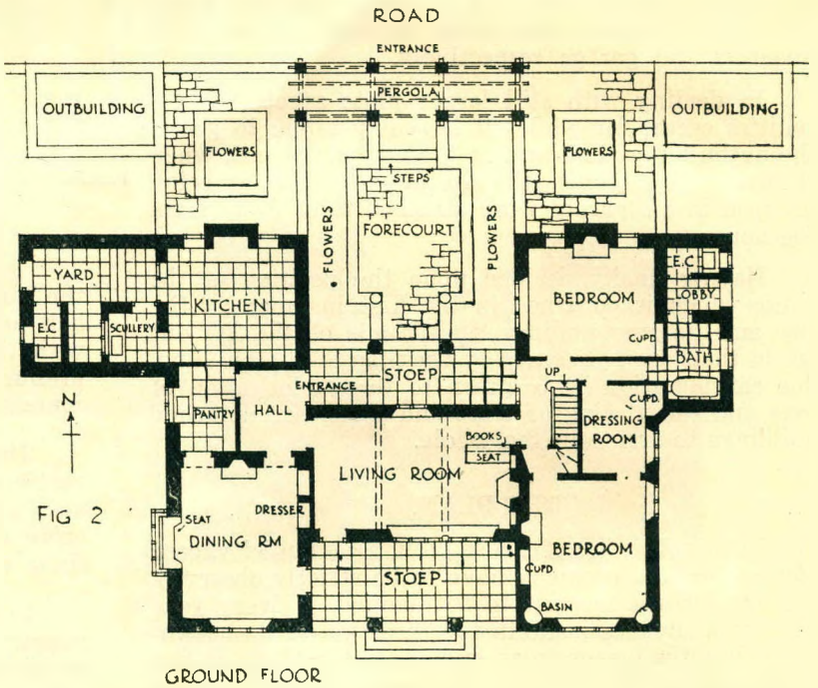


FIG 2

Residence, Parktown West. *E.Willmott, Architect.*

On less restricted sites the problem is easier to solve and many illustrations could be given showing excellent solutions of the larger bungalow plan. In these, however, one frequently finds an enormous waste in roof space, which could be made to serve a useful purpose as an attic. This is rarely done, but the accompanying plan (Figure 2) shows the possibilities in this respect.

In this plan service from kitchen to entrance and to bedrooms is possible without crossing the reception room, and the entrance vestibule is skilfully introduced. The photograph shows clearly the treatment of the roof in such a case.

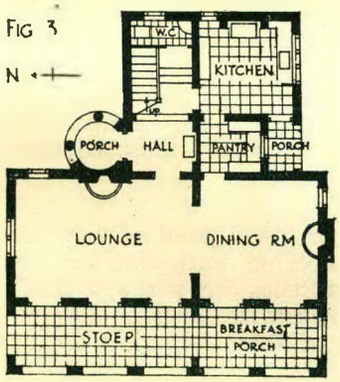
With a two-storied house it is usually much easier to obtain the ideal aspect for the various rooms.

The Stair, a new element, has always to be carefully considered. It should, if possible, be visible from the entrance hall, but so planned that service between the kitchen and the bedrooms can be arranged without crossing the entrance hall or reception rooms.

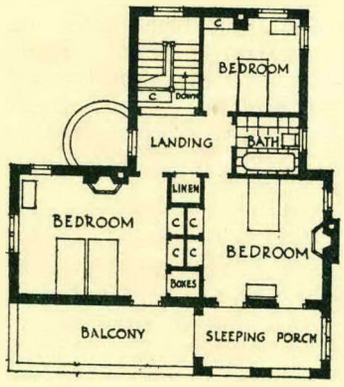
The question of carrying up furniture, especially round the landings, must be taken into consideration, as must be the important question of clearance or headroom. Good lighting is essential, and the windows should be so arranged as to be easily cleaned. This latter point also refers to all windows on an upper floor, and, with care and forethought, they can be so arranged as to be easily accessible from inside the room.

A common feature in our South African homes is the Sleeping Porch, which should be so designed that its openings can be easily screened with canvas blinds or mosquito wire, if required. Figure 3 shows the arrangement of a small two storied house on a site where the view is to the West and the entrance front on the North. The best aspect has been considered for each room with the exception, perhaps, of one bedroom upstairs which faces West. This, however, with the reception rooms downstairs is protected by a deep loggia. The service to all parts has been carefully considered and no waste space, in the way of passages, exists.

FIG 3



GROUND FLOOR



FIRST FLOOR



Residence, Killarney, Johannesburg. — *A. J. Marshall, Architect.*

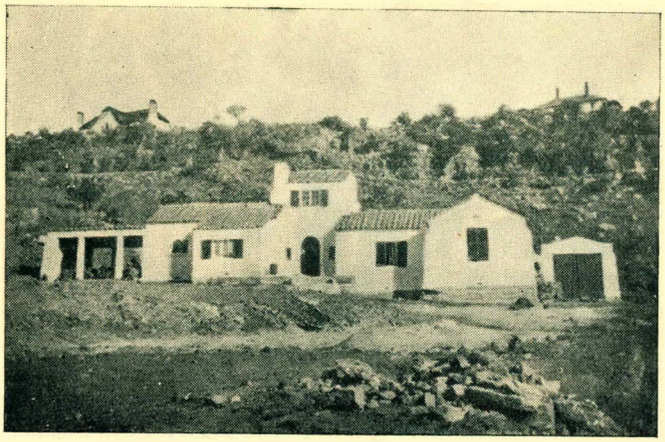
THE EXTERIOR.

The charm of many of the old world towns and villages in Europe lies in the fact that the buildings were, of necessity, constructed with local materials.

In the design of our modern houses one should not lose sight of this factor, for the materials used play an important part in good design. When the early settlers arrived at the Cape, the only available building materials were stone, a poor clay, lime, timber and reeds for thatching, hence we find that the majority of the early homesteads were built with thick, crude brick walls, plastered and whitened with lime, with stone flagged floors and thatched roofs. They blend with the landscape and appear a part of their surroundings. In all parts of South Africa to-day excellent building materials are available. Stone of almost every kind is obtainable, including good building limestone, sandstone, slate and granite. Lime and cement of the best quality are produced in large quantities throughout the Union. Excellent bricks and tiles are being manufactured. The one essential building material, timber, is lacking and has to be imported. The indigenous hardwoods, owing to their cost of working and the difficulties of seasoning, are too rare and costly to be used in the construction of the ordinary dwelling house. In this respect we are placed in a somewhat similar position to countries like North Africa, Arabia and some parts of Southern Europe, and it would be as well if the building methods of these countries were more carefully studied and applied here. The substitution of brick or concrete vaulting or the use of reinforced concrete flats which are a tendency of modern European domestic architecture should have a marked effect on the design of our homes in the future.

In designing the house the essential quality which should be sought for by the Architect is repose or restfulness. This results from many factors, the chief of which are proportion and colour.

Proportion has been briefly described as that harmonious relationship between all the parts consciously or unconsciously produced by the trained artist. It is only by experience that the eye learns that certain relationships of dimensions and surfaces are satisfactory and others are not.



Residence, Westcliff, Johannesburg. — *Gordon Leith, Architect.*

Closely allied to proportion are scale and rhythm, the former, in fact, being but another aspect of it. How often one hears the remark, "Out of scale," or "out of proportion," applied to parts of the human figure. In a similar way the question of scale as provided by the human figure enters very largely into every detail of the design and furnishing of the home which is built to house it.

For example, a doorway eight feet wide and sixteen feet high would be quite "out of scale" in a small private house, or again the size of the blocks of stone used in the construction of a town hall would be quite "out of scale" in the construction of a small house.

It is a question, therefore, affecting the design of all details—whether they are too large or too small for their purpose—the scale of the building itself in relation to its surroundings and the scale of the materials used in the design.

Rhythm in design concerns that relationship of parts to each other which gives continuity of idea and affects the proper placing of columns, arches, windows, contrasting surfaces, etc., in juxtaposition to obtain a rhythmic effect.



Cottage Homes, Rondebosch, Capetown. — *H. Baker and F. K. Kendall, Architects.*

The other factor, colour, is no less important. The experienced designer, like the experienced painter, is aware that certain effects of colour are pleasing and others are not. In this respect the composition of the materials used in a design must be carefully taken into consideration. However pleasing a building may be at completion, its beauty, especially when assisted by nature's setting, will be greatly increased and enriched by the finishing touches of time, and it is thus very important that the materials of which the building is composed shall be such as do not too greatly resist time's kindly influence.

Stone or brick, slates or tiles, must not be chosen wholly and simply because they fulfil their practical function of excluding wind and rain; they must also "weather" well, that is to say, they must not so far resist the atmospheric influence as to prevent the process of "toning," which nature exerts over all natural



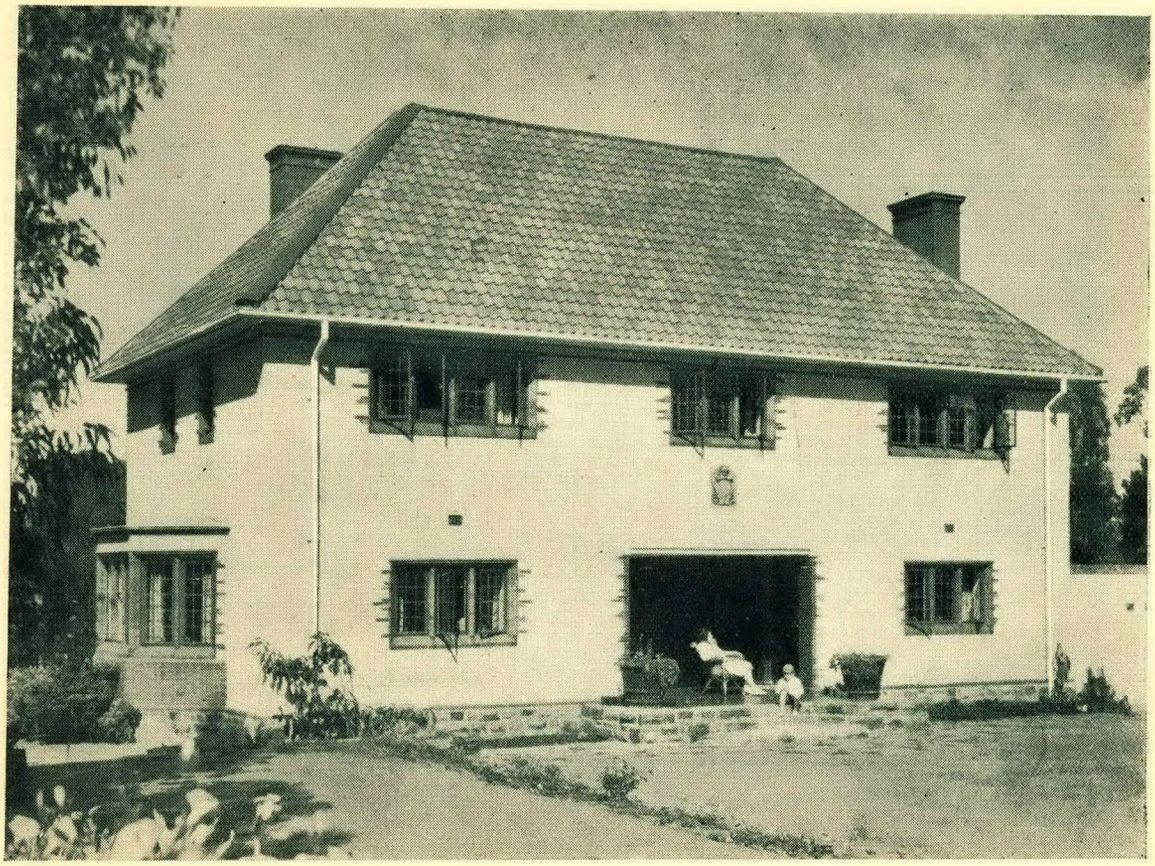
Residence, Parktown, Johannesburg. — *J. M. Solomon, Architect.*

substances exposed to her touch . . . Natural stone weathers well, but it is in the manufactured articles, bricks and tiles, that care must be exercised in their selection.

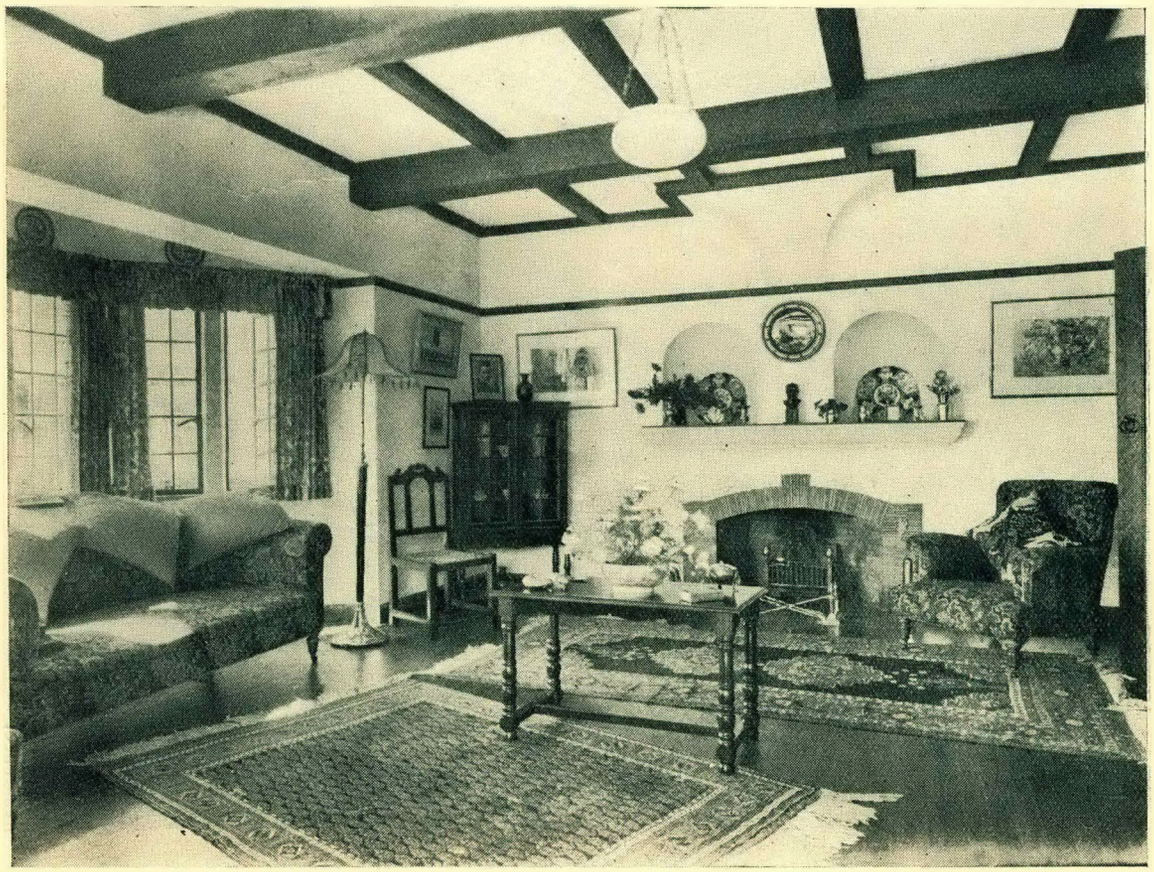
From the practical point of view hard blue bricks used for engineering purposes, and certain machine made bricks and tiles are, perhaps, the best to be had, but a house otherwise good in design, will be sadly marred if any of these materials are used in its construction.

Everyone knows the aggressive effect which obtains in many manufacturing towns in England, where hard, red or blue brick walls and purple grey slates are used in conjunction. It obtains, too, in many of the railway cottages scattered throughout the length and breadth of the Union—dreary, dismal blue brick buildings with corrugated iron roof—casting a depressing effect on the blaze of flowers that frequently surrounds them.

Allied to colour is texture which greatly enhances the colour values and is obtained in innumerable ways; by the type of jointing used in the brickwork and stonework, by the surface colouring and texture of the bricks and stones themselves, in the finish given by the plasterer to his material and by the combination of different materials in the same surface.

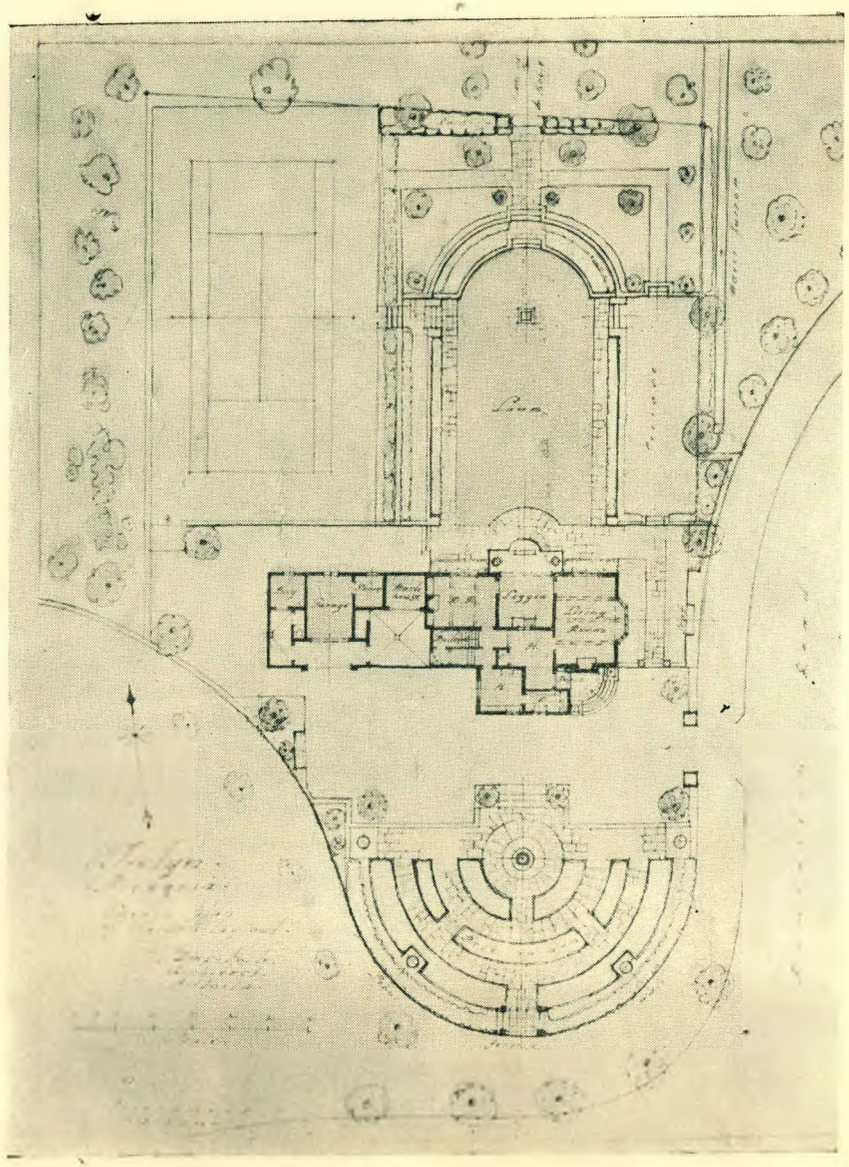


North Front.



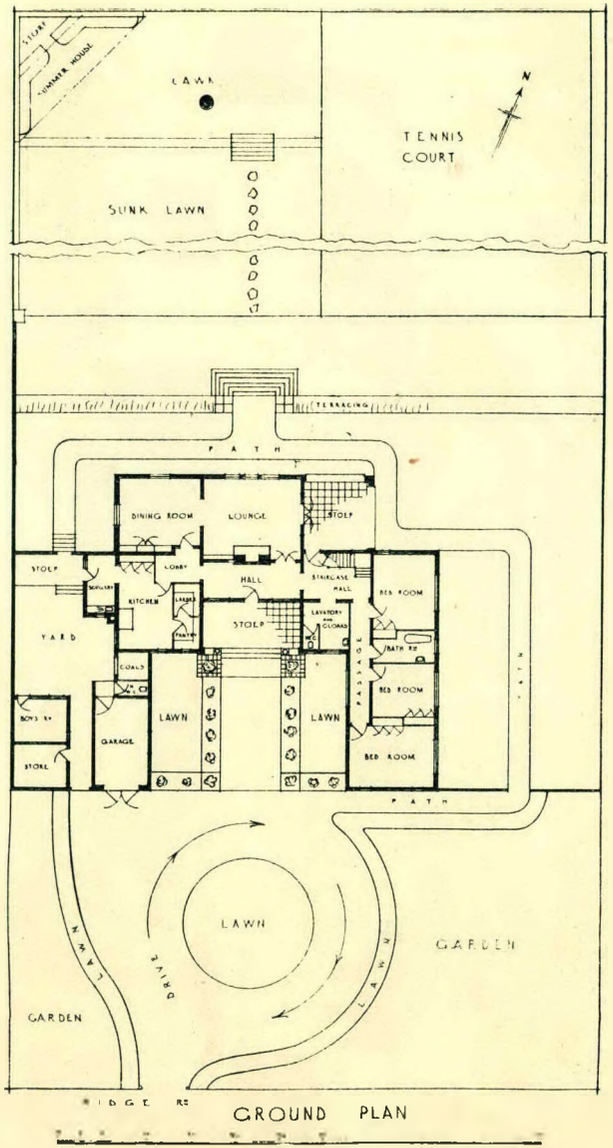
The Living Room,
Residence, Arcadia, Pretoria.

V. S. Rees Poole,
Architect.



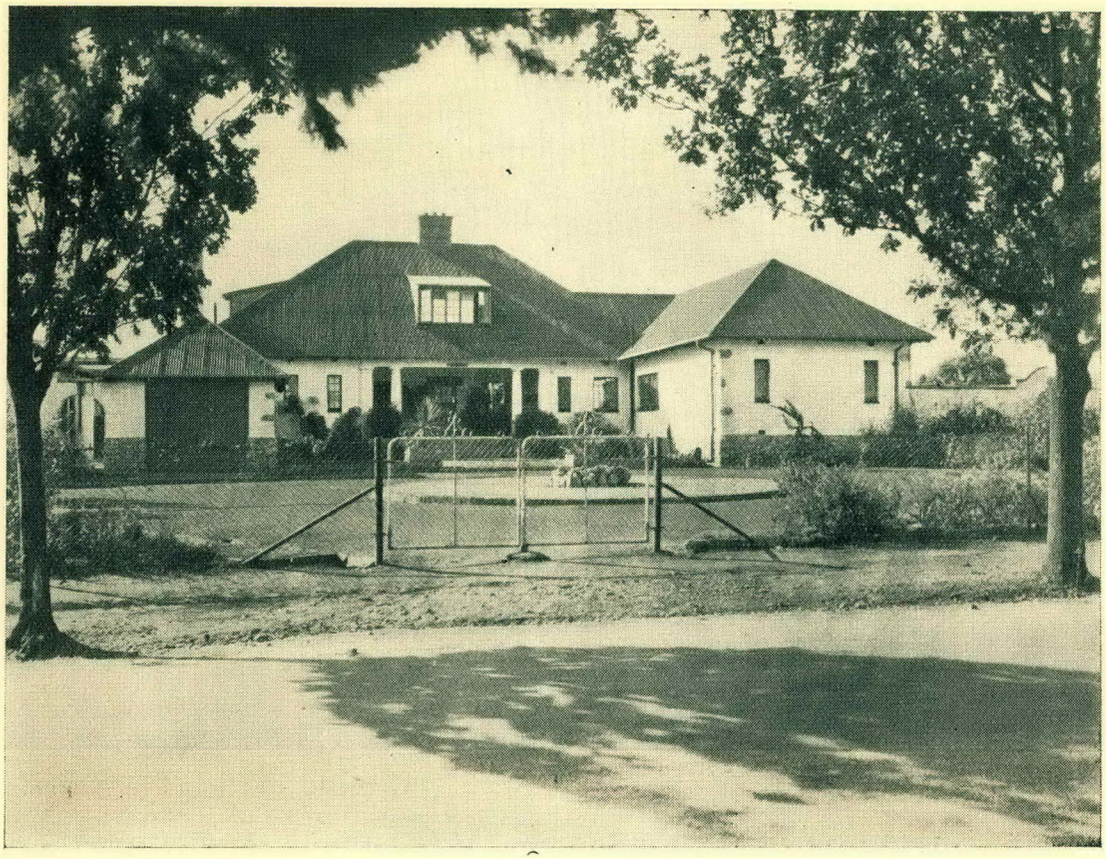
Residence,
Arcadia, Pretoria.

V. S. Rees Poole,
Architect.

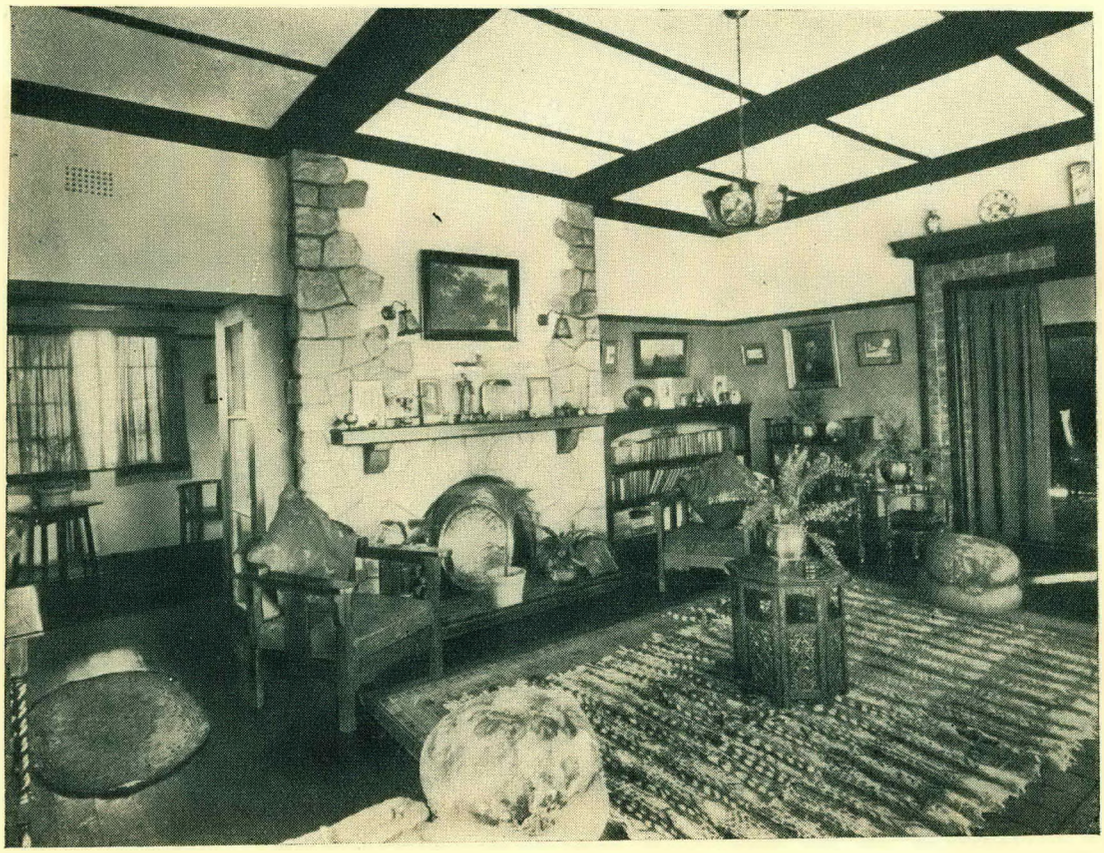


Residence,
Mountain View,
Johannesburg.

Cowin, Powers and Ellis,
Architects.

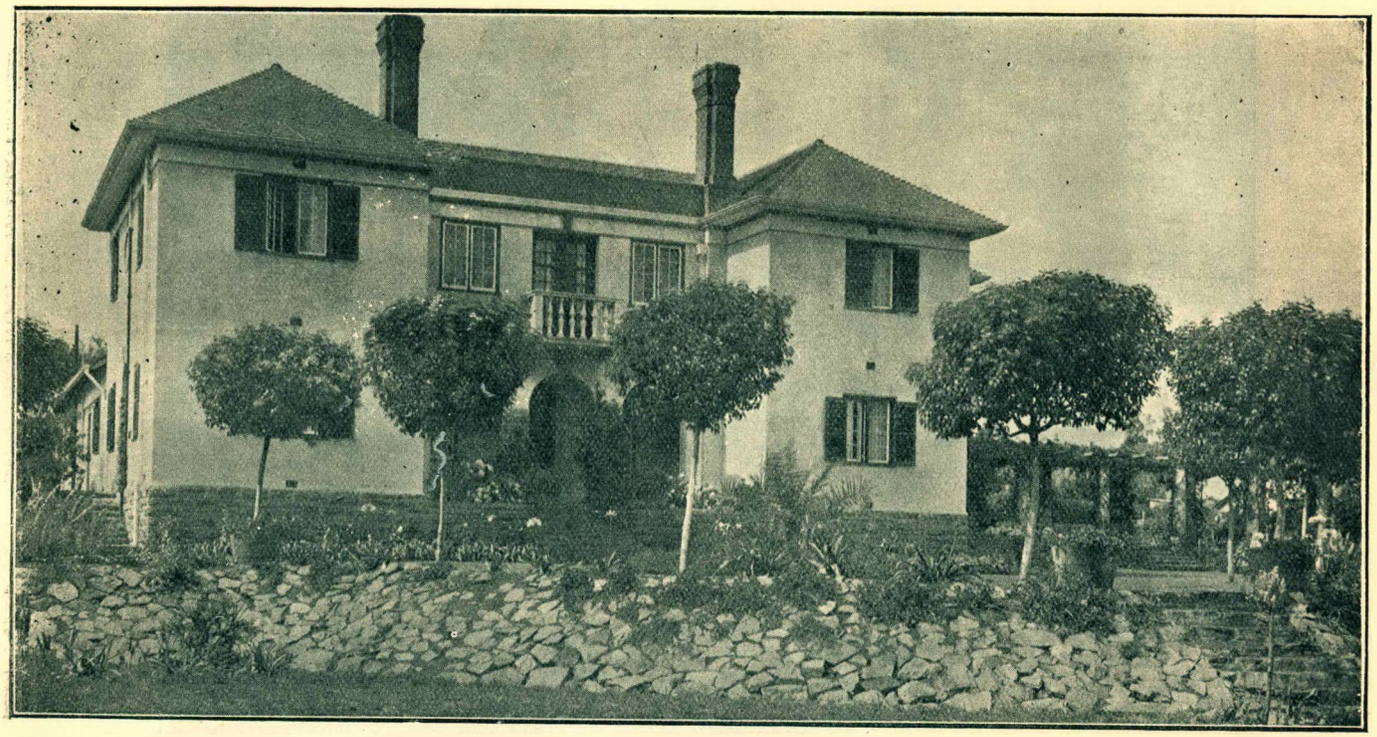


Entrance Front.



The Lounge,
Residence, Mountain View,
Johannesburg.

Cowin, Powers and Ellis,
Architects.



Residence, Pretoria.

V. S. Rees Poole, Architect.



Residence, Parktown, Johannesburg.

Photo Brittain.

Harold Porter, Architect.

These considerations have all to be carefully borne in mind by the expert designer in the care of selection of his materials.

The use of substitutes—painted plaster to represent wood—concrete blocks, cast and tinted to represent rubble masonry—coloured asbestos tiles—is to be deprecated.

These and many other shams are soon exposed by the bleaching process that takes place in the fierce rays of the sun in this country.

Another most important consideration is the question of local influences on colour harmonies. Many instances occur where glaring red brick buildings have been erected in a neighbourhood where stone abounds and where the predominating tones of the landsscape are grey or brown.

In the same way a glaring white building on one of our kopjes frequently mars the whole charm of the landscape.

The use of white plaster has often been criticised in this country and tinted plaster advocated.

This latter has been and is effectively used in colder climates for obtaining contrasting surfaces, but in this land of ours lit by a brilliant sun the delicacy and wealth of this refined quiet colour is blotted out by the very strength of the light.

The inviting coolness of white, the value it gives to welcome shadows cast upon it, the effective foil it makes to strong colour which alone "tells" in such light justifies its adoption more and more in South Africa. The question of reflected lights in design is of the utmost importance, and it is found that not only do brilliant walls reflect the colouring of their surroundings, but, by this reflection, the quality of the shadows cast upon them is affected.

Further important principles which cannot be overlooked by the designer are the arrangement of masses, the handling of light and shade and the detailed design and effective display of such enrichment as is permissible. Any detailed consideration of all these principles must, however, be held over for a further series of articles.

Suffice it to say that they bear a large part in those refinements, more easily recognised than analysed, upon which the varying degrees of distinction in good design depend.

THE INTERIOR.

In dealing with the treatment of the interior the Architect, however large may be his resources, however wide his experience, has only two factors to deal with, form and colour, but it is essential above all things—for the eye is more sensitive to colour than to form—if the restful quality is to be maintained throughout our homes, that the greatest care and attention should be given to ensure harmonious colour in our dwelling rooms.

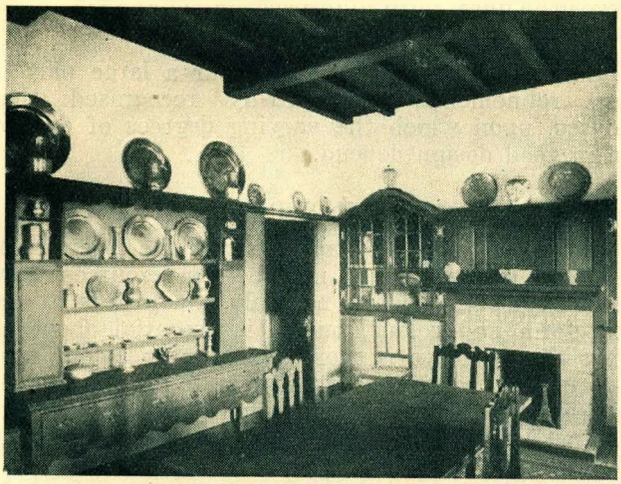
It is not my intention to suggest definite schemes of decoration for each type of room—the personal factor enters too largely into these matters—but rather to treat the matter in a broad general way and deal with the methods and materials employed in the decorative scheme. In every room the governing factors are the floors, walls, openings and ceilings. In openings are included doors, windows, arched openings leading from one room to another, and fireplaces.

The purpose of a room is another matter of vital consideration, for purpose and treatment must, to produce a satisfactory result, go hand in hand. There are certain conventional differences of treatment between say a dining room and a bedroom.

The proportions of a room are of the utmost importance, that is, the relationship between the length, breadth and height, and the proportions of the openings to the walls in which they occur. The wall openings are often a source of artistic embarrassment but should not be if the house is well designed, for the interior treatment is never lost sight of by the Architect when preparing his scheme.



Residence, Houghton Estate, Johannesburg. *F. Emley, Architect.*



Interior. The Woolsack, Rondebosch, Cape. — *H. Baker, Architect.*

The fireplace demands the first consideration, being structurally the most important feature of a room. One glance into an empty room will demonstrate its importance, which, unless the room is broken up with fitments or recesses, exercises a more or less commanding influence.

It is a feature which most aptly expresses the word "home."

The great open fire of the early castles round which the owner dispensed lavish hospitality to guests and retainers alike, the fine fireplaces of Elizabethan and Jacobean times, important architectural features richly decorated with the armorial bearings of the family, the cosy ingle of the inn of coaching days and the humbler but no less cosy kitchen-living room fire of the cottage are well known to us all. The hideous cast-iron register grate of the last century, with its tiled surround and ornate mirrored overmantel is rapidly disappearing and once again we are returning to the simpler types of stone, brick or well-designed tiles.

Infinite variety can be obtained with these materials, but considerations of scale and proportion must be carefully maintained and the suitability of the type for the position it has to occupy.

For example, although a red klompje brick fireplace may look extremely well in a hall or room where heavy timber and furniture are largely employed it is quite out of keeping in a drawing room with more delicate colouring and daintier furniture.

The designing of the actual fireplace requires a good deal of attention. While the open fire with its dog grate is probably the most popular, it is extravagant in fuel consumption and the bulk of the heat is carried up the chimney. To get the fullest value from the fire the fireplace should be constructed of brick and fireclay instead of iron, and have splayed sides and a sloping back.

These practical details need not, however, seriously affect the design for the effect of the deep recessed open type can still be maintained. The design of the surround and the materials used should all be in harmony with the general scheme of colouring and furnishing. The treatment of the floors is the next consideration and here again infinite variety is possible.

The floor bears the same relationship to the applied decoration as the fireplace does to the structural decoration. It may be regarded as the decorative foundation of the room, for once the scheme of decoration is decided upon the floor becomes the natural groundwork of operations.

No matter how admirable the walls and ceiling may be—no matter how refined and artistic the furniture—an inharmonious carpet or an injudicious distribution of unsuitable rugs would mar everything.

Floor treatments to-day practically depend upon the resources of the textile art : for although the wax-polished wood floor, whether in narrow boards or in parquet, has certain effective and useful qualities, it is almost invariably used in conjunction with the rich colours of the Oriental carpet or rug. These may entirely cover the whole area or may only partially do so : but in either case they have to play an influential part in the colour scheme.

The history of the Oriental rug is an absorbing study. Their manufacture was enveloped in a venerable tradition at a time when European homes had to be content with rush-strewn floors, and to-day if something exceptionally choice and decorative is required it is in the Oriental markets that one must seek it. To the man of moderate means the finest Oriental rugs are not always possible—but many of the cheaper varieties manufactured in certain parts of Persia and India and the well-known Persian "ghileem" and Indian "dhurri" possess good colourings and hard-wearing qualities. From Chinese and Japanese markets we can obtain many fine and inexpensive carpets with a plain ground and decorative border. English reproductions of Oriental designs are improving in colouring and quality, especially the Wilton, which can be obtained at reasonable prices to-day.



The Hall. Residence, Parktown West, — *E. Willmott, Architect.*

The floor, being the largest mass of colour in the room, should be darker in tone and more broken in hue than any other part of the decoration and by broken in hue is not meant a multiplicity of colours. As a rule —though there are exceptions—a relatively sober, soft harmony will prove the most effective foil for the brighter colour of the walls. A kaleidoscope of colour is not to be dreamt of. Great dazzling floral effects in the carpet are fatal to the due influence of the superimposed decoration.

Some kinds of carpets, of course, naturally suggest themselves for particular rooms. In bedrooms, for instance, a plain quiet type is perhaps most suitable, whilst in a dining room where the general treatment is usually quiet and sober, a richly-coloured floor covering, such as the Turkey carpet, is more popular. Persian rugs, however, are suitable for almost any place or condition.

Coming to the walls we find that the range of treatment is very wide, varying from plain distemper up to old tapestries, fine frescoes or rich brocades.

The first thing to be decided upon is whether the walls are to be decorative in themselves or serve as a background for decoration, for example, pictures.

To cover the walls with an expensive artistic pattern paper simply as a foundation for heavily framed oil paintings is a sheer waste of good material. The one not only injures but unpardonably kills the other. It is essential to make up one's mind at the outset as to the extent to which one intends to cover the walls with works of art and arrange accordingly. The custom of covering walls with enlarged family photographs and cheap prints in ornate frames is rapidly dying out and the picture buyer to-day takes care to have only a few examples in each room so that there shall not be a violent clashing of interest. He will see to it, moreover, that the background is destitute of ornament and pattern. For this purpose a neutral covering without any design may be chosen whether in distemper or paint, canvas or paper.

The two latter coverings are questionable in this dry climate as there is a tendency for the adhesive material to dry out and the covering to come away from the wall. Further, the question of dust on such surfaces is an important consideration.

Distemper in a warm neutral tone is not to be despised as a background, especially for good pictures, in simple black or gold frames. These remarks are not intended to rule out tapestries or a finely printed Japanese paper as a decorative treatment, for there is scarcely a nobler decoration than the first. Apart from the fascinating distinction of quiet tone which is the chief virtue of fine tapestries they supply the interest of ornament also and no one possessing either of these materials would think of obstructing them with pictures or such like accessories. Wood panelling is another delightful form of wall decoration, particularly for the hall or dining room or, if painted, for the drawing rooms and bedrooms.



The Drawing Room.
Residence, Parktown,
Johannesburg.

H. W. Spicer,
Architect.

The cost of doing this properly, however, makes it somewhat prohibitive and however carefully cheap imitations are carried out there is no denying the fact that they are what they are. The finest examples of panelling are those in which the woodwork is carried up to the ceiling. When stopped at the height of the doors it tends to diminish the height in a low roomed house as does a picture rail carried round at that height.

For the treatment of the ceiling probably the most attractive material is plain white plaster. It harmonises well with the rich floor covering. It can be successfully employed in this country and should be more frequently used. The use of colour on the ceiling is becoming more and more popular in Europe, and many fine examples exist in which delicate tints of blue or blue green, dull gold or silver have been employed. For reasons of economy substitutes for plaster are largely used in South Africa, but the disadvantage of them all is that worrying patterns have to be employed. Where sheets of any material covered with wood strips are used the best results are obtained by treating the whole surface in white.

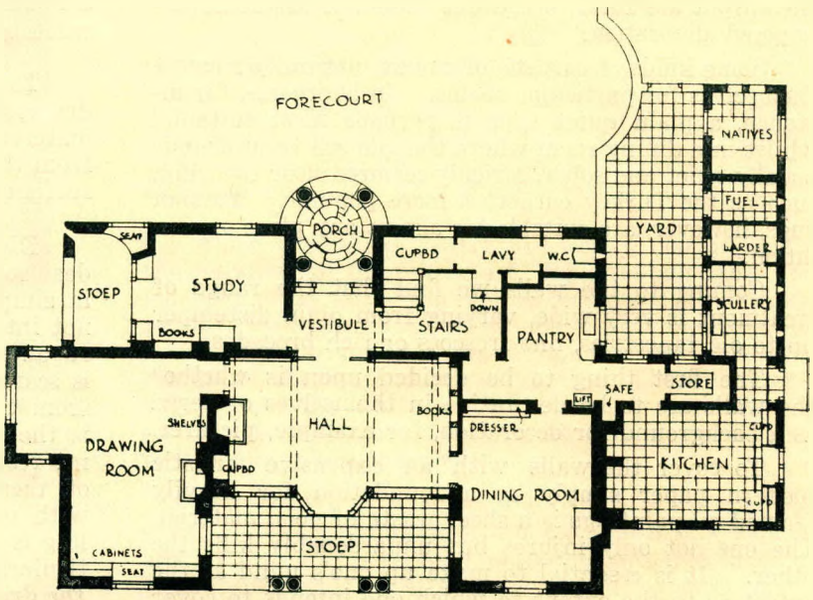
Timber used structurally as in the old Dutch homesteads is very satisfactory and forms a pleasing contrast to walls aud floor, but mock beams and thin strips of stained wood should not be tolerated.

The decorative treatment of the openings is the next consideration and a wide choice of material is available in the silk, brocades, tapestry, velvets, chintzes and cretonnes at our disposal. In dining rooms, billiard rooms and studies tapestries are frequently and appropriately used for the curtains and upholstery. Silks and brocades are popular for the drawing room.

Chintzes and cretonnes, however, coming as they do within the means of the man with a modest income, are most commonly used and can be obtained in great variety. The colours are, as a rule, bright and bold and for this reason require to be used—chintzes in particular—with great judgment otherwise they will overwhelm a small room and their gaiety under such limitations will degenerate into gaudiness. In fact, it may be said of all draperies, particularly curtains, that the size of the pattern in relation to the size of of the room must be taken into account. Where plain floor coverings are employed bright colours may be safely used for the decoration of the openings, but where the richer floor coverings of Oriental rugs exist then it is wiser to select materials of Oriental design or use a plain material which will harmonise with the predominant colours of the rugs.

The gaily painted linen and stuffs which look so well against a simple white or delicately tinted ground are quite out of place for use with fine old hangings, say of silk or stamped leather which in another case give just the right back-ground note.

So far I have dealt with the design and interior treatment of the house in a general way. I now intend to deal with the various parts in more detail, and for this purpose I am illustrating a plan showing new elements not previously discussed.



Residence, Parktown, Johannesburg. *H. Baker, Masey and Sloper, Architects.*

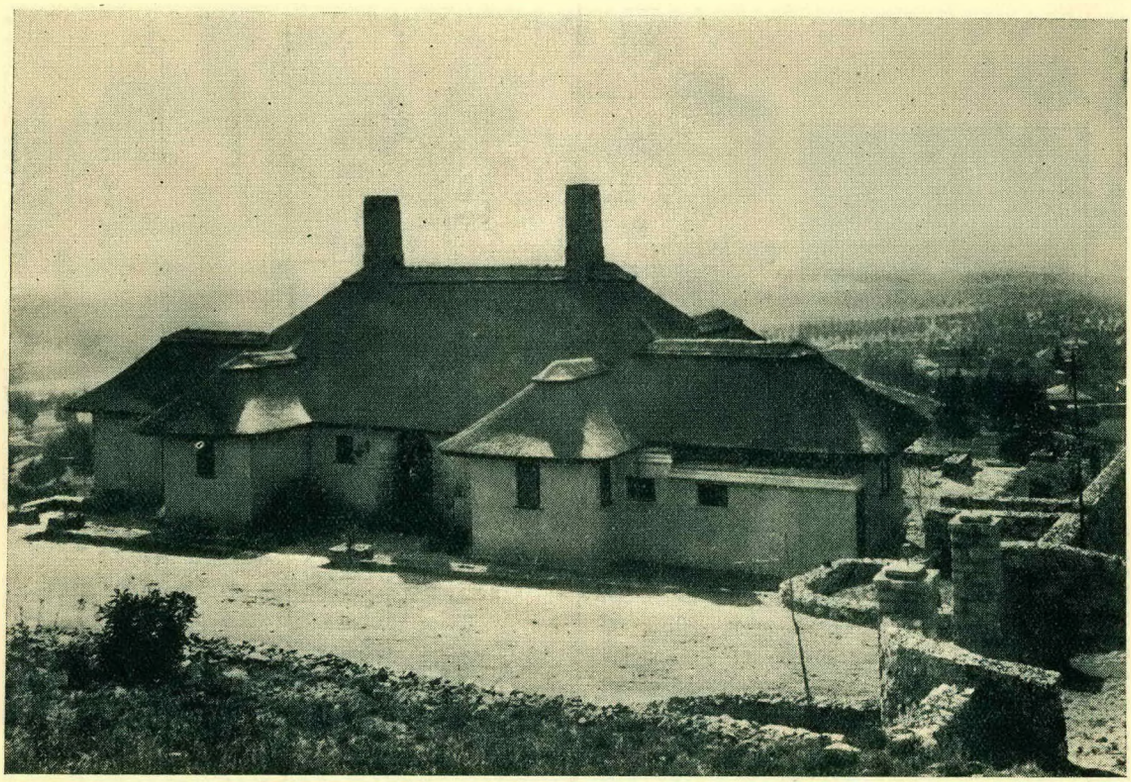
THE ENTRANCE.

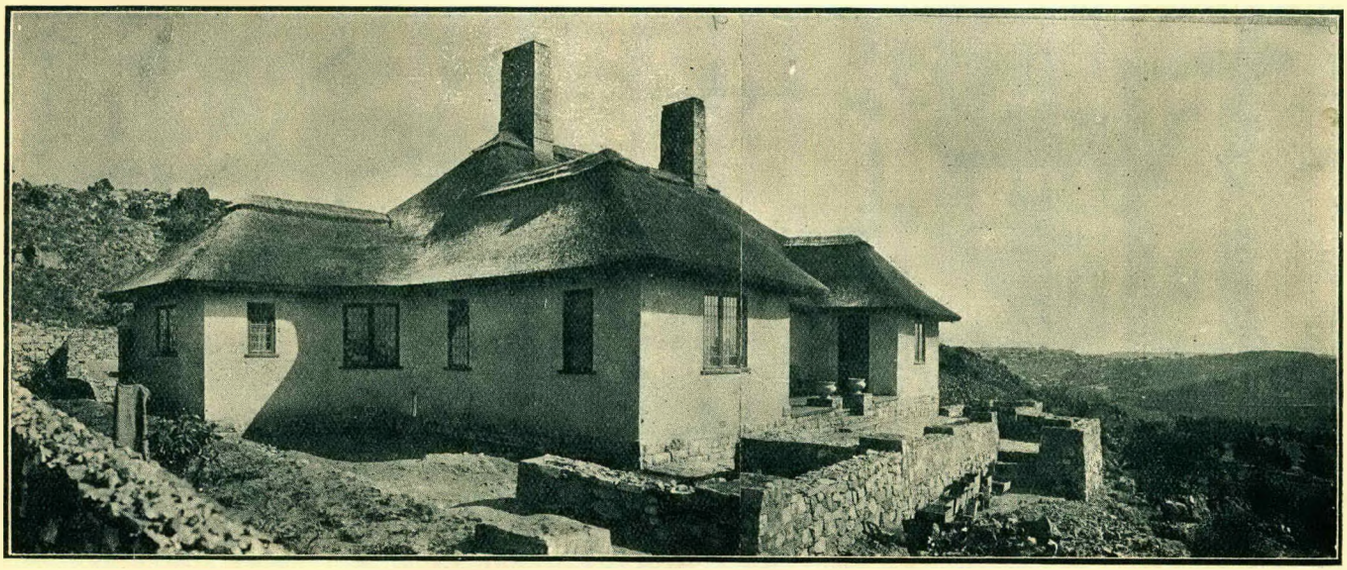
The entrance doorway is a most important element in the design of any house. Its importance was recognised and stressed in the old Dutch houses at the Cape and in the charming mediaeval houses in England, where we find delightful inscriptions carved in stone or wood over the entrance to welcome the coming and speed the parting guest.

In early work an entrance porch was always an essential element, but later the more severe classic doorway, which might or might not be protected, came into general use. A porch forms a very useful function in protecting the door from the weather and providing shelter and a momentary resting place for the visitor. Hence we often find it furnished with a fitted wooden seat. In this country the verandah invariably takes the place of a porch in houses with a Northern frontage, but when the entrance is on the East, South or West, opportunities occur for the design of attractive porches which may either project from the wall or be recessed into the building. In either case a seat on one or both sides offers a hearty welcome.

THE ENTRANCE VESTIBULE.

This serves a very important function in the planning of the modern home and requires a good deal of care and thought on the part of the designer. It is here that the first impression of the house is obtained by the visitor, and it is of the utmost importance that that impression should be a good one.





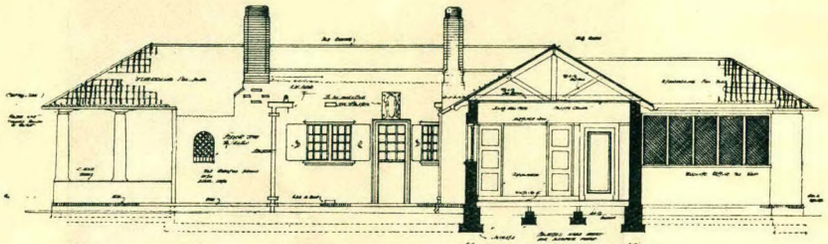
Residence, Westcliff, Johannesburg.

H. W. Spicer, Architect.

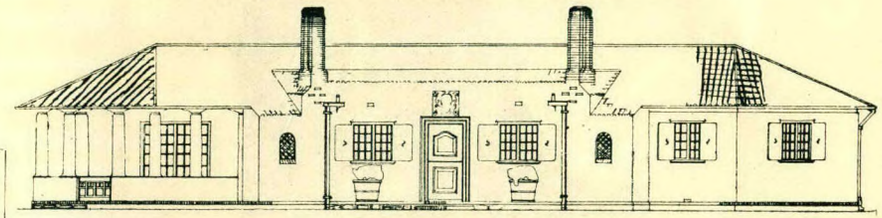
RESIDENCE OF MISS MEINTJES SUNNYSIDE PRETORIA

Quarter Scale Drawings

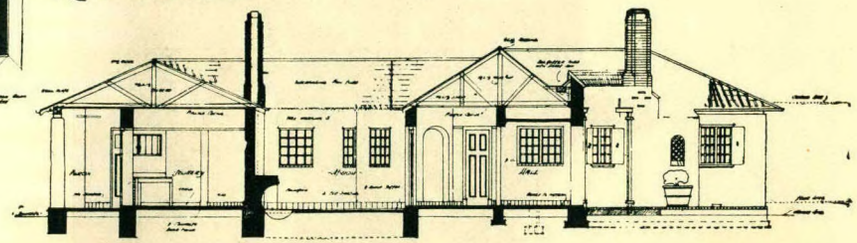




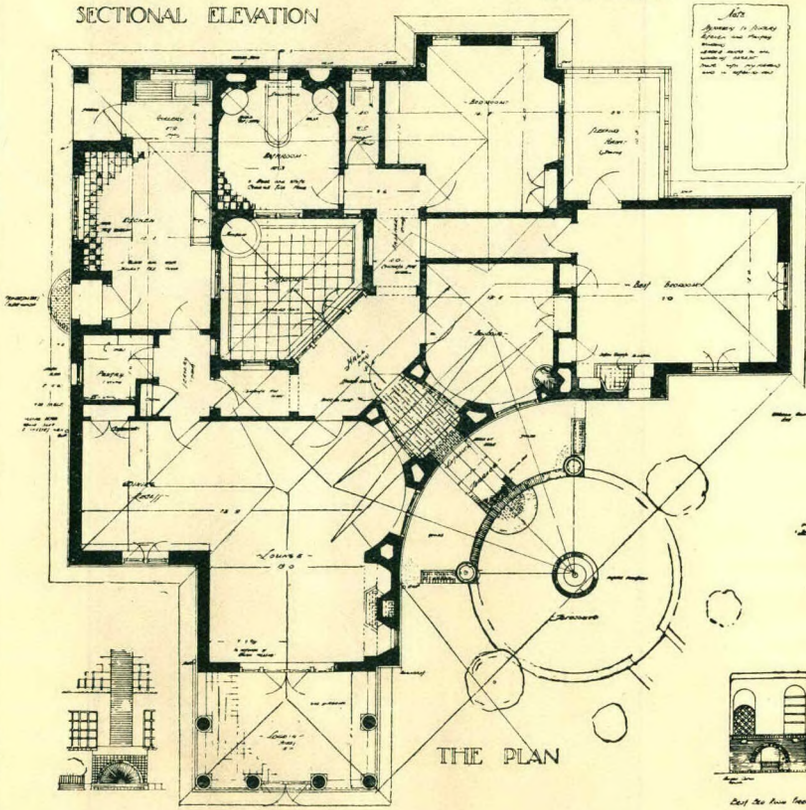
SECTIONAL ELEVATION



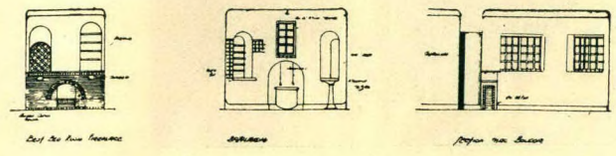
FRONT ELEVATION

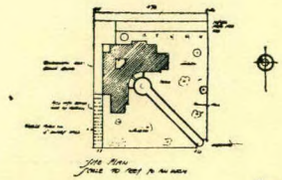


SECTION on CENTRAL AXIS



THE PLAN





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