

ARCHITECTURE ~ A Community Asset

by Lillian J Rice

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T IS A far cry from the ramshackle, indifferently designed towns of Sinclair Lewis' "Main Street," that grew up like Topsy, all over the plains of the Mississippi Valley during the nineteenth century, to the modern adequately planned and architecturally controlled community of the last few years. Rebellion against the sordid mediocrity of the old order, and acceptance of the new idea of city planning and protective restrictions is a natural result of civilization's progress. Through experience, people have finally come to learn that art has a place in commercialism. Conceptions which once were considered to have only an aesthetic value are at last recognized as being most practical of the practical.

One has only to compare some of the communities that sprang up along the magic coast of California thirty to fifty years ago with others which have lately come into being—compare hard, practical commercial values, I mean—to realize the full, inevitable truth of this statement. Our mild climate unfortunately encouraged people to build cheaply. And the worst of it is that they chose many of our most scenic natural beauty spots. Without control, the heritage of natural charm that nature gave us was further disfigured, instead of being enhanced.

With the dawn of the new day for the

city planner and the architectural planner, this condition has happily changed. Here and there in the world of industry and commercialism, there are bright spots that delight the eye—communities where vision and creative ability are fashioning results with true important values, aesthetically, commercially and in every other way.

The coast regions of Southern California having similar climatic and topographical conditions to those of the Mediterranean area have naturally inclined to develop along the same lines. This was made more logical by the fact that Spain planted the seed of

Christianity on our shores and brought to the new world many characteristics of the old. The modern architect, far from throwing tradition overboard and starting with a clean slate, as did the Babbitts of the middle west, gladly accepts California's early Spanish background as the richest source of inspiration.

With the full appreciation of these facts, Rancho Santa Fe was started six years ago. A large corporation with immense resources of capital desired to create a permanent horticultural development on this old Spanish grant of some 9000 acres. L. G. Sinnard was selected as the man with the vision and sensibilities to carry out the project and W. E. Hodges, vice-president of the Santa Fe Railroad, gave him carte blanche to do as he willed in the matter of



STREET SCENE, RANCHO SANTA FE

city planner, has been retained to help work out a covenant to be signed by all owners of property at Rancho Santa Fe, which will forever keep out shacks, buildings of inferior design, unsightly grounds and all other influences which might depreciate values or the opportunity to enjoy life fully. Since the natural antecedents of present day California were Latin blooded, those who

COAST TO COAST COMMENTS

ANNOUNCEMENT will be made next month of a contributing editorial board composed of well known Pacific Coast architects who will write exclusively for this magazine on events and other subjects of special interest to the profession. Writers in Seattle, Portland, San Francisco and Los Angeles will comment



FLOWER GARDENS AND PATIO, SPANISH INN, RANCHO SANTA FE

were responsible for this covenant have recognized the suitability of requiring here architecture of the Mediterranean type. With this requirement, all buildings at Rancho Santa Fe will not only complement each other, but will conform to the landscape, climate and general California conditions. The fact that more and more new communities everywhere are adopting plans essentially parallel to the plan of Rancho Santa Fe is further proof of its validity.

on matters architectural in their respective cities and readers of The Architect and Engineer will therefore be better able to familiarize themselves with the accomplishments of the profession from one end of the coast to the other. The comments will also refer to local civic improvements and the activities of the different Chapters, Societies and Clubs. Arrangements are being made to show portfolios of some of the very latest work of note in the four leading Coast cities and the tributary country.

architectural and community planning. Requa and Jackson were selected by Mr. Sinnard as official architects because of their outstanding work at Ojai. It became my privilege to work out the details of design on the ground at Rancho Santa Fe and in time the entire responsibility was thrown upon my shoulders.

Working out the architectural development of Rancho Santa Fe has been a task

As for the more practical side of home planning, every woman has a natural instinct in this respect and I suppose I am no exception. The woman who is to live in a house usually has most to say about exposures, arrangement of rooms, size of rooms, etc., and I find that being a woman is a genuine help to me in working out these details. Then the real joy in the work



Padilla Company Photo

SPANISH HOME AT RANCHO SANTA FE, CALIFORNIA

of tremendous personal interest and satisfaction. With the thought early implanted in my mind that true beauty lies in simplicity rather than in ornateness, I found real joy at Rancho Santa Fe. Every environment there calls for simplicity and beauty—the gorgeous natural landscapes, the gently broken topography, the nearby mountains. No one with a sense of fitness, it seems to me, could violate these natural factors by creating anything that lacked simplicity in line and form and color.

comes in planning the exterior upon these requisites so that the general appearance will conform to the setting of nature.

Proof that architectural restrictions are important from both aesthetic and monetary standpoints, lies in the fact that home owners at Rancho Santa Fe are now forming an association to perpetuate forever the general regulations that have been enforced by the Santa Fe Land Improvement Company up to this time. Charles H. Cheney,