



THAT IS HISTORIC???
**THE HISTORY OF MID-
CENTURY MODERN
ARCHITECTURE IN SC**

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WHAT WE'LL COVER TODAY



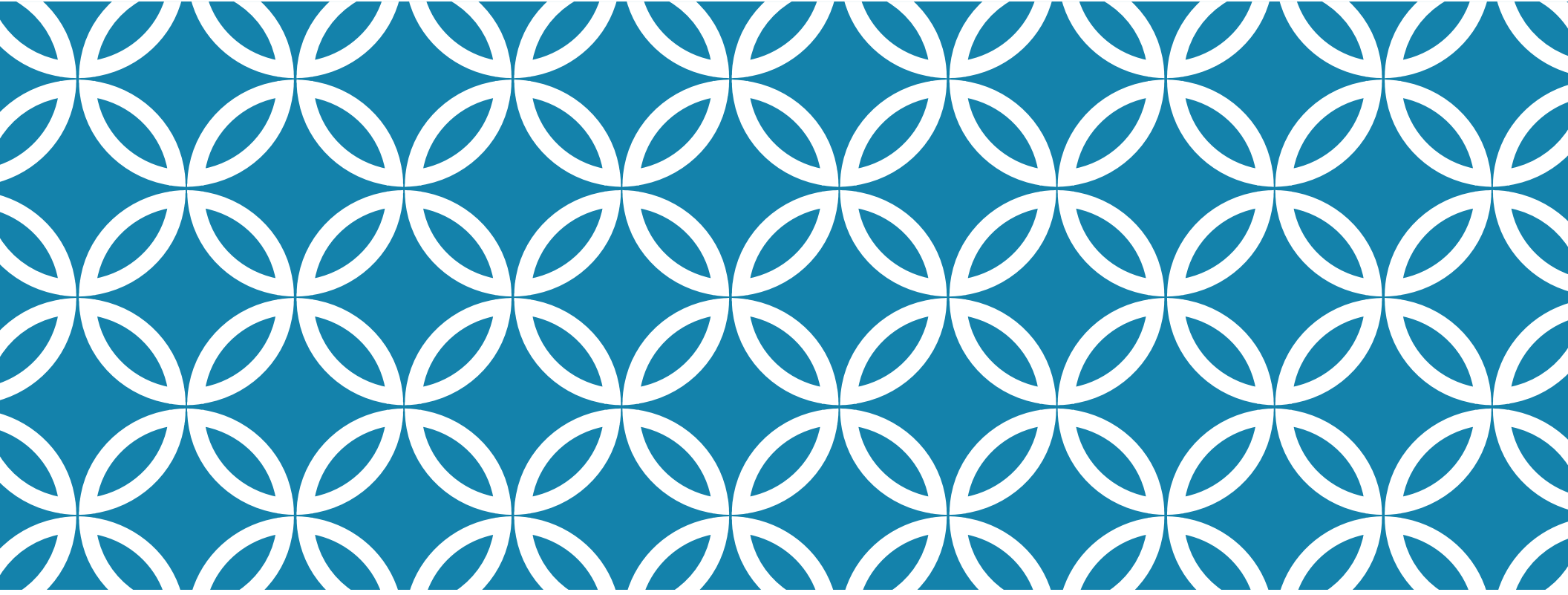
**History of Mid-Century
Modern Architecture in
SC**



**Identifying patterns,
styles and materials**



**Strategies for
identifying,
documenting and
preserving**



HISTORY OF MID-CENTURY MODERN ARCHITECTURE IN SC

- The Times
- The Profession
- The Architects

HISTORY: CHANGE

- Wartime/post-war economy and baby boom
- Urbanization and suburbanization
- Role of Jim Crow segregation, white flight
- Technology and dependence on the automobile
- Commitment to long-term planning and investment in infrastructure
- Institutional expansion



SECTION D

FINANCIAL WANT ADS
THEATER STATE

The State

The State: South Carolina's Largest Newspaper

COLUMBIA, S. C., THURSDAY, JULY 26, 1956

SLUM CONDITIONS IN NEW TARGET AREA



LAUREL, HUGER, HAMPTON

Three Blocks Near Penitentiary Tagged Tentatively for 'New Look'

Three blocks of Columbia near Penitentiary and city streets, contain both white and Negro housing. Virtually all is occupied by renters. The Pickens Street area is expected to be virtually completed in another month.

Mulligan Festival

Fund Set Up At For Boy Who Lost Family

WALHALLA, S.C., July 25 (AP)—A Walhalla minister today called a trust fund set up for a youngster who lost his entire family in an auto accident "an act of love."
The Rev. Eugene Mandrell referred to 9-year-old Billy Branham. Five members of his family were killed in the accident last week.
A trust fund for Billy was started by the First Baptist Church of Walhalla.
"The money contributed will be used for Billy's future education and to meet any emergency that arises. The fund already has reached nearly \$500. Everyone here," the minister said, "is concerned and interested in Billy."
Billy lost his father and mother and three sisters when their automobile crashed into a bridge near Saluda Saturday. They were en route to Charleston for a weekend at the beach. Billy was a passenger in another car at the time.
Funeral services were held yesterday for the family. Mr. and Mrs. William M. Branham, Evangeline, 11, Theresa, 6, and Alice, 2.
Billy has been staying with his maternal grandparents near Walhalla since the tragic accident.
The Rev. Mandrell described Billy as "grief-stricken but maintaining a remarkable degree of composure."
"Billy probably will be living with one of his aunts or uncles later on," the pastor said. "But nothing is certain just yet."

Wily William To Be Back In Pen Soon

Wily William Gill, 34-year-old State Penitentiary convict who has racked up three real escapes, is destined to be back at the prison soon.

Two officers are scheduled to leave Sunday for Philadelphia where an extradition hearing for Gill is set for August 1. Gill, being held by Philadelphia cops under a \$1,500 fugitive bond, was captured early this month. He is serving a 20-year housebreaking and grand larceny stretch begun in 1938.

Deputy Warden R. Fuller Goodman said he hopes the two officers, one from the pen and one from the State Law Enforcement Division, will be able to bring Gill back with only one trip. In the past, as many as three trips to Philadelphia have been made by officers seeking to return a single prisoner.

Gressette: Schools Will Run as in Past

Sen. L. Marion Gressette, chairman of South Carolina's special segregation committee, said yesterday that the state's schools will be operated in the coming school year "as they have been in the past."

Gressette's statement was made following a meeting of the committee held with the trustees of the Summerton school district of Clarendon County.

Gressette said the meeting was devoted to a general discussion of the recent U.S. Supreme Court decision banning racial segregation in public schools.

HISTORY: ARCHITECTURE

- Impact of modern styles of architecture.... after a little Moderne
- New ideas for comprehensive city planning
- Federal funding for
 - new building types
 - growing institutions
 - city planning, including urban renewal
 - highway/infrastructure development
 - influence of the GSA (General Services Administration)

HISTORY: THE PROFESSION

- Clemson's architecture program shifts to modern curriculum (1955)
- Clemson Architectural Foundation (founded 1956)
- South Carolina AIA



"Fallingwater" by Frank Lloyd Wright—a fine example of blending architectural design with the natural surroundings. The cantilevered balconies reflect the scientific achievement of man and create a pleasing contrast of smooth concrete surfaces against the native stone walls. (Photo by Hedrich-Blessing, Chicago.)

MODERN ARCHITECTURE— *Its Purposes and Aims*

By Louis M. Wolff

LOUIS WOLFF is a graduate of Clemson College and the University of Pennsylvania and holds degrees of Architecture from both schools. While in school he was the recipient of two medals from the Beaux Arts Institute of Design of New York and the Arthur Spayd Brooke Medal for proficiency in design. He was born and reared in Allendale, and is a partner in the firm of William G. Lyles, Bissett, Carlisle and Wolff, Columbia.

THE modern architect strives to make the structure practical and beautiful. In this respect he does not differ from great architects of the past; but practical demands of today are far different from those of the past. He designs to enclose space for human activity, and lets form follow function rather than juggling the space to fit a particular style or period.

A modern building is honest when it achieves utility and strength—it becomes architecture when the architect working as an artist achieves beauty by choice of materials, textures and colors, by the contrasting play of light and shade, relating forward planes with the recessed ones, and by organization of the plan in relation to the exterior walls. The modern

architect concerns himself with producing character into a building without resorting to style or a cribbed design. He attempts to better the lives of people through environment and considers the relationship of form and space to the human being.

Influence of Science

Science has been one of the most influencing factors in transforming architecture from its traditional styles to one distinctly new in character. Scientific advancement over the past hundred years has affected man's thinking with respect to time and space, his demands for comfort and convenience, and his attitude towards his neighbor and community.

Science has introduced streamlined and

efficient materials and equipment, and our modern method of living has varied the activities of work and family.

In keeping pace with the industrial transformation, traditional styles of architecture have become inefficient, expensive and wasteful. New buildings, with the possible exception of houses and a few public structures, have become strictly business ventures for economy and quick amortization. Versatility and flexibility to meet changing tenancy and activities have imposed influences on design that again causes traditionally styled buildings to be burdensome. A modern architect achieves fabrication and building integration when the people who buy buildings refuse to pay any longer for waste, confusion and inefficiency.

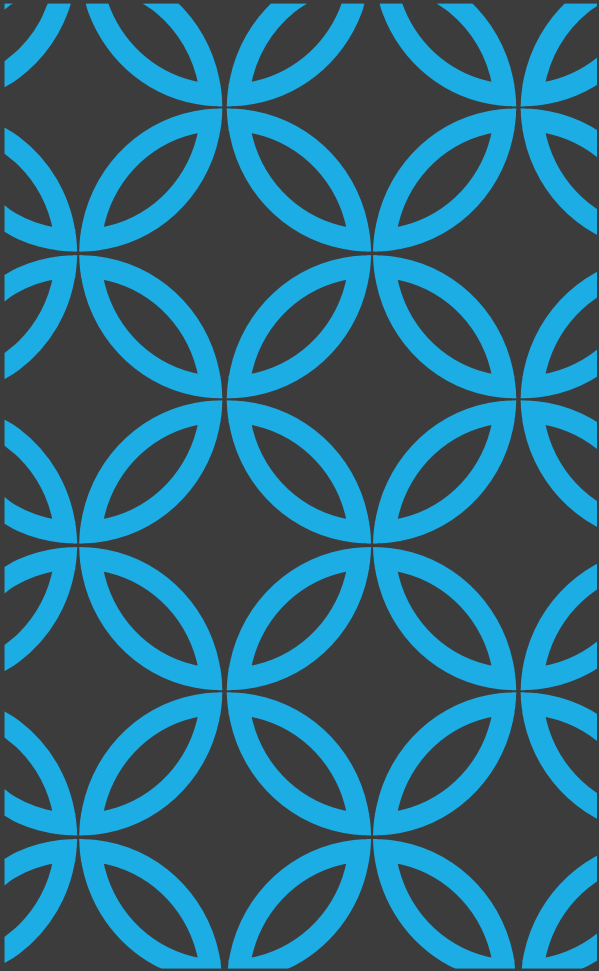
Lyles, Bissett, Carlisle & Wolff



HISTORY: THE FIRMS

- Continuity of smaller firms/partner swapping and associating
- Expansion of Beaux Arts eclecticism (Lafaye, Lafaye & Fair)
- Formation of new full-service corporate firms specializing in different kinds of modernism and training new generations (LBC&W)
- Specialized firms (Wilbur Smith and Associates)
- Savvy politics.....





IDENTIFYING PATTERNS, STYLES AND MATERIALS

What makes it modern?

PATTERNS:

ERA

- Defining the Modern era is an important component for any effort towards documentation, identification and preservation
- Generally, the era is around the mid-1940s through the mid-1970s
- In South Carolina, there are later examples of Modern architecture, into the 1980s
- Total Design = these buildings were part of a new philosophy/ideology that included all elements of the built



Columbia Post Office, Assembly Street (1965)



North Myrtle Beach area (c.1960), Horry County Resources Survey

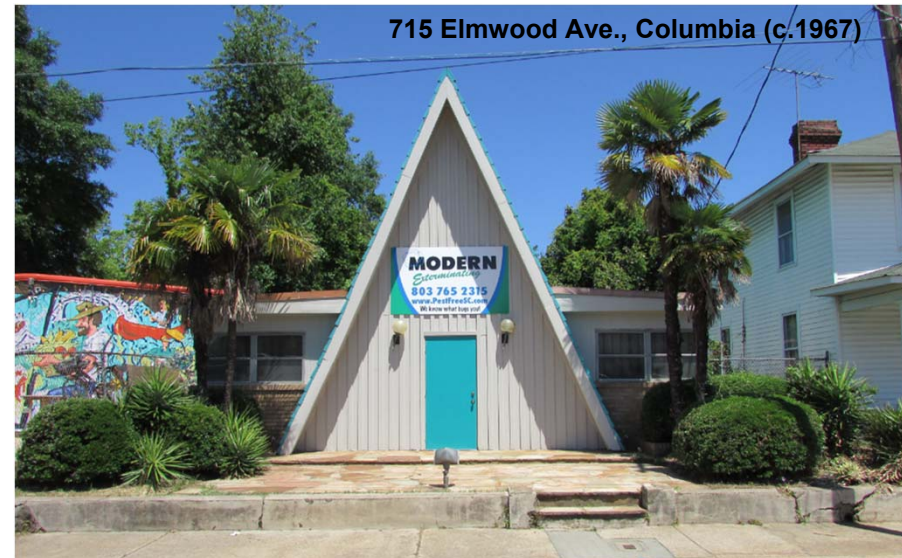
PATTERNS: SHAPES

- Mid-Century Modern architecture often has an emphasis on the overall shape, which can be short and squat, whimsical with swooping roofline, or tall and narrow
- Openings like windows and doors may be the only other “decoration” on the building and can be used as geometric shapes that contrast with the wall material
- Wall materials can be used to generate the appearance of a monolith, to create a contrast with a repeated window pattern on a single floor
- Due to some of these shapes, the building may have used unusual

1420 Elmwood Ave., Columbia (c.1972)



715 Elmwood Ave., Columbia (c.1967)



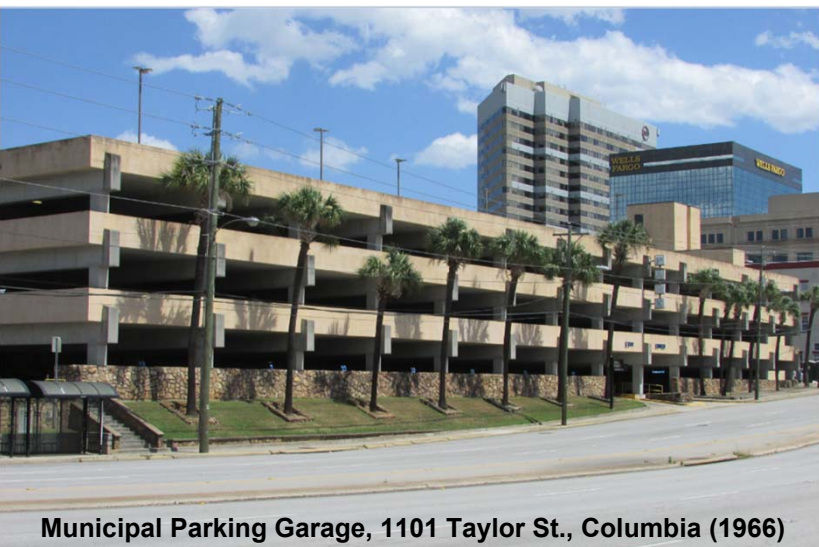
PATTERNS: CARS

- Unlike early 20th-century buildings, Mid-Century Modern architecture is accommodating to the automobile
- In urban settings this resulted in some interesting solutions to small lots, like raising the building up, or creating a drive-thru to a rear parking lot
 - Banks were first introducing drive-thru service
- Parking garages became a new architectural form in this era, and they sometimes reference the main building if they are an attachment
- Parking lots may have incorporated a fence or low wall that ties into the building material
- Cities were trying to figure out how to carve out parking in dense urban areas, older buildings were often demolished
 - Older buildings nearby were sometimes





South Carolina State Library, Columbia (1969)



Municipal Parking Garage, 1101 Taylor St., Columbia (1966)

PATTERNS: THE SETTING

- The setting around the building was given attention, since some of the Modern buildings were constructed on formerly residential lots
- In dense urban areas the setting could include the sidewalk and street lighting, which matched the materials used in and on the building
- Landscaping and hardscaping became an integrated part of the design
- The setting beyond the building was not as important as the building's own lot; these buildings did not necessarily sympathize with established lot setbacks, building heights, scale or massing
- If part of a planned development, the building's setting may have been a carefully designed element that tied multiple buildings together
- Plazas were a design feature that encircled parts of a building and often repeated its materials, creating an extension of the structure

IDENTIFYING STYLES: International

Veterans Administration Regional Office, Columbia (1949)



- First articulated in Europe and the United States in the 1910s-20s
- First seen in SC in the late 1940s
- Inspired by the machine: sleek, efficient, industrial materials
- Open plan made possible by new structural technologies
- Form follows function
- Could be built at any scale
- Other characteristics:
 - flat roofs
 - ribbon windows (windows in bands)
 - honest use of materials
 - lack of applied decoration

IDENTIFYING STYLES: New Formalism

- Develops in the US in 1950s
- First seen in SC in the late 1950s
- More Classicizing approach to the International Style
- Sometimes called “Ballet Style” or “Neo Palladianism”
- Other characteristics:
 - symmetry
 - temple-like
 - strong axes/platforms
 - play with surfaces and ideas of transparency
 - lacy, delicate details



IDENTIFYING STYLES: Brutalism

Humanities Complex, UofSC, Columbia (1968)



Federal Complex, Columbia (1975-79)



- Develops worldwide post-1945
- First examples in SC by mid-1960s
- Heavier, more muscular and expressive approach to modernism
- from *beton brut* = “raw concrete”
- Also called “monumental” or “heroic” modernism
- Clear expression of function (“served” vs. “servant”)
- Importance of public space
- Usually institutional; often very large scale
- Other characteristics:
 - exposed concrete
 - deep-set/few windows

MATERIALS: WHAT?

- the materials ARE the decoration
- can be difficult to identify without original drawings/specifications
- many are experimental or proprietary (and are therefore no longer available)
- modern materials can age differently than historic materials



**Specialty brick and granite
in contrast with each other**

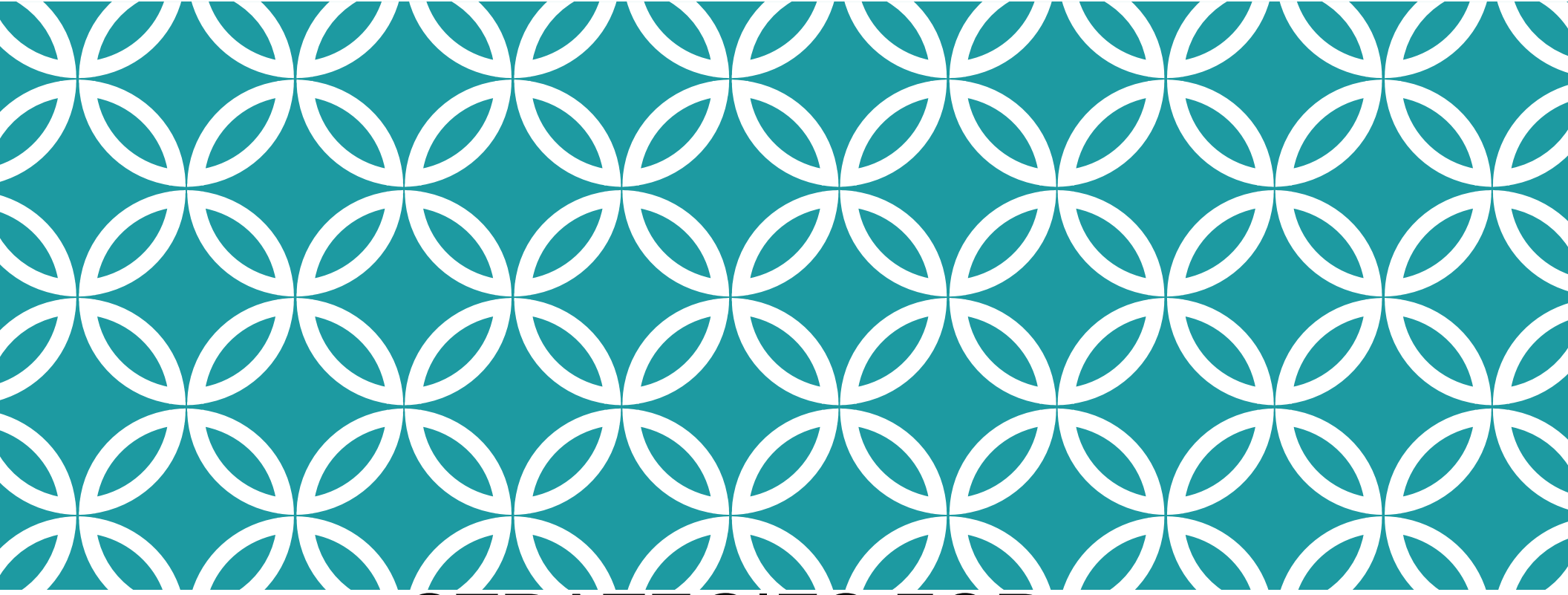
Example of shotcrete



**Crimped metal screen over old building on
Main St., Columbia, SC (c.1970)**

**Concrete veil block on motel in Myrtle
Beach (c.1965) Horry County Historic
Resource Survey**



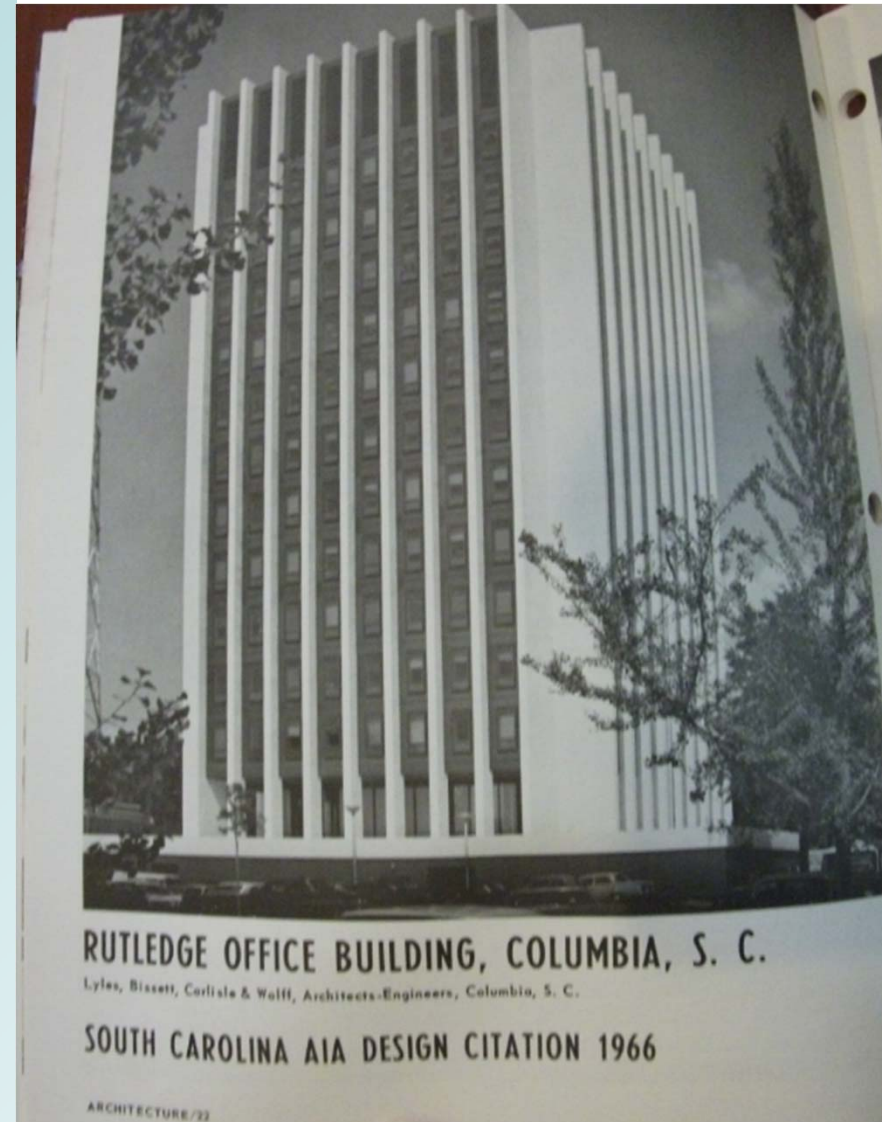


STRATEGIES FOR IDENTIFICATION, DOCUMENTATION AND PRESERVATION

It's not that easy (but
hopefully getting
easier!)

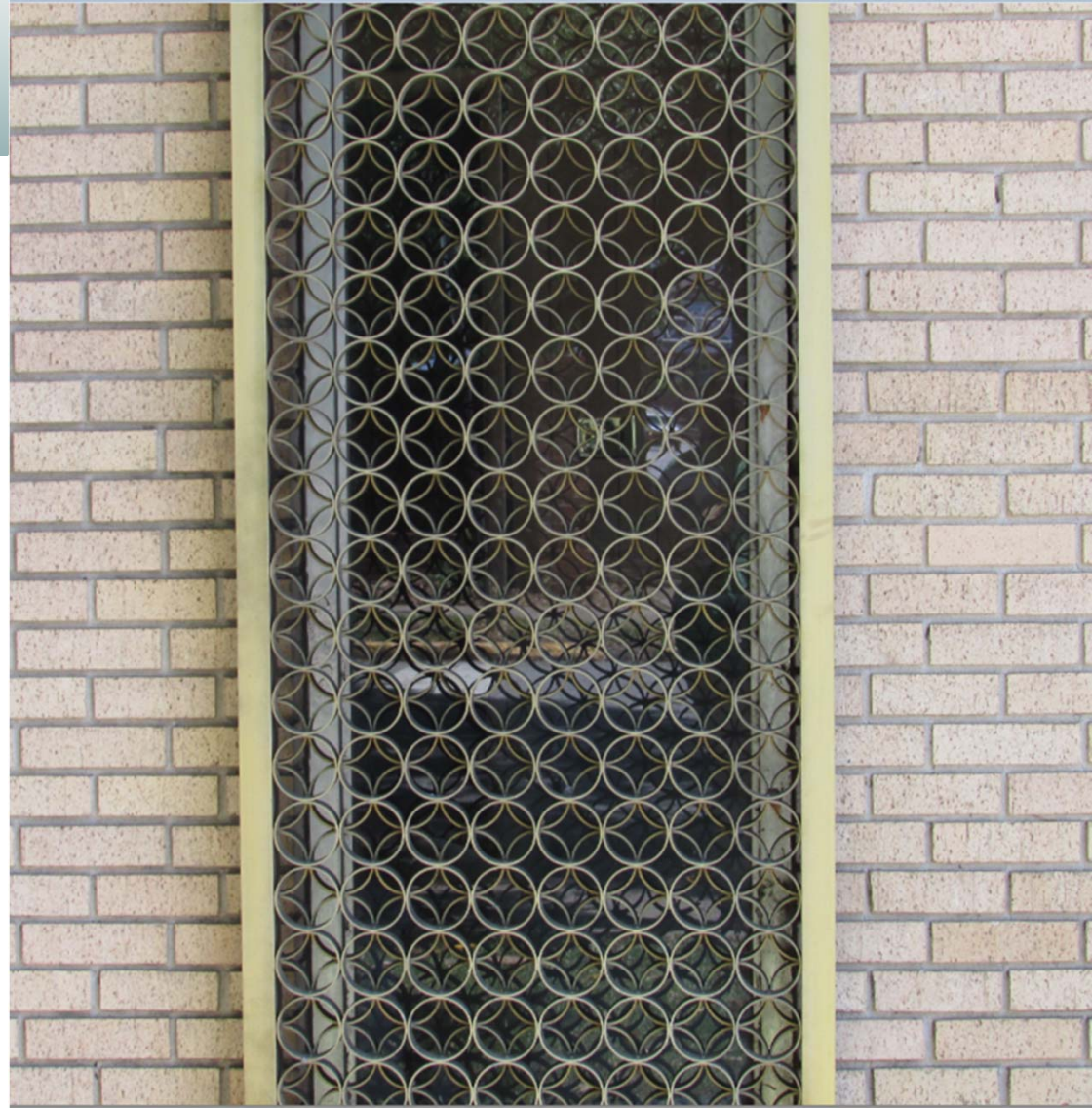
IDENTIFYING Mid-Century Modern Resources

- Educate yourself about the variety of styles
- Research the local history and the patterns that contributed to the growth of modern buildings
 - Find residential resources by maps/driving
 - Generally, higher-style commercial and institutional resources are in urban areas
 - Vernacular examples, particularly for small office and retail, appear in both urban and rural areas
 - Note concentrations of resources that may indicate a planned effort
- Learn about locally important architects and the examples of their work
 - Research published architect portfolios
 - Research architecture publications – AIA magazine, for award-winning examples (see also US Modernist Architecture Magazine Library)



DOCUMENTING Mid-Century Modern Resources

- Surveys are now capturing buildings up through 1972 and later (50-year mark)
- Resources can be documented through National Register of Historic Places nominations
- As buildings are threatened, communities can document them as part of a preservation effort or as an archival record if they are lost
- Recent City of Columbia Downtown Resource Survey (2020) captured 430 resources built between 1945-1981, many of them representative of Modern architecture



DOCUMENTING Mid-Century Modern Resources: Tips

- Take into account the surrounding context since some mid-century resources were part of a planned effort that included several buildings, hardscape features, landscaping, street lighting and parking = total design!
- Look at resources beyond buildings, including artwork, bridges, pedestrian bridges, monuments, landscapes (like gardens), amphitheaters, plazas, signage
- Consider interior features as part of the thoughtful design for the building
- Research city and privately published planning documents from the era – things that are planned but never built can still help explain what was!



PRESERVING MID-CENTURY MODERN RESOURCES

Preserving a historic resource generally always includes the following:

- Research of the resource's history, architect (if known), original purpose and appearance, and date of construction
- An assessment of the integrity of the resource and identification of any changes
- An honest assessment as to the significance of the resources, based on the research and integrity
- Owner's desire to preserve the site (and interest in incentives)
- A listing of the site on a local historic register, which might have the authority to prevent demolition or govern alteration
- A listing on the National Register of Historic Places, which does not prevent demolition, but can provide incentives for preservation through tax credits and recognizes and documents the building at the national level

1225 Laurel Street, Columbia (1951), LBC&W, rendering
photograph by Russell Maxey, Richland County Public Library



CHALLENGES TO PRESERVATION

Perception of youth (I am older than that building!)

Taste (that's ugly!)

Layout inside and out (set back on lot)

Materials used are deteriorating

Vernacular and high styles

Lots of Ranches and Colonial Revival

Lack of understanding from professionals on styles, architects

Painful history (urban renewal, relocation)

Alterations

Unsympathetic zoning

Lots of others

vernacular examples in Columbia, SC





CHALLENGES to Preservation:
No documentation, demolition permit request does not trigger any review at City level, no information to provide to owner about the significance of a site.

1529 Washington Street, Columbia, designed by Maynard Pearlstine (c.1964), Russell Maxey Collection, Richland County Public Library



**CHALLENGE
S to
Preservation:
Alterations**

Preservation
is largely
reactionary,
and there are
other fires to
put out

1529 Washington Street, Columbia (1964), c.2004, City of Columbia, Planning

Google Streetview
today



“I guess it’s not old enough to be saved by the preservationists,” he said. “It’s in the middle ground.”

– architect Maynard Pearlstine quoted in *The State* newspaper when referencing his works from the 1950s and 1960s in Columbia, SC (6/24/12)

CHALLENGES to Preservation: Alterations



**Masonic Lodge, 1401 Senate St (built 1962), Russell
Maxey photograph (1979), Richland County Public Library**



CHALLENGES to Preservation: Alterations



**2717 Devine Street, Columbia
Google Streetview today**



**2717 Devine Street, Columbia
1970, Russell Maxey photo, Richland
County Public Library**

CHALLENGES to Preservation: Aging Materials and Limited Knowledge on Proper Restoration



CHALLENGES to Preservation: Loss of “Character-Defining Features”?

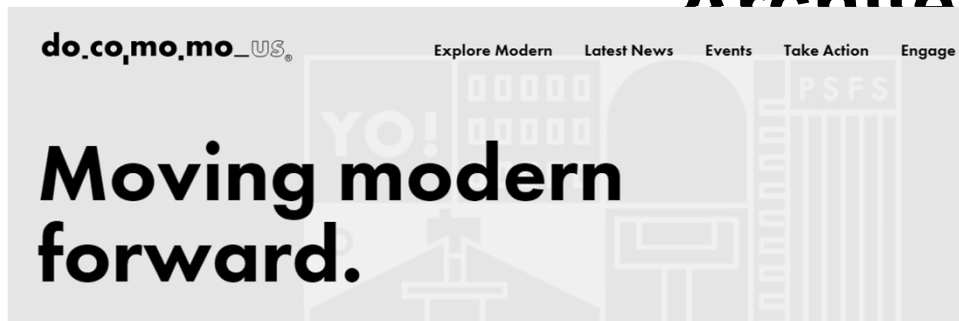
1979, Russell Maxey photograph, Richland County Public Library



1339 Main St., 2020 photo



ADVOCACY for Mid-Century Modern Architecture



<https://docomomo-us.org/>

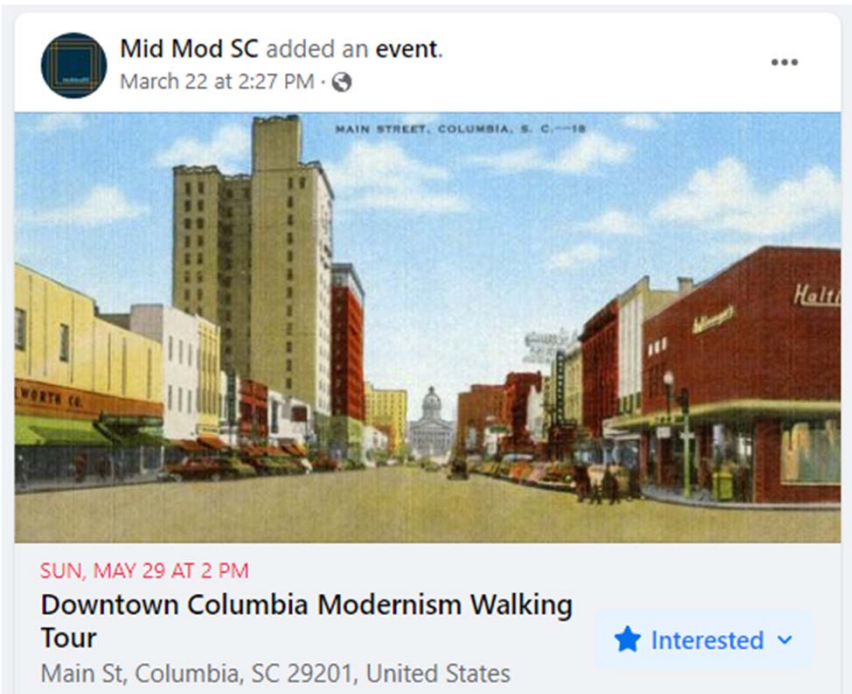
Docomomo is an international organization with state and local chapters, dedicated to the documentation and conservation of buildings, sites and neighborhoods of the modern movement.

MidModSC is a new state-wide non-profit (filing) dedicated to the documentation and preservation of South Carolina's Mid-Century Modern resources.

Email Caroline Wilson: cwilson@mac-ha.com



<https://midmodsc.wordpress.com/>



<https://fb.me/e/1roQYbXYM>

Link to facebook page for the tour to let us know you are coming!



Mid Mod SC Tour

Please join us for a tour in downtown Columbia, featuring some of our Mid-Century Modern architecture. You will see buildings ranging from the 1940s through the 1970s and learn about the city's efforts to modernize Main Street and use futuristic city planning to draw people back downtown.

May 29, 2022

2 pm

Corner of Main and Blanding Street
Street and nearby lot parking available
(metered spaces, but free on Sunday)

THANK YOU!
QUESTIONS?

Read our survey of
downtown Columbia!



Constan AutoWash (1967) and Heritage Apartment Building (1975), from Gervais Street, Columbia

