

Architectural Analysis of 331, Rittiman Road

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The house constructed at 331 Rittiman Road in 1950 is a post-war Minimal Traditional style home. The exterior of the house is clad in a pale buttermilk siding with a white stone base surrounding it; probably a later addition. The carport may also have been added later in the 1960s; my supporting evidence being the ironwork supports with a curving-vine design and the horizontal slat screen that gives the area greater privacy.



What I find intriguing is the vintage 1950s doily-cut screen door at the entry. The triple-arch motif softens the corners and a series of slim spindles were used to create a divider between the upper and lower screens. This doily-cut look is a feminine touch that harkens back to San Antonio's early days as an immigrant community.



Families from Central and Eastern Europe arrived and set to building houses in their country's tradition, often with elaborate spindlework and carved, cut-out frames, a kind of craftsmanship that we know associate with the Queen Anne or Folk Victorian style. I have seen many 20th-century houses with similar interior details in San Antonio.

In the house of Rittiman Road, the doily-cut detail is repeated in the kitchen. The opening between the kitchen and screened-in porch in the back is framed by a curve-counter-curve that lends a romantic, if now down right homey, look to the kitchen. Other quaint details in the kitchen are the fold-down kitchen table,

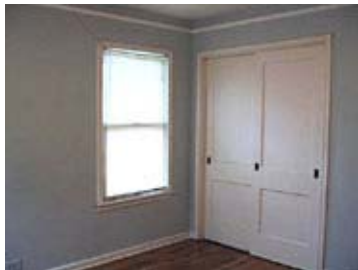


which reveals hidden shelves, the broad hexagonal yellow tile on the countertops, and the black dashed accent tile that creates a continuous border around the kitchen. Some of the original bead board siding still remains on the walls. The pretty flowered vinyl tile on the floor is in excellent shape; perhaps indicating that it is much newer than the house's date of construction.

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There are a few details in the house that are repeated, giving the house a feeling of unity. When you walk through the living and dining areas you will notice that even in a Minimal Traditional style house there is quite a bit of molding around the windows, doorways, walls and baseboards. Stock wood molding was still a traditional part of construction, which is now remiss in more modern homes. The molding on the walls is set decoratively about 6 inches down from the ceiling; it appears to be a proportion also seen in the placement of the dashed tile in the kitchen; which is repeated again in 1950s powder-pink and crimson in the master bathroom. The bathroom in



the hallway is done in a sage green with hexagonal tiles that match the design of those seen on the kitchen countertops.

The two bedrooms you will see before the master bedroom are distinctly paired as a girl's and boy's room. The more masculine room is covered head-to-toe with a medium-stained pine wood and has built-in shelves and closets. The more feminine room has similar closet doors but painted white to match the white wood molding and contrast the soft blue walls. The bedroom/study addition (perhaps the former garage) just off the kitchen, has built-in cabinets and a unique, masculine 1970s "swinging bachelor pad" looking bathroom. The screen-in porch as a real iron wood-burning stove.

