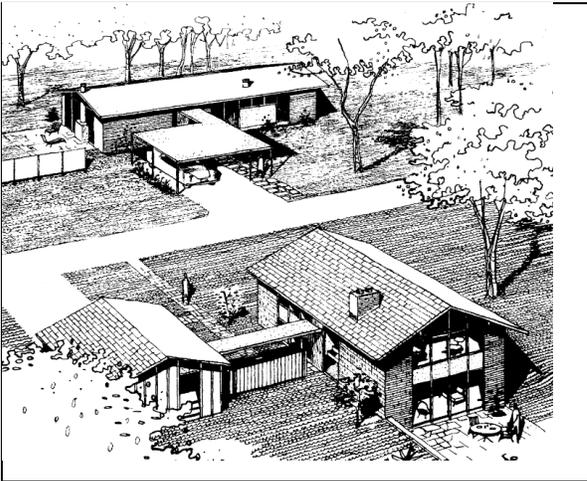


# **An Architectural Overview of Holly Hill Farms**

Contemporary Homes +  
A Woodland Community =  
Easy, Elegant Living

*Holly Hill Farms  
50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary  
1956- 2006*

## An Architectural Overview of Holly Hill Farms



The Holly Hill Farms development consists of 139 lots spread across more than 89 acres. As with most housing developments each lot holds one dwelling. What makes Holly Hill Farms stand out from other developments is the style and placement of these dwellings.

Many of the houses in Holly Hills reflect the culmination of a home design trend that began over 100 years ago.

At the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century the Arts and Crafts style began to supplant the Victorian designs of the 1800s. The new designs were considered radical for their time and were often scorned. Nevertheless, they were undeniably more in keeping with the surging growth and optimism of the United States, and as a result began to shift the look of homes. Following on the heels of the Arts and Crafts movement were several other architectural initiatives, many of which incorporated now familiar building materials like concrete, metal and glass. Architects later changed designs to embrace the “less is more” approach of the Bauhaus movement in Germany.

One such architectural initiative led to the development of the dominant style of architecture found in our subdivision. This is called the Contemporary style. While there are variations among the elevations and floor plans, with each reflecting the specific trend of the period in which it was built, they are all Contemporary in their scale and scope.

Contemporary style is an evolution of these earlier design ideals. It is based upon the notion that houses should not impose upon the land, but integrate with it. The goal of the Contemporary style is to provide modern, open living in a dwelling that mates to the natural surroundings.

For example, a number of the homes in Holly Hills built between 1955 and 1960 are fairly direct descendants of Frank Lloyd Wright’s revolutionary "Prairie" style houses – a variation of the Arts and Crafts designs.

The term Prairie style stems from a 1901 Wright floor plan that was published in the *Ladies Home Journal* titled, "A Home in a Prairie Town."

Among the distinguishing features of Prairie style homes are:

- A low-pitched roof
- Overhanging eaves
- Horizontal lines
- A central chimney
- An open floor plan
- Rows of small windows
- One-story projections

In 1936, Wright created a simplified version of the Prairie style design called Usonian (a play on United States and North American). This simplified version altered some of the earlier features and focused on ease of construction and scale. Wright himself encouraged people to build their own homes using this model. There is a community in Ohio where the residents did precisely as Wright suggested. Today it is considered the most preserved grouping of Wright inspired designs.

Usonian homes typically incorporate:

- A flat roof
- An open floor plan centered on the kitchen
- Multiple entries and large windows
- Wide lots to mimic the long lines of the house
- Built ins

Usonian style homes were constructed through the 1950s and became the models for contemporary suburban housing.

Walking through the subdivision it is easy to spot the architectural cues of the styles mentioned above. Holly Hills also features an element proposed by Wright and others calling for the structure to be set at an angle on the lot. This affords the occupants better views and stimulates the sense of diversity among the dwellings. The lot sizes encourage landscape designs to help the houses snuggle into their surroundings and foster a sense of privacy among the residents. This placement approach is a notable contrast to the neatly aligned house rows on city blocks, or the seemingly endless fronting of garage doors that line many other subdivisions. In a conscious or unconscious way the angled placement of homes probably influenced the decision of each resident to move to Holly Hills.

Other homes in Holly Hills, particularly those built between 1958 and 1964 slip into that sub-group of Contemporary style designs known broadly as split-levels.

Some architectural purists exclude these homes from the Contemporary Style classification, citing a lack of open movement caused by the separating stairwell. Others counter this point with the assertion that split-levels embody the principles of “organic” design with their compactness and efficiency.

Split-levels are sometimes also called raised ranches. In a split-level one small set of stairs leads to the lower level, the other to the upper level. A similar design is the split-entry, in which the dividing stairs are found in a centrally placed entry foyer. The key features of a split-level or raised ranch are:

- Two stories
- An attached garage
- A partially bermed lower level with living quarters
- A low-pitched roof
- Large windows, sometimes including picture windows
- Sliding glass doors

Again, it’s fairly easy to spot these homes in the neighborhood. This style is prevalent in the two-story homes found along Sugarspring and Highmeadow. It is no coincidence that these were the lots that were built out during the late 1950s and early 1960s. Split-level designs were in vogue as the latest in family-sized, modern homes and were thus naturally incorporated into the community.

Another notable architectural design in Holly Hills, is the Techbuilt Home. The Techbuilt (or ‘Tech’) Home is a forerunner of the prefabricated house designs that are just now gaining widespread popularity. Prefabricated homes have the advantage of being built in a controlled environment and delivered in sections to the lot location for final assembly. The controlled environment in which the sections of a “prefab” home are built ensures consistent and accurate results. Likewise electrical, heating, and plumbing connections can all be shipped in a ready to use state. Since the homes can be delivered to any number of locations they are built to the highest building code standards in the target area.

The original, award-winning 1953 design by Carl Koch was built around a set of 4’ modules. As envisioned by the designer, the components of the Tech Homes in Holly Hills were trucked in and assembled upon their foundations. Thus, the homes were ready for occupancy much sooner than their “stick built” companions throughout the rest of the subdivision. The advantages to the builder and the prospective buyer in that scenario are clear. Having these early Tech Homes within the confines of the subdivision is another example of what makes Holly Hills unique.

Techbuilt homes are practically indistinguishable to the casual observer from their stick built cousins. The “model” version of the Techbuilt Home can be found on Lot 6.

Perhaps the most interesting architectural “specimen piece” in Holly Hill Farms is the “panelized” home. The panelized home is also a prefabricated house in the sense that its major components are built in a factory setting. However, unlike Techbuilt Homes of traditional materials, the panelized home is constructed of factory prepared walls of sandwiched materials (foam, aluminum, steel, and insulated glass). The Alsid Corporation of Akron, Ohio was a manufacturer of this innovative design. Alsid integrated a vast array of built in features and amenities as part of the design.

The Alsid designed home on Lot 126 is an excellent representation of this construction style. This particular home was first shown as a display model at the Northland Shopping Center – the original owners bought the house in 1964 and had it delivered to Holly Hill Farms on a flatbed truck.

The final, major variant of the Contemporary style homes found in Holly Hills is the bi-level, or Colonial Modern. These homes became popular during the mid-1960’s, taking the lead from the split-level types that dominated a few years earlier. In common reference these homes became known simply as Colonials. The article regarding the history of Holly Hills describes how construction of this style of home was met with some resistance. Many people outside Holly Hills also felt the homes were out of place in the suburban landscape. Some went so far as to say they were simply “two tract houses stacked one atop the other”.

Time has mellowed these design criticisms and today Colonials have a loyal base of admirers. It’s a safe bet to say that anyone who lived in the Midwest during the 1960s and 1970s knew someone (perhaps their own family) who owned a Colonial.

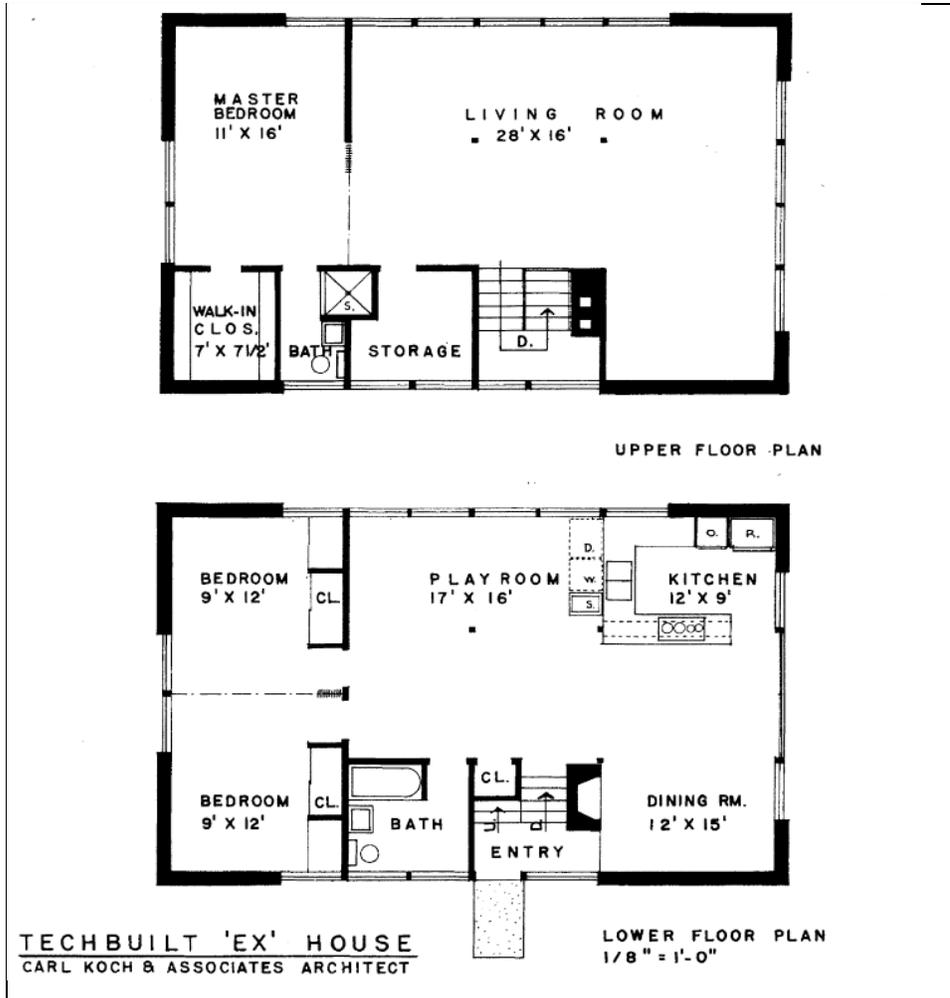
Colonial Modern homes are recognizable for their:

- Two story elevation
- Attached garage
- Large front picture window
- Moderate-pitched roof

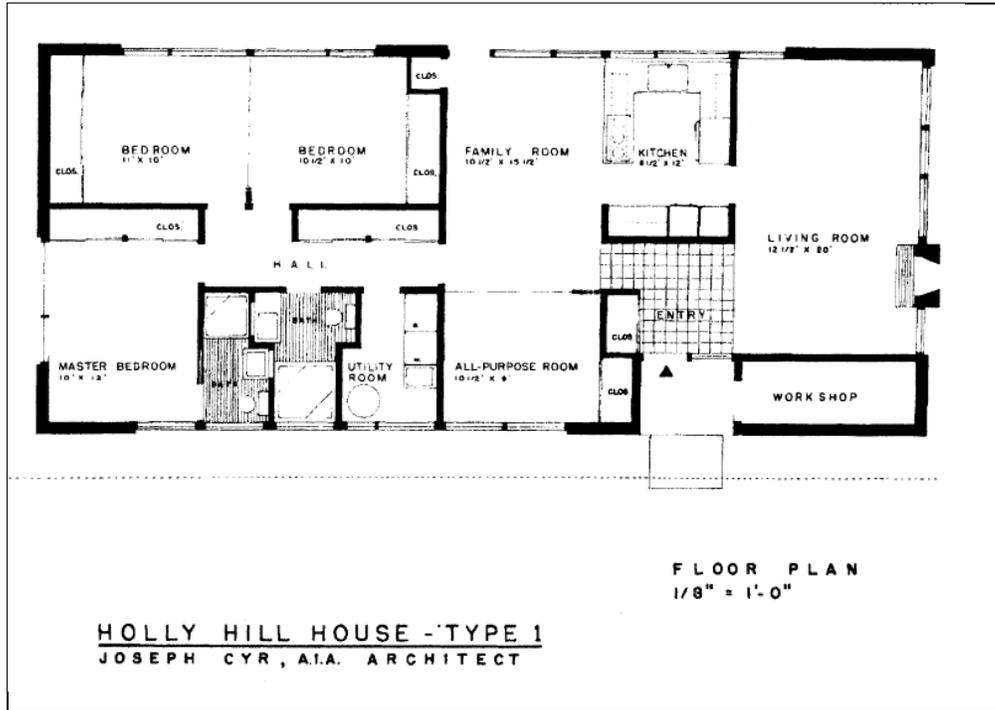
Holly Hill Farms is a wonderful collection of architectural styles. The vision of architects like Koch, Tobocman, and Cyr who worked with the developers to make Holly Hills a place of “easy, elegant living” has been abundantly realized. Those of us who have lived in these “woodland community” houses know the pleasure and fulfillment of being able to call them our homes.

*Home Drawings from the Original Holly Hill Farms Sales Literature*

There is a Techbuilt house on Lot 6



There is a Type 1 House on Lot 4



There is a Type 2 House on Lot 2

