

Vernacular Architecture in Northern California, Fall 2023 Syllabus  
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Vernacular architecture in Northern California uses images and videos to examine common place buildings from the adobes of 19th century Spanish and Mexican colonization to the Americans' use of wood construction in the Gold Rush era through the post-World War II period.

Course Objectives

- Survey houses and commercial structures for artisans, shop keepers, public servants, gold diggers, and industrial workers.
- Explain how the regional context influenced design, construction, and the presence of amenities.
- See buildings as part of larger economic, transportation, and information networks.

September 18, 2023 Session 1: Adobes

Beginning with the Spanish colonial period (1769–1821), we examine San José, the first pueblo, and the José Manuel González–Luis Maria Peralta Adobe, 1797. In the provincial Mexican Period (1821–1848), our focus is Rancho Arroyo de la Alameda Adobe, c. 1830s. Monterey is explored in the transition to the American period with Casa de Soto, c. 1820s; Castro Adobe, now La Mirada Adobe; and Larkin House c. 1835 examined.

September 25, 2023 Session 2: Gold Rush Log Cabins, Shacks, and Pre-Fabricated Houses

Wood was the primary construction material in 19th century Northern California. Good lumber, good tools, and craft were critical needs, not available without immigration, trade, and industrial development. Our concern will be with Gold Rush tents, wood shacks, and log cabins and the prefabricated houses brought from around the world in the brief time before lumber was mechanized and skilled carpenters were available.

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October 2, 2023 Session 3: Worker Cottages in the Industrial Bay Area

Industrial growth required workers; simple one-and-two story light wood frame cottages housed them. Housing need accelerated with post-Civil War industrial expansion and San Francisco's 1906 earthquake and fires. Meeting this need, industrial production of cottages began at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century.

October 9, 2023 Session 4: Bungalows

Influenced by Asia, the Middle East, and Europe, bungalows captivated the California home buying public and then the nation. Industrially produced, they were low to ground, with overhanging eaves, and outdoor spaces integrated with interiors. Economy in construction cost was achieved by efficiency in space planning and by whole house kits and "built in" furnishings brought by rail from the Midwest

October 16, 2023 Session 5: Ranch Houses

The California ranch house was another dwelling type whose form and massing captivated the nation. Influenced by 19<sup>th</sup> century adobes and rancheros, ranch houses were industrially built of industrially produced lumber and set down on concrete slabs in long rows on what had been farm and ranch land made accessible by new highways and automobile ownership.

October 23, 2023 Session 6: Post WW II Modernism

Population growth and roadway congestion led architects, planners, and "housers" to rethink detached houses in expanding suburbs. Southern California architects Irving Gill and Rudolph Schindler along with UC Berkeley's William Wurster and Catherine Bauer reconsidered building forms, materials, and site plans