Keck & Keck: Mid-Century Modernists

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a non-profit organization founded in 2004 which celebrates and promotes 20th century modern architecture and design collectors, dealers, architects, designers, curators and enthusiasts.

gather information and communicate about architecture and design from the vastly creative 20th century modernist era, roughly 1930s-1970s.

Beginning with the migration of the famed German Bauhaus school to Chicago, first as the New Bauhaus and later as the Institute of Design, and continuing through the evolution of modernism in the prolific post-WWII era and beyond, the group hosts social events, educational seminars and tours relating to modern aesthetics and design concepts, product design, graphic design, arts, crafts and architecture.
ARCHITECTS

- George Fred Keck 1895 – 1980: Born in Watertown, WI, studied engineering and architecture at Univ of IL.
- Worked at D.H. Burnham & Co; Schmidt, Garden and Martin
- William Keck 1908 – 1995

- Settled in 1921 in Chicago. Worked with Chicago Workshops, a group of artists modeled upon the Austrian Werkbund and former members. Led to his role in the New Bauhaus, which had broad impact on design in Chicago
- Private practice 1926
NEW BAUHAUS, AMERICAN SCHOOL OF DESIGN

- In 1937, an industrial design school broke away from the Art Institute of Chicago to train designers using Bauhaus methods, bringing Laszlo Moholy-Nagy to Chicago for the New Bauhaus. Mies van der Rohe came to the Armour Institute in Chicago. Walter Gropius went to Harvard.

- New Bauhaus become the Institute of Design (merged with IIT)

- Keck served as architecture department head and part-time teacher for 5 years while in practice. Appointed Ralph Rapson as his successor.
WILLIAM KECK

ORAL HISTORY OF WILLIAM KECK

Interviewed by Betty J. Blum

Compiled under the auspices of the Chicago Architects Oral History Project
Ernest R. Graham Study Center for Architectural Drawings
Department of Architecture
The Art Institute of Chicago
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Books
DESIGN TRADEMARKS

- Designed modern award-winning, affordable homes in the Chicago area and Midwest 1935 - 1979
- Flat roof
- Passive solar
- Indirect lighting
- Cedar siding, common brick
- Radiant heated floors
- Post & Beam construction (wood or steel)
- Modular design
- Ventilation louvers with thermopane glass
MIRALAGO BALLROOM

Wilmette, IL 1930 with Vale Faro
MIRALAGO BALLROOM 1930

“No Man’s Land”
Wilmette, IL
Plaza del Lago
CHICAGO CENTURY OF PROGRESS EXPOSITION

House of Tomorrow 1933, America’s first glass house
CHICAGO CENTURY OF PROGRESS EXPOSITION

House of Tomorrow 1933
HOUSE OF TOMORROW 1933
HOUSE OF TOMORROW 1933
HOUSE OF TOMORROW 1933
Moved in 1934 to Beverly Shores, IN by developer Robert Bartlett

Ground floor enclosed

Windows replaced to operable windows
HOUSE OF TOMORROW 1933

In sad condition in Indiana Dunes National Lakeshore......
you can thank the National Park Service 😃

Photo: Lee Bey 2012
CRYSTAL HOUSE 1934
DEVELOPMENTS

- Solar Park in Glenview (1940, Chicago Tribune)
- Pre-fab housing development of Green's Ready-Builts in Rockford
- Forest Crest subdivision, Glencoe
- Solar Lane, Flossmoor
- Olympia Woods, Olympia Fields
- ...... plus many custom homes  919+ projects
5551 S. UNIVERSITY 1937

Keck-Gottschalk-Keck Apartment Building
5551 S. UNIVERSITY 1937
JOHNSON HOUSE, 1938

Flooded roof for evaporative cooling
GREEN’S READY-BUILT PRE-FAB, 1942, 1946+

Well over 100 built in 5 states

Ready 60-90 days after ordering

Modular panels
Roof sections 39” x 12’
Wall sections 39” x 8’
Solan House
Solar Park, Glenview, IL 1942
FAGAN HOUSE, LAKE FOREST  1948
Alexander Archipenko glass screen, interior design by Marianne Willisch,
Alexander Calder mobile
GORDON HOUSE, CHICAGO HEIGHTS 1952
Passive solar heating, slate floors, redwood siding
GORDON HOUSE, CHICAGO HEIGHTS 1952
HIGHLAND PARK, IL
Forest Crest  Glencoe, IL 1951
FOREST CREST, KATZ 1953
Forest Crest, Katz 1953
FOREST CREST, KATZ 1953
FOREST CREST, KATZ 1953
FOREST CREST, KATZ 1953
MINSK HOUSE, RIVERWOODS 1955
MINSK HOUSE, RIVERWOODS 1955
MINSK HOUSE, RIVERWOODS 1955
MINSK HOUSE, RIVERWOODS 1955
MINSK HOUSE, RIVERWOODS 1955

Nature loves Keck architecture
Budlong Woods, Chicago
Budlong Woods, Chicago
Budlong Woods, Chicago
McCORMICK BLAIR HOUSE
LAKE BLUFF 1953

27 acres, lakefront
MCCORMICK BLAIR HOUSE
LAKE BLUFF 1953
McCormick Blair House
Lake Bluff 1953
McCORMICK BLAIR HOUSE
LAKE BLUFF 1953
McCormick Blair House
Lake Bluff 1953
McCORMICK BLAIR HOUSE
LAKE BLUFF 1953
FLOSSMOOR HOUSE 1955
FLOSSMOOR HOUSE 1955
FLOSSMOOR HOUSE 1955
FLOSSMOOR HOUSE 1955

Addition by T. Paul Young
FLOSSMOOR HOUSE 1955
FLOSSMOOR HOUSE 1955
Hohf House, Kenilworth 1959
Hohf House, Kenilworth 1959
Hohf House, Kenilworth 1959
Wilmette, IL 1960
Wilmette, IL 1960
Wilmette, IL 1960
Wilmette, IL 1960
Wilmette, IL 1960
Wilmette, IL 1960
Wilmette, IL 1960
WILMETTE, IL 1960
Wilmette, IL 1960
Weinrib House, Highland Park 1961
Weinrib House, Highland Park 1961
Weinrib House, Highland Park 1961
Weinrib House, Highland Park 1961
Weinrib House, Highland Park 1961
WEINRIB HOUSE, HIGHLAND PARK 1961

modern updates
WEINRIB HOUSE, HIGHLAND PARK 1961

retractable sun roof
WEINRIB HOUSE, HIGHLAND PARK 1961
Weinrib House, Highland Park 1961
Sources:

Interviews with homeowners

“Julius Shulman: Mid-Century Modern Chicago”, by Gary Gand
Art Institute of Chicago, Oral History, Betty Blum


Interview with Peter Beltemacchi, associate professor of city planning, IIT, 1999.

Interview with Dan Obermaier: Spence house in Bensenville
ADDITIONAL SOURCES:

- Stuart Cohen and Susan Bejamin; *North Shore Chicago; Houses of the Lakefront Suburbs 1890-1940* Acanthus Press, 2004
- George Fred and William Keck papers at Wisconsin Historical Society Archives
- MRED LLC MLSNI, Multiple Listing Service of Northern Illinois, Realtor database; Broker Reciprocity; Baird & Warner; Coldwell Banker Residential; Jameson Sotheby’s International Realty, Urban Search Corp of Chicago, Griffith, Grant & Lackie
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