

Architectural Analysis of 127, Harrow Drive

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The owner of this modern Ray Ellison home has been enjoying the shade of the mesquite tree in the front yard since she was a child. Her mother told her to watch for it to bloom sometime in February, the first sure sign that Winter was over and Spring had arrived. As an adult, she surrounded the tree with a flagstone patio, in order for her and her family to enjoy the gentle cool breezes summertime brings to the neighborhood.



The house's slick, red brick exterior and single fluted column at the entry tells me that it is a contemporary Neo-colonial, a style of house popular in American neighborhoods from the 1950s forward. The subdued red, slate gray and off-white



color scheme complements the minimal classical décor. The change in material from brick to less-expensive siding between the first and second floor is typical of salt-box Neo-colonials on the East Coast.

This 1964 Ray Ellison home, built in a neighborhood near Lackland Air Force Base, was part of a continuing effort to provide housing for servicemen and employees of the base shortly after World War II. Ray Ellison Sr., the founder of what was once the largest home building company in Texas, began building in San Antonio in 1949. By the time the house was constructed on Harrow Drive, Ray Ellison was the largest builder of single-family homes in Texas, having built in more than 40 subdivisions around San Antonio.



This Texas tycoon built his business by focusing on starter homes for young couples who were eligible for VA or FHA mortgages. The owner's parents who purchased the home in the 1970's from its original owner,

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fit the profile of Ellison's target market: a young couple with children employed by the Base. KB Homes later bought out Ellison's enterprise in 1996.

The light inside this house is spectacular. Every room in the house glows with a subdued late afternoon light that casts pale shadows and illuminates soft-colored walls, reminiscent of the kind of sweet light usually only found in older homes. Is it the house's orientation, the proportion of the windows? I think part of the effect is due to the foliage and trees which allow intermittent light and shading to the windows from

the exterior.



Upon entering the house, a partial screen of columnettes provides a transparent barrier between the entry into the house and the living room, and a solid wall gives more privacy to the adjacent dining room. The wood kitchen cabinets, the staircase railing, and the slim beams in the study contribute to a modernized colonial look inside the house.



The curtains in the den with their metal "pearl" drawstring and patterned metallic valance look vintage 1960s. Other original details in the house are the brass hinges, door knobs, and possibly the ceiling fan that is in the upstairs bedroom. My favorite "period" details in the house are the light fixtures and switch plates. Upstairs you

will see a round milk glass light fixture with protruding bubbles and a luminous sandblasted rectangular fixture with an antique rose painted on its surface. The bathroom fixtures and lighting in the master bath are newly renovated and the owner's cat was kind enough to pose for the final photograph.

