

## **Architectural Analysis of 276 El Monte Drive**

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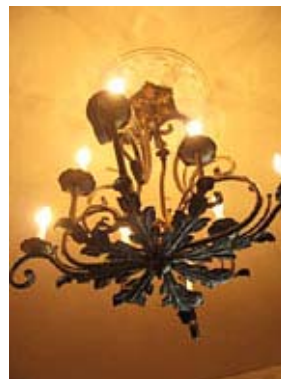


The Western Ranch Style, in full swing by the 1940's, was considered to be the first truly American house style; in other words, the first one not borrowed from Europe. This Ranch Style home on El Monte is wood-frame construction faced in limestone. A masonry-faced house is a gem to own. They are much easier to maintain and have tremendous longevity, in comparison to their wood-clapboard counterparts. The large blocks of limestone veneer, placed in a loose, random pattern across the surface of the wall, gives it a casual, western look. The slightly projecting entry portico has a subtle classical design. The projecting gable over the entry forms a pediment with the same random limestone blocks, and this component is supported by two stately rectangular piers whose stone is set, in contrast, in a staid, right-angle pattern. The walls are punctuated by multi-paned, wood framed windows with symmetrical decorative shutters.



When you first walk into the living room, your eye naturally moves to the light---in this case through the living room, through the dining room beyond, out the glass-paned French doors, through the sunroom windows looking out to the pool in the backyard. This direct line of sight, from front to back was a typical design feature of the Ranch Style. Views to the exterior and a connection to nature from inside the home were valued.

Still standing just inside the front door, if you look to the right, you will see the highlight of the living room, a painted brick and plaster fireplace, flanked by windows on each side. What is truly eye-catching is the



sunflower-like pattern that fans out in slight relief from the mouth of the fireplace. The mantel above is formed by projecting, angled courses of masonry.

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The dining room is entered through a segmented arch opening. An attractive brass, faux-candlestick chandelier hangs from the center of the ceiling and, although it must be fairly new, its leaf-like contours match the leaf pattern of the vintage ceiling medallion to which it is attached. Just through a doorway, the kitchen has its original wood cabinetry but with new tile added to the countertop and backsplash. The floor and walls have a very tasteful decorative floral pattern (French fleur-de-lis?) painted right onto the surface, which enhances the cottage-character of the period cabinetry.



Another historical detail can be found in the hallway to the bedrooms, an original built-in telephone niche, replete with a narrow shelf for the phonebook. The height of the niche was designed to be just enough for the tallest standing phone still in use. In the bedrooms broad windows and French doors let in ample light, and the rooms are made elegant by the triple-inset wood molding of the door and window frames and the slim ceiling molding. The bathroom has an old-fashioned beadboard wainscot covering  $\frac{3}{4}$  of the height of the wall (the height of this wainscot makes me doubt that it is original to the house). The owners have added an attractive wallpaper border to the top of the wall and gold stars are sprinkled across the ceiling, tying this space in with the soft, cottage-style of the kitchen.



Last but not least, the windows of the kitchen and sunroom in the back look out to a turquoise pool and verdant green back yard.

