

THE PRESERVATION OF THE CALIFORNIAN STYLE IN ARGENTINA:  
A CASE STUDY OF COMMUNITY ADVOCACY  
IN BARRIO PERON, BUENOS AIRES

A Thesis

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by

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## ABSTRACT

This thesis advocates for the preservation of the Californian style in Argentina, an architectural style that has been largely undervalued and overlooked by architectural historiography and professionals. The style developed during the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century in association with the Mission Revival and the Spanish Colonial Revival styles in California and the Neocolonial style in Argentina. This work examines the representations of the style in popular culture and political propaganda, identifying the values and ideas that instilled the style in Argentinian social memory. Also, after examining the biases that threaten its preservation, the thesis demonstrates the Californian style's major contribution to the socio-cultural, architectural, and urban development of Argentina. Finally, the valuation of the style by the general public is demonstrated in the case of *Barrio Perón*, a Californian-style planned community in Buenos Aires, whose residents launched a tenacious advocacy campaign to preserve it.

## BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

María Gabriela Brito is an architect from Córdoba, Argentina. She graduated with honors from the Universidad Nacional de Córdoba in 2008, where she continued to explore her interest in historic buildings and the preservation of the built environment by participating in research projects and serving as a teaching assistant in architectural history. She also gained professional experience as an architect by working for an architectural firm in Córdoba for five years. In 2013, she was awarded the Fulbright-Ministerio de Educación scholarship to pursue graduate studies in Historic Preservation Planning at Cornell University. During her time at Cornell she served as President of the Preservation Studies Student Organization and as a teaching assistant in the Historic Preservation Planning Program, helping students in the preparation of measured drawings of historic buildings. During the summer of 2014 she interned at the Department of Planning and Development of the City of Ithaca, N.Y, collaborating in the operation of the municipal historic preservation program and assisting the Ithaca Landmarks Preservation Commission.

To My Family.

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## INTRODUCTION

The Californian style is an architectural style developed in Argentina in the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. It has its origins in the Mission Revival and the Spanish Colonial Revival styles which largely originated in the U.S. state of California during the late 19th and early 20th century. These styles arrived in Argentina in the first decades of the 20th century through Hollywood films and specialized domestic and professional magazines such as *House and Gardens* and *Pencil Points*, whose content was reproduced in many Argentinian magazines of the time.

At the same time, inspired by the celebration of the Centenary of the Independence in 1910, Argentina was looking for an architectural style that identified itself as a nation. Reviving forms from its colonial times, Argentina began to develop the Neocolonial style. The Mission Revival and the Spanish Colonial Revival styles were welcomed in this context and were rapidly adopted by the upper classes for their vacation or weekend houses in the suburbs during the 1930s and early 1940s. The local adaptation was first known as the Californian Style, although even today scholars do not agree on an appropriate terminology.

From the mid-1940s to the mid-1950s, the style was reinvigorated by actions of the federal government. The first and second presidencies of Juan Domingo Perón (1946-1952 and 1952-1955, respectively)<sup>1</sup> ensured the survival of the style just when the high classes and the architectural professionals began to abandon it. These were the decades when the style became widely replicated throughout the country through

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<sup>1</sup> Juan Domingo Perón was President a third time, from 1973 to 1974.

its most popular form: the “*chalecito californiano*” (‘little’ Californian chalet), which became the quintessential icon of homeownership for the Argentinian working class.

Examples of Californian-style architecture are strong candidates for preservation, given the style’s significant historic and cultural value. First, the style is representative of a significant period of time in Argentina’s architectural history, when the country was looking for its own identity as a nation. Despite political ideologies and preferences, the style is also representative of a significant chapter in the political and social history of the country. The use of the style in much of the Peronist government’s architectural production reflected the Peronist political ideal of ‘social justice’ through the fulfillment of homeownership rights for the working-class population. The *chalecito californiano* became symbolic of the acquisition of these new rights and the growth of the wellbeing of the working class.<sup>2</sup> Second, the Californian style played an important role in the urban history of the country, becoming the selected style for the construction of massive housing developments, institutional buildings such as schools, hospitals, and governmental buildings, and other types of buildings such as gas stations and hotels. Finally, the development of the style in Argentina was also part of a transnational phenomenon. Most of the countries of the Americas at that time were engaged in the search for a national style of architecture that reflected their identity. California’s Mission Revival and Spanish Colonial Revival styles migrated also to other countries of Latin America—and other parts of the world—and a local adaptation of the style was developed in each of them.

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<sup>2</sup> Anahí Ballent, *Las huellas de la política: vivienda, ciudad, peronismo en Buenos Aires, 1943-1955* (Buenos Aires, Argentina: Universidad Nacional de Quilmes, 2005), 20.

Therefore, the preservation of the Californian style in Argentina also can be seen as part of a hemispheric perspective on architectural history and historic preservation, which takes into account the transnational migration of styles, architectural ideas, professionals, construction methods and materials.

Research for this thesis began with the analysis of bibliographic and archival material held by the Cornell University Library or obtained through the services of interlibrary loan or borrowed directly from other U.S. libraries and universities. First came a review of bibliographic material related to a general history of architecture in Argentina during the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, works addressing cross-cultural relations between US and Argentina, and articles discussing the preservation of the recent past in the United States.

Once the topic was clearly defined, the research focused on bibliographic material directly related with the Californian style and the analysis of professional and domestic architectural magazines in Argentina during the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Few secondary sources were found specifically and exclusively about the Californian style, but some useful books included the topic in discussions of the development of housing in Argentina and its political and cultural contexts. Particularly helpful were the books “*Las huellas de la política: vivienda, ciudad, peronismo en Buenos Aires, 1943-1955*” (Anahí Ballent 2005) and “*La casa y la multitud: vivienda, política y cultura en la Argentina moderna*” (Anahí Ballent and Jorge Francisco Liernur 2014). Primary sources examined included architectural magazines and newspapers, government publications, and cinematic productions.

The case study for this thesis was selected after a careful consideration of a series of factors:

- (1) Design characteristics: *Barrio Perón* was the first planned community designed by the Peronist government that combined features of both the garden city and U.S suburbs with the use of the Californian architectural style. Also, of the three Californian-style housing projects developed by the Peronist government in the city of Buenos Aires, *Barrio Perón* is the one with the largest number of inhabitants (2,200 people), greatest variety of building typologies (27 different house models), and most complete set of facilities, which made the neighborhood self-sufficient.
- (2) Location: *Barrio Perón* is located on the periphery of the city of Buenos Aires, next to General Paz Avenue, which makes it a perfect realization of the idea of creation of a suburban landscape in an urban context. To this day, the community remains a green oasis surrounded by parks.
- (3) Condition: Despite some alterations and demolitions, *Barrio Perón* still has many of its character-defining features, thanks not only to its location but also because of its community's active advocacy on the behalf of the neighborhood's preservation.
- (4) Community advocacy: *Barrio Perón* is an exceptional example of community advocacy. It demonstrates the power of residents and users to stop the "destruction by construction" phenomenon propelled by the redevelopment pressure that Buenos Aires and other Argentinian cities are experiencing.

(5) Logistics: The scale of the development, its accessibility, and the availability of information also played an important role in its selection as a case study, due to the thesis' time constraints.

The investigation was completed with a trip to Argentina during winter break (December 2014-January 2015). This trip served three purposes. First, it enabled the procurement of bibliographic and archival material not found in U.S. libraries. Especially helpful in this tenor were the libraries of the *Sociedad Central de Arquitectos* (Central Architects Society) and the *Instituto de Arte Americano e Investigaciones Estéticas "Mario J. Buschiazzo"* (Institute of American Art and Aesthetic Investigations "Mario J. Buschiazzo"). Second, a series of interviews were conducted with officials of public agencies related to historic preservation in Argentina, with Argentinian academics in the fields of architectural history and historic preservation, and with members of *Barrio Perón's* neighborhood association. Third, a visit to the site allowed for closer study and the collection of photographic material.

The thesis is organized in four chapters. The first chapter provides a background history on the topic, tracing the origins of the Californian style in Argentina and how it developed. Particular attention is given to the development of the style during the first and second presidencies of Juan Domingo Perón, when the style gained a new impetus.

The second chapter provides an analysis of the style as represented in popular culture and government propaganda. The representations of the Californian style in mass media played a significant role in the spread of the style across the country, its

popularity, and its association with specific ideas and values. The meanings given to the Californian style and the values that were associated with it helped to reinforce its popularity among the public.

Chapter 3 investigates the historic significance of the Californian style in Argentina. The chapter collects a series of opinions, reflections, and discussions from different stakeholders, providing an insight into the on-going debates about the valuation of the style. An analysis is provided of the biases that lie behind those debates, which can threaten the preservation of the style.

Chapter 4, consists of the study of the case of *Barrio Perón* (currently called *Barrio Brigadier Cornelio Saavedra*). A planned community for 2,200 people developed in Buenos Aires, Argentina, during the first presidential term of Juan Domingo Perón, the *Barrio* consists of 427 housing units and a civic center with a church, a school, a cinema-theatre, commercial shops, a gas station, and a post office and telecommunications facility, all of them designed in the Californian style. Many features distinguish this neighborhood from its surrounding context: its architecture, its street pattern associated with the concept of ‘garden city’, and its large percentage of green space. Nowadays, *Barrio Perón* remains a distinct urban form within an otherwise homogeneous, dense grid. After a brief introduction about the history of the place, its characteristics, and its evolution, the chapter focuses on the ways in which the community has been able to preserve the character-defining features of the neighborhood.

The Conclusion provides a synthesis of the main ideas concluded in each chapter and analyzes how these findings support the need to recognize the historic

value of the Californian style in Argentina and to further its investigation, documentation, and preservation. Recommendations to undertake these actions are provided in this section.

## CHAPTER 1

### HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

#### *Introduction*

This chapter provides a history of the origins and development of the Californian style in Argentina. The chapter is divided in two sections. The first traces the style's roots back to the development of the Mission Revival and the Spanish Colonial Revival styles in California, developed between 1880 and 1930, and the Argentinian Neocolonial style, developed between 1915 and 1930. The second section discusses the development of the Californian style in Argentina, which can be divided into three periods: the introduction of the style by the upper classes in their vacation and weekend houses during the 1920s and 1930s, its inclusion in the first debates and developments in social housing from the mid-1930s to mid-1940s, and the adoption of the style by the Peronist government for the construction of massive housing developments, public facilities, and institutional buildings from the mid-1940s to mid-1950s.

#### *1. Origins of the Californian style*

To obtain a complete understanding of the genesis of the Californian style in Argentina it is necessary to analyze the phenomenon through a hemispheric perspective of architectural history in the Americas from the late 19<sup>th</sup> century to early 20<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>3</sup> The Californian style owes its name to its affiliation with the Mission

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<sup>3</sup> A perspective that explores the ways in which architectural ideas and styles migrated between the Americas, taking into account the transnational flow of professionals, materials, and information.

Revival and the Spanish Colonial Revival styles in California, in the United States of America. However, the origin of the style is also associated with the development of the Neocolonial style in Argentina. A discussion of these two sources follows.

### *1.1 California's Mission Revival and Spanish Colonial Revival:*

The Mission Revival is an architectural style largely developed in California during the late 19th and early 20th century. The style drew inspiration from the Spanish missions, which were considered a reminder of California's early history and, therefore, became a symbol of both her antiquity and of a colonial past distinct from that experienced by the northeast and central United States.<sup>4</sup> Although the first physical manifestations of the Mission Style arose in the 1890s, its genesis dates back to the 1860s, when an increasing interest in California's Spanish heritage began to develop.<sup>5</sup> The 19<sup>th</sup>-century fascination with the concepts of 'the sublime' and 'the picturesque' made the Franciscan missions, which had been abandoned since Mexico's Secularization Laws of 1834, the perfect setting for a romanticized view of California's Hispanic past. During the 1870s and 1880s, periodicals, guidebooks, and longer works of fiction and non-fiction were filled with descriptions and representations of these exotic ruins and buildings.<sup>6</sup> Especially influential was the novel "Ramona" written by Helen Hunt Jackson in 1884, which portrayed an idealized vision of the Mexican colonial past and its people.<sup>7</sup> This increasing interest in California and its missions was followed during the late 1880s and the early 1890s by

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<sup>4</sup> Karen J. Weitze, *California's Mission Revival* (Los Angeles: Hennessey & Ingalls, 1984), 12.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, 4

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, 5

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, 7

an intense promotion of the region by railroad companies and land developers.<sup>8</sup> The region was marketed as a place of adventure and romanticism, attracting large numbers of tourists and settlers.

The Palo Alto campus of Leland Stanford Junior University was the first major institutional design that drew upon the missions (1887-1891).<sup>9</sup> However, the building that inaugurated the Mission Revival style in the minds of many in the United States was the California Building<sup>10</sup> designed by A. Page Brown for the Columbian Exposition in Chicago in 1893 (see figure 1.1). After its construction, architects began experimenting with the style in a wide range of types, from residential to institutional and commercial. The Santa Fe and Southern Pacific railroads made the style popular across the west by commissioning Mission Revival stations and resort hotels.<sup>11</sup>

The character-defining features of the Mission Revival style are: roof parapets and/or dormers with silhouetted shapes that mimic the old missions, large flat stucco surfaces punctuated by deep windows and door openings, arcaded entry porches and galleries, gabled and hipped roofs commonly covered with red clay tiles, and wide overhanging eaves with decorative brackets. Quatrefoil windows or details and bell towers are also common.<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> Ibid., 13-17

<sup>9</sup> Ibid., 21; Susana Torre, "En busca de una identidad regional: evolución de los estilos misionero y neocolonial hispano en California entre 1880 y 1930," in *Arquitectura neocolonial: América Latina, Caribe, Estados Unidos*, ed. Aracy Amaral (São Paulo, SP, Brasil: Memorial, 1994), 49.

<sup>10</sup> Karen J. Weitze, *California's Mission Revival* (Los Angeles: Hennessey & Ingalls, 1984), 48.

<sup>11</sup> Virginia & Lee McAlester, *A Field Guide to American Houses* (New York: Knopf, 1984), 410.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid., 409-415; Golden Gate National Recreation Area (U.S. National Park Service), "Mission Revival Style," U.S. National Park Service, <http://www.nps.gov/goga/historyculture/mission-revival.htm> (accessed February 8, 2015).

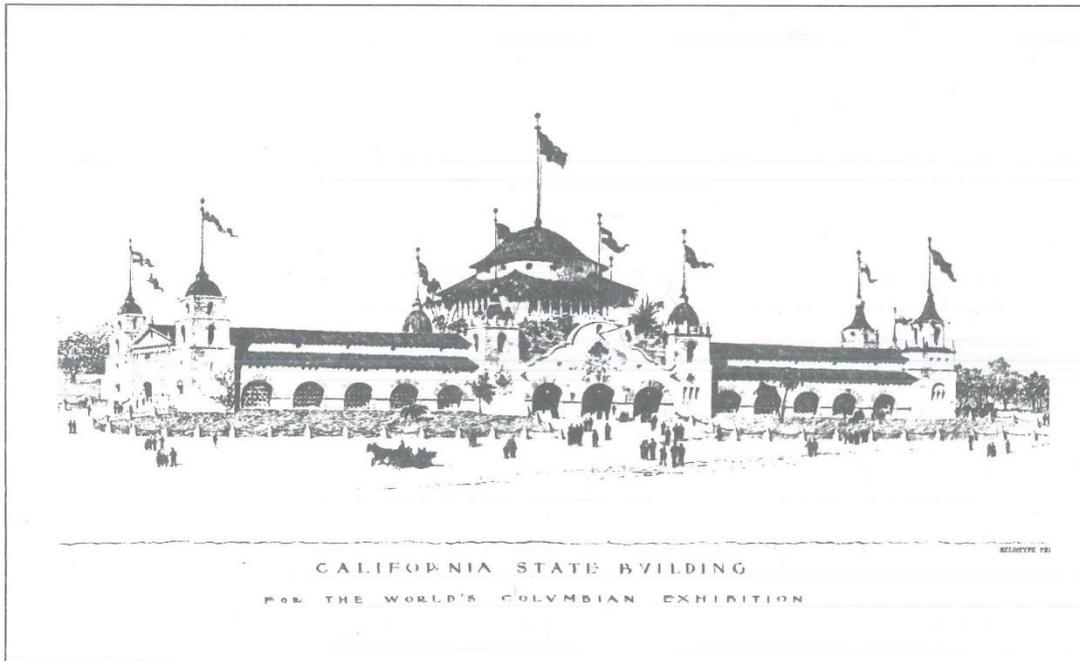


Figure 1.1 California Building, designed by A. Page Brown for the Columbian Exposition in Chicago in 1893.

Source: A. Page Brown, California Building, Columbian Exposition, Chicago, 1893, perspective published in *American Architect and Building News*, July 30, 1892, in Karen J. Weitze, *California's Mission Revival* (Los Angeles: Hennessey & Ingalls, 1984), 40.

The direction of California's architecture began to change again after the Panama California Exposition held in San Diego in 1915. Although the series of buildings designed for the Fair were Hispanic, the architects drew on a broader spectrum of both Old and New World Spanish buildings.<sup>13</sup> In this way, the Mission Revival gave way to the Spanish Colonial Revival style (also known as Spanish Neo-Colonial or Spanish Eclectic). Architect Bertram Goodhue, who was the Fair's principal and supervisory architect, wanted to go beyond the Mission interpretations and emphasize the richness of Spanish precedents found throughout Latin America.<sup>14</sup>

Both the Mission Revival style—popular until the 1920s—and its evolution into the Spanish Colonial Revival—popular from 1915 to the 1940s—reflected California's search for a regional architecture appropriate for its climate and geography and representative of its Hispanic identity. Other southwestern states also contributed significantly to a national understanding of Mission and Spanish history, particularly New Mexico and Texas. The romanticism of the missions and the Spanish Colonial architecture spread to places such as Taos and Santa Fe, in New Mexico, and the Alamo Mission in San Antonio, Texas.

The “authenticity” of this architecture was extensively promoted by publications of the time, providing advice for materials, details, and architectural features.<sup>15</sup> The film industry also helped to the promotion of the region and its

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<sup>13</sup> Ibid., 410.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid., 418. Interestingly, Goodhue's contemporaneous work at the mining town of Tyrone (New Mexico) was based on Mission interpretations.

<sup>15</sup> Susana Torre, “En busca de una identidad regional: evolución de los estilos misionero y neocolonial hispano en California entre 1880 y 1930,” in *Arquitectura neocolonial: América Latina, Caribe, Estados Unidos*, ed. Aracy Amaral (São Paulo, SP, Brasil: Memorial, 1994), 52.

architecture. By 1912, most major film companies had set up production facilities in Southern California, particularly near or in Los Angeles. Though few Spanish Colonial buildings existed beyond the missions and presidios, this architecture became a unique and evocative setting for the series of films that introduced the romanticism of the Hispanic era. Together, publications and film industry helped the Mission Revival and its associated Spanish Colonial Revival become internationally influential, especially all over Latin America.

### *1.2 The Neocolonial in Argentina: a search for a national style.*

During the 1910s, a series of events marked the beginning of a crisis in the socio-cultural system in Argentina. From the 1880s, the leaders of the country began a serious campaign to “Europeanize” (meaning: “civilize”) the country. Southern Europe, especially France, provided the preferred cultural model. The promotion of a massive European immigration, the reconstruction of cities according to French urban theories and models (e.g. Hausmann’s renovation of Paris), and the reformulation of the entire educational system to imitate the European models were some of the main manifestations of this drive. In terms of architecture, Paris’ *Ecole de Beaux Arts* had been the absolute referent. Argentinian architects were educated abroad and their designs reflected the whole range of European styles available, with a particular emphasis on French architecture.<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>16</sup> Ramón Gutiérrez, “Una entusiasta introspección: el neocolonial en el Río de la Plata,” in *Arquitectura neocolonial: América Latina, Caribe, Estados Unidos*, ed. Aracy Amaral (São Paulo, SP, Brasil: Memorial, 1994), 62.

However, this model of “civilization” began to lose popularity around Argentina’s Centenary of Independence, celebrated in 1910. From a political standpoint, the Mexican Agrarian Revolution in 1910 provided a revindication of indigenous and rural workers’ rights. Also, World War I (1914-1918) put in crisis the role of Europe as a model of “civilization.” The Russian Revolution of 1917 produced a wave of socialist movements and ideas that further unsettled political thinking in Latin America.<sup>17</sup> From the educational standpoint, in 1909, the publication of the book *La Restauración Nacionalista: Informe sobre educación* (National Restoration: an educational report) by Argentinian writer Ricardo Rojas urged the study of the history of the country as a way to build a national identity. In 1918, the Argentine University Reform began in the city of Córdoba, with a call for modernization and democratization of the University's statutes. These events had strong echoes in many other countries in Latin America.<sup>18</sup>

In this context of increasing nationalism, an architectural style that represented the identity of the country began to take shape.<sup>19</sup> In 1915, the students of Architecture in the National University of Buenos Aires founded the magazine *Revista de Arquitectura* and created the first architecture students’ organization.<sup>20</sup> As they expressed in the magazine’s first editorial: “*Nuestra arquitectura deberá plasmarse en las fuentes mismas de nuestra historia, de acuerdo con razones de orden natural y*

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<sup>17</sup> Ibid., 62-63 This citation corresponds to the whole paragraph.

<sup>18</sup> Ibid., 63.

<sup>19</sup> This was also an international phenomenon taking place in many countries around the world at the turn of the century, in association with Modernity.

<sup>20</sup> Ibid., 63.

*climatérico que fundamentan la obra a realizar...*”<sup>21</sup> (Our projects should be based in an architecture that expresses our history, and is in accord with the logic of [our] natural context and climate).

It was clear, then, that this new “national style” should be related to Argentina’s earlier colonial period; a period of “*hipotéticos nobles hispanos y unos bravíos criollos*” (Hispanic nobles and brave creoles), far removed from the massive invasion of European immigrants that occurred during the end of the 19th century.<sup>22</sup> The Neocolonial style was born undergirded by nationalism, which saw the colonial past as a way to reconstruct a national identity.

The architects and designers who experimented with the Neocolonial style used a broad range of models, resulting in different variants of the style. Among the most common were those that used Spanish architectural references, such as the Spanish Baroque and the Neoplateresque.<sup>23</sup> Some other variants had Latin American references, trying to find something authentic in a broader, continental perspective, such as the *Arequipeño*, from Perú, and the Hispanic-American Baroque.<sup>24</sup>

By the 1920s it was clear that those using the Neocolonial were not able to detach and differentiate their designs from the Eclecticism of European styles that they criticized—an almost inevitable consequence of the *Ecole de Beaux Arts* influence.

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<sup>21</sup> “Propósitos,” *Revista de Arquitectura* (Centro Estudiantes de Arquitectura, July, 1915), 2.

<sup>22</sup> Marina Waisman, “Neocolonial y moderno: falacias y realidades,” in *Arquitectura neocolonial: América Latina, Caribe, Estados Unidos*, ed. Aracy Amaral (São Paulo, SP, Brasil: Memorial, 1994), 278.

<sup>23</sup> Ramón Gutiérrez, “Una entusiasta introspección: el neocolonial en el Río de la Plata,” in *Arquitectura neocolonial: América Latina, Caribe, Estados Unidos*, ed. Aracy Amaral (São Paulo, SP, Brasil: Memorial, 1994), 67.

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*, 68.

The multiplicity of formal variants did not produce a significant change in the prevailing Academicism.

## 2. *Development of the Californian style in Argentina*

It was in that context of the search for a national architectural identity that California's Mission Revival and associated Spanish Colonial Revival styles arrived in Argentina. Hollywood films and specialized domestic and professional magazines—the contents of which were reproduced in many Argentinian magazines of the time—introduced California architecture to Argentinian professionals, academics, and the Argentinian gentry. This architecture was praised as authentically regional: an architecture adapted to the geography, the climate and the culture of the place.

California's situation—in terms of geography, climate, and culture—was considered by many Argentinian academics and professionals as similar to Argentina. In 1918, Alejandro Christophersen<sup>25</sup> recommended reading the journal of the California Society of Architects, "The Architect", where he found "*tipos de casas de campo y estancias perfectamente adaptables a la Argentina (...) una arquitectura bien de acuerdo con el paisaje (...) que tiene semejanza con lo que conocemos de la República Argentina. Estos edificios californianos recuerdan, en sus líneas, al estilo colonial de aquí [Argentina] ...*" (models of rural houses and *estancias* perfectly adaptable to Argentina...an architecture in relation to the landscape...that has similarity with what we know of the Argentinian Republic. These Californian

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<sup>25</sup> Alejandro Christophersen (Cádiz, 1866-Buenos Aires, 1946) was one of the most prominent eclectic architects in Argentina. He was also one of the founders of the Central Architects Society and professor in the Architecture School of the University of Buenos Aires.

buildings remind one, in their shape, of the Colonial style of Argentina).<sup>26</sup> A year later, another Argentinian architect, Raul J. Alvarez,<sup>27</sup> praised “North-Americans” for their ability to create a regional architecture in California: “*debemos tomar ejemplo de los norteamericanos que han sabido levantar sobre todo en California una Arquitectura regional*” (We should take ‘North-Americans’ as an example, since they were able to create a regional architecture in California).<sup>28</sup>

Hence, the United States replaced Europe as the new reference for modernity in Argentina. The migration of architectural ideas through publications and Hollywood movies and the similar physical and cultural context made California’s Mission Revival and Spanish Colonial Revival styles seem desirable in Argentina. Using these styles and Argentina’s own Neo-colonial style as referents, Argentinian architects developed a set of architectural forms that was soon labeled as “Californian style.” The buildings designed in the Californian style displayed local materials (stone, brick, and wood) and emphasized the contrast between volumes, evoking a sort of domesticity (even though the style was used for a large variety of building types) and a rural or suburban character (even though the style was later used also in urban settings). Typical character-defining features include: low-pitched, gabled or cross gabled roof covered with red, tapered mission tiles (called “colonial tiles” in Argentina), supported by a wood structure, and featuring overhanging, unenclosed

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<sup>26</sup> Alejandro Christophersen, “A propósito del arte colonial y su origen,” *Revista de Arquitectura*, no.15 (March-April 1918), 31-34.

<sup>27</sup> Raúl Jacinto Alvarez, born in Mendoza in 1890, was an architect and a professor in the University of Buenos Aires and the University of La Plata. He was one of the founders of magazine *Revista de Arquitectura*.

<sup>28</sup> *Revista de Arquitectura*, 1919; Ramón Gutiérrez, “Una entusiasta introspección: el neocolonial en el Río de la Plata,” in *Arquitectura neocolonial: América Latina, Caribe, Estados Unidos*, ed. Aracy Amaral (São Paulo, SP, Brasil: Memorial, 1994), 69.

eaves with exposed rafter tails; white, stuccoed, masonry walls with a stone (later on, also brick) veneer at the base; wood casement windows, with wood plank (or louver) shutters or wrought iron grates (usually for first floor windows in larger houses); stucco decorative vents and wood paneling on gables; and a lateral entry porch (often, arcaded) supported by square masonry piers or wood columns. Over-hanging, wood balconies, with wood or iron railings, and arcaded galleries are typical of more elaborated, larger examples.

The development of the Californian style in Argentina can be divided into three different periods. The first, during the 1920s and 1930s, was associated with the upper classes and their vacation and weekend houses. The second, from the mid-1930s to mid-1940s, includes the style's association with the first debates and developments in social housing. The final period, from the mid-1940s to 1950s, is related with the introduction of the homeownership right and the massive approach given by the State to the problem of housing.

### *2.1 First period: 1920s-1930s*

After its introduction in the late 1910s-early 1920s, Argentinian upper classes began to use the new Californian style for their suburban houses. The idea of a “rural” way of life in close relationship with nature and far away from the chaos of the city was taking shape. Leisure and outdoor sport activities became more common in suburban settings. The introduction of the automobile furthered these trends, along

with the emergence of the concepts of ‘weekend’ and ‘vacation houses’, the promotion of tourism, and the construction of new infrastructure.<sup>29</sup>

The Californian style came to represent a life connected with nature and an expression of new forms of sociability. Houses designed in Californian style were called ‘*chalets*’ or ‘bungalows’, emphasizing their association with a “rural,” suburban setting. The idea of “rural” in this first period was related to the idea of “authenticity.” An example of this period is the “Tortugas Country Club,” an upper-class, planned community built in Buenos Aires Province in 1933 (see figure 1.2). It was designed by Carlos Malbranche using the Californian style and taking advantage of the new trend of weekend houses and practice of outdoor activities and sports.<sup>30</sup>

This association of the style with the “rustic” and “authentic” was considered a sign of “modernity.” Anahí Ballent<sup>31</sup> describes the style as “*descontracturado*” (relaxed, laid-back). She explains that, from a sociologic standpoint, the style indicated a change in attitude towards the need for “social representation” of the upper classes that began to abandon European and Academic traditions in favor of “nudity, freedom, and openness.”<sup>32</sup> Furthermore, the promotion of the style in the cinema and media publications, which often showed the houses of Hollywood movie stars, helped to reinforce the idea of the style as a symbol of modernity. Upper- and middle-class Argentinians wanted “to keep up to date with world trends.”

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<sup>29</sup> Anahí Ballent and Jorge Francisco Liernur, *La casa y la multitud: vivienda, política y cultura en la Argentina moderna* (Buenos Aires: Fondo de Cultura Económica, 2014), 442.

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*, 442

<sup>31</sup> Anahí Ballent, PhD, Architect (Tandil, 1956). She is professor and researcher in the National University of Quilmes (Buenos Aires province), and researcher of the *Consejo Nacional de Investigaciones Científicas y Técnicas* (CONICET).

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*, 439.

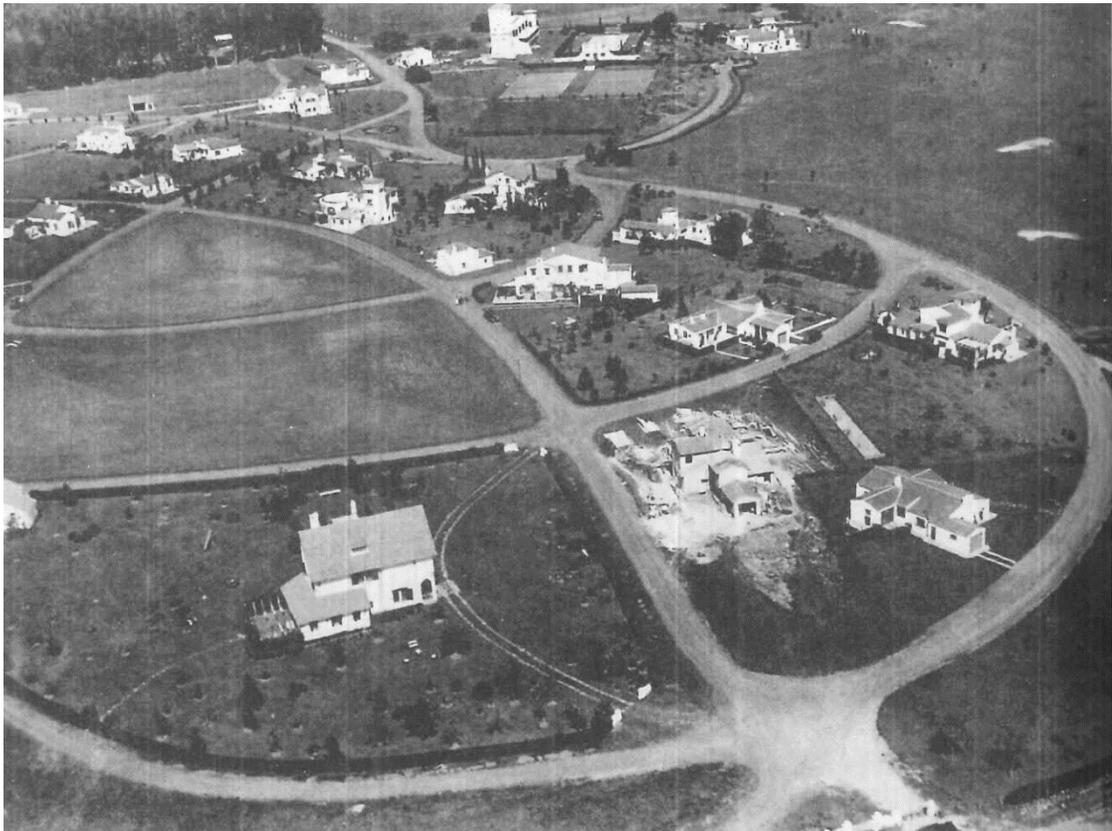


Figure 1.2 Tortugas Country Club, aerial photograph, ca. 1940

Source: Tortugas Country Club, fotografía aérea, c. 1940, Archivo General de la Nación, Departamento Documentos Gráficos, Argentina, in Anahí Ballent and Jorge Francisco Liernur, *La casa y la multitud: vivienda, política y cultura en la Argentina moderna* (Buenos Aires: Fondo de Cultura Económica, 2014), 442.

## 2.2 *Second period: mid-1930s to mid-1940s*

The Great Depression during the 1930s produced a notable deterioration of the Argentinian economy. An agricultural crisis, generated by a drop in both prices and quantities of agricultural production and exports, meant the end of the agro-export model that dominated the economy until then. The crisis affected international markets and Argentina began a process of import-substituting industrialization. Domestic industries that produced consumer goods (food, textiles, and clothing), household electrical appliances, simple machinery, and straightforward metal products, as well as those industrial activities associated with construction were the most dynamic economic sectors during this period.<sup>33</sup>

A massive migration of farm workers to the cities in search of jobs in the new industries resulted in a significant housing shortage and the need to retrofit the cities. For the first time the government and other public institutions began to think about social housing.

The Californian style began to be included in many of the debates regarding these first social housing developments. The debates were centered on the selection of the right model for social housing (single-family or multifamily housing), the development of new “styles of habitation” and the modernization of the house, and the search for an appropriate decentralization model according to garden-city ideals.

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<sup>33</sup> Bernardo Kosacoff, “The Argentine Industry: A thwarted restructuring process,” in *Producción y trabajo en la Argentina. Memoria fotográfica 1860-1960*, ed. Marta Cichero (Buenos Aires: Banco Bice & Universidad Nacional de Quilmes, 2002), 149-158.

### *Single-family vs. multifamily housing*

The model of the single-family, detached house—as opposed to collective housing—gained preference during this period. Social Catholics associated multifamily housing with Communism because they believed that it helped the propagation of revolutionary ideas by encouraging sociability among its inhabitants.<sup>34</sup> Also, Catholic groups in general were in favor of the single-family, detached model, since it followed the goals mandated by the 1931 *Quadragesimo Anno* Encyclical about the protection of the nuclear family.<sup>35</sup> The privatization of the family through the individualization of their dwelling served to keep the nuclear unit intact. Also, the houses imposed a subtle form of domesticity, “togetherness”—family closeness—through the distribution of space.

Despite significant debates among the promoters of each model, the *Congreso Panamericano de la Vivienda Popular* of 1939 (Pan-American Congress of Social Housing) reasserted the single-family, detached house as the best model for social housing developments.

### *New styles of habitation and the modernization of the house*

The period between 1930 and 1943 was fruitful in the development of new ideas in the “styles of habitation” in Argentina.<sup>36</sup> During this period, the *Comisión*

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<sup>34</sup> Rosa Aboy, *Viviendas para el pueblo: espacio urbano y sociabilidad en el barrio Los Perales : 1946-1955* (Victoria, Pcia. de Buenos Aires: Universidad de San Andrés. 2005), 36.

<sup>35</sup> Anahí Ballent, *Las huellas de la política: vivienda, ciudad, peronismo en Buenos Aires, 1943-1955* (Buenos Aires, Argentina: Universidad Nacional de Quilmes, 2005), 60; Anahí Ballent and Jorge Francisco Liernur, *La casa y la multitud: vivienda, política y cultura en la Argentina moderna* (Buenos Aires: Fondo de Cultura Económica, 2014), 449.

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid.*,

*Nacional de Casas Baratas* (National Commission of Economic Housing)—the first housing government agency—built the first single-family and multi-family public housing. This agency began experimenting in new styles of habitation and types that incorporated physical and social concerns in the design.<sup>37</sup>

Until then, the *casa chorizo* (“sausage” house) and the *conventillo* (tenement) were the most common popular housing types in Argentina, especially in Buenos Aires. The *casa chorizo* consisted of a linear succession of interconnected rooms that each opened to a parallel patio. The *conventillo* consisted of a series of rental rooms around a central patio; sometimes it had two or three floors. However, several problems began to be associated with these types during the 1930s’ debates: promiscuity, insalubrity, and the threat of political upheaval—a fear generated after some tenants’ strikes associated with socialists and anarchists.<sup>38</sup>

These typologies gave way to the development of a more compact model called the *casa cajón* (“box” house), a type that employed modern concepts such as comfort and functionality, improvements in hygiene and sanitation, as well as the promotion of certain moral values that were gaining preeminence in the first decades of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. These were primarily the privatization and domesticity of the house. The new typology was modern in the arrangement of the rooms, the differentiation between public and private areas, and the inclusion of electricity and

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<sup>37</sup> Rosa Aboy, *Viviendas para el pueblo: espacio urbano y sociabilidad en el barrio Los Perales : 1946-1955* (Victoria, Pcia. de Buenos Aires: Universidad de San Andrés. 2005), 30.

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid.*, 28.

sanitary services, with indoor plumbing. The kitchen and bathroom were included in the interior of the house.<sup>39</sup>

The Californian style was quickly associated with this new compact model (see figure 1.3), although it gained a more austere character, as opposed to its more ostentatious earlier forms when used in the upper-class vacation houses. The style was transformed into a symbol of a “national” affordable architecture suitable for the entire country.

The plan of the house changed as well as its style. The ‘living-room’, previously nonexistent in Argentinian houses, became the most important room in the house.<sup>40</sup> Also, whereas previous types fronted the street and were organized around internal patios, the newly introduced Californian chalets were compact, set in the middle of the plot, and surrounded by a garden, in keeping with the ideas of the garden city and the privatization of the family.<sup>41</sup>

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<sup>39</sup> Anahí Ballent, *Las huellas de la política: vivienda, ciudad, peronismo en Buenos Aires, 1943-1955* (Buenos Aires, Argentina: Universidad Nacional de Quilmes, 2005),

<sup>40</sup> Anahí Ballent and Jorge Francisco Liernur, *La casa y la multitud: vivienda, política y cultura en la Argentina moderna* (Buenos Aires: Fondo de Cultura Económica, 2014).

<sup>41</sup> Cristina López Uribe, “Reflections of the ‘colonial’: Between Mexico and Californiano,” in *Latin American Modern Architectures: Ambiguous Territories*, ed. Patricio del Real and Helen Gyger (New York, NY: Routledge, 2013), 220-221.

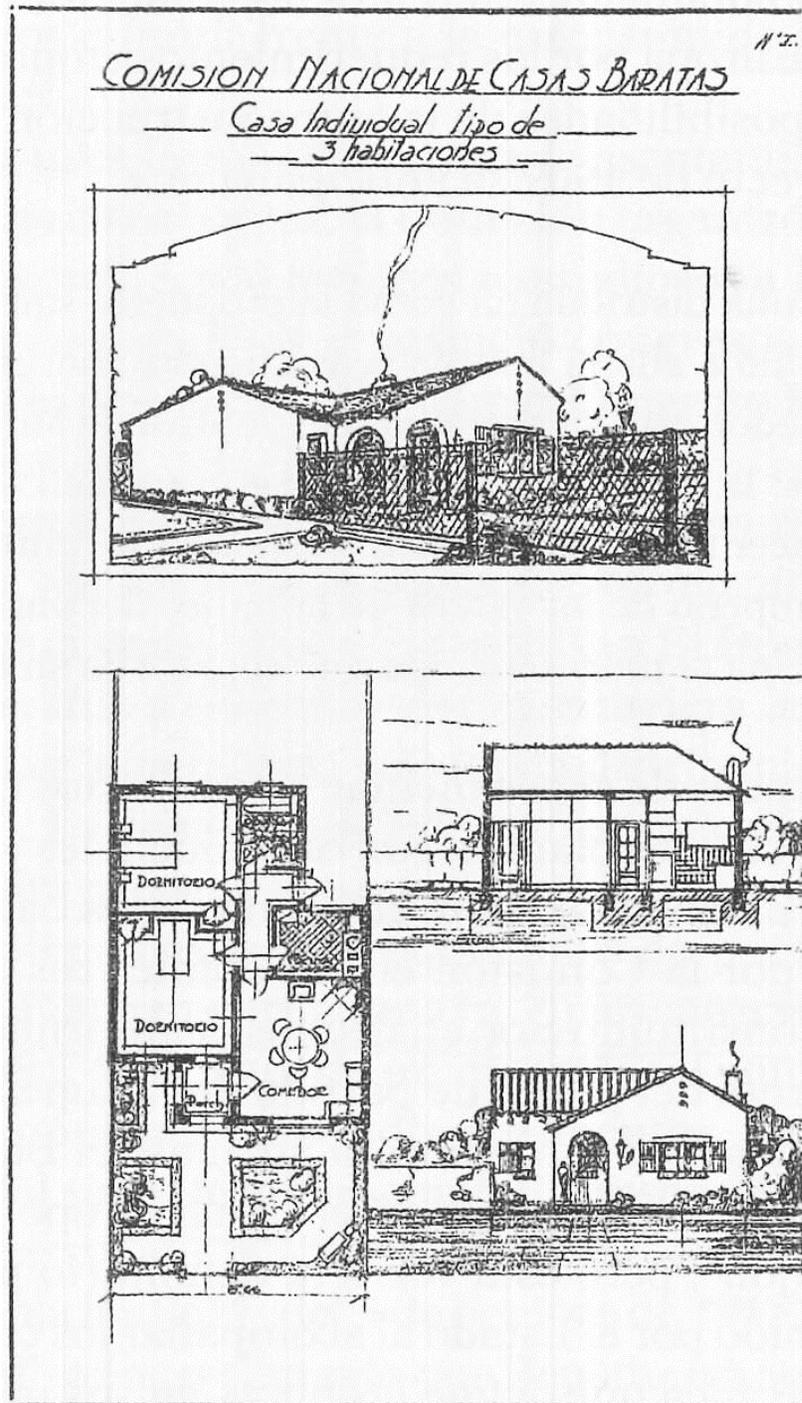


Figure 1.3 Single-family house model with 3 rooms, designed by the *Comisión Nacional de Casas Baratas* (1934).

Source: *La Habitación popular*, Noviembre, 1934, in Anahí Ballent and Jorge Francisco Liernur, *La casa y la multitud: vivienda, política y cultura en la Argentina moderna* (Buenos Aires: Fondo de Cultura Económica, 2014), 192.

## *Decentralization*

The use and spread of the Californian style in Argentina is closely linked to the urban model of the garden city<sup>42</sup> and ideas of decentralization during the 1930s and 1940s. The garden city, introduced by Ebenezer Howard in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, proposed a harmonic relation between urban space, society, nature, and technology.

This urban model was adopted during the 20<sup>th</sup> century through the construction of decentralized and self-sufficient neighborhoods or planned communities. The reference model for Argentina were U.S. suburbs: planned communities made of single-family detached houses, forested streets, and wide side-walks. One of this models was the planned community of Radburn in New Jersey (designed by Clarence Stein and Henry Wright in 1929), which combined planning related to the automobile with England's city-garden concepts: traffic separation according to mode (pedestrian vs. vehicular) and incorporation of *cul-de-sac* streets.<sup>43</sup> Radburn's urban character can be found, for example, in the *Barrio de Suboficiales Sargento Cabral* in Campo de Mayo, Buenos Aires Province (1934-1937).

### *2.3 Third period: 1946 to 1955*

From the mid-1940s to mid-1950s, the style gained new impetus thanks to the Peronist government. During the first two presidencies of Juan Domingo Perón, the Californian style gained preeminence on a massive scale. The Peronists not only

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<sup>42</sup> Mario Sabugo, "Familia y ciudad: casa y urbe," *FUNDAVI* (Buenos Aires, n.2, March 1985), 18.

<sup>43</sup> Anahí Ballent and Jorge Francisco Liernur, *La casa y la multitud: vivienda, política y cultura en la Argentina moderna* (Buenos Aires: Fondo de Cultura Económica, 2014), 447-448.

ensured the survival of the style just when the upper classes began to abandon it,<sup>44</sup> but also ensured its long-lasting popularity in the country.

The housing shortage of the 1930s increased after World War II (1939-1945). The rural to urban migrations that had started during the Great Depression continued with renewed strength in the postwar period due to a notable expansion of the industrial sector promoted by the Peronist government. According to the Peronist ideal of “economic independence,” the government carried out major works for the industrialization of the country such as large investments in hydro- and thermoelectricity production and in gas pipelines and distribution networks. Metallurgy and ironworks industries saw the most growth: military equipment (e.g. airplane factories), tractors and other agricultural machinery, and automotive industries (e.g. automobiles and commercial vehicles factories).<sup>45</sup>

These rural-to-urban migrants generally lived in rented rooms in *casas chorizos*, or in overcrowded *conventillos*. Other common types of housing included rooms in cheap hotels, shelters, self-constructed shacks, and the factories themselves.<sup>46</sup> In some cases, the migrants could afford to buy a lot in the peripheries but usually they could only build a one-room dwelling that reproduced the overcrowding of the *conventillos*.<sup>47</sup>

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<sup>44</sup> Anahí Ballent, *Las huellas de la política: vivienda, ciudad, peronismo en Buenos Aires, 1943-1955* (Buenos Aires, Argentina: Universidad Nacional de Quilmes, 2005),

<sup>45</sup> Fermín Chavez et al., *Historia Argentina: Tomo XIV El Justicialismo* (Buenos Aires: Editorial Oriente S.A., 1993), 228-233.

<sup>46</sup> Rosa Aboy, *Viviendas para el pueblo: espacio urbano y sociabilidad en el barrio Los Perales: 1946-1955* (Victoria, Pcia. de Buenos Aires: Universidad de San Andrés. 2005), 25-27.

<sup>47</sup> *Ibid.*

The post-World War II climate favored the widespread social acceptance of government intervention in health, education, and social welfare.<sup>48</sup> In response to the critical housing shortage and according to the ideals of “social justice”<sup>49</sup> and “popular well-being” Perón introduced the “right to housing.” The right was included in the National Constitution in 1949 and, therefore, the government assumed the commitment to ensure that benefit.

The participation of the State in the provision of housing during the Peronist years had two different phases. The first one, from 1946 to 1949, involved the government’s direct participation in the construction of large projects for the working-class population. The second one, from 1950 to 1955, involved the government’s indirect participation in the provision of housing through a series of public loans given to people to construct their own houses.<sup>50</sup>

#### *Government’s direct participation (1946-1949)*

If the government adopted a policy that housing was a right, the need for State participation in the planning and construction of housing across the nation was considered an obligation. The difference between the first and the second phases was a matter of how this participation took place. The first phase was regulated by the “First Five-year Plan” (1947-1951). The housing projects constructed during this

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<sup>48</sup> Rosa Aboy, “‘The Right to a Home’: Public Housing in Post-World War II Buenos Aires,” *Journal of Urban History* 33, no. 3 (March 2007), <http://juh.sagepub.com/content/33/3/493> (accessed April 13, 2015)

<sup>49</sup> One of the fundamental pillars of the Peronism was “social justice:” the State as responsible for the well-being of the people and as a “mediator” between the classes of society and between managers and workers.

<sup>50</sup> Anahí Ballent, *Las huellas de la política: vivienda, ciudad, peronismo en Buenos Aires, 1943-1955* (Buenos Aires, Argentina: Universidad Nacional de Quilmes, 2005), 74-90.

period followed two different urban models: the planned community with single-family detached houses in individual plots, designed in the Californian style and following the models of the 1930s; and the multi-family dwellings or apartment blocks, designed in the Modern style and related with the European social housing between the World Wars.<sup>51</sup> The housing developments constructed by the government in Buenos Aires City and Buenos Aires Province during this first period were (see location map in figure 1.4):<sup>52</sup>

1. Barrio Balbastro, Buenos Aires City (designed before 1946/ constructed in 1948): 108 units in 6 apartment blocks.
2. Barrio 1° de Marzo (current Barrio Saenz Peña), Buenos Aires City (designed in 1945-46/constructed in 1948): 177 single-family houses.
3. Barrio Juan Perón (current Barrio Brigadier Cornelio Saavedra), Buenos Aires City (designed in 1946/constructed between 1947 and 1949): 427 single-family houses.
4. Barrio Villa Concepción, Buenos Aires Province (designed in 1944/constructed in 1949): 530 single-family houses.
5. Barrio N°1, Buenos Aires Province (designed and constructed between 1948 and 1949): 382 single-family houses.
6. Barrio 17 de Octubre (current Barrio General San Martín or Barrio Grafa), Buenos Aires City (designed in 1948-1949/constructed in 1950): 960 units in 34 apartment blocks.

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<sup>51</sup> Rosa Aboy, *Viviendas para el pueblo: espacio urbano y sociabilidad en el barrio Los Perales : 1946-1955* (Victoria, Pcia. de Buenos Aires: Universidad de San Andrés. 2005), 13.

<sup>52</sup> *Ibid.*, 73; Ramón Gutiérrez, ed. *La habitación popular bonaerense 1943-1955: aprendiendo en la historia* (Buenos Aires: CEDODAL, 2011), 146-156; and Anahí Ballent, *Las huellas de la política: vivienda, ciudad, peronismo en Buenos Aires, 1943-1955* (Buenos Aires, Argentina: Universidad Nacional de Quilmes, 2005), 45.

7. Monobloque General Belgrano, Buenos Aires City (constructed between 1949 and 1950): 133 units in 1 apartment block.
8. Pabellones Acoyte y Ambrossetti, Buenos Aires City (designed and constructed between 1950 and 1951): 44 units in 2 apartment blocks.
9. Barrio 17 de Octubre (current Albarellos), Buenos Aires City (designed in 1947/constructed between 1947 and 1952): 40 single-family houses.
10. Barrio Los Perales (current Barrio Manuel Dorrego), Buenos Aires City (designed in 1946/constructed between 1949 and 1952): 1,068 units in 48 apartment blocks.
11. Ciudad Evita, Buenos Aires Province (designed in 1947-1948/constructed in 1953): 5,000 units (single-family houses and apartment buildings).
12. Barrio Curapaligüe (current Barrio Simón Bolívar), Buenos Aires City (designed in 1948/constructed in 1953): 676 units in 6 apartment blocks.
13. Barrio Marcelo T. de Alvear (current Barrio Alvear III), Buenos Aires City (constructed between 1947 and 1954): 1,692 units in 26 apartment blocks.

One of the most significant characteristics of these early Peronist housing projects is the great variety of building types. The projects often included single-family detached houses, semi-detached houses, terraced or row houses, and even apartment buildings. This was in conformance with the Peronist ideal of social justice: the housing projects were inclusive in the sense that they were projected to house families from different socio-economic situations. Although the multi-family, apartment blocks were designed in the Modern style, the Californian style was used in the design of the single-family houses and some facilities of the planned communities. The adaptability and malleability of the style was perfect for the large variety of housing types.

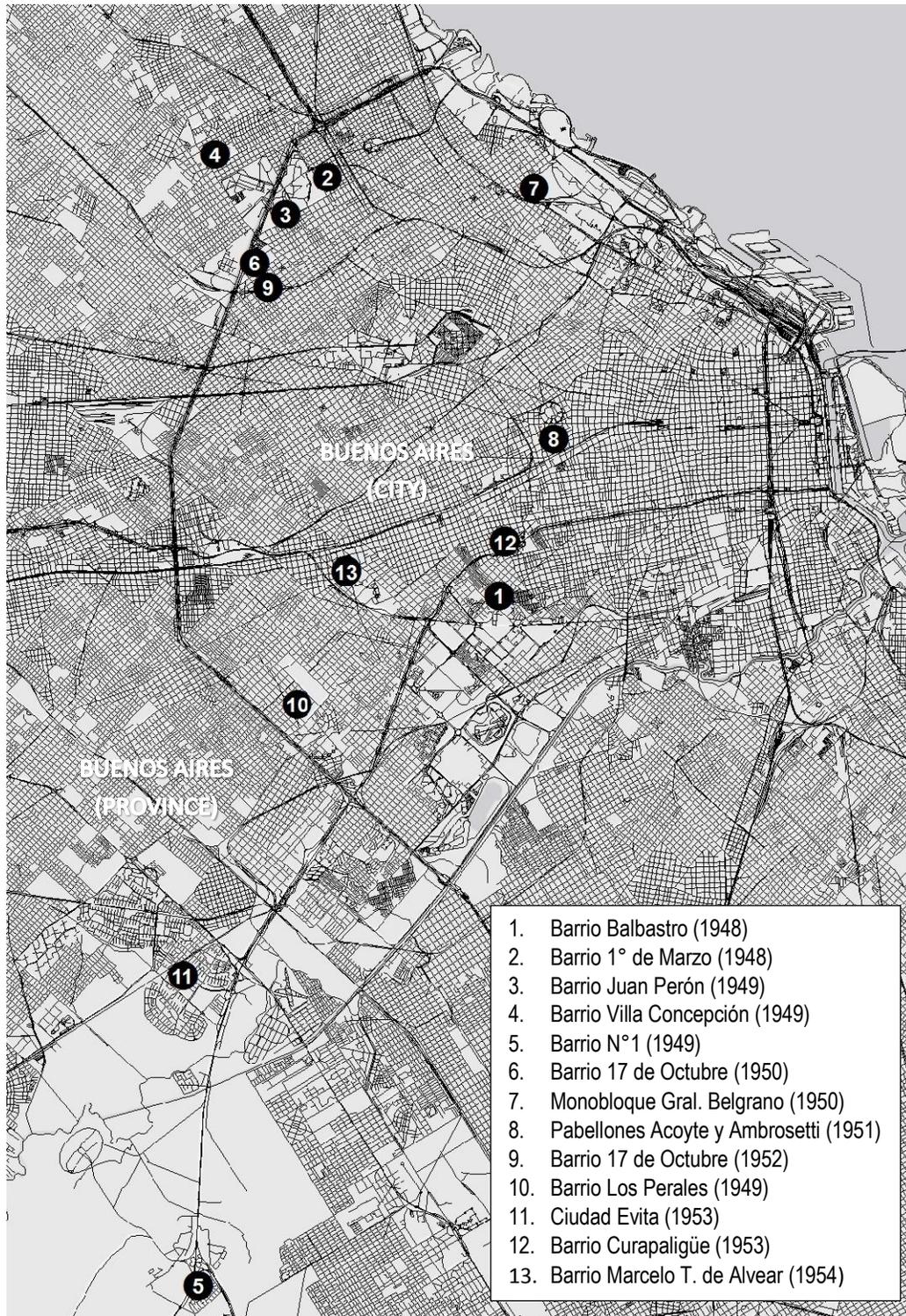


Figure 1.4 Location map of housing developments constructed by the Peronist government in Buenos Aires City and Buenos Aires Province during the period of government's direct participation.

Source: Author's illustration.

*Government's indirect participation (1950-1955)*

During the final years of Peron's first presidential term, an economic crisis that had developed in 1949 forced a redistribution of public expenditures. The "Second Five-year Plan" (1952-1957) regulated the State's indirect participation in housing development. The participation was in the form of economic incentives for the construction of housing by the people themselves and the promotion of the creation of intermediary associations and cooperatives for the construction of housing projects.

The *Plan Eva Perón* financed the construction of single-family houses throughout the country through the provision of low-interest loans given by the *Banco Hipotecario Nacional* (National Mortgage Bank or BHN) (see figure 1.5).<sup>53</sup> The BHN provided the complete set of construction documents including architectural drawings, specifications and quantity surveys, and guidelines for the execution and management of the construction. The savings of time and money, the minimal complexity of operations, the adaptability to different uses, and the State control over building types and construction systems are all notable aspects of this operation.<sup>54</sup>

The materials specified in the technical documentation were all produced domestically. The BHN knew the local materials that were available, and avoided the use of imported materials, which during the post-war period were difficult to acquire. Among the specified local materials were large amounts of red ceramics (bricks, colonial tiles, etc.), lime for plaster, and wood for windows, doors, and the roof

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<sup>53</sup> The loan provided the total value of the building plus a subsidiary value of 30% of the total cost of the plot and the construction, with the intention of facilitating the purchase of the land. The interest was 4.5% and the quota could not surpass the 30% of the salary (Ballent 2005).

<sup>54</sup> Anahí Ballent, *Las huellas de la política: vivienda, ciudad, peronismo en Buenos Aires, 1943-1955* (Buenos Aires, Argentina: Universidad Nacional de Quilmes, 2005), 86-90.

structure. There was a very small amount of cement and iron, which were mainly used for the fabrication of commercial conveyances (e.g. ships and locomotives) and the construction of industrial and transportation infrastructure (e.g. grain elevators and bridges).<sup>55</sup>

The Californian style proposed for the BHN loans was simpler than earlier examples. The porch was supplanted by a large, overhanging eave; the arch was replaced by straight lintels; and the roof plan was simplified with only two gables, avoiding L-shaped roofs. Furthermore, the future owner had the alternative to opt between a gable roof covered with tiles, a tin roof, or even a flat roof.<sup>56</sup>

A fundamental change between the projects developed in the earlier government's direct participation phase and the second indirect phase is the absence of an urban design component. The second-phase types were to be constructed as individual units on a typical plot of a typical block in the city grid, unlike the garden-city projects of the first phase. There were some planned housing projects developed by cooperatives and labor unions, but these were made up by repetition, without any variation on types, sizes, or urban pattern.

In spite of the different degree of government involvement in the production of housing, the ideologies and values promoted by those projects and programs were similar in both phases. The Peronist government used forms of urbanism and architecture that promoted the socio-economic growth of the working-class people in

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<sup>55</sup> Ramón Gutiérrez, ed. *La habitación popular bonaerense 1943-1955: aprendiendo en la historia* (Buenos Aires: CEDODAL, 2011), 64.

<sup>56</sup> Anahí Ballent and Jorge Francisco Liernur, *La casa y la multitud: vivienda, política y cultura en la Argentina moderna* (Buenos Aires: Fondo de Cultura Económica, 2014), 458.

an attempt to shorten the distance between the lower and the upper classes, and improve the quality of life of the population. The use of the Californian style by the Peronist government in its numerous housing projects and programs was one of the main vehicles for spreading ideals and values.

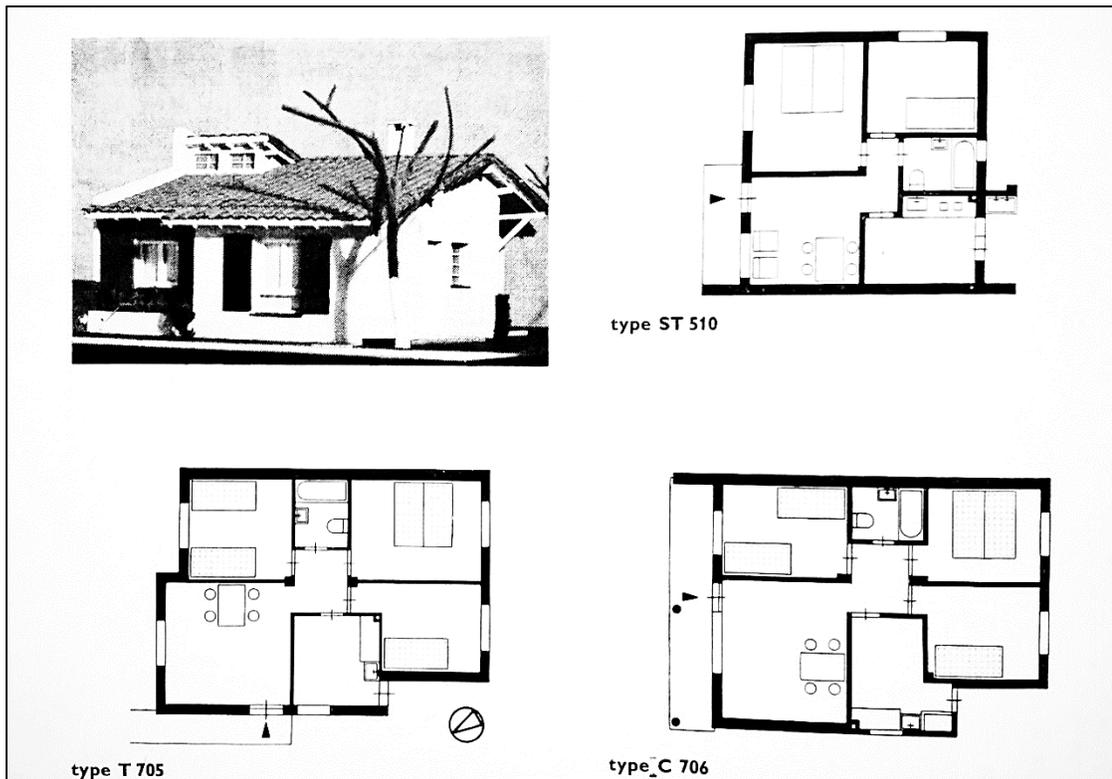


Figure 1.5 Single-family house types of *Plan Eva Perón, Banco Hipotecario Nacional*.

Source: Union internationale des Architectes, *Habitation 1945-1955: Programme, Projet, Production*, Serie 1-3: Argentine (Rotterdam, Bouwncentrum, 1955), 15.

## *Conclusion*

The Californian style was used as an innovative model for the suburban and vacation houses of the upper class during the 1920s and 1930s. Despite the fact that the style began to lose popularity among the upper classes after the mid-1940s, it still conveyed status and prestige in the eyes of the lower classes. By choosing the Californian style for its numerous housing projects, the Peronist government re-signified it as a style granting dignity to the working class, which was exercising its right to *vivienda propia* (homeownership) and sharing the same architectural “taste” as the upper class.

Also, the use of the Californian style was related to the agrarian myth. The weekend or vacation houses of the upper classes were the result of the 1930s debates on the advantages of a “rural” way of living. The suburbs began to embody the idea of a transitional place between an urban and a rural way of life. The concept of ‘garden city’ created by Ebenezer Howard in 1898 regained strength during the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. During the 1940s and 1950s, the Peronist government also adopted this existent form of urbanism and gave it a new meaning, associating it with the well-being of the working class. Many Peronist housing projects incorporated designs of mildly curved streets and large public and private green areas. The use of the Californian style reinforced this “rural” discourse by providing a serene environment that was intended to be associated with the wealthy vacation houses of the upper-class and also to the bucolic and rustic ranches of the countryside.

As a last point, the use of the Californian style was also related to the promotion of the single-family house as opposed to the crowded, multi-family

dwellings that were common for the working class in the late-19<sup>th</sup> century, early 20<sup>th</sup> century. The State, the Catholic Church, and the society in general associated a series of positive values to the single-family house: an emphasis on the nuclear family (“togetherness”), privacy as a way to preserve the virtue and morality of the family, and the ‘good citizen’ values associated with homeownership. The ‘Californian chalet’ became the quintessential symbol of this model throughout Argentina.

CHAPTER 2  
REPRESENTATIONS OF THE CALIFORNIAN STYLE  
IN MASS MEDIA: AN ANALYSIS

*Introduction*

The Californian style is one of the architectural styles most easily recognized by the public in Argentina. This chapter will survey the style as presented in popular culture and political propaganda, exploring the meanings and messages conveyed in various means of mass communication. The chapter is divided into three sections. The first one describes the role of the cinema in the introduction of California architecture in Argentina and in the cultivation of the desire to consume the ‘forms’ and details of this architecture. An analysis is performed on the different types of films that showcased Mission Revival and Spanish Colonial Revival architecture during the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. The second section describes the portrayal of the Californian Style in specialized professional and domestic magazines and the related meanings and values. The last section studies the political ideals, values, and messages conveyed in official propaganda during the Peronist government that helped to perpetuate the style in social memory.

*1. The Cinema and the diffusion of California architecture*

The cinema played a significant role in the diffusion of California architecture not only to Argentina and Latin America in general, but throughout the world. In the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, the cinema industry of the United States began its successful

development on the West Coast. By 1912, most major film companies had set up production facilities in Southern California, particularly near or in Los Angeles.<sup>57</sup>

Not coincidentally, the first movie filmed in Hollywood was “In Old California” (1910),<sup>58</sup> which was set in 19<sup>th</sup>-century California, when it belonged to Mexico. This movie was the first of a series of drama and Western films that portrayed a romantic view of the Hispanic era of California. For example, Helen Hunt Jackson’s novel “Ramona”—a romantic drama about a half-Native American, half-Scottish orphan that falls in love with a Mission Indian—has been adapted in various films since 1910. Spanish Colonial and Mission architecture were commonly used in the settings of these films. This can be illustrated in “The Mark of Zorro” (1920),<sup>59</sup> which introduced one of the most famous stories in the history of Western films. It was based on the story “The Curse of Capistrano,” created in 1919 by New York-based pulp writer Johnston McCulley. The legend of “Zorro”—a masked hero living in Los Angeles during the era of Spanish rule who avenged the poor by attacking those who had exploited them—had popular appeal throughout Latin America. Two “Zorro” cinematic productions were released in Argentina during the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. In 1939, the Republic Pictures film serial “Zorro's Fighting Legion”<sup>60</sup> was released in twelve chapters (see figures 2.1 and 2.2). In 1941, the first remake of

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<sup>57</sup> Lewis Jacobs, *The Rise of the American film* (Harcourt Brace, New York, 1930), 85.

<sup>58</sup> *In Old California*, directed by D.W. Griffith, Biograph Company, 1910.

<sup>59</sup> *The Mark of Zorro*, directed by Fred Niblo, Douglas Fairbanks Pictures Corporation, 1920. This film was remade twice, once in 1940 and again in 1974.

<sup>60</sup> *Zorro's Fighting Legion*, directed by Jon English and William Witney, Republic Pictures, 1939. This film was shot in Simi Hills and Chatsworth, Los Angeles. It was released in Argentina as “*La Legión del Zorro*.”

the movie “The Mark of Zorro”<sup>61</sup> became available in theaters. Through these films California became a synonym for adventure, romance, and tradition.

In addition to Western and dramatic films, California’s Mission Revival and Spanish Colonial Revival styles were showcased in other film genres popular during the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. An early example, “The Music Box” (1932)<sup>62</sup> is a short comedy film shot in Silver Lake neighborhood, Los Angeles, an upper-class neighborhood in which Spanish Colonial Revival is the defining style. The popular comedy duo of Laurel and Hardy (known in Argentina as *El Gordo y el Flaco*) attempt to move a piano up a long public stairway located between Vendome Street and Descanso Drive (see figures 2.3 and 2.4).

Mission Revival and Spanish Colonial Revival styles were also commonly found in *film noir*, which became popular during and after World War II. This genre began to explore the “darker aspects of modernity,”<sup>63</sup> reflecting the tensions and insecurities of the period. Film-noir dramas include crime, tragic romance, treachery, and the sense of failure and broken dreams. The archetypes of the male as an outsider and the female as a femme-fatale are characteristic of these movies.<sup>64</sup> The aesthetics of the characters and the architectural settings usually evoke a sort of sensuality and extravagance. California’s Mission Revival and Spanish Colonial Revival styles are used either as ostentatious remnants of a better life before the Depression or as a

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<sup>61</sup> *The Mark of Zorro*, directed by Rouben Mamoulian, 20th Century Fox, 1940. It was released in Argentina as “*La Marca del Zorro*.”

<sup>62</sup> *The Music Box*, directed by James Parrot, Hal Roach Studios, 1932 (released in Argentina as *La caja de música*).

<sup>63</sup> Tony D’Ambra, “What is Film Noir?” Filmsnoir.net: In the shadows, <http://filmsnoir.net/what-is-film-noir> (accessed February 22, 2015).

<sup>64</sup> *Ibid.*

representation of the “gentile respectability”<sup>65</sup> of middle class neighborhoods during that period.

Figure 2.5 shows the house of femme-fatale Phyllis Dietrichson—a seductive housewife who planned her husband’s demise—in the movie “Double Indemnity” (1944).<sup>66</sup> The house is a two-story, stuccoed building designed in the Spanish Colonial Revival style. It features multi-level, low-pitched roofs covered with red ceramic tiles; a central, octagonal tower; over-hanging, wood balconies; arcaded garage openings; elaborated chimney tops; and stucco decorative vents. Quatrefoil detailing in some of the windows shows also an association with the Mission Revival style. The interior of the house is equally exuberant, showing a prominent spiral staircase with elaborated wrought-iron railings, tile flooring, and arched openings. “It was one of those California Spanish houses everyone was nuts about 10 or 15 years ago (...) This one must have cost somebody 30,000 bucks. That is, if he ever finished paying for it,” the male character mentioned in the movie.<sup>67</sup> The idea of wealth and prestige associated with California’s Spanish Colonial Revival style was complemented in film-noir movies with the idea of sensuality, exuberance, and intrigue.

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<sup>65</sup> *Los Angeles Plays Itself*, directed by Thom Andersen, Modcinema.com, 2004, disc 1, 1:06:44.

<sup>66</sup> *Double Indemnity*, directed by Billy Wilder, Paramount Pictures, 1944. It was released in Argentina as “*Pacto de Sangre*” (Blood Covenant).

The house used for this movie is located in Hollywood Hills, California.

The term "double indemnity" refers to a clause in certain life insurance policies that doubles the payout in cases when death is caused by certain accidental means.

<sup>67</sup> *Ibid.*, 7:12 to 7:24.

An additional *film noir* example in which Spanish Colonial Revival is showcased is “Mildred Pierce” (1945).<sup>68</sup> The movie is set in the 1930s and tells the story of another femme-fatale, Mildred Pierce, who after a divorce has to make her way socially and economically while coping with her ungrateful daughter. Unlike the mansion in the previous example, Mildred lives in a simple, one-story, Spanish Colonial Revival house (see figure 2.6), similar to those that dominated many 1930s neighborhoods in California.<sup>69</sup> Though simpler, the house shares many of the common features of the previous example: low-pitched roof covered with red ceramic tiles; a central tower (circular, in this case); an arcaded opening; and stucco decorative vents. In the interior, the film shows arcaded openings and the inevitable wrought-iron staircase (though the exterior of the real house only shows one story); ostentatious furniture together with iron sconces and chandeliers denote the desire of social upgrading of the main character.

Lastly, the films “Union Station” (1950)<sup>70</sup> and “Vertigo” (1958)<sup>71</sup> exemplify how Spanish Colonial Revival and Mission style buildings continued to be popular filming locations beyond the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. “Union Station” is a crime thriller taking place in Los Angeles Union Passenger Terminal (designed by John and Donald Parkinson in 1939). The station was the major gateway to Los Angeles in the 1940s and 1950s and its design—a combination of Spanish Colonial Revival and Art

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<sup>68</sup> *Mildred Pierce*, directed by Michael Curtiz, Warner Bros., 1945. It was released in Argentina as “*El suplicio de una madre*” (The agony of a mother) in 1946.

<sup>69</sup> The house used for this movie, built c. 1935, is located in Glendale, California.

<sup>70</sup> *Union Station*, directed by Rudolph Maté, Paramount Pictures, 1950. It was released in Argentina as “*De mala entraña*.”

<sup>71</sup> *Vertigo*, directed by Alfred Hitchcock, Alfred J. Hitchcock Productions, 1958.

Deco architecture—represents the relationship between the city’s history and modernity (see figure 2.7). Hitchcock’s “Vertigo” is a psychological thriller that uses the Mission church at San Juan Bautista (founded by Franciscan missionaries in 1797) for the most climatic scene in the movie (see figure 2.8). Curiously, the bell tower shown in the movie was added at a studio (the original church’s tower had collapsed many years before).

Hollywood cinema continued to offer distinctive interpretations of California’s Mission Revival and Spanish Colonial Revival styles throughout the 20<sup>th</sup> century, even when the styles started to wane in popularity among architectural professionals and academics.

In Argentina, the first private film screenings appeared in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century but it was not until the 1930s that cinemas began to be a popular attraction. At that time, the lower classes were used to radio serials. Class conciliation, love as an instrument to break social barriers, and the difficulty of adaptation to the cities were the popular topics.<sup>72</sup> The middle and upper classes preferred French cinema and Hollywood productions.<sup>73</sup> From the mid-1930s onwards, however, a series of modern theatres and cinemas began to appear in the cities, chiefly in Buenos Aires, and attendance began to increase rapidly. By the 1940s, cinemas were one of the most popular attractions for the entire population.

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<sup>72</sup> Alberto Ciria, *Política y Cultura Popular: La Argentina Peronista, 1946-1955* (Buenos Aires: Ediciones de la Flor, 1983), 259-260.

<sup>73</sup> Ibid.



Figures 2.1, and 2.2 Two typical scenes from "Zorro's Fighting Legion" portraying the Hispanic architecture of Old California.

Sources: "Zorro's Fighting Legion the Great Republic Serial Chapter 5," Youtube video, minute 8:02, posted by The Serial Squadron, Sep 26, 2011, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FMOkjvYIZ-s>; "Zorro's Fighting Legion the Great Republic Serial Chapter 4," Youtube video, minute 12:04, posted by The Serial Squadron, Sep 26, 2011, [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=D\\_fPInIjY6Y](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=D_fPInIjY6Y)



Figure 2.3, and 2.4 Spanish Colonial Revival houses surround the public stairway used in Laurel and Hardy's short film "The Music Box" (Silver Lake neighborhood, Los Angeles, CA)

*Source:* "The Music Box," Dave Lord Heath, [http://www.lordheath.com/index.php?p=1\\_230\\_The-Music-Box](http://www.lordheath.com/index.php?p=1_230_The-Music-Box) (accessed April 20, 2015).



Figure 2.5 House in “Double Indemnity”

Source: “Double Indemnity: Film Locations,” Dear Old Hollywood, <http://dearoldhollywood.blogspot.com/2009/05/double-indemnity-film-locations.html> (accessed March 2, 2015).

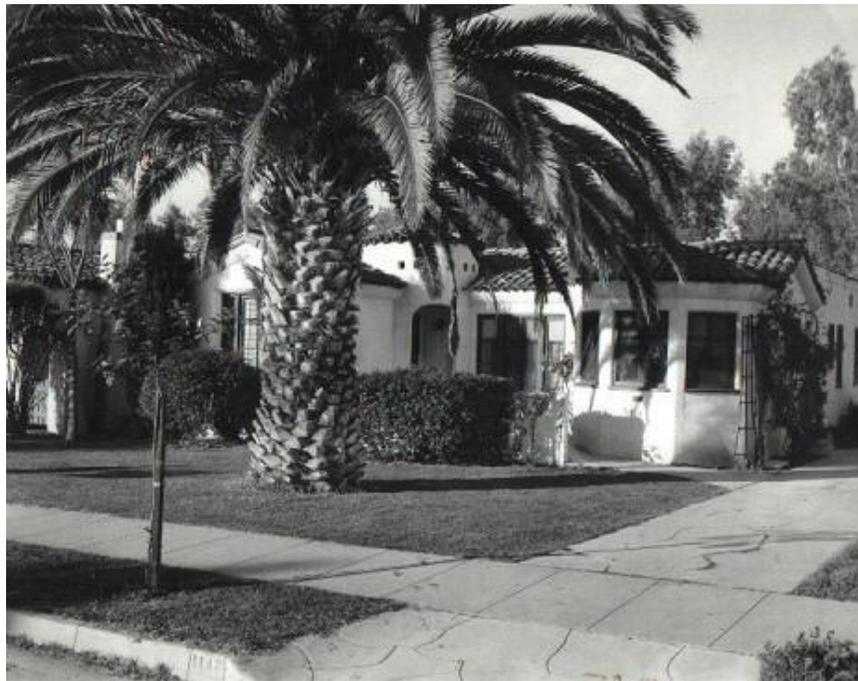


Figure 2.6 House in “Mildred Pierce”

Source: “Mildred Pierce’s house on Glendale,” Hooked on Houses, <http://hookedonhouses.net/wp-content/uploads/2011/03/Mildred-Pierces-house-in-Glendale.jpg> (accessed March 2, 2015).



Figure 2.7 Los Angeles Union Passenger Terminal's interior in the film "Union Station."

*Source:* Heidi Zeller, "Reflections on Union Station: an essay by Rafer Guzman," The Source: transportation news and views, [http://thesource.metro.net/2014/07/01/reflections-on-union-station-an-essay-by-rafer-guzman/guzman\\_3\\_unionstatn\\_still\\_un\\_11461-29/](http://thesource.metro.net/2014/07/01/reflections-on-union-station-an-essay-by-rafer-guzman/guzman_3_unionstatn_still_un_11461-29/) (accessed April 20, 2015)



Figure 2.8 Representation of Mission San Juan Bautista in the movie "Vertigo."

*Source:* "Vertigo - Mission San Juan Bautista," San Francisco movie locations from classic films, <http://reelsf.com/reelsf/vertigo-bell-tower> (accessed April 20, 2015)

## 2. *Specialized Magazines: a changing attitude towards the Californian style.*

Changes in the ways and frequency that the Californian style was portrayed in architectural magazines of the period was both a reflection of the different stylistic developments and an influence on the direction that these developments took. Specialized domestic and professional architecture magazines had a significant role in the introduction of the style, its diffusion, and its association with certain ideas and values in the social memory of the country.

### 2.1 *Domestic architectural magazines*

The most prominent Argentinian domestic architectural magazine during the 20<sup>th</sup> century was *Casas y Jardines* (a near-literal translation of “House and Garden,” one of the U.S. referents of the magazine).<sup>74</sup> The main intent of the magazine was the diffusion of a modern style of habitation that privileged the single-family, detached house located in a suburban or rural setting. In terms of styles of architecture, the magazine showcased both modern and ‘rustic’ or ‘picturesque’ houses. Although the editors of the magazine preferred Modernism—*Editorial Contémpera* also published *Nuestra Arquitectura*, the magazine that boosted Modern architecture in Argentina—they recognized people’s preference for rustic styles.<sup>75</sup> The Californian style was the one that reflected this popular preference. To justify the ‘modernity’ of the Californian style, the editors praised the style’s authenticity, simplicity, and perfect adaptation to the climate, geography, and culture of the country.

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<sup>74</sup> *Casas y Jardines* was published by Editorial Contémpera from 1933 to the 1980s.

<sup>75</sup> Anahí Ballent and Jorge Francisco Liernur, *La casa y la multitud: vivienda, política y cultura en la Argentina moderna* (Buenos Aires: Fondo de Cultura Económica, 2014), 438.

The continued use of the Californian style in *Casas y Jardines* (the longest-lived magazine in the local media)<sup>76</sup> was noticeable. The magazine documented the different phases of development of the Californian style. In doing so, the emphasis of the magazine evolved from a focus on large, suburban and vacation houses for the upper class to smaller, often urban, models for the middle class.

As mentioned in Chapter One, during the 1930s the Californian style was associated with the upper class and the idea of living in close contact with nature, playing outdoor activities and sports, and accessing (by train, first, and then by automobile) far-away, pristine landscapes in which to vacation. These ideas were reflected in the first houses showcased in the magazine. Figure 2.9 shows a vacation house located in Marcos Paz, one of the many suburban communities connected to the city of Buenos Aires. The house is surrounded by a large park in a traditional *estancia*.<sup>77</sup> In this case, the Californian style represents not only contact with a rural setting but also the social status associated with the ownership of these large pieces of land.

Suburban or ‘weekend’ houses are also portrayed in Californian style in the magazine. The house shown in figure 2.10 is located in Tortugas Country Club, an upper-class, planned community built in 1933 and associated with outdoor sports (e.g. polo, horse-back riding, golf, and tennis). The house is described as ‘picturesque’ and outfitted with all the necessary features to achieve a “perfect spiritual and physical

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<sup>76</sup> Anahí Ballent and Jorge Francisco Liernur, *La casa y la multitud: vivienda, política y cultura en la Argentina moderna* (Buenos Aires: Fondo de Cultura Económica, 2014), 436.

<sup>77</sup> *Estancias* are large estates that belonged to Buenos Aires aristocracy, usually associated with cattle.

rest:” a well-ventilated and shaded porch, a terrace and a balcony connected to the bedroom, and a wall-mounted fountain providing a relaxing sound of water.<sup>78</sup>

The association of the Californian style with wealth and prestige, and especially with what was considered to be ‘modern’ and fashionable, was also emphasized in a section of the magazine called “*Las casas de los artistas de la pantalla*” (The homes of movie stars). In this section, many of the houses were Spanish Colonial Revival or Mission Revival-style buildings in Hollywood. California architecture was praised as appropriate to the region; an architecture adapted to geography, climate and culture.

In 1938, the house of Patric Knowles, a famous actor from the Warner Bros, is described as follows:

*“La casa de Patric Knowles, como nacida entre la abundante vegetación acusa, con sus sencillas líneas californianas, una arquitectura típica que dice bien a las claras del clima de la región donde fue levantada.”*<sup>79</sup> (The house of Patrick Knowles, flowering among the abundant vegetation, manifests with its simple Californian lines a typical architecture that speaks clearly of the climate of the region where it was built).

The cultural appropriateness of the style is exemplified in the house of George Brent (see figure 2.11), another Warner Bros. actor, which is described as “a very typical model of the old constructions of California, in which the influence of Spanish architecture was evident” (translation is mine).<sup>80</sup> Lastly, the close relation between California architecture and nature is shown in the house of comic actor Joe E. Brown

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<sup>78</sup> Carlos Malbranche, Architect, “Un chalet en el Tortugas Country Club,” *Casas y Jardines*, November 1938, 502-503.

<sup>79</sup> “Las casas de los artistas de la pantalla,” *Casas y Jardines*, January 1938, 18-20.

<sup>80</sup> “Las viviendas de los artistas de la pantalla,” *Casas y jardines*, May 1940, 214-215.

(see figure 2.12), where the “harmonic” association between the house and the park “should be taken as an example” (translation is mine).<sup>81</sup> In this way, the houses of Hollywood movie stars validated the ideas and values recognized in the Californian style: simplicity, authenticity, and a close connection with nature, climate, and Hispanic culture.

In the late 1930s and early 1940s, the content of *Casas y Jardines* reflected the adaptation of the Californian style to smaller programs associated with an increasing urban population and a burgeoning middle class. Rural and suburban settings gave way to urban contexts with narrower, smaller lots. Although the middle class still dreamt about U.S. suburbs, their reality was houses for 10-yard-wide lots.<sup>82</sup> Being “*pequeño*” (small) was considered a positive quality, and the term was frequently applied to the homes shown in the magazine. The magazine even started providing plans for affordable homes along with budgets and construction guidance, reflecting the contemporary debates about social housing.<sup>83</sup>

The wide range of Californian-style residential projects published in *Casas y Jardines* reflected the adaptability of the style to a changing economy and social representation, which allowed the construction of projects of diverse costs and sizes.<sup>84</sup>

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<sup>81</sup> “Las casas de los artistas de la pantalla,” *Casas y jardines*, April 1938, 165.

<sup>82</sup> Anahí Ballent and Jorge Francisco Liernur, *La casa y la multitud: vivienda, política y cultura en la Argentina moderna* (Buenos Aires: Fondo de Cultura Económica, 2014), 445.

<sup>83</sup> *Ibid.*, 436.

<sup>84</sup> *Ibid.*, 446.



Figure 2.9 Vacation house located in a traditional *estancia* in Buenos Aires.  
Source: "La casa de veraneo del Sr. Ángel Greco," *Casas y Jardines*, February 1938, 68-69.

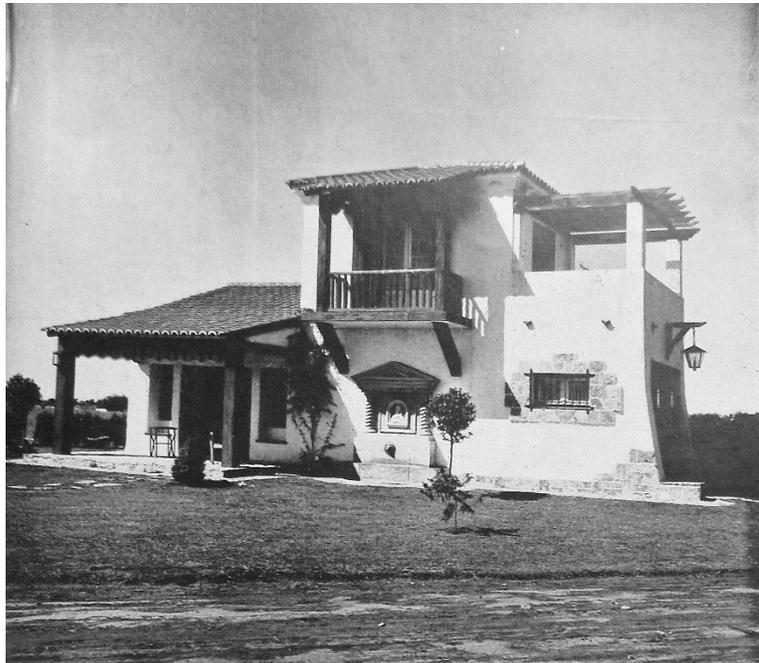


Figure 2.10 Suburban house located in Tortugas Country Club, Buenos Aires.  
Source: Carlos Malbranche, Architect, "Un chalet en el Tortugas Country Club," *Casas y Jardines*, November 1938, 502-503.



Figure 2.11 George Brent's residence.

Source: "Las viviendas de los artistas de la pantalla," *Casas y jardines*, May 1940, 214-215.

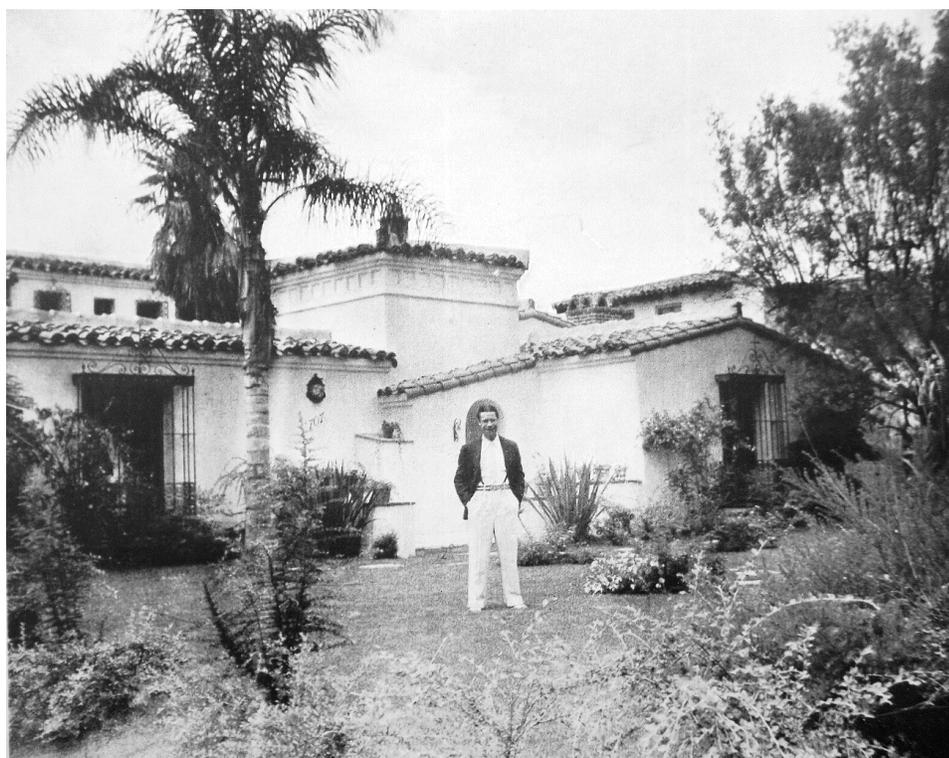


Figure 2.12 Joe E. Brown's residence.

Source: "Las casas de los artistas de la pantalla," *Casas y jardines*, April 1938, 165.

## 2.2 Professional architectural magazines

Compared to domestic architectural magazines, the portrayal of the Californian style in professional architectural magazines was not as constant. Even though there are certain similarities, professional magazines tended to be more influenced by international events and ideologies, and, in certain cases, by the academic environment of Buenos Aires' School of Architecture and the development of architectural education in Argentina.

*Nuestra Arquitectura* and *Revista de Arquitectura* were the most important Argentinian architectural magazines among professionals and academics in the 20<sup>th</sup> century. *Nuestra Arquitectura* was published between 1929 and 1986 by *Editorial Contémpera*, the same company that published *Casas y Jardines*. Housing was the main focus of the magazine, mainly influenced by its founder U.S. engineer Walter Hylton Scott, who was a prominent socialist activist. He was interested in the solution of social housing needs and the diffusion of 'modern living' in Argentina. On the other hand, *Revista de Arquitectura* had a broader focus, generally directed towards urbanism and city management.<sup>85</sup> It was published between 1915 and 1945 by the *Centro de Estudiantes de Arquitectura* (Architecture Students Organization) and the *Sociedad Central de Arquitectos* (Central Architects Society).

Examples of the Californian style in *Nuestra Arquitectura* were published during two distinct periods. The first was during the first years of the magazine. During 1930 and 1931, the style was introduced with an intense promotion of Spanish

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<sup>85</sup> Rosa Aboy, *Viviendas para el pueblo: espacio urbano y sociabilidad en el barrio Los Perales: 1946-1955* (Victoria, Pcia. de Buenos Aires: Universidad de San Andrés. 2005), 46.

colonial and Mediterranean architecture, and new trends in social interactions that included outdoor activities, and weekend and vacation retreats. One of the first projects introducing the style was figure 2.13: “*Una casa californiana*” (A Californian-style house). The article describes the house as designed in a “Spanish-Californian style” and explains how the style had been developing for many years in California, deriving its forms from buildings typical of similar-climate places along the Mediterranean and Mexico.<sup>86</sup> The association of the Californian style with new trends in outdoor activities and sports was clear in the project for the Tortugas Country Club (see figure 2.14). In December of 1930, *Nuestra Arquitectura* announced the creation of a new suburban planned community. Conceived with the purpose of providing accommodation and facilities for the associates of the club (located “60 minutes” away from Buenos Aires city), the Tortugas Country Club was designed with a chapel, restaurant, social club, housing, and several sports facilities. All the architecture was designed in, and described as Californian style and the houses reflected “...ese aspecto sólido, uniforme; de esa sobriedad comfortable que caracteriza las creaciones del estilo californiano” (that solid and uniform appearance; of that comfortable propriety that characterizes Californian-style creations).<sup>87</sup> The interiors had all the requirements of a ‘modern’ house: “ample living room with chimney, built-in wardrobes, interior kitchen, and electricity, telephone, and sanitary installations.”<sup>88</sup>

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<sup>86</sup> “Una casa californiana: proyecto del Arquitecto Carlos Malbranche,” *Nuestra Arquitectura*, May 1930, 387-389.

<sup>87</sup> “Lo que será el Tortugas Country Club. Proyecto de Carlos Malbranche, Arq.,” *Nuestra Arquitectura*, December 1930, 659-660.

<sup>88</sup> *Ibid.*

Despite this first promotion of the Californian style in *Nuestra Arquitectura*, it disappeared from the magazine between 1932 and the end of the decade. Not coincidentally, those were the years in which the Modern Movement (known in the United States as the International Style) spread all over the world. The “Modern Architecture International Exhibition” held in 1932 at the Museum of Modern Art in New York City, the closure of the Bauhaus in 1933 (caused by an increasingly unstable political situation in Germany), and the consequent emigration of key figures of the Bauhaus were all influential in the spread of Modern Movement ideas.<sup>89</sup> As a consequence, the editors of *Nuestra Arquitectura* devoted several pages to the diffusion of the Modern Movement, transforming the magazine into the most important promoter of contemporary design in Argentina.<sup>90</sup>

During World War II, however, examples of the Californian style appeared again in the pages of *Nuestra Arquitectura*, usually in rural and suburban settings. Weekend and vacation houses were still popular, especially the houses located in Mar del Plata, a popular seaside vacation destination in Buenos Aires (see figure 2.15). Despite this ‘renaissance’ of Californian-style architecture in *Nuestra Arquitectura*, the term “Californian style” was not used any more. When necessary, the architecture was simply described as ‘appropriate to the place’ (rural or suburban), but there was no mention of the name of the style.

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<sup>89</sup> Alexandra Griffith Winton, “The Bauhaus, 1919–1933,” The Metropolitan Museum of Art: Heilbrunn Timeline of Art History, [http://www.metmuseum.org/toah/hd/bauh/hd\\_bauh.htm](http://www.metmuseum.org/toah/hd/bauh/hd_bauh.htm) (accessed March 2, 2015).

<sup>90</sup> Anahí Ballent and Jorge Francisco Liernur, *La casa y la multitud: vivienda, política y cultura en la Argentina moderna* (Buenos Aires: Fondo de Cultura Económica, 2014), 438.

On the other hand, the presence of the Californian style in *Revista de Arquitectura*, the other professional architectural magazine of the time, was more continuous although perhaps not as intense as the two periods of the style in *Nuestra Arquitectura*. Founded by the Architectural Students Organization (and later co-edited with the Central Architects Society), the content of the magazine was influenced by the prevailing academic and eclectic architectural educational system. The Californian style was included as one more of the styles available for designers. Even during the peak years of the Modern style in Argentina, the Californian style was still present in the section of the magazine dedicated to students' projects. Suburban schools, vacation villages, rural monasteries, and equestrian clubs were some of the building types for which the students considered the use of the Californian style as appropriate (see figure 2.16).

After 1946, the Californian style began to wane in popularity among architecture professionals. By 1947, it had almost disappeared from the two professional architectural magazines. Only *Revista de Arquitectura* published some of the Californian-style, government-sponsored architectural production during the Peronist period of 1946 to 1955 (see figures 2.17 and 2.18). *Nuestra Arquitectura*, on the other hand, asserted that the government housing projects were without architectural value: "...*las obras del Estado que no tienen valor arquitectónico (los barrios de viviendas, por ejemplo).*"<sup>91</sup>

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<sup>91</sup> "Editorial," *Nuestra Arquitectura*, March 1949, 83.



BIBLIOTECA



*El estilo californiano, tan poco frecuente entre nosotros,  
como abundante en ciertas regiones de los Estados Unidos.*

## Una casa californiana

Proyecto del Arquitecto CARLOS MALBRANCHE

*(Arg. A. S. A. de Paris)*

La obra que publicamos en estas páginas es en estilo californiano español, el que por muchos años ha estado prosperando y desarrollándose en ese estado norteamericano, derivando su principal inspiración, directa o indirectamente, de los tipos latinos que surgieron bajo condiciones similares de clima a lo largo del Mediterráneo y en puntos de Méjico y California.

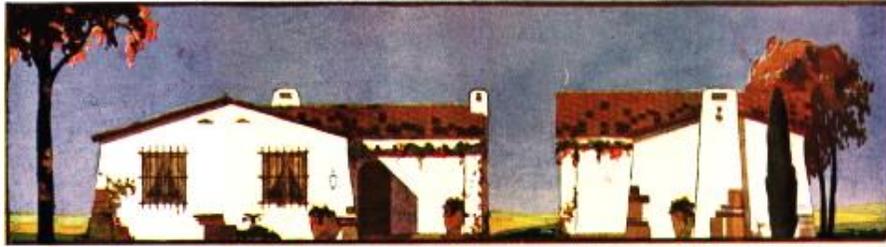
El color empleado es generalmente muy claro de tonos; los materiales usados son el yeso con paredes exteriores de construcción durable en adobe y estuco o en concreto, piedra o piedra artificial. Los techos tienen poca inclinación, rara vez más empinados que de 30 grados, con un máximo de 35, generalmente de tejas o a veces en el tipo de galería de Monterrey, usando tejamaniles.

Para proyectar la presente construcción, levantada en la estación Anchorena, se ha tenido como idea primordial conseguir el máximo posible de vistas al río desde sus dormitorios y especialmente desde el living room, para lo cual se lo ha ubicado expresamente en el piso alto, comunicándolo por medio de un gran ventanal a una terraza cubierta. En la parte posterior se halla agrupado el servicio con su entrada independiente. En el piso bajo hay, además, un estudio y dormitorio de los niños, también con su acceso independiente.

En la distribución y orientación se ha previsto que podía ser habitado tanto en invierno como en verano, por lo cual los dormitorios y el living room reciben el sol por la mañana y al atardecer, sin tener que soportar los rigores de los fuertes soles.

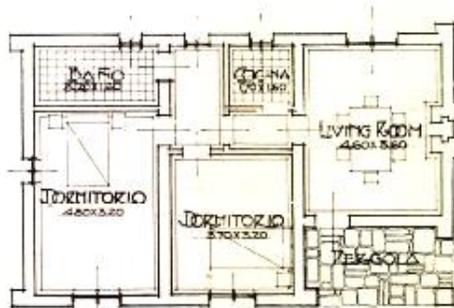
Figure 2.13 One of the first Californian-style projects introduced in magazine *Nuestra Arquitectura*.

Source: "Una casa californiana: proyecto del Arquitecto Carlos Malbranche," *Nuestra Arquitectura*, May 1930, 387-389.



CASA TIPO A.

taurant de primer orden, ubicado en el edificio social, especie de monasterio de estilo colonial californiano, de grandes dimensiones, con todas las comodidades pero sin lujos superfluos, tal como es hoy la tendencia en las mejores instituciones similares del mundo. Rodeando a este edificio, un barrio de casitas blancas, diseminadas entre el bosque centenario: ermitas más o menos amplias, más o menos lujosas por dentro, a gusto del socio, pero por fuera conservando todas ese aspecto sólido, uniforme; de esa sobriedad confortable que caracteriza las creaciones del estilo californiano; y en todas ellas



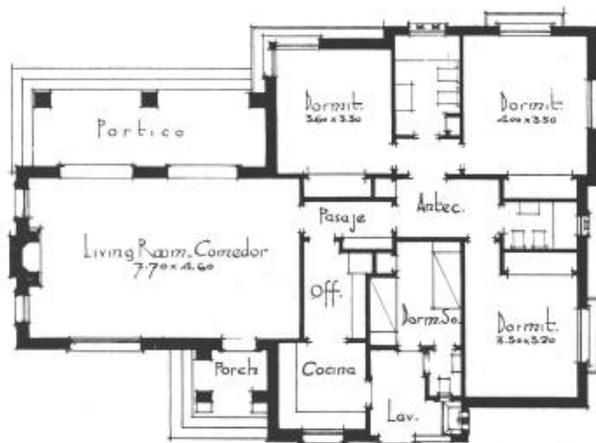
PLANO DE LA CASA TIPO A.



Figure 2.14 One of the models of residence in the Tortugas Country Club, Buenos Aires.

Source: "Lo que será el Tortugas Country Club. Proyecto de Carlos Malbranche, Arq.," *Nuestra Arquitectura*, December 1930, 659-660.

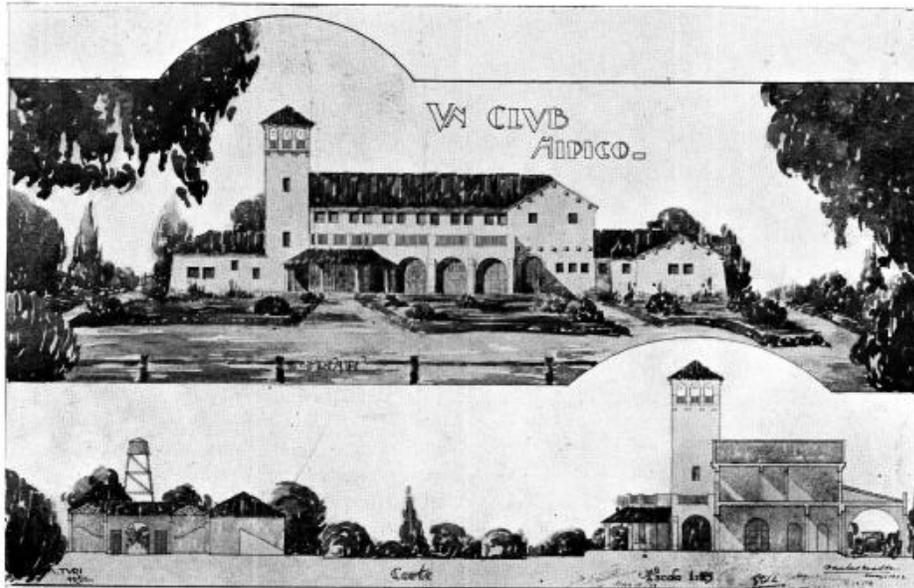
## CASA DE VACACIONES EN MAR DEL PLATA



Uno de los males que aqueja a muchas casas de Mar del Plata, es la escasez del terreno sobre el que se las construye. Ello es la consecuencia de una imprevisión inconcebible, traducida en la ausencia de toda reglamentación eficaz, circunstancia que alienta la especulación desenfrenada, sin otro fin que el lucro personal. Como se siga así por unos años más, la gran ciudad balnearia habrá sido estropeada sin remedio. Esta que publicamos aquí, ha tenido la suerte de un terreno grande y bien proporcionado, lo que ha permitido extenderse en planta baja y orientar el edificio sin otra preocupación que dotar a sus ambientes principales de los beneficios inapreciables de la luz y el sol. La planta no requiere mayores comentarios; sólo vale la pena hacer notar cómo mediante un pasaje de dimensiones relativamente reduci-

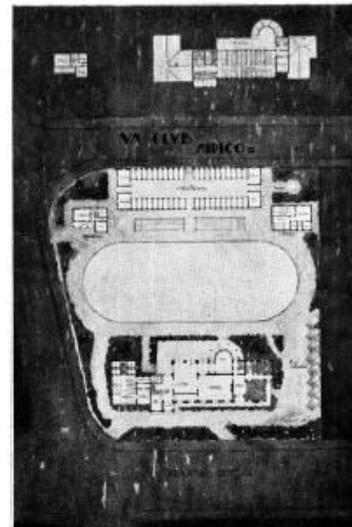
Figure 2.15 Vacation house in Mar del Plata, a popular coastal destination in Buenos Aires.

Source: "Casa de vacaciones en Mar del Plata," *Nuestra Arquitectura*, January 1944, 24-27.



Frontes y corte-transversal

Tema: "Un Club Hipico"  
 Arquitectura III<sup>er</sup> Curso  
 Por el Alumno: M. Turi  
 Profesores: René Karmán y Alfredo Villalonga - Año 1933  
 (Tema publicado en el número de Julio de 1933,  
 página N°. 325)



Plantas principales

REVISTA DE ARQUITECTURA 390

Figure 2.16 Architecture student project for an "Equestrian Club."  
 Source: "Trabajos de la Escuela de Arquitectura," *Revista de Arquitectura*, August 1933, 390.

## BARRIO

### PRESIDENTE PERON

BUENOS AIRES

El barrio está limitado por las calles Republicetas, Andanaegui, Aizpurúa y Avda. General Paz, y ocupa una extensión aproximada de 32 hectáreas.

En la parte norte del Barrio se halla el terreno destinado al Jardín Zoológico de la Ciudad de Buenos Aires, y al Sur el Parque y Museo Municipal de Saavedra.

Su proximidad a las Avdas. General Paz y de los Constituyentes, Triunvirato y estaciones Villa Urquiza y General Pueyrredón, del F. C. N. General Bartolomé Mitre, dan al barrio rápido y cómodo acceso.

Por iniciativa del Presidente de la Nación, General de Ejército Don Juan Perón y bajo la dirección inmediata del Ministro de Obras Públicas, General de Ejército Don Juan Pistarini, se procedió al emplazamiento, trazado y estudio del Barrio. Las obras empezaron el día 15 de septiembre de 1947 y terminaron el 17 de octubre de 1949.

Su construcción se llevó a cabo con los fondos provenientes de la Ayuda Social Eva Perón.

#### Edificios que comprende.

Consta de un Centro Cívico y viviendas individuales, aisladas y en bloque. El Centro Cívico está formado por los siguientes edificios:

a) Templo con vivienda para el cura párroco y despacho parroquial.

Vista general del Barrio. Al fondo el Museo Saavedra.



Figure 2.17 Publication of government-sponsored housing projects during the Peronist era: *Barrio Perón* (case study on Chapter 4).

Source: "Barrio Presidente Perón, Buenos Aires," *Revista de Arquitectura*, February 1952, 23.



Das aspectos de Villa Evita



III - IV 1953 - 23

Figure 2.18 Publication of government-sponsored architectural production during the Peronist era: *Ciudad Infantil* (The Children City), an institution for the education of preschool, poor or orphan children.

Source: "Ciudad Infantil, Buenos Aires," *Revista de Arquitectura*, III-IV, 1953, 23.

Professional and domestic architectural magazines shaped architects' and consumers' ideas about the Californian style. The association of the style with rural and suburban settings appeared to be a constant across the pages of these magazines, but its evolution into urban, smaller forms was also traced.

3. *Government propaganda: the “chalecito californiano” as the quintessential symbol of homeownership and social justice.*

The extensive propaganda of the Peronist government during the 1940s and 1950s helped diffuse the Californian style throughout Argentina. Despite the fact that the Californian style co-existed with the Modern style in government housing developments, it is clear that the Peronists' preferred that their housing production be represented publicly by examples of the Californian style.

Particular ideas and values had been associated with the Californian style during the previous decades. From the 1920s, the style had conveyed the value of nationalism, and upper-class status and prestige. During the 1930s the style also began to be associated with the idea of modernity and the values of the nuclear family and good citizenship. These ideals and values were considered by Peronism as consistent with its own political ideology and the Peronist pillars of “social justice” and “social welfare.” Therefore, the Peronist government used the Californian style as a representation of its own ideas and values, giving the style a renewed meaning and multiplying its effects at a massive scale. As Anahí Ballent states: “*la política no crea formas sino que resignifica formas existentes*” (politics does not create new

forms but re-signifies ones that already exist).<sup>92</sup> Thus, the Californian “forms” were re-signified by the Peronism as symbols of the acquisition of new rights and the extension of wellbeing to the working class.

An example of social welfare is shown in figures 2.19 and 2.20. The images are an allegorical representation of upward mobility, in social and economic terms, of a typical working-class family (grandfather included as a recognition of old-age rights). In the background of figure 2.19, a series of public works and other symbols of progress accompany a *chalecito californiano* (small Californian chalet) and an institutional building also designed in the Californian style. In contrast to the poorly dressed family of figure 2.19, the family of figure 2.20 is dressed up as a middle-class family. The contrast between the two pictures is a symbolic representation of the State as responsible for the well-being of the population and as a mediator between the classes of society. The Californian style is used in this example to illustrate the social upgrading and welfare of the working-class population.

Figure 2.19 and figure 2.20 are taken from one of the most significant government propaganda publications produced by Peronists: “*La Nación Argentina, justa, libre, soberana*”<sup>93</sup> (The Argentine Nation, fair, free, sovereign). This large “atlas” (more than 800 pages), published and distributed in 1950, was a compilation of the work done by the administration during the first term of Juan Domingo Perón. The book portrays, in a very didactic way, all the values and ideals of Peronism. It

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<sup>92</sup> Anahí Ballent, *Las huellas de la política: vivienda, ciudad, peronismo en Buenos Aires, 1943-1955* (Buenos Aires, Argentina: Universidad Nacional de Quilmes, 2005), 23.

<sup>93</sup> Luis Guillermo Bähler, *La Nación argentina, justa, libre, soberana* (Buenos Aires: Control de Estado de la Presidencia de la Nación, 1950).

also includes the goals and strategies for the development of the country, and the accomplishments and results. Its large size (10" x 15"), full-color pages, and mostly graphic nature (very little text, just enough to emphasize the ideas conveyed in the pictures) made it effective in communicating ideas to the population. Californian-style architecture has a significant presence in the book. Not only is the style shown in the many housing and institutional projects built by the government, but also it is used to represent any reference to architecture. Whenever an allusion to a building is needed, it is represented in the Californian style, even when these constructions appear in the background, as shown in figure 2.20.

The value of homeownership is represented in figure 2.21 (also from "*La Nación Argentina, justa, libre, soberana*"). The *chalecito californiano* is used as an icon to show the distribution and presence of housing developments throughout the country. In the background, the drawing plans of a typical, single-family, detached house designed in the Californian style is complemented with a picture of a happy family standing in front of their own Californian chalet. Again, the Californian style is used as symbol of the acquisition of new rights of the population.

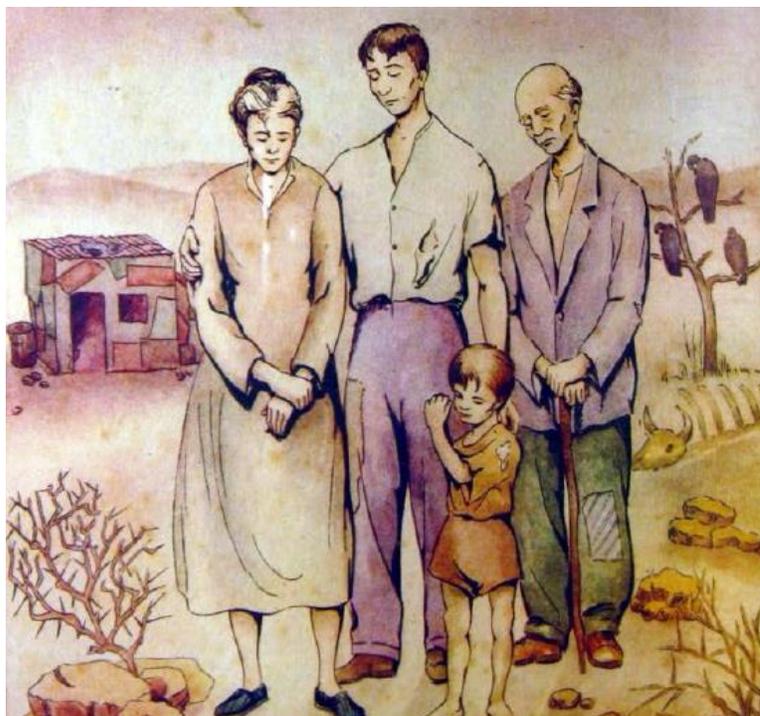


Figure 2.19. Representation of a working-class family before the government of Juan D. Perón.

Source: Luis Guillermo Bähler, *La Nación argentina, justa, libre, soberana* (Buenos Aires: Control de Estado de la Presidencia de la Nación, 1950), 34.



Figure 2.20. The Californian style as symbol of homeownership and social upward mobility.

Source: Luis Guillermo Bähler, *La Nación argentina, justa, libre, soberana* (Buenos Aires: Control de Estado de la Presidencia de la Nación, 1950), 799.



Figure 2.21 Californian chalet used as an icon of government housing projects. Source: Luis Guillermo Bähler, *La Nación argentina, justa, libre, soberana* (Buenos Aires: Control de Estado de la Presidencia de la Nación, 1950), 320.

The values of patriotism and good citizenship were considered by Peronists a result of the fulfillment of homeownership rights. This relationship is symbolically emphasized in the image of figure 2.22, an advertisement published in the magazine *Caras y Caretas*—a general-interest magazine that combined current issues with political satire and humor. From 1952 on, full-page, four-color advertisements promoted the goals and values of the “Second Five-year Plan” and encouraged the collaboration of people in its fulfillment. The advertisement reads: “*Construyamos, con nuestra propia felicidad, la grandeza de la Patria. Como el hornero: cada argentino en su casa*” (Let’s build, with our own happiness, the greatness of our country. Like the *hornero*: every Argentinian in his/her house [underlining is original]).<sup>94</sup> Homeownership is literally emphasized as one of the values pursued by this plan. The reference to the *hornero* is not only a direct allusion to the values of homeownership and the protection of the nuclear family but also conveys a national sentiment. The *hornero* was elected the national bird of Argentina in 1928. It is a sedentary bird native to Argentina and other South American countries that is known for building a mud nest and it is popularly regarded as “hardworking” and “family-oriented” (the *hornero* has a single partner its entire life and they build, together, a new nest every year).<sup>95</sup> Argentine writer Leopoldo Lugones (1874-1938) memorialized the qualities of this bird in the traditional poem “*El Hornero*”:

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<sup>94</sup> *Caras y Caretas*, Abril 1952, 71.

<sup>95</sup> Manlio Landolfi, “Fichas de Aves: el Hornero,” *Aves Argentinas*, Asociación Ornitológica del Plata, [http://www.avesargentinas.org.ar/12/05-fichas\\_detalle.php?id=30](http://www.avesargentinas.org.ar/12/05-fichas_detalle.php?id=30) (accessed March 2, 2015).

*“La casita del hornero  
tiene alcoba y tiene sala.  
En la alcoba la hembra instala  
justamente el nido entero.”*

*“Allá, si el barro está blando,  
canta su gozo sincero.  
Yo quisiera ser hornero  
y hacer mi choza cantando.”*

The poem describes the “house” of the *hornero* and the effort and joy with which the bird builds its own house. Gender roles are emphasized (the male as constructor and the female as housekeeper) as well as the importance of the nuclear family. Below the *hornero*, a happy couple is looking towards a Californian-style neighborhood. A church is at the distance and ample gardens surround the single-family, detached houses.<sup>96</sup> The Californian style is used as the style that symbolizes the well-being of the population, their attachment to the country, and the protection of moral and family values, all of them products of social justice.

Peronism also indoctrinated children with these ideas and values, especially through the content and illustrations in elementary school readers. Figures 2.23 and 2.24 show the illustrations included in the book “*Evita*,”<sup>97</sup> a reader for small children released in 1953. The children surrounded by a “dream world” of Californian-style houses and institutions symbolizes how the government looks after the welfare of the

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<sup>96</sup> The neighborhood represented in this advertisements is Barrio Perón, the case study that is analyzed in Chapter 4.

<sup>97</sup> The book took its name from Eva Duarte, the second wife of President Juan Domingo Perón. She died in 1952.

population. The book reminds the children of the importance of going to school and learning good citizenship obligations and shows them that the government is providing educational facilities and other infrastructure. Therefore, from early in life, the population was introduced to the style and learned to associate it with a patriotic sentiment, ‘good citizen’ values, and a desirable aesthetic.

The extensive propaganda by the Peronist government instilled the Californian style in Argentinian social memory with social and political connotations. As Anahí Ballent clearly states, the “Californian chalets” have remained in social imagination strongly associated with Peronist architecture production.<sup>98</sup> Hence, the presence of those connotations in the pictorial production of Argentinian artist Daniel Santoro in the 1990s reflects the long-lasting effects of the propaganda. “*La casita peronista*” (The small, Peronist house) in figure 2.25 recreates the essential elements of the Californian chalet: “gabled roof with wood structure; a small, arched lateral porch with a corner pillar; a stone veneer at the base, emphasizing the tectonicity of the walls; and an oblong window.”<sup>99</sup>

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<sup>98</sup> Anahí Ballent and Jorge Francisco Liernur, *La casa y la multitud: vivienda, política y cultura en la Argentina moderna* (Buenos Aires: Fondo de Cultura Económica, 2014), 434.

<sup>99</sup> Ibid.

Construyamos, con nuestra propia felicidad, la grandeza de la Patria.

**Como el hornero:  
cada argentino  
en su casa**

El objetivo fundamental de la Nación, en materia de vivienda, será asegurar a todos los habitantes del país la posesión de una vivienda adecuada, higiénica, confortable y económica. La vivienda, en su condición de propiedad individual, tiene una función social que cumplir, y por ello ha de ser considerada bien de familia, garantizando el Estado su condición de tal, Ud. será beneficiado con este otro objetivo fundamental del 2º. Plan Quinquenal. Por su propia felicidad, colabore en su realización.

Figure 2.22 “Second Five-year Plan” advertisement with a Californian-style neighborhood as background (the neighborhood is ‘Barrio Perón,’ analyzed in Chapter 4).

Source: *Caras y Caretas*, April 1952, 71.



Figures 2.23, and 2.24 Reader “Evita” (1953). The Californian style is represented in all the buildings throughout the book.

Source: Graciela Albornoz de Videla, *Evita: libro de lectura para primer grado inferior* (Buenos Aires: Editorial Luis Lasserre, 1953).

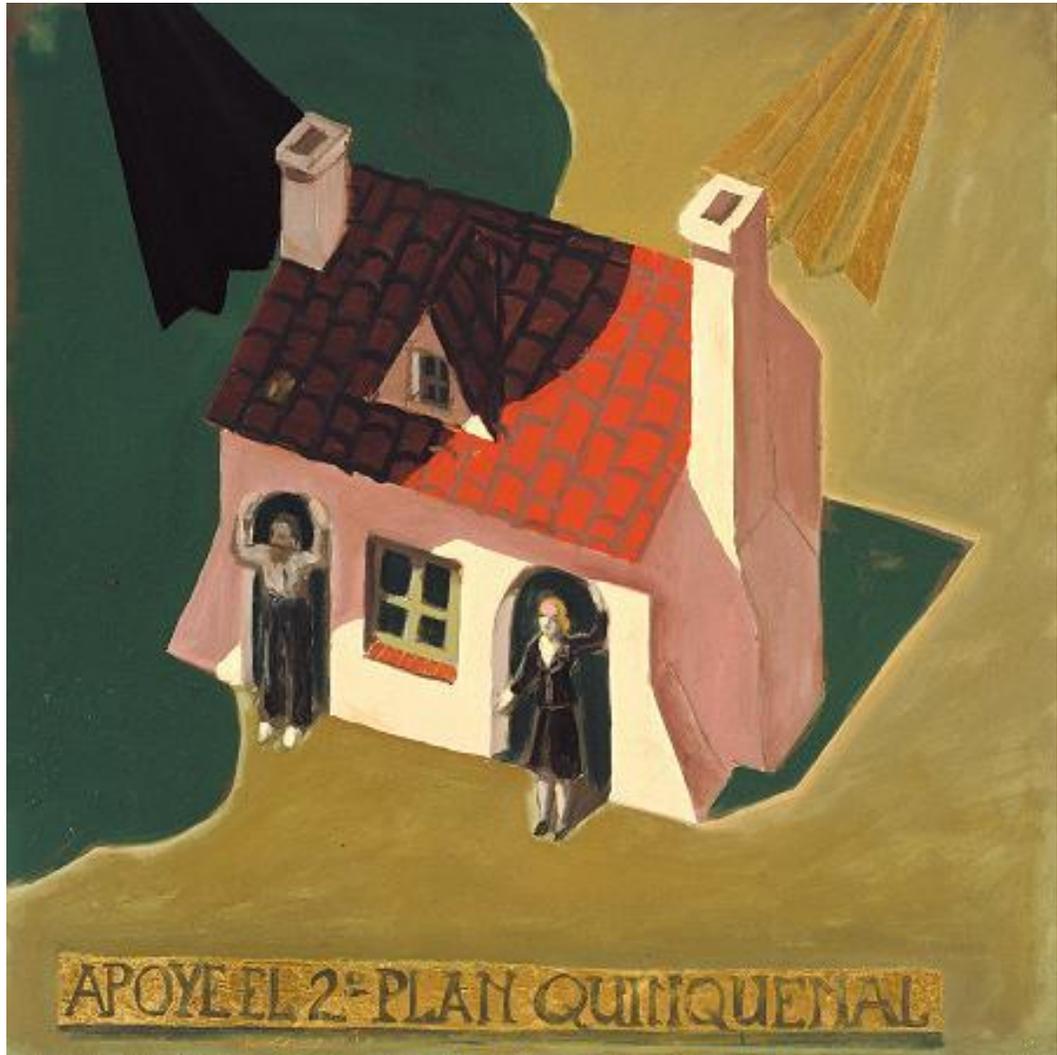


Figure 2.25 The Californian style in social memory. Painting “La casita peronista” (1999) by Daniel Santoro.

Source: Centro Cultural Recoleta, *Daniel Santoro: un mundo peronista: pinturas dibujos objetos libros: del 10 al 29 de Abril del 2001*, Centro Cultural Recoleta, Buenos Aires (Buenos Aires, Argentina: Centro Cultural Recoleta, 2001), 31.

## *Conclusion*

The meanings given to the Californian style and the values that were associated with it helped to instill the style in Argentinian social memory. As stated in the introduction of the chapter, the Californian style is now one of the architectural styles most easily recognized by the Argentinian population. The permanence of the style in the popular imagination was a result of the intense use of it in cinema, political propaganda, and the printed media.

The numerous values and ideas mentioned throughout this chapter give us an idea of the almost infinite capacity of architecture to carry social and political messages. The Californian style connotes a series of interrelated ideas that reflect the style's historic significance. Among them, the ideas of domestic happiness, homeownership, social welfare, as well as tradition, localness, and patriotism were firmly instilled in social memory.

CHAPTER 3  
DETERMINING THE HISTORIC SIGNIFICANCE OF  
THE CALIFORNIAN STYLE

*Introduction*

The Californian style has been the object of several debates among architectural historians, preservationists, and government officials. The lack of agreement on the origins, name, architectural value, and historic importance of the style have threatened the preservation of many valuable historic resources. Political and aesthetic prejudice, together with a lack of a thorough study of the style in architectural historiography, have been the principal causes of the neglect of Californian style architecture in Argentina.

The chapter is divided into two sections. The first section offers an insight into the debates about the Californian style in the fields of architectural history and historic preservation. The second section presents some contemporary reflections on the biases found in the preservation of mid-20<sup>th</sup> architecture and how this affects the evaluation of the Californian style's historic significance in Argentina.

*1. Debates about the Californian style*

One of the main topics of debate among academics and scholars in the field of architectural history and historic preservation is the use of the label “Californian style.” A direct or indirect feeling of discomfort can be perceived in almost every academic text that deals with a description of the style. Almost invariably, the term

*estilo californiano* (Californian style) is written with quotation marks—indicating a special meaning—and introduced by the expression “*el llamado [estilo californiano]*” (the so-called Californian style)—indicating the intention of the author to distance him- or herself from the use of the term.

The arguments against the use of the label ‘Californian style’ are focused on an alleged imprecision of the style’s origins and on a perceived negative connotation of the term. For example, Alberto Petrina<sup>100</sup> and María Isabel Larrañaga<sup>101</sup> mention two reasons for disagreeing with the term ‘Californian’: first, they argue that there is an assumption that this type of architecture is related only to California’s architecture when, in fact, the style’s main characteristics are found in architecture all across Hispanic America (including the U.S. states of New Mexico, Arizona, and Texas); second, they argue that the term has acquired a pejorative meaning as a style without any architectural value.<sup>102</sup> Similarly, Margarita Gutman<sup>103</sup> argues that “the term ‘Californian’ advances an idea of transculturation of the Mission style, that is to say, the term describes the style as a phenomenon of acceptance of a foreign imposition”<sup>104</sup> [translation is mine]. She emphasizes the connection between the Californian style

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<sup>100</sup> Alberto Petrina, Architect, Professor of Architectural History and Researcher at the National University of Buenos Aires, and Director of the *Centro de Estudios del Patrimonio Arquitectónico Nacional (CEPAN)* of the Ministry of Culture of Argentina.

<sup>101</sup> María Isabel Larrañaga, Architect, Professor of Architectural History and Researcher at the National University of Buenos Aires, and Assistant Director of the *Museo de Artes Plásticas Eduardo Sívori*.

<sup>102</sup> María Isabel de Larrañaga & Alberto Petrina, “Arquitectura de masas en la Argentina (1945-1955): hacia la búsqueda de una expresión propia,” *Anales del Instituto de Arte Americano e Investigaciones Estéticas Mario J. Buschiazzo*, n.25 (Buenos Aires: Facultad de Arquitectura y Urbanismo, Universidad de Buenos Aires, 1987), 202-222.

<sup>103</sup> Margarita Gutman, PhD, Architect, Associate Professor of Urban Studies and International Affairs at The New School for Public Engagement, Director of the Observatory on Latin America (OLA) of The New School, and Consulting Professor at the National University of Buenos Aires.

<sup>104</sup> Margarita Gutman, “Neocolonial: un tema olvidado,” *Seminario de crítica n.5* (September 1988), Instituto de Arte Americano e Investigaciones Estéticas Mario J. Buschiazzo, <http://www.iaa.fadu.uba.ar/publicaciones/critica/0005.pdf> (accessed March 6, 2015).

and the Neocolonial style of Argentina. She argues that the national, traditional, rural, and provincial values held by the Neocolonial were also present in the Californian style, supplemented by a popular content—a result of the great acceptance of the Californian style by the general population. Furthermore, she believes that the style is considered in a derogatory fashion, reminding her of other terms associated with a common critique against Peronism of being populist and demagogic.<sup>105</sup>

The diverse alternative terms used when referring to the style reflect the complexity of the debate. For example, Alberto Petrina and María Isabel Larrañaga prefer the term *arquitectura pintoresquista* (picturesque architecture) since it better reflects the origins and development of the style.<sup>106</sup> Petrina explains that the term *arquitectura pintoresquista* embodies the whole Hispanic American roots of the style since this architecture is also Mexican, Colombian, Guatemalan, Peruvian, and Bolivian.<sup>107</sup> Margarita Gutman expresses her preference for the term *chalet argentino* (Argentinian chalet) instead of *chalet californiano* (Californian chalet).<sup>108</sup> As explained in Chapter One, the term *chalet californiano* was used in the 1920s and 1930s to describe the Californian-style houses built in rural and suburban settings by

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<sup>105</sup> She compares the negative connotation given to the term Californian style with the concepts of ‘*cabecitas negras*’ (black heads) and ‘*profesores flor de ceibo*’ (flor de ceibo is Argentina’s national flower). This contemptuous terms refer to a discriminatory behavior of the upper, ‘white’ classes of the cities against the rural immigrants, and a prejudice against the new national educational plans and national products (as oppose to foreign, imported products).

<sup>106</sup> María Isabel de Larrañaga & Alberto Petrina, “Arquitectura de masas en la Argentina (1945-1955): hacia la búsqueda de una expresión propia,” *Anales del Instituto de Arte Americano e Investigaciones Estéticas Mario J. Buschiazso*, n.25 (Buenos Aires: Facultad de Arquitectura y Urbanismo, Universidad de Buenos Aires, 1987), 210.

<sup>107</sup> Alberto Petrina, interview by author, Buenos Aires, Argentina, January 16, 2015.

<sup>108</sup> Margarita Gutman, “Neocolonial: un tema olvidado,” *Seminario de crítica n.5* (September 1988), Instituto de Arte Americano e Investigaciones Estéticas Mario J. Buschiazso, <http://www.iaa.fadu.uba.ar/publicaciones/critica/0005.pdf> (accessed March 6, 2015), under “Neocolonial y ‘californiano’.”

the upper classes; the term continued to be used during the following decades to designate any house designed in the Californian style, even those located in urban contexts.

The architectural validity of the Californian style and the role that the style played (and still plays) in architectural historiography have been also common topics of debate in the field of architectural history and historic preservation. The style was largely omitted from architectural historiography until the late 1980s-early 1990s. At that time, a series of scholars began to discuss the absence of a thorough study of the architectural production of the period between 1945 and 1955 (the Peronist years) and rejected the general assumption that the period was unproductive in terms of ‘real architecture’. In 1987, Pedro Sonderéguer<sup>109</sup> agreed with the impoverishment of historiographical work and denounced increasingly byzantine and rarefied reflections about the period’s architecture that drew away from the actual buildings.<sup>110</sup> He argued for a reconstruction of ‘architectural memory’ in future historiography.<sup>111</sup>

According to Alberto Petrina, the absence of specific studies and bibliography regarding the Californian style in Argentina has been driven by two motivations: stylistic and political.<sup>112</sup> This dual framework is also useful for understanding the reasoning behind some of the specific critiques of the style made by professionals and scholars.

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<sup>109</sup> Pedro C. Sonderéguer, Architect, Researcher on Architectural History, and Professor at the National University of Lanús.

<sup>110</sup> Pedro C. Sondéreguer, “La década 1945-1955,” *DANA Documentos de Arquitectura Nacional y Americana* (Resistencia, Chaco: Instituto Argentino de Investigaciones en Historia de la Arquitectura, n.23, 1987), 57.

<sup>111</sup> Ibid.

<sup>112</sup> Alberto Petrina, interview by author, Buenos Aires, Argentina, January 16, 2015.

With regards to stylistic motivations there are different layers of prejudice and contempt. The first layer can be identified as a general disparagement by Argentinian elites of all architecture with Hispanic or Hispanic American roots, especially during the late 19<sup>th</sup> century. At that time, a style was considered prestigious if it was linked with the canonical architecture of academic design, especially French academic tradition.<sup>113</sup> The Neocolonial, on the other hand, was considered almost ‘barbarian’ because of its association with the Hispanic culture.<sup>114</sup> The Californian style, as one of the variants of the Neocolonial, inherited this negative connotation but it was subject to an increased scorn. For example, Ramón Gutiérrez<sup>115</sup> and Federico Ortiz<sup>116</sup> described the Californian Style as an ‘unsophisticated’ version of the Neocolonial style (“*Neocolonial lavado*”) and as the last stage in the process of ‘degradation’ of the Colonial style.<sup>117</sup>

The second layer of prejudice is related to the perception of the Californian style as a reflection of cultural dependence, in this case, on the United States. Gutiérrez and Ortiz, for instance, described the Californian Style as the ‘*yanqui*’<sup>118</sup> version of the Hispanicist process (the process in which the Neocolonial style

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<sup>113</sup> Ibid.

<sup>114</sup> Ibid.

<sup>115</sup> Ramón Gutiérrez is an Argentinian architect, architectural historian, researcher in the fields of architectural history and historic preservation, professor in various universities and institutions of Spain, Italy, Portugal, and the Americas, founder and Director of Argentinian magazine *Documentos de Arquitectura Nacional y Americana* (DANA), author of numerous books and articles about architecture and urbanism in Latin America, and founder of the *Centro de Documentación de Arquitectura Latinoamericana* (CEDODAL) in Buenos Aires.

<sup>116</sup> Federico Ortiz (1929-2005) was an Argentinian architect, architectural historian, researcher, and professor in the fields of architectural history, art, and publicity.

<sup>117</sup> Ramón Gutierrez and Federico F. Ortiz, *La arquitectura en la Argentina: 1930-1970* (Librería Concentra: Buenos Aires, 1975), n.p., under “V. La década 1945-1955”.

<sup>118</sup> ‘*Yanqui*’ (from ‘yankee’) is a citizen from the United States as distinguished by a Latin American, usually it has a pejorative connotation.

appeared all over Latin America) of the 1920s.<sup>119</sup> Similarly, Marina Waisman<sup>120</sup> criticized the use of the Californian style as a model of ‘national’ expression when, in fact, the style borrowed images from a country totally foreign to Argentinian cultural tradition.<sup>121</sup>

With regards to political motivations, it has been mentioned already that the style has been almost invariably associated with Peronism. The use of the style in Peronist government propaganda—particularly represented in the ubiquitous *chalecito californiano*—increased the political connotations of that architecture. Consequently, the style was seen as a political instrument, and this political connotation was seen as the cause of the style’s null architectural value. The use of the Californian style by the government was perceived by many academics and professionals as an act of populism and demagoguery. In this fashion, Gutiérrez and Ortiz classified Californian style architecture as the *vertiente populista californiana* (Californian populist variant) of Peronist architecture.<sup>122</sup> Their critique was directed towards the architectural quality of the style, expressing admiration only for the quantity: “*El mérito, pues, a la obra hecha, la crítica centrada en la calidad arquitectónica global de la misma*”<sup>123</sup>

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<sup>119</sup> Ramón Gutiérrez and Federico F. Ortiz, *La arquitectura en la Argentina: 1930-1970* (Librería Concentra: Buenos Aires, 1975), n.p., under “V. La década 1945-1955.”

<sup>120</sup> Marina Waisman (1920-1997) was an Argentinian architect and important architectural historian. She received the *Premio América* in 1987 for her contribution to Latin American architecture. She was also researcher, and professor at the National University of Córdoba and the Catholic University of Córdoba, and founder of the *Instituto de Historia y Preservación del Patrimonio* (currently called *Centro Marina Waisman*).

<sup>121</sup> Marina Waisman, “Neocolonial y moderno: falacias y realidades,” in *Arquitectura neocolonial: América Latina, Caribe, Estados Unidos*, ed. Aracy Amaral (São Paulo, SP, Brasil: Memorial, 1994), 279.

<sup>122</sup> Ramón Gutiérrez and Federico F. Ortiz, *La arquitectura en la Argentina: 1930-1970* (Librería Concentra: Buenos Aires, 1975), n.p., under “V. La década 1945-1955.”

<sup>123</sup> *Ibid.*

(The merit, then, is to the work done [referring to the quantity], the criticism is focused on its overall architectural quality).

There has been, however, a validation of the Californian style among some architectural historians and professionals since the ‘historiographical awakening’ period of the late 1980s-early 1990s. First, the Californian style has been recognized as respectful of and consistent with traditional, provincial ways of living. This opinion is based on the argument that a large percentage of the rural migrants who came to the cities during the 1930s, and even more intensively during the postwar period, were people with strong Hispanic-Creole cultural ties who brought with them mental images of their native environments. As explained by Petrina and Larrañaga, “those images included the patio surrounded by galleries, the thick, white walls, and the Spanish tile roof” [translation is mine].<sup>124</sup> The Californian style provided familiar images with which these new urban inhabitants identified. In the words of Margarita Gutman, “*los ayudaba a recuperar en la fagocitante metrópoli, los valores de familiaridad e identidad, para sentirse ‘como en casa’, entre los suyos*” (it helped them to recover the values of family and identity in order to feel ‘at home’ in the engulfing metropolis).<sup>125</sup> Also, Petrina and Larrañaga argue that the use of the Californian style by the Peronist supporters was an appropriate way to provide identifiable characteristics to the users: “*nunca antes en la Argentina los intereses y la*

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<sup>124</sup> María Isabel de Larrañaga & Alberto Petrina, “Arquitectura de masas en la Argentina (1945-1955): hacia la búsqueda de una expresión propia,” *Anales del Instituto de Arte Americano e Investigaciones Estéticas Mario J. Buschiazso*, n.25 (Buenos Aires: Facultad de Arquitectura y Urbanismo, Universidad de Buenos Aires, 1987), 209.

<sup>125</sup> Margarita Gutman, “Neocolonial: un tema olvidado,” *Seminario de crítica n.5* (September 1988), Instituto de Arte Americano e Investigaciones Estéticas Mario J. Buschiazso, <http://www.iaa.fadu.uba.ar/publicaciones/critica/0005.pdf> (accessed March 6, 2015), under “Neocolonial y ‘californiano’.”

*idiosincrasia cultural del pueblo fueron interpretados mediante una respuesta física tan respetuosa y digna*” (Never before in Argentina were the interests and cultural characteristics of the people interpreted through such a respectful and dignified physical response).<sup>126</sup> Interestingly, Petrina assigns the Californian style an “almost primitive psychological connotation,” associated with the idea of fire, cavern, a refuge for the family, and a pleasant and cozy atmosphere.<sup>127</sup> The fact that almost all Californian-style houses included chimneys (although almost never used and hardly necessary) seems physical evidence of Petrina’s claims, but also indicates an intention of providing a good quality of life for the working class population.

Second, Californian style architecture has been also associated with the appearance of important features of modernity in Argentina in relation to social issues. Waisman, for example, highlights the massive construction of housing projects and social facilities and institutions produced during the 1940s—what she calls the ‘second phase’ of the Neocolonial.<sup>128</sup> Likewise, Larrañaga and Petrina assert that the Peronist housing production (including both the Californian-style, single-family houses, and the Modern-style apartment buildings) was the first, and so far only, experience of

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<sup>126</sup> María Isabel de Larrañaga & Alberto Petrina, “Arquitectura de masas en la Argentina (1945-1955): hacia la búsqueda de una expresión propia,” *Anales del Instituto de Arte Americano e Investigaciones Estéticas Mario J. Buschiazzo*, n.25 (Buenos Aires: Facultad de Arquitectura y Urbanismo, Universidad de Buenos Aires, 1987), 204.

<sup>127</sup> Alberto Petrina, interview by author, Buenos Aires, Argentina, January 16, 2015

<sup>128</sup> Marina Waisman, “Neocolonial y moderno: falacias y realidades,” in *Arquitectura neocolonial: América Latina, Caribe, Estados Unidos*, ed. Aracy Amaral (São Paulo, SP, Brasil: Memorial, 1994), 279-280.

architecture for the masses in Argentina.<sup>129</sup> Mario Sabugo,<sup>130</sup> on the other hand, validates the style's association with the urban model of the 'garden city'. He laments the "dramatic abandonment of the great popular architecture made, for example in 'Ciudad Evita' or in 'Barrio Saavedra' (...) closely linked to a urban conception of garden city" [translation is mine].<sup>131</sup>

Finally, the Californian style has been praised by Petrina and Larrañaga for the use of construction methods and materials appropriate to the situation of the country during the post-World War II period.<sup>132</sup> They point out the importance of the massive employment of unskilled workers, which could not have been addressed by using more sophisticated construction methods. In addition, it is noteworthy that domestic materials were used to cope with the unavailability of imported goods.

## 2. *Historic significance recognition*

### 2.1 *Reflections on the preservation of the recent past*

It is essential to examine the roots of the negative attitudes towards the style analyzed in the previous section. What are the criteria adopted by those architectural

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<sup>129</sup> María Isabel de Larrañaga & Alberto Petrina, "Arquitectura de masas en la Argentina (1945-1955): hacia la búsqueda de una expresión propia," *Anales del Instituto de Arte Americano e Investigaciones Estéticas Mario J. Buschiazzo*, n.25 (Buenos Aires: Facultad de Arquitectura y Urbanismo, Universidad de Buenos Aires, 1987), 204.

<sup>130</sup> Mario Sabugo is an Argentinian architect, architectural historian, and researcher in the fields of architectural and urban history. He is a professor at the University of Buenos Aires, and Director of the *Instituto de Arte Americano e Investigaciones Estéticas Mario Buschiazzo*.

<sup>131</sup> Mario Sabugo, "Familia y ciudad: casa y urbe," *FUNDAVI* (Buenos Aires, n.2, March 1985), 18.

<sup>132</sup> María Isabel de Larrañaga & Alberto Petrina, "Arquitectura de masas en la Argentina (1945-1955): hacia la búsqueda de una expresión propia," *Anales del Instituto de Arte Americano e Investigaciones Estéticas Mario J. Buschiazzo*, n.25 (Buenos Aires: Facultad de Arquitectura y Urbanismo, Universidad de Buenos Aires, 1987), 208-209.

historians, professionals, and preservationists that negate or neglect the consideration of Californian style architecture as valuable historic resources?

The perspective on post-World War II, vernacular architecture as historically insignificant is based on a series of biases that are common in Argentina and the United States (and most probably across the Americas). One of the most pervasive is the ‘aesthetic bias’. As Richard Longstreth points out, ‘taste’ has a profound influence on what we preserve and how we preserve it.<sup>133</sup> Richard Striner denounces preservationists’ proclivity for “allowing our personal taste in architecture to outweigh more legitimate criteria for determining the historic significance of buildings.”<sup>134</sup> He is correct in his assertion that buildings from the recent past are more vulnerable to ‘aesthetic ridicule’. This holds true in any period in history. An interesting example of this are the severe critiques against the Neo-Mediterranean architecture produced in Latin America during the 1980s and early 1990s. Although this style also has Hispanic roots, the same architectural historians and professionals who were advocating at that time for the Californian style of the 1940s and 1950s had difficulty validating the contemporary Neo-Mediterranean. Curiously, they used the same arguments that were used against the Californian style. The Neo-Mediterranean style was considered as having “no architectural value.” It was “hardly worthy of the term ‘construction’,” a manifestation of the deterioration of Hispanic American

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<sup>133</sup> Richard Longstreth, “Taste Versus History,” *Historic Preservation Forum* 8, n.3 (National Trust for Historic Preservation, May-June 1994), 40-45.

<sup>134</sup> Richard Striner, “Scholarship, Strategy, and Activism in Preserving the Recent Past,” in *Preserving the Recent Past*, ed. Deborah Slaton and Rebecca A. Shiffer (Washington, DC: Historic Preservation Education Foundation, 1995), III-17 to III-21.

architecture, and a mere commercial product.<sup>135</sup> This illustrates the often pejorative nature of an architectural discourse that disparages the recent past.

One of the consequences of this aesthetic bias is the tendency within the preservation movement to evaluate the “architectural” significance of a building separately from its “historical” significance.<sup>136</sup> It would be senseless to separate the development of architecture from history because architecture is shaped and conceived within a particular socio-economic, cultural, and political context in history. Hence, evaluating the significance of a building in terms of its ‘architecture’ as separate from its ‘history’ is senseless and constitutes in itself an act of aesthetic prejudice.

Margarita Gutman correctly argues that the ‘professional disqualifications’ against the Neocolonial (and its variants) speak more of the persons and their historic moment than the object which they try to qualify.<sup>137</sup> Often this is because people cannot ‘distance themselves’ from history. Formulating a more objective rationale for the evaluation of historic resources implies an understanding of these common biases and the provision of an appropriate context; as Longstreth mentions, “understanding (...) evidence within the context of its own time.”<sup>138</sup>

The other consequence of the aesthetic bias is the commonplace tendency to classify architecture in “styles.” The effort put into the recognition of the ‘best

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<sup>135</sup> Alberto Petrina, “Tránsito de la arquitectura hispanocriolla: de la vitalidad nacional a la banalidad comercial,” in *Arquitectura neocolonial: América Latina, Caribe, Estados Unidos*, ed. Aracy Amaral (São Paulo, SP, Brasil: Memorial, 1994), 293-295.

<sup>136</sup> Richard Longstreth, “Taste Versus History,” *Historic Preservation Forum* 8, n.3 (National Trust for Historic Preservation, May-June 1994), 40-45.

<sup>137</sup> Margarita Gutman, “Neocolonial: un tema olvidado,” *Seminario de crítica n.5* (September 1988), Instituto de Arte Americano e Investigaciones Estéticas Mario J. Buschiazso, <http://www.iaa.fadu.uba.ar/publicaciones/critica/0005.pdf> (accessed March 6, 2015), 3.

<sup>138</sup> Richard Longstreth, “The significance of the recent past,” *APT Bulletin*, vol.23, n.2, Preserving What’s New (Association for Preservation Technology International, 1991), 13.

example' of a style, or the decision whether the architecture of a building fits into a 'valid' style are pervasive in the identification of certain buildings as historic resources. In the case of the Californian style, for instance, Anahí Ballent disagrees with the idea that it be called a 'style'. She thinks a 'style' is "a stable set of architectural forms or similarly fixed relationships between them," and describes the Californian [style] as "a diffuse phenomenon from the point of view of a rigorous formal definition, although incredibly strong as an image" [translation is mine].<sup>139</sup> Although this provocative argument seems precise in its assertion, a thorough study of the [style] and its architectural resources is necessary to reach to such a conclusion. In any case, the definition of the movement as a "style" should not condition the evaluation of its architectural resources' historic value.

'Age bias' is also pervasive in the evaluation of architecture of the recent past. The expression "I grew up in a house like this, that can't be historic!"<sup>140</sup> heard by a U.S. preservationist investigator in 1981 regarding a 1920s bungalow, can be perfectly applied to some of the current attitudes towards Californian style architecture in Argentina. The belief that because a building was built in our (or in our parents') lifetime it cannot be historic is commonly held among the general public, architecture professionals and preservationists. As Longstreth points out, the older a building or structure, the more preservationists, academics, and professionals tend to venerate

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<sup>139</sup> Anahí Ballent and Jorge Francisco Liernur, *La casa y la multitud: vivienda, política y cultura en la Argentina moderna* (Buenos Aires: Fondo de Cultura Económica, 2014), 433.

<sup>140</sup> Claudia R. Brown, "Surveying the Suburbs: Back to the Future?," in *Preserving the Recent Past*, ed. Deborah Slaton and Rebecca A. Shiffer (Washington, DC: Historic Preservation Education Foundation, 1995), II-105 to II-112.

it.<sup>141</sup> There is also the belief that buildings in the past were better constructed, made to last forever, and were more authentic in their use of local materials. Although some of this might be true in certain cases, this does not preclude the existence of similar qualities in a younger building and, therefore, does not constitute per se a valid criteria for assigning significance based on age.

One of the consequences of the age bias is, as indicated by Longstreth, that “age may make things rarer and hence seem more imperative to save as individual relics.”<sup>142</sup> Californian style architecture of the 1940s and 1950s is commonplace in almost every Argentinian city. What is the urge to preserve it if there are plenty of examples everywhere? Admittedly, the scarcity of a historic resource should trigger its preservation, but the abundance of others should not preclude from a thorough evaluation of their historic significance in order to ensure their preservation. There is no sense in waiting until we have the “last surviving example” of a particular historic resource. The rapid real-estate development that affects Argentinian cities at the moment is disturbing many mid-20<sup>th</sup> century neighborhoods. By the time the style would be appreciated as historic, it may be too late, as the character-defining features of much of the architecture of these neighborhoods may be lost or damaged.

Finally, class and political prejudice also propel biases against the Californian style. The architectural resources associated with the working class and the poor are

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<sup>141</sup> Richard Longstreth, “Taste Versus History,” *Historic Preservation Forum* 8, n.3 (National Trust for Historic Preservation, May-June 1994), 43.

<sup>142</sup> Richard Longstreth, “The significance of the recent past,” *APT Bulletin*, vol.23, n.2, Preserving What’s New (Association for Preservation Technology International, 1991), 17.

often ignored and undervalued in terms of architectural and historic significance.<sup>143</sup>

This holds true in the case of government-sponsored, Californian-style housing of the 1940s and 1950s. Furthermore, in the case of Argentina, the political bias is prevalent in assigning historical value to structures built by administrations of opposing political ideology. As seen in the previous section, demagoguery and populism were the common critiques against the architectural production of the Peronist government.

## *2.2 The historic significance of Californian style architecture*

After examining the common critiques (negative and positive) of the style, and understanding the biases that lie behind those attitudes, it is possible to undertake an assessment of the historic significance of the Californian style in Argentina. In order to do that, a discussion follows regarding the contributions of the style in the development of the country's social, cultural, architectural, and urban evolution. History is considered embedded in each of these fields.

First of all, Californian-style buildings have a significant role as social and cultural documents.<sup>144</sup> Californian style architecture contributed to the socio-cultural development of Argentina. The style is associated with the development of an identity initiated in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century. The search for a "national style" that identifies Argentinian culture led to the development of the Neocolonial style and the subsequent Californian style. The national historic importance of this process is

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<sup>143</sup> Richard Longstreth, "Taste Versus History," *Historic Preservation Forum* 8, n.3 (National Trust for Historic Preservation, May-June 1994), 43.

<sup>144</sup> Richard Striner, "Scholarship, Strategy, and Activism in Preserving the Recent Past," in *Preserving the Recent Past*, ed. Deborah Slaton and Rebecca A. Shiffer (Washington, DC: Historic Preservation Education Foundation, 1995), III-17 to III-21.

increased by the fact that it was inserted in a broader, transnational context, encompassing a continental scale. The process of defining a “national identity” was shared with many other countries in Latin America. Furthermore, the acceptance of the Californian style as an appropriate representation of this national identity was also common in other Latin American countries, especially Mexico, Brazil, Chile, and Peru.<sup>145</sup> Mexican historian Antonio Fernández Toca expressed this common Ibero-American socio-cultural history:

*Iberoamérica ha tenido, en algunas ocasiones un destino común. Fue común la cultura de la Colonia (...) y fue también común la lucha por la Independencia (...) fue también compartida la aceptación de la cultura del positivismo europeo (...) y, ante esa cultura alienada, fue también común el intento de ofrecer una alternativa contestataria; surgió así un movimiento—que tuvo alcances en todo el continente—de reivindicación, de lucha por definir una identidad propia.*<sup>146</sup>

[Ibero-America has had, on certain occasions, a common destiny. These moments include the culture of the Colony, and also the struggle for Independence (...) also the acceptance of European positivism’s culture (...) and, before that foreign culture, there was also a shared attempt to offer an alternative; thus arose a movement—which spread across the continent—of struggle for the definition of a self-identity].

The Californian style is also associated with the fulfillment of deeply held values by Argentinian middle and working classes. Californian-style residential architecture, in particular the popular “*chalecito californiano*,” represents for many Argentinians the physical manifestation of the social aspiration of homeownership,

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<sup>145</sup> Alberto Petrina, “Tránsito de la arquitectura hispanocriolla: de la vitalidad nacional a la banalidad comercial,” in *Arquitectura neocolonial: América Latina, Caribe, Estados Unidos*, ed. Aracy Amaral (São Paulo, SP, Brasil: Memorial, 1994), 289.

<sup>146</sup> Antonio Fernández Toca, “Del neocolonial al internacional: Una modernidad peculiar, 1920-1960,” *AV Monographs 13: América Sur*, (Madrid, 1988).

culturally associated with the values of domestic happiness and social upward mobility. The style carries significant symbolic associations with the protection of moral and family values, and with the attachment to the country. Interestingly, David L. Ames offers a parallel approach for the recognition of the historic significance of post-World War II, U.S. suburbs, “In a larger cultural sense, suburbs are significant because they represent the fulfillment of deeply held values about home in American society.”<sup>147</sup>

Secondly, the Californian style played a significant role in the architectural development of Argentina. The style is associated with the introduction of Modernity in the country. As accurately expressed by Cristina López Uribe,<sup>148</sup> “in the construction of Latin American identities, modes of expression that reinforced nationalism through familiar images were as modern as those more in tune with the technological impulse that championed an internationalist abstraction.”<sup>149</sup> In this fashion, the Californian style was ‘modern’ in the sense that was intended to represent a national image. Although it can be argued that the style used a foreign reference, the importance of using a regional model of the Americas instead of a European one cannot be denied.

The Californian style is associated with the introduction of new styles of habitation and the modernization of the house (refer to Chapter 1). The spatial

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<sup>147</sup> David L. Ames, “Interpreting Post-World War II Suburban Landscapes as Historic Resources,” in *Preserving the Recent Past*, ed. Deborah Slaton and Rebecca A. Shiffer (Washington, DC: Historic Preservation Education Foundation, 1995), II-97 to II-98.

<sup>148</sup> Cristina López Uribe is an architect from the Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México and PhD in Theory and History of Architecture from Universitat Politècnica de Catalunya.

<sup>149</sup> Cristina López Uribe, “Reflections of the ‘Colonial’: Between Mexico and *Californiano*,” in *Latin American Modern Architectures: Ambiguous Territories*, ed. Patricio del Real and Helen Gyger (New York: Routledge, 2013), 215.

compression of rooms<sup>150</sup> and the development of the compact model known as *casa cajón* were closely related to the introduction of California architecture in Argentina and the pursuit of Modernist concepts of functionality, efficiency, and comfort. This new model of habitation is still in use in the country.

Finally, as regards Argentina's urban development, the style played a significant role in the introduction of new urban models and in the massive scale of housing production during the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century. The rural and suburban connotations of the Californian style justified its association with the garden city model, introduced in Argentina in the construction of planned communities, first for the upper classes (e.g. Tortugas Country Club, 1933), and later, during the Peronist administration, for the lower classes (e.g. Barrio Perón, 1949). The introduction of the garden city model in the regular grid of Argentinian's cities constitutes a rare and peculiar situation; nowadays, the model is only reproduced in gated communities for the upper classes. The style was part of the first example of architecture for the masses in Argentina, developed during the period 1945-1955 by the Peronist government. The massive spread of Californian style architecture was spurred by the government through the construction of planned communities, and later, through the construction of single-family houses financed by the *Plan Eva Perón* during the period of government's indirect participation. The scale of development during that decade is something without parallel in the urban history of the country. In summary, the Californian style

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<sup>150</sup> Rosa Aboy, "'The Right to a Home': Public Housing in Post-World War II Buenos Aires," *Journal of Urban History* 33, no. 3 (March 2007), <http://juh.sagepub.com/content/33/3/493> (accessed April 13, 2015).

is historically significant because it contributed to the cultural, social, architectural, and urban development of Argentina.

### *Conclusion*

Despite some specific positive attitudes, the Californian style has been largely undervalued and overlooked by many architectural professionals, academics, and preservationists. Aesthetic and political motivations led to an almost complete omission of the style from architectural historiography until the late 1980s-early 1990s. The Californian style was considered by many as an unsophisticated version of the Neocolonial, the last stage in the process of degradation of the Colonial style, a symbol of cultural dependence, and a political instrument resulting in populism and demagoguery. Furthermore, a lack of agreement on the terminology or even on its consideration as a “style,” adds to the confusion.

These on-going debates and lack of agreement threaten the preservation of valuable Californian-style architecture. As Michael Tomlan points out, there is a need to speak coherently, with one voice, inside the preservation community in order to successfully advocate for the preservation of historic resources.<sup>151</sup> In the case of the Californian style, in which there is a multiplicity of opinions, the coherence should be found in the recognition of the style’s historic value, and in that sense, those opinions and debates are precisely a reflection of the importance and presence of the style in the Argentina’s history. Hence, after an examination of the biases lying behind the debates, an attempt to determine the historic significance of the Californian style was

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<sup>151</sup> Michael A. Tomlan, *Historic preservation: caring for our expanding legacy* (Springer, Cham, Switzerland, Heidelberg, New York, 2014), 302.

undertaken, resulting in the finding of the style's major contribution to the social, cultural, architectural, and urban development of the country.

CHAPTER 4  
CASE STUDY OF BARRIO PERON: PRESERVATION THROUGH  
COMMUNITY ADVOCACY

*Introduction*

In spite of being undervalued and overlooked by many architectural professionals, academics, and preservationists, the Californian style is still valued by a large part of the general population. This value is demonstrated in the case of *Barrio Perón*, a mid-20<sup>th</sup> century, planned community in Buenos Aires, Argentina, designed entirely in the Californian style. The character of the neighborhood has been largely preserved thanks to the community's active advocacy. This chapter is divided into four sections. The first three sections provide a historical background of *Barrio Perón*, a description of its characteristics, and its evolution over time. The last section describes the pitfalls and battles in the preservation of the neighborhood, evidencing the role of community advocacy.

*1. Historical background*

*Barrio Perón* is a planned community designed in 1946 and constructed between 1947 and 1949<sup>152</sup> in Buenos Aires, Argentina, during the first presidential term of Juan Domingo Perón (1946-1952). As stated in Chapter One, this period was characterized by the government's direct participation in housing production in order to address a significant housing shortage due to the massive internal migrations during

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<sup>152</sup> "Barrio Presidente Perón: Buenos Aires," *Revista de Arquitectura* (Sociedad Central de Arquitectos, February, 1952), 23-24.

the Great Depression and post-World War II. The construction of *Barrio Perón* was the responsibility of the *Dirección de Vivienda* (The Housing Division) of the *Ministerio de Obras y Servicios Públicos de la Nación* (Ministry of Public Works and Services of the Nation) with funds from the *Fundación Ayuda Social Eva Perón* (Social Aid Foundation Eva Perón). At the beginning the houses were rented. It was not until 1953 that they were sold through the provision of low-interest mortgages for up to 50-year terms by the *Banco Hipotecario Nacional* (National Mortgage Bank).<sup>153</sup>

The neighborhood is located at the northwest border of the city of Buenos Aires, next to General Paz Avenue<sup>154</sup> (see figure 4.1), on land that used to belong to the Saavedra family, an aristocratic family of 19<sup>th</sup>-century Argentina.<sup>155</sup> After 1900, the economic strength of the family declined and portions of the land began to be leased for vegetable farming. In 1936, the land was expropriated by the government and declared of “public interest,” with the intent of creating a public park. Today, only small portions remain as public parks, while the rest has been subdivided into housing parcels.

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<sup>153</sup> Norma H. Rozadas, “U36” *Barrio Brigadier Gral. Cornelio Saavedra* (Buenos Aires: M Ediciones, 2013), 26-27.

<sup>154</sup> *Avenida General Paz* is a beltway freeway that surrounds the city of Buenos Aires in its north, northwest, west, and southwest borders, demarcating the boundary between the city and Buenos Aires province.

<sup>155</sup> This family is associated with Cornelio Saavedra (1759-1829), an Argentinian political and military that was instrumental in the *Revolución de Mayo* of 1810, the first step of Argentina’s independence from Spain.

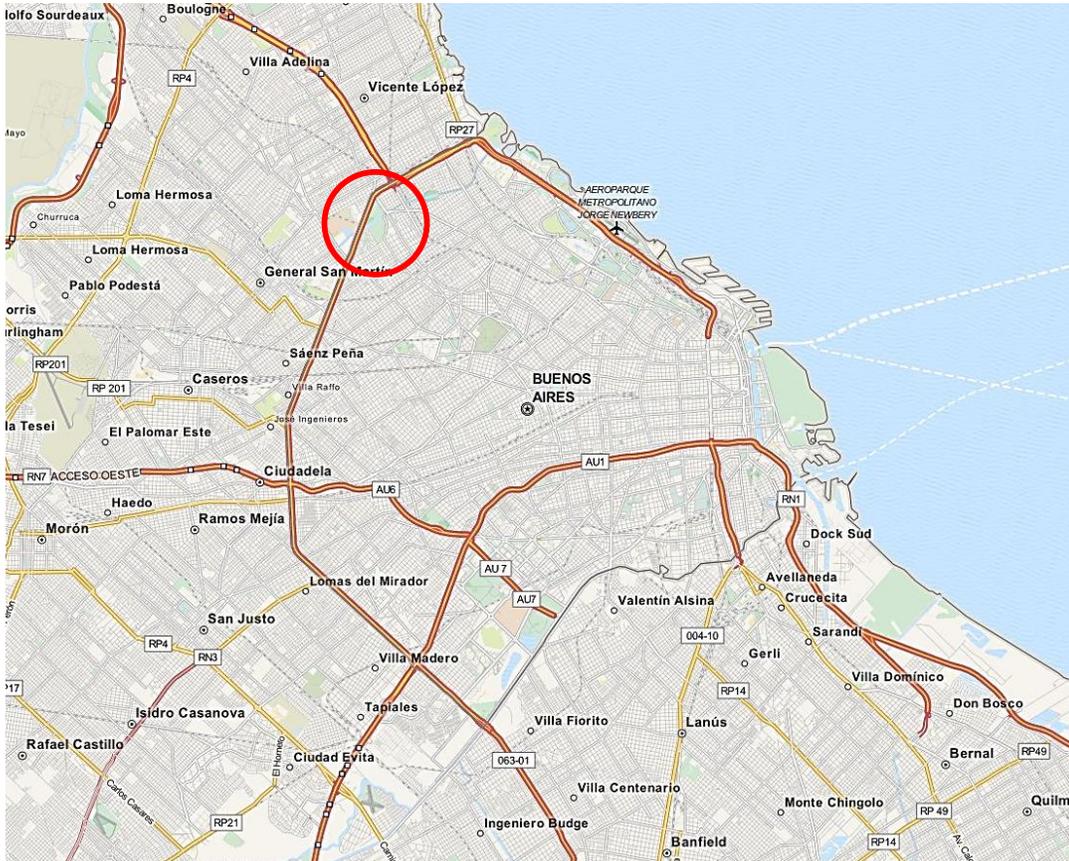


Figure 4.1 Location map of *Barrio Perón*, currently called *Barrio Brigadier Gral. Cornelio Saavedra*.

Source: Open Street Map, <http://www.openstreetmap.org/>

*Barrio Perón* was inaugurated on November 10<sup>th</sup>, 1949. The political significance of this event was demonstrated by the participation of a large number of governmental and military officials, including President Perón and his wife. Reports of the opening appeared in several newspapers, like the one in figure 4.2. ‘*Barrio Perón*’ was the original name given to the neighborhood;<sup>156</sup> the current name, *Barrio Brigadier Gral. Cornelio Saavedra*, was assumed after Perón was overthrown by a military and civilian uprising known as *Revolución Libertadora* in 1955.

Even though *Barrio Perón* was designed mainly as a working-class neighborhood, 10% of the houses were built for military and government officials.<sup>157</sup> The neighborhood included housing types for a variety of socio-economic situations and encouraged the interaction between the working and the upper class—a reflection of the Peronist idea of the state as a ‘mediator’ between the classes of society. In this way, on one hand, railway and municipal employees, and teachers were assigned housing according to priority lists created by labor unions, while on the other hand, some influential government officials inhabited the neighborhood, such as José Presta (deputy), Raúl Mende (Secretary of Technical Issues of the Presidency), and Carlos Vicente Aloé (governor of Buenos Aires from 1952 to 1955).<sup>158</sup>

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<sup>156</sup> The housing development was originally named after the President with subtle variations that seemed to emphasize different aspects of his persona or his roles in society: *Barrio Juan Perón* (his ‘common-man’ persona), *Barrio Presidente Perón* (his political role as President of the country), or *Barrio General Perón* (his military role as an Army General).

<sup>157</sup> *Ibid.*, 26-27.

<sup>158</sup> *Ibid.*

# EN LUCIDA CEREMONIA INAUGUROSE AYER EL BARRIO DE VIVIENDAS "PRESIDENTE PERON"

**Asistieron el Jefe del Estado y Funcionarios**

EN horas de la mañana de ayer se inauguró el barrio de viviendas económicas "Presidente Perón", construido por el Ministerio de Obras Públicas, ceremonia que contó con la presencia del primer magistrado, su esposa, los ministros del Poder Ejecutivo, los gobernadores de Santa Fe, Corrientes y Córdoba, legisladores, jefes de las fuerzas armadas, altos funcionarios de la administración nacional, miembros del secretariado de la Confederación General del Trabajo y numerosos público.

A las 11 llegó al nuevo barrio el primer magistrado acompañado por su esposa, doña María Eva Duarte de Perón, la señora del coronel Mercante y el jefe de la Casa Militar, capitán de marío Guillermo Platzer, siendo recibido por el ministro de Obras Públicas, general Pasterni.

De inmediato el jefe del Estado y su comitiva se trasladaron hasta la iglesia ubicada en el centro del grupo de viviendas sobre la avenida General Paz, donde le acompañaron el intendente municipal y altos jefes y oficiales de las fuerzas armadas. Seguidamente visitaron el cementerio, donde se exhibieron noticieros sobre la labor que cumple el Ministerio de Obras Públicas, la escuela y varias viviendas. En su recorrida por el nuevo barrio, el primer magistrado y su esposa fueron objeto de entusiastas manifestaciones de sim-

## RIGEN DESDE HOY LAS NUEVAS TARIFAS PARA EL TRANSPORTE URBANO

DESDE medianoche rigen las nuevas tarifas para el transporte urbano de pasajeros en la Capital Federal. Según se informó oportunamente, las mismas mantuvieron la tarifa básica de \$ 0.10, sin modificaciones para los tranvías, ómnibus, subterráneos y trolebús, situándola al kilometraje de los distintos recorridos en los microómnibus.

Según informa el Ministerio de Transportes, en los microómnibus se ha disminuido el recorrido de las secciones, sin que el sistema se haya aplicado rigidamente. "Es así —agrega— como hoy líneas que no registran aumentos para su total recorrido, como la 12, que continuará cobrando 30 centavos por el trayecto total, integrada por cuatro secciones o la línea E de

micro y la número 70, que continuarán cobrando diez centavos como actualmente. Por otra parte, se ha tenido en cuenta a las secciones serás el mismo que el de tres, y el de ocho lo mismo que el de siete: así por ejemplo, la línea 50, que hace el trayecto La Lucila (F.C.N. Mitre) a Hospital Favón, de acuerdo con el acuerdo, debía cobrar 75 centavos y el boleto máximo será regímen tarifario ha sido objeto de distintos estudios en cada caso, de manera que la incidencia de los aumentos será, además de limitada a los micros, muy reducida.



El GENERAL Perón, el ministro de Obras Públicas (a su izquierda), y la señora de Pasterni (a su derecha); la esposa del jefe del Estado, la señora del coronel Mercante y otras autoridades, recorriendo el barrio inaugurado ayer.

## REGIRA UN NUEVO HORARIO EN EL F. C. N. SAN MARTIN DESDE EL 5 DE DICIEMBRE

ANUNCIO el Ministerio de Transportes que a partir del 5 de diciembre se registrarán horarios en los servicios de pasajeros del Ferrocarril Nacional General San Martín, que aumentará el número de trenes entre esta ciudad y las zonas de turismo.

El expreso diurno El Guayano partirá para San Juan a las 7.40, menos los sábados en que llegará solamente a Mendoza, transbordando sus pasajeros a un coche-motor. Hasta esta última ciudad llevará coches "pullman". En esta misma línea circulará El Sanjuniño, que saldrá de Retiro los sábados a las 6.45, y El Zonda, que lo hará los jueves y sábados a las 20.30.

Para Villa Dolores partirá un tren expreso diurno los lunes, miércoles y viernes, que circulará bajo la denominación de El Champiqui. Hasta esa misma localidad llegará otro tren —el Sierras Grandes— que saldrá los mismos días a las 20.30 y conducirá coches dormitorio.

El mismo ferrocarril pondrá en servicio diez trenes más por día a El Palomar y a Hurlingham. Entre esta última localidad y José C. Paz el aumento será de cinco trenes y de cuatro el que corresponderá a la zona que sirven las estaciones Derqui y Pilar. Los domingos se incorporarán al tráfico urbano once trenes ascendentes y doce descendentes, prolongándose además otros servicios.

**Se ha Prorrogado el Plazo Para Pagar la Contribución**  
La Dirección Nacional Inmobiliaria ha prorrogado hasta el 19 de diciembre próximo el plazo para pagar la contribución inmobiliaria del año actual, correspondiente a propiedades ubicadas en la Capital Federal.



patía por parte del público y de los vecinos del lugar.

### ★ El Nuevo Barrio

El nuevo barrio comprende 450 viviendas que cuentan con toda clase de comodidades en las cuales podrán albergarse alrededor de 2.500 personas. Cuenta, además, con amplios solares destinados a plazas, campos de ejercicios físicos, y espacios re-

servados para edificios públicos. El barrio tiene una hermosa iglesia y construcciones destinadas a servicios médicos y sanitarios.

La obra, llevada a cabo por el Ministerio de Obras Públicas de la Nación, es de moderna arquitectura y ha sido ejecutada en el pedregal comprendido entre las calles Antonaguti, Aizpurún, Republicanas y la avenida General Paz.

Una Imagen de la Vivanza de Unión Entendimiento



Figure 4.2 Inauguration of Barrio Perón: "In a glittering ceremony, the housing project 'Presidente Perón' was inaugurated yesterday" (translation is mine).

Source: "En lucida ceremonia inauguróse ayer el barrio de viviendas 'Presidente Perón': asistieron el Jefe del Estado y Funcionarios," Clarín, November 11, 1949.

## 2. Description

*Barrio Perón* was designed as a self-sufficient, planned community for 2,200 people which consisted of 428 housing units and a complete civic center, all located on 29-hectares of land. It is a combination of garden city urban design and Californian-style architecture. As mentioned in Chapter One, the Peronist government took the ideas of decentralization and suburban development from the 1930s and used them in the design of working-class housing developments (six Californian-style housing developments were developed in Buenos Aires city and province during the period of government's direct participation). The adoption of the Californian style for the architecture of these developments associated them with the expensive vacation houses of the upper classes and the bucolic and rustic ranches of the countryside.

At the time *Barrio Perón* was built, the area where it is located was popularly known as “*La Siberia*,” making an allusion to distant lands where few people dared to live.<sup>159</sup> This border location was perfect, however, for embodying the idea of the suburbs as a transitional place between an urban and rural way of life. To further this, *Barrio Perón* incorporated mildly curved streets and large public and private green areas. A series of radial streets converge in the center of the ensemble, where the community facilities are located (see figure 4.3). Civil, commercial, and religious facilities were built to make the neighborhood self-sufficient: a church with housing for the priest, a cinema-theater for 532 people, a school with housing for the director and the porter, commercial premises for stores—a restaurant, pharmacy, hairdresser's

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<sup>159</sup> Norma H. Rozadas, “U36” *Barrio Brigadier Gral. Cornelio Saavedra* (Buenos Aires: M Ediciones, 2013), 434.

shop, and market were some of the first shops—a post office and telecommunications office, and a gas station and a garage with capacity for 100 automobiles. As can be seen in figures 3 and 4, the church was given the most prominent location, on the axis of the composition, in front of the central *plaza*. The church tower was the tallest building in the development. This layout of the civil, religious, and commercial facilities around a central square can be associated with the Hispanic-Creole settlement layouts regulated by the Law of the Indies.<sup>160</sup>

Although *Barrio Perón* was designed as self-sufficient and urbanistically different from its surroundings, it was integrated with the existing urban grid. The radial streets lead, every two blocks, to pre-existing streets on the periphery of the development, and the curvy streets begin to rectify themselves before joining the city grid. Therefore, the neighborhood is, on one hand, integrated with the city grid, and on the other hand, a distinct urban form surrounded by parks, at the edge of the city.

There were 27 different housing typologies at *Barrio Perón*. These types responded to the following factors: occupation of the building (single-family or multi-family), location of the building on the lot (detached, semi-detached, or attached or terraced), type and size of lot (e.g. corner or mid-block lot), number of floors (one- or two-floors), and relation between the units in multi-family types (duplex or French flats). Figures 4.5 to 4.10 provide images of some of the types found in the neighborhood.

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<sup>160</sup> Escuela, Arte, Ciencia, Técnica y Comunidad Nacional: Arquitectura y Comunidad Nacional: Historia Argentina de la vivienda de interés social. Período 1943-1955 (1), 43. This refers specifically to the Law of the Indies' town planning scheme, with a plan centered on a Plaza Mayor (main square), around which the main civic, religious, and commercial institutions were placed.

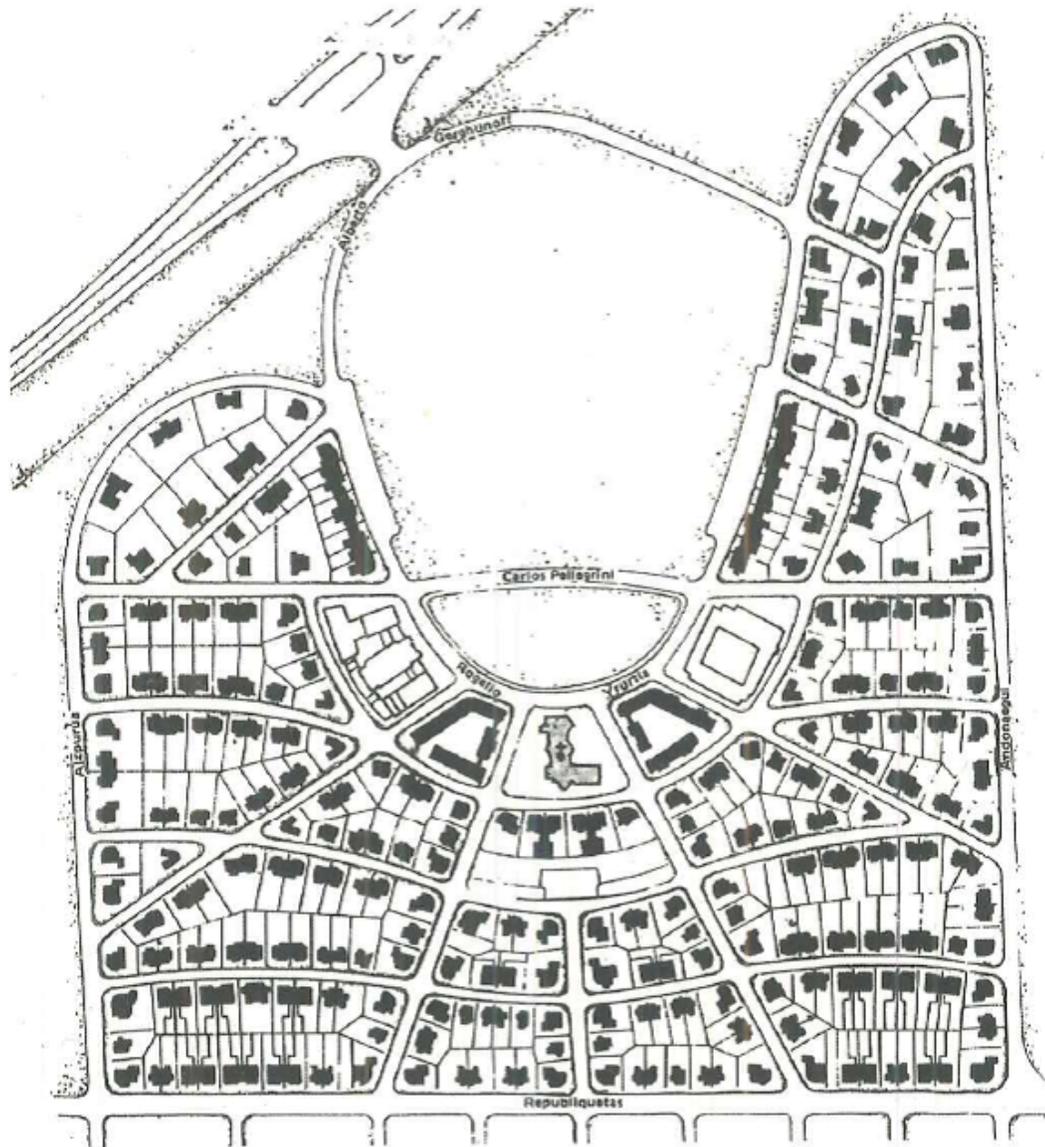


Figure 4.3 Plan of *Barrio Perón*.

Source: "Barrio Brig. Gral. Cornelio Saavedra," *Escuela, Arte, Ciencia, Técnica y Comunidad Nacional: Arquitectura y Comunidad Nacional: Historia Argentina de la vivienda de interés social. Período 1943-1955 (1)*, 43.



Figure 4.4 Aerial view of *Barrio Perón* in a piece of Peronist political propaganda. The phrase “*Una vivienda sana para cada familia y cada familia en su vivienda*” (A healthy house for each family and each family in its own house) emphasizes the ideal of the nuclear family and the importance of the single family house, at the same time that it conveys the message that the ‘suburban’ design of the neighborhood provides a ‘healthy’ connection with nature.

Source: Luis Guillermo Bähler, *La Nación argentina, justa, libre, soberana* (Buenos Aires: Control de Estado de la Presidencia de la Nación, 1950).



Figure 4.5 Single-family, detached, one-story house type.

Source: Norma H. Rozadas, *"U36" Barrio Brigadier Gral. Cornelio Saavedra* (Buenos Aires: M Ediciones, 2013), Appendix: DVD-ROM.



Figure 4.6 Single-family, semi-detached, one-story house type. Street trees were jacarandas.

Source: Norma H. Rozadas, *"U36" Barrio Brigadier Gral. Cornelio Saavedra* (Buenos Aires: M Ediciones, 2013), Appendix: DVD-ROM.



Figure 4.7 Single-family, detached, one-story house, corner type.

Source: Norma H. Rozadas, “U36” *Barrio Brigadier Gral. Cornelio Saavedra* (Buenos Aires: M Ediciones, 2013), Appendix: DVD-ROM.



Figure 4.8 Single-family, detached, two-story house, corner type. The design of the street lamps together with the manicured gardens collaborated with the idea of prestige and upgrading social status desired for the neighborhood.

Source: Norma H. Rozadas, “U36” *Barrio Brigadier Gral. Cornelio Saavedra* (Buenos Aires: M Ediciones, 2013), Appendix: DVD-ROM.



Figure 4.9 Single-family, semi-detached, two-story houses on a street lined with young jacaranda trees.

Source: Norma H. Rozadas, “U36” *Barrio Brigadier Gral. Cornelio Saavedra* (Buenos Aires: M Ediciones, 2013), Appendix: DVD-ROM.



Figure 4.10 Multi-family building composed of French flats.

Source: Norma H. Rozadas, “U36” *Barrio Brigadier Gral. Cornelio Saavedra* (Buenos Aires: M Ediciones, 2013), Appendix: DVD-ROM.

Despite all the variations in type, the buildings shared common architectural features that made them part of an ensemble. A masonry system composed of 30-centimeters-thick walls was used in all the buildings. The roofs were low-pitched, gabled or cross-gabled, covered with red, tapered mission tiles—called *tejas coloniales* (colonial tiles) in Argentina—supported by a wood structure featuring overhanging, unenclosed eaves with exposed rafter tails. Exterior wall surfaces were typically stuccoed and painted white—though exposed brick-work was used on some of the larger houses—generally only interrupted by a short base course of painted, exposed brick. Access to the property was typically through a front garden set off by a low masonry wall. A narrow path led to an entry porch with red encaustic tile flooring. Entry porches were also a character-defining feature of these buildings; in most cases the porch did not protrude from the façade but was set into the main structure. Porch roofs were usually supported by square, stuccoed, masonry columns; some porch roofs, however, were supported by round or square, painted, wood columns. In some other cases, the porch roof was formed by the overhanging second-floor, without the need for columns. The buildings had wood windows protected by wood jalousies with exterior metallic locks; window sills were made of ceramic tiles. The exterior door was also painted wood and included a peephole. Interestingly, all the facades included metallic flag-holders, which reflected the importance at the time of the idea of patriotism and its relationship to homeownership.

### 3. *Development over time*

Over the years, homeowners have introduced changes to their properties, either in the exterior and interior appearance of their houses, or the internal organization of space. These changes are both a consequence and a reflection of the successful social upward mobility generated in the neighborhood. *Barrio Perón* constitutes today a middle and upper-middle class neighborhood, with highly priced properties in a much desired location. In some cases, the changes do not compromise the architectural and urban character of *Barrio Perón*, but in others the nature and extent of the changes is such that they jeopardize important character-defining features of the neighborhood, both architectural and urban.

Architectural changes can be divided into four categories: aesthetic, spatial, safety and comfort, or entire replacement. Aesthetic changes are those introduced by homeowners with the desire of improving the exterior appearance of their houses. Often the changes are seen as a way to reflect the owner or resident's socio-economic position in the community. They are also a way to distinguish the house (and the owners) from the surrounding properties. Therefore, the emphasis of these changes is on the front façade and the front garden and range from a simple change in paint color to a complete restyling of the façade. An addition or replacement of materials is very common, such as the addition of brick or stone veneer to the front façade (see figure 4.11), the replacement of original roof tiles (red, *colonial* or tapered mission tiles) with red or black French tiles (see figure 4.12), and the replacement of sidewalk paving. Also common is the replacement of original casement windows with bay windows, which seems to respond more to an Anglo-Saxon fashion than to a real necessity to

admit additional light into the house (see figure 4.12). In some cases, homeowners evince a desire to disguise the original stylistic characteristics of the building and aim for a more “classical” style, usually achieved through the addition of balustrades on balconies and front gardens, and moldings in windows surroundings (see figure 4.13).

Spatial changes constitute the second group of architectural changes. The most common of these include the construction of a garage in available space in the side garden (see figures 4.11, 4.12, and 4.15). Most of the houses lacked a garage in the original plans (the first cars were held in the community garage, which had a capacity for 100 cars). Only the larger, two-story houses had garages but even those became obsolete for contemporary vehicles. Two other common changes have been the enclosure of porches and balconies in order to gain more interior space (see figure 4.14), and the construction of an additional floor on the one-story houses (see figure 4.15). Finally, there have been frequent additions of *quinchos*<sup>161</sup> (barbecue areas) in the back garden, often in association with swimming pools.

The third group of architectural changes springs from issues of safety and comfort. An increasing level of delinquency and insecurity led to the installation of metal fences in the front gardens and grates across the windows of many houses. In some cases, grates can also be found enclosing balconies (see figure 4.11). The development of new ideas about what was considered a comfortable and habitable house have led to the installation of air conditioning, heaters, and other mechanical

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<sup>161</sup> The term *quincho* originally described an open shed with thatched roof supported by wood columns used for cookouts, especially for the Argentinian famous *asado* or barbecue. Today, *quinchos* are generally closed or feature large glass sliding doors, and the roof generally consists of a wood structure covered with tiles. *Quinchos* are a highly desired element in Argentinian households.

equipment, and their exterior components appear on the main facades of the buildings (see figure 4.16). Vents and TV aerials, and gutters and ducts were also installed in many roofs. Finally, both insecurity and comfort may have had a role in the common replacement of the original louver shutters with interior roll-up slat curtains or blinds.

The last and most extreme group of architectural changes is the demolition of original structures for the construction of new ones. This can be seen as a local example of the global phenomenon in which “McMansions” (US term for large and ostentatious houses designed on colossal proportions) replace “tear downs” (the existing, smaller houses purchased with the expressed intent that they would be demolished).<sup>162</sup> These complete replacements started to take place during the 1990s but exploded in number after 2000.<sup>163</sup> They tend to be large, two- and two-and-a-half-story houses that stylistically do not harmonize with the character of the neighborhood. These constructions tend to appear at the north and west extremes of the neighborhood, where the parcels were bigger and the houses generally single-family detached. The presence of these constructions jeopardize the character of *Barrio Perón* since it destroys the aesthetic unity of the ensemble and the harmonic relationship between the constructions and the green and open spaces (see figure 4.17 to 20). An approximate 20% of the buildings of *Barrio Perón* have been replaced by a new structure or have completely lost their Californian-style, character-defining features.

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<sup>162</sup> Michael A. Tomlan, *Historic preservation: caring for our expanding legacy* (Springer, Cham, Switzerland, Heidelberg, New York, 2014), 269-270.

<sup>163</sup> Norma H. Rozadas, “U36” *Barrio Brigadier Gral. Cornelio Saavedra* (Buenos Aires: M Ediciones, 2013), 101.



Figure 4.11 Two single-family, semi-detached, one-story houses. The one on the left features a new stone veneer and a metal fence enclosing the front garden. Both houses have a garage addition in what used to be the side garden.

Source: Google Street View



Figure 4.12 Two houses similar to the ones in Figure 4.11 that suffered replacement of original casement windows with bay windows, addition of garages, metal fences (in house on the right), and replacement of original roof tiles (red, tapered mission tiles) with red French tiles on the left house.

Source: Google Street View



Figure 4.13 Single-family, two-story, corner house. A “classical” stylistic renovation: addition of balustrades in balconies and front gardens. The creation of a driveway in the front garden and the addition of palm trees aim to reflect a higher social status.  
*Source:* Author’s photograph.



Figure 4.14 Multi-family, semi-detached, French-flat dwellings (one unit in the first floor and other unit in the second floor). The building on the right has its two balconies enclosed. The building on the left has only its center balcony enclosed and features a new brick veneer on its front façade.  
*Source:* Author’s photograph.



Figure 4.15 Former single-family, semi-detached, one-floor type with addition of a garage and a second floor, and the paving of large part of green space.

Source: Google Street View



Figure 4.16 Installation of air conditioning exterior units in multi-family building.

Source: Author's photograph.



Figure 4.17 Replacement: demolition of original structures and construction of large houses.

Source: Author's photograph.

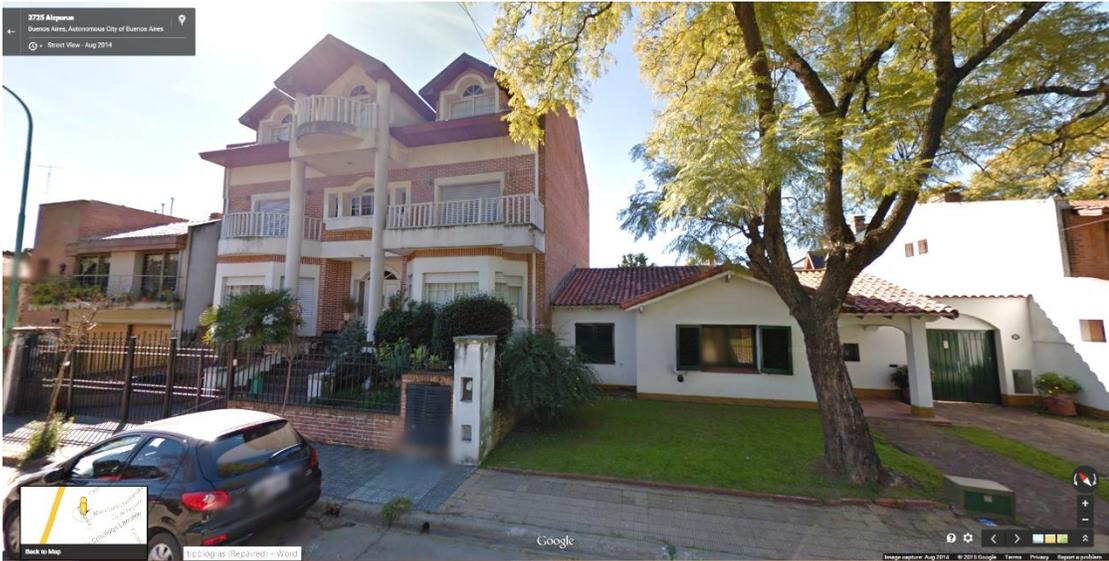


Figure 4.18 The large, two-and-a-half-story house on the left replace the original one-story, semi-detached house that mirrored the one on the right, now overshadowed by its neighbor.

Source: Google Street View.



Figure 4.19 Replacement: demolition of original structures and yards and construction of large house. Removal of original trees and installation of tall fencing. *Source:* Google Street View.



Figure 4.20 Replacement: demolition of original structure and construction of large house; along with the loss of yard area, high fencing, and paving of the remaining green space. *Source:* Google Street View.

With regard to the evolution of *Barrio Perón*'s urban character, two main phenomena have been modifying the original garden-city character of the place: an increase in the built vs. green area ratio, and the loss of trees and vegetation in public and private areas. The first situation is the result of the expansion of buildings and the construction of new larger houses. The increase in floor area comes at the expense of the loss of green area. The side gardens, which enabled a visual continuity to the backyard, have disappeared in most of the properties. The front gardens are in many cases hidden from public view behind walls and thick fences in pursuit of security. Using aerial photography and spatial data, an approximate quantitative analysis of the evolution of *Barrio Perón* in terms of green vs. built area ratio from 1949 to 2014 is shown in figure 4.21.<sup>164</sup> Built areas increased from 24% to 43%. Although these percentages are approximate, they give a clear idea of the process of transformation experienced by the neighborhood. The second situation—loss of trees and lawn areas—has been justified by alleged leaf litter and dirt, problems with roots, or the obstruction of sunlight on the newly-constructed swimming pools. The result is that many trees have been extracted and no replacements have been planted. Also, the paving of many lawn areas in the front gardens, especially for parking, is diminishing the presence of green in the neighborhood.

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<sup>164</sup> This analysis was part of a mapping project produced as a student of the class “Latin America: Landscapes and Urbanisms” (Cornell University, Fall 2014, Prof. Brian Davis) and published in: María Brito, “Atlas of Latin American Landscape: Barrio Perón,” Landscape Archipelago, <http://landscapearchipelago.com/index.php/america/barrio-peron/> (accessed April 21, 2015).

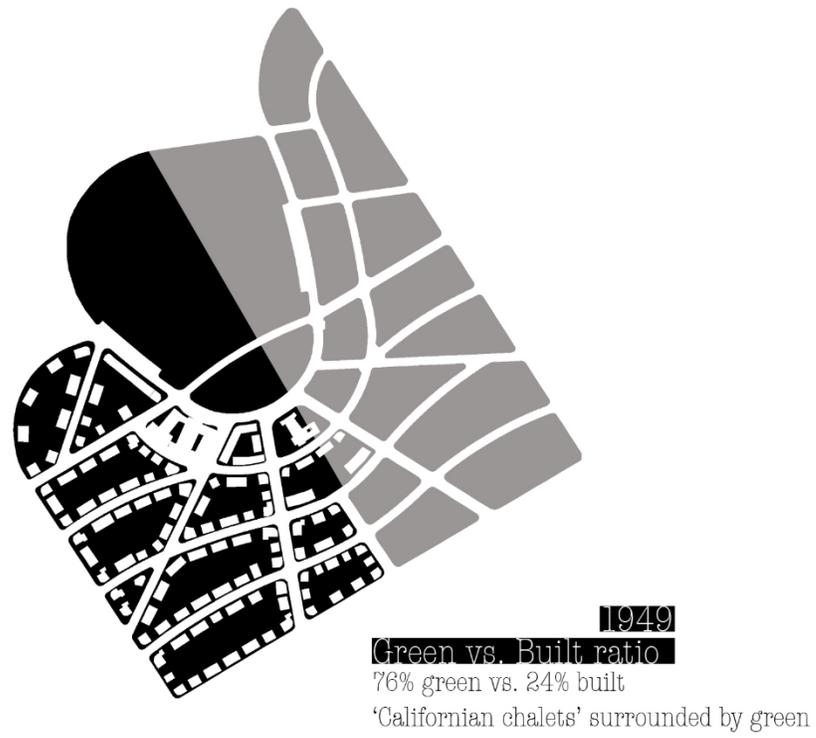


Figure 4.21 Evolution of *Barrio Perón* in terms of green vs built area ratio from 1949 to 2014.  
 Source: Author's illustration.

#### 4. *Preservation through community advocacy*

While preservation advocacy is often associated with the organization of campaigns against the demolition of a historic building, advocacy for preservation also involves fighting the construction of new buildings that would negatively affect the historic character of an area or district. This has been the case of *Barrio Perón*, whose entire community, led by their neighborhood association “*Asociación Vecinal Barrio Cornelio Saavedra*,” opposed the construction of a new building that would negatively affect the neighborhood.

*Barrio Perón*’s neighborhood association was first founded in 1964, but it became inactive sometime after 1970.<sup>165</sup> It was refounded in 1985, obtaining municipal recognition in 1987 and legal standing in 1999. Since 2000, it has been operating in the former post office building of the neighborhood, which was rehabilitated by the association. The doors are open twice a month to receive complaints and comments from the neighbors—there is also a suggestion box and a telephone line for messages. As specified in the neighborhood association’s bylaws, one of its functions is to perform all actions and negotiations aimed at preserving the neighborhood’s building characteristics, parks, and vegetation.<sup>166</sup> Indeed, the members of the neighborhood association—unpaid and elected every two years—have been leading the advocacy for the preservation of *Barrio Perón*’s most outstanding characteristics: its parks, its architecture and its urban character.

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<sup>165</sup> The information on this paragraph is from Norma H. Rozadas, “U36” *Barrio Brigadier Gral. Cornelio Saavedra* (Buenos Aires: M Ediciones, 2013), 49-56.

<sup>166</sup> *Ibid.*, 102.

Among these advocacy campaigns, the opposition to the construction of a large housing project on the site of the former garage and gas station (described in detail later in this chapter) had the greatest community participation. There are three other examples worthy of mention that reflect the broad scope of the neighborhood association's actions and the variety of results obtained. First, since 1986, the association has been making efforts to reverse a municipal ordinance<sup>167</sup> that established the widening of Crisólogo Larralde Avenue (former *Republiquetas* in figure 4.3) from 17.32 to 36 meters, resulting in an increase of the current setback requirement to four meters on both new and existing construction. In 2000, the association collected 1,228 neighbors' signatures to request a bill for the repeal of the law, but they were unsuccessful.

A second example is the advocacy campaign that began in 1992 in response to the expansion and modernization of General Paz Avenue, at the border with Buenos Aires province. Among many other issues, the neighborhood association fought to preserve open space, avoiding the construction of a collector road that would encroach on the public parks surrounding the neighborhood. It negotiated the forestation of the lands adjacent to the avenue to help control noise and air pollution. This campaign continued for more than a decade, with some successful outcomes but many requests yet unanswered. A third example was the attempt by the neighborhood association to declare *Barrio Perón* as an *Area de Protección Histórica-APH* (Historical Protection Area). APH are areas that possess a high patrimonial significance due to their historical, architectural, symbolic, and environmental values, being worthy of

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<sup>167</sup> Municipal Ordinance No 44-095, in *Ibid.*, 35.

appropriate protection of their distinctive characteristics.<sup>168</sup> Despite repeated attempts to have the neighborhood be designated an APH, however, government authorities have not responded favorably.<sup>169</sup> Often, these attempts were also fought by some of the neighbors, who saw designation as a possible obstacle to development and a cause of devaluation of their houses.<sup>170</sup>

Although some neighbors might not favor the designation of *Barrio Perón* as an APH, they certainly do not consider ‘development’ as a synonym of destruction of the neighborhood’s most valuable characteristics. This was clearly reflected in one of the most significant advocacy campaigns led by the neighborhood association—in terms of community participation and results—which started in 1999 in opposition to the construction of a large housing project on the site of the former neighborhood garage and gas station.

The old garage lot, which has 2,520 square meters,<sup>171</sup> is located at 5799 Macedonio Fernandez Street, in the heart of the neighborhood, one block south from the church. The property was owned by the national government until 1983, when it was sold to a private owner who continued the original use of the building, establishing an YPF<sup>172</sup> gas station and garage.<sup>173</sup> Over time, the property was gradually abandoned until it was definitively closed and sold at auction (see figure

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<sup>168</sup> *Código de Planeamiento Urbano LEY N° 449* (Buenos Aires, B.O.C.B.A. N° 1.044, 2000), 302.

<sup>169</sup> Norma H. Rozadas, “U36” *Barrio Brigadier Gral. Cornelio Saavedra* (Buenos Aires: M Ediciones, 2013), 98.

<sup>170</sup> Alberto Szécsi and Norma Rozadas, members of neighborhood association, interview by author, Buenos Aires, Argentina, January 14, 2015.

<sup>171</sup> *Mapa interactivo de Buenos Aires v3.0* (<https://mapa.buenosaires.gob.ar>)

<sup>172</sup> YPF, acronym for *Yacimientos Petrolíferos Fiscales* (Treasury Petroleum Fields), is an Argentinian energy company, engaged in the exploration and production of oil and gas.

<sup>173</sup> Norma H. Rozadas, “U36” *Barrio Brigadier Gral. Cornelio Saavedra* (Buenos Aires: M Ediciones, 2013), 107.

4.22). In February 1999, the company “*Urbana 21*” bought the property and in May 1999 submitted a multi-family housing project for approval to the “*Dirección General de Fiscalización de Obras y Catastros*” (General Directorate of Supervision of Works and Cadastres). The project, called “*Saavedra Chico,*” consisted in a six-story building containing 25 apartments of 2 and 3 bedrooms and 22 triplex houses with units of 3 and 4 bedrooms (see figure 4.23). The company had correctly identified one of the significant characteristics of the neighborhood, highlighting the ‘suburban’ quality of the place in the project brochure: “*Saavedra Chico es la naturaleza a su alcance (...) es el lugar indicado para quienes desean vivir en la ciudad como si no se estuviera en ella*” (‘Saavedra Chico’ is nature at your fingertips ... it is the right place for those who wish to live in the city as if they were not).<sup>174</sup> In June, the plans for the new project were registered. The company installed a temporary showroom at the site featuring a scale model of the new development.

The neighborhood association together with the neighbors started an aggressive advocacy campaign to stop the construction of that “monstrosity.”<sup>175</sup> They articulated several arguments against the proposed housing project. First, the six-floor building would surpass the height of all the buildings in the neighborhood, including the tower of the church, which was the point of reference for the community; this would alter the original landscape or scenic view of the neighborhood. Second, the significant increment in population density would bring problems in water and gas supply and in sewer and storm-water systems. Third, the project would bring an

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<sup>174</sup> *Saavedra Chico brochure* in *Ibid.*, 109.

<sup>175</sup> The information on this paragraph is from Norma H. Rozadas, “*U36*” *Barrio Brigadier Gral. Cornelio Saavedra* (Buenos Aires: M Ediciones, 2013), 111 and 120.

approximate 30% increase in traffic to a place with narrow streets—9 meters wide as opposed to the current 17.32 meters established by the regulations—which would result in an increase in noise, lack of parking availability, and accidents. Fourth, the environmental quality of the neighborhood would be damaged due to noise, visual, and air pollution, with loss of sunlight and changes in wind direction.

Apart from those arguments, and after doing research and making inquiries to different government organizations, the neighborhood association concluded that there had been a series of irregularities and that the project was not in compliance with the current Building Code.<sup>176</sup> The zoning of the neighborhood at that time was R1-bI (low-density, limited-height residential) and E3 (local facilities). The lot containing the garage and gas station was zoned as E3. The areas affected by zone E3, as described by the existing Urban Planning Code at the time, were destined for the installation of service uses for the nearby residential areas. For detached buildings, the zoning allowed a *Factor de Ocupación Total –FOT* (Floor Area Ratio) of 3, from which only a *FOT 2* could be assigned for housing; otherwise, for attached buildings the *FOT* should be 2, from which only a *FOT 1* could be assigned for housing.<sup>177</sup> The company ‘*Urbana 21*’ considered the project to be a detached typology and, therefore, used a *FOT 2*, doubling the area of the lot and incrementing the height of the building. The neighborhood association opposed this interpretation. First, they stated that the purpose of the E3 zoning was to provide services to a residential context; allowing an exclusively residential use would distort that purpose, since the project would be

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<sup>176</sup> Ibid., 116.

<sup>177</sup> Ibid., 98-101.

doubling the size of its context without providing any services. Second, they argued that the proposed housing project was in violation of the urban planning code, since the building was not detached but rather a “combination type” and, therefore, it would correspond a *FOT* 1. Third, they discovered that the demolition plans had not been approved before the new construction plans were registered, and on top of that, the company had not declared the gas tanks buried in the site—remnants of the former service station—which was not only an environmental but also a life-safety concern for the neighbors. Last, the finding of a series of alleged alterations in the cadastral plots of the parcel completed the picture.

As Michael Tomlan states, “for those unfamiliar with advocacy campaigns, the learning curve can be steep and time consuming.”<sup>178</sup> Indeed, the advocacy campaign was a long process that had its first successful result in 6 months but then continued until 2010. Although the neighborhood association had been advocating for the appropriate development of the location since its founding, the time and effort put in this particular campaign were considerable. In this case, the learning process was also experienced by the community. At the end of this advocacy campaign, the community of *Barrio Perón* achieved the following results: the cancellation or deregistration of the housing project, the appropriate presentation of the demolition plans and the consequent extraction of the fuel tanks and other environmental regulations compliance, the holding of a public hearing, and the modification of the Urban Planning Code through the passing of the Law No 261, by which the entire

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<sup>178</sup> Michael A. Tomlan, *Historic preservation: caring for our expanding legacy* (Springer, Cham, Switzerland, Heidelberg, New York, 2014), 271.

neighborhood came under the new zoning provision “District U36” (see Appendix). In the end, the garage and gas station were demolished and the parcel was divided into 8 lots, which are being sold separately.

An evaluation of the entire advocacy process yields four main elements that ensured the positive outcome. First, the neighborhood association, representing the entire community, “raised its voice,” repeatedly, in all suitable venues and in front of all suitable people.<sup>179</sup> The association presented numerous letters alerting government officials, including notes to the Director of Supervision of Works and Cadastres, the Director of Urban Planning and Environment, the Solicitor of the City of Buenos Aires, and the Ombudsman. Also, a proposal of a new zoning for the neighborhood adapted to the necessities of the community was presented with the assistance and participation of a group of architects from the community and later approved as the Law No 261 (see Appendix). The neighborhood association also looked for legal assistance and managed to present themselves in court as third-party victims after the company ‘*Urbana 21*’ filed a lawsuit against the Government of the City of Buenos Aires claiming, among other things, the inapplicability of the Law No 261 and requesting compensation for alleged damages in account of the Government’s delay in the whole process.

Second, the community knew how to capitalize local, political, and religious connections, looking for their engagement and participation in the cause. The advocacy campaign counted with the support of important political figures such as deputies (parliamentary representatives), members of the Urban Planning Committee

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<sup>179</sup> Ibid., 271.

of the Legislature of the City of Buenos Aires, and the Deputy Ombudsman of the city of Buenos Aires. Furthermore, the advocacy campaign counted on the support of Father José María Lombardero, who, besides of being the parson of the neighborhood from 1957 until his death in August 1999, was also a popular priest who conducted religious programs in television and radio. At the time of the advocacy campaign, Father Lombardero was participating in the Legislature and his support was very important.

Third, the advocacy campaign was widely covered in the media, including television, radio, and newspapers. This brought the problem and the community to the attention of millions<sup>180</sup> and, therefore, encouraged the participation of people outside the neighborhood and political figures. The community offered a story that was appealing to the media; a newspaper article reported that “...*hasta los chicos (...) se sumaron a la protesta. Porque junto a las casas bajas, blancas o de ladrillos, con tejas rojas que se alinean en las calles curvas y angostas, ahora, donde hay un viejo garaje, van a construir un edificio...*” (...even the children joined the protest, because next to the low, white stuccoed or brick houses of red tile roofs that line up the curvy and narrow streets, a tall building will be built now, in the place where there is an old garage).<sup>181</sup>

A final and equally important element was the engagement and enthusiastic participation of the community, which included not only the people of the neighborhood but also people from nearby areas. This participation was encouraged

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<sup>180</sup> Ibid., 273.

<sup>181</sup> Gabriela Vig, “Quejas en una zona de Saavedra por la construcción de un edificio,” *Clarín* (July 1, 1999), <http://edant.clarin.com/diario/1999/07/01/e-04401d.htm> (accessed March 31, 2015).

through a thorough public information campaign. The neighborhood association kept neighbors informed through the distribution of informative circulars during the entire advocacy process. Likewise, the association summoned neighbors to a total of 37 massive meetings every Saturday and Sunday at four p. m. at the project site. The community also expressed its repudiation of the construction of the building, participating in a total of 18 marches across the neighborhood (see figure 4.24) and placing signs and posters expressing their position against the building and in favor of keeping the neighborhood's character (see figure 4.25). Furthermore, the fact that the public hearing, achieved through the collection of 2,285 neighbor's signatures, counted with the participation of 135 neighbors—number that forced to split the hearing in two days—shows the strength that community advocacy has on the preservation of our built environment (see figure 26).

*“Fue algo inolvidable, si ‘la unión hace la fuerza’, algo habíamos logrado.”<sup>182</sup>*

(It was something unforgettable; if ‘unity makes strength’, we had achieved something)

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<sup>182</sup> Norma H. Rozadas, *“U36” Barrio Brigadier Gral. Cornelio Saavedra* (Buenos Aires: M Ediciones, 2013), 129.



Figure 4.22 Site of the garage and gas station where the new housing project was proposed.

Source: Norma H. Rozadas, *"U36" Barrio Brigadier Gral. Cornelio Saavedra* (Buenos Aires: M Ediciones, 2013), Appendix: DVD-ROM.



Figure 4.23 Multi-family housing project by company Urbana 21.

Source: Norma H. Rozadas, "U36" Barrio Brigadier Gral. Cornelio Saavedra (Buenos Aires: M Ediciones, 2013), Appendix: DVD-ROM.



Figure 4.24 The community participating in one of the 18 marches held in the neighborhood. A banner reads: “*NO a los edificios altos en el barrio. Los vecinos*” (NO tall buildings in the neighborhood. Signed: the Neighbors). The Argentinian flag present in the marches is also a demonstration of the patriotism present in the neighborhood.

Source: Norma H. Rozadas, “U36” *Barrio Brigadier Gral. Cornelio Saavedra* (Buenos Aires: M Ediciones, 2013), Appendix: DVD-ROM.



Figure 4.25 At the back, one of the signs posted in the houses of the neighborhood in opposition to the construction of the building and in favor of ‘chalets’. The sign is divided in three sections: the first features a tall building crossed out and with the legend ‘NO;’ the center section features a small white house with red tile roof, with the legend ‘SI;’ and the last section reads: “*Chalets SI, torres NO*” (Chalets YES, tall buildings NO).

Source: Norma H. Rozadas, “U36” *Barrio Brigadier Gral. Cornelio Saavedra* (Buenos Aires: M Ediciones, 2013), Appendix: DVD-ROM.



Figure 4.26 Neighbors in their way to the Legislature of Buenos Aires to participate in the Public Hearing.

Source: Norma H. Rozadas, *“U36” Barrio Brigadier Gral. Cornelio Saavedra* (Buenos Aires: M Ediciones, 2013), Appendix: DVD-ROM.

## *Conclusion*

This chapter demonstrated that “preservation is fundamentally a social campaign.”<sup>183</sup> It is interesting to note that an example of the Californian style—a style that has been undervalued and overlooked by many professionals and academics—is the one that the general public raised their voice to preserve. The community of *Barrio Perón* launched a tenacious advocacy campaign against the destruction of their neighborhood’s most valued characteristic: its “suburban” character. The strong association between the garden-city model and the Californian-style architecture of the neighborhood is what gives *Barrio Perón* its character. Although the community failed to address the possible historic significance of the original garage and gas station, they did defend the significance of their neighborhood as a whole.

The new zoning provision “District U36” was a positive, first step in the protection of *Barrio Perón*’s character. Unfortunately, as one of the members of the neighborhood association pointed out, the community of *Barrio Perón* “stopped halfway” in the recognition of the neighborhood historic significance and the identification and protection of its character-defining features.<sup>184</sup> Although “U36” zoning stipulations protect valuable character-defining features of the place,<sup>185</sup> there are others that are not addressed, such as wall surface materials and colors, fenestration patterns, and windows and doors characteristics. Furthermore, the lack of

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<sup>183</sup> Michael A. Tomlan, *Historic preservation: caring for our expanding legacy* (Springer, Cham, Switzerland, Heidelberg, New York, 2014), 271.

<sup>184</sup> Alberto Szécsi and Norma Rozadas, members of neighborhood association, interview by author, Buenos Aires, Argentina, January 14, 2015.

<sup>185</sup> The “District U36” zoning regulates set-back and yard dimension requirements, lot coverage, height allowances, in addition to special regulations in terms of roof pitch and material, height of fences, sidewalk material, and the protection of forestation and green areas.

an appropriate reinforcement system allows current code violations. The tools used in U.S. neighborhood conservation districts seem an appropriate solution for the preservation of *Barrio Perón*'s character. First, it is necessary to develop specific design guidelines to educate the community in terms of appropriate alterations and new constructions. At the same time, a design review process would be beneficial to help implement the regulations, though it might prove difficult to secure in terms of governmental support. All in all, a comprehensive survey of the neighborhood should be undertaken in order to gather information about the character and common alterations on the neighborhood and, at the same time, engage the community in the subsequent development of the design guidelines and the participation in a potential design review process.



Figure 4.27 “Chalecitos SI, edificios altos NO” (Small chalets YES, tall buildings NO).  
Source: Barrio Brigadier Cornelio Saavedra webpage, [http://bcorneliosaavedra.com.ar/index.php?option=com\\_content&view=article&id=46:la-arquitectura-del-barrio&catid=42:caracteristicas&Itemid=61](http://bcorneliosaavedra.com.ar/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=46:la-arquitectura-del-barrio&catid=42:caracteristicas&Itemid=61), (Accessed April 2, 2015)

## CONCLUSION

There is a need to further investigate and document the Californian style in Argentina in order to identify and protect valuable historic resources that are currently neglected. This thesis is a first step in the recognition of the style's historic significance and the study of its development in Argentina. The Californian style contributed to the social, cultural, architectural, and urban development of the country. Ever since it began to be used, the style has been associated with the search for Argentina's national identity. This exploration looked for a "national style" of architecture that reflected the identity of the country. The adoption of an architectural style had its origins in "Hispanic" California and spread all over Latin America. For Argentina, it brought a sense of Hispanic identity that implicitly recognized shared values and traditions across the Americas. Later, this idea of a national identity was capitalized upon by the Peronist government, which used the style for the construction of housing projects and social facilities throughout the country.

Those early associations are responsible in part for the subsequent attitudes towards the style, both negative and positive. On the negative side, the associations can be interpreted as the reasons for the omission of the style in architectural historiography. First, the aesthetic prejudice—especially during the late 19<sup>th</sup> century—to all architecture with Hispanic-Creole roots resulted in the disparagement of the Neocolonial style and its variants by some professionals and elite society. Even for those who did favor the Neocolonial, the Californian style was seen as an "unsophisticated" version of it. Second, prejudice based on political ideas resulted in

a narrow view of the Californian style as a symbol of cultural dependence upon the United States, overlooking or undervaluing its Hispanic associations in cultural tradition. Last, political motivations also resulted in a stigmatization of the style because of its association with Peronism, undervaluing the style as a mere political instrument and a product of populism and demagoguery.

On the positive side, those associations can be interpreted as the reasons for the style's embeddedness in Argentinian social memory. The Hispanic-Creole origins of the style and its role in the process of developing a national identity resulted in its permanent association with the values of patriotism, tradition, and localness. Also, its consideration as regional architecture spurred the associations with rural and suburban settings, which were later developed in the garden city model. Furthermore, the style's role during the Peronist era resulted in its immediate association with the values of homeownership, domestic happiness, and social welfare, at the same time that it emphasized the previous values of patriotism, tradition, and suburban quality, now available for the general population (not only the upper classes). These values instilled the Californian style in popular imagination—especially in its most popular form: the *chalecito Californiano*. This was by the representation of the style in the cinema, printed media, and political propaganda.

These ideas and values have made the Californian style popular among the general public in spite of the fact that it has been undervalued and overlooked by many professionals and academics. The community of *Barrio Perón* demonstrated this positive public opinion of the style and its association with garden-city ideas, but at the same time showed that there is still a long way to go in the preservation of

Californian-style architecture in Argentina. There is a need to support these community efforts with a profound change in the way architects and preservationists look at the style. The provision of an appropriate context for the evaluation of Californian-style historic resources and the elaboration of relevant tools for its preservation are crucial. In the case of *Barrio Perón*, where an APH (*Historical Protection Area*) designation is not favored by government authorities, other tools such as a “conservation district program” might be useful for the protection of the character of the neighborhood. The new zoning provision “District U36” (see Appendix) achieved through the community advocacy campaign was a positive, though incomplete, step in the protection of *Barrio Perón*’s character. A comprehensive survey of the neighborhood’s character and common alterations should be undertaken for the subsequent development of design guidelines.

*Barrio Perón* is not the only Californian-style planned community developed by the Peronist government. Time constraints did not allow for an analysis of more case studies. Other examples include the *Barrio 17 de Octubre* and *Barrio 1 de Marzo*, located in Buenos Aires city; and *Ciudad Evita* and *Barrio No 1*, located in Buenos Aires province. Also, other housing projects were developed by the government, and more were built by companies or labor unions during the government’s period of indirect participation. Furthermore, not every aspect of *Barrio Perón* is analyzed in this thesis. The focus is on the residential and urban characteristics that launched the community advocacy campaign against the construction of the new building. Chapter Four is by no means a comprehensive account of the neighborhood’s characteristics and development.

Similarly, due to time constraints and the limited access to resources, only a few interviews were conducted. In an attempt to include the opinions and insights of different stakeholders and participants in the preservation of the Californian style in Argentina, the interviewees include people from different organizations and fields: academics (professors and researchers in architectural and urban history), government officials (directors of public agencies related to historic preservation at the national level), and members of *Barrio Perón*'s neighborhood association, which are also residents or former residents of the neighborhood. More interviews with residents would add more information regarding the perception of the style by the public and it would be essential for a thorough analysis of the changes introduced in the buildings.

Time limitations also precluded the analysis, in Chapter Two, of the role of newspaper advertising, television, and literature (e.g. popular and pulp fiction) in the diffusion of the Californian style. A more exhaustive analysis of the films that found their way to Argentina would add more information about the ideas and values that were transmitted through the cinema. Moreover, the thesis focuses on the films that introduced the style during the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. There are also contemporary television productions and films that continued showcasing the Californian style. For example, *Barrio Perón* has been used as a setting for several national soap operas (e.g. *Soy Gitano*), films (e.g. Disney's Latin American version of *High School Musical 3*), and television advertisements (eg. *Arnet la casa del futuro*). This demonstrates a continuing positive outlook towards the style as representative of particular values. A complete study of the different values transmitted in mass media,

their meanings and implications could prove to be worthy of analysis by other researchers in related fields, such as sociology.

The topic of the Californian style in Argentina will definitely prove fruitful for many future investigations. First of all, a study of the Californian style's regional variations should be conducted in order to understand how such a large-scale diffusion took place in terms of materials, constructive technologies, details, and types. The analysis of these regional variations should be undertaken at both national and transnational scales. For instance, at the national scale there is the so-called '*estilo Mar del Plata*', which is a variation used in Mar del Plata (a coastal city in Buenos Aires) that is noted for having stone facades (generally using as a veneer local 'Mar del Plata' stone). Transnational variations would include the local adaptations of the style in other Latin American countries, especially in Mexico, Brazil, Chile, and Peru. Also at a transnational scale, a topic that might be worthwhile of study in its own right is a comparative analysis of the variable aspects between Californian-style architecture in Argentina and Mission Revival and Spanish Colonial Revival architecture in California.

In addition, a thorough investigation should be made of the other building types which used the Californian style. This thesis focuses only on residential architecture, but many other types deserve attention. As mentioned in this thesis, one of the Californian style's qualities was its adaptability to diverse programs. Of particular interest would be a study of the numerous gas stations built by the A.C.A (*Automóvil Club Argentino*) across the country; the Californian style was the selected style for those stations located in rural and 'picturesque' settings.

Finally, a series of surveys to quantify the number of Californian style buildings and developments in the country would be important to get a complete understanding of the presence of the style in Argentina. Similarly, a quantification of the threats to the style, both in terms of loss of character-defining features and complete demolitions, would help validate the necessity of identifying and preserving Californian-style historic resources.

The items that are mentioned above are some of the many possibilities which await future investigators. Previous studies have included a superficial analysis of the Californian style as part of a broader topic. This thesis aims at providing a first focused study on the style. After being largely overlooked by architectural historiography, much work still needs to be done in terms of research, identification of resources, and documentation of the Californian style in Argentina.

## APPENDIX

### DISTRICT U36: *BARRIO CORNELIO SAAVEDRA*

Current zoning of the neighborhood *Barrio Perón* (current *Barrio Brigadier Cornelio Saavedra*) proposed by the neighborhood association with assistance of a group of architects and other professionals from the community. It was approved in October 7, 1999 as Law No 261. The following is translated from the Urban Planning Code of the city of Buenos Aires, Argentina.<sup>186</sup>

#### District U36 – Barrio Cornelio Saavedra

- 1 Delimitation: corresponds to the polygon bounded by the streets: Crisólogo Larralde, Andonaegui, Rogelio Yrurtia, and Aizpurúa, according to Zoning Plan and Plan N°5.4.6.37.
- 2 Parcel Structure: the grouping of parcels is permitted. The subdivision of parcels is prohibited.
- 3 Special Regulations: parcel No 7, which belongs to the block bounded by the streets A. Storni, Macedonio Fernández, Miguel Camino, and A. Williams, can be subdivided into parcels greater than 300 sqm.
- 4 Zoning: this district is divided in two zones:
  - Zone A: intended for low density, single-family housing.
  - Zone B: intended for multi-family housing, commercial and service facilities, and buildings subject to landmark cataloguing.
- 4.1 Zone A: bounded by the streets Crisólogo Larralde, Aizpurúa, Rogelio Yrurtia, Carlos E. Pellegrini, Alberto Williams, Carlos E. Pellegrini, and Andonaegui.
  - 4.1.1 Uses: residential exclusively. Single-family housing.
  - 4.1.2 Urban Fabric regulations.

Morphology: terraced, detached, and semi-detached buildings are allowed.

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<sup>186</sup> *Código de Planeamiento Urbano LEY N° 449* (Buenos Aires, B.O.C.B.A. N° 1.044, 2000), 262-266.

| LOT AREA (sqm) | a) <i>F.O.S.</i><br>(Lot Coverage Ratio) | b) Maximum <i>F.O.T.</i><br>(Floor Area Ratio) |
|----------------|--|--|
| < 400          | 0.5                                      | 1  |
| ≥ 400          | 0.4                                      | 1  |

#### 4.1.3 Rear yard requirements:

-All the parcels shall have a rear yard equivalent to 30% of the parcel area.

(...)

-Area of occupancy of the rear yard: 5% of the lot area. This space shall only be occupied with ancillary buildings (*quinchos*, barbecue areas, deposits, changing rooms for swimming pools, service rooms, bathrooms, and similar)...

#### 4.1.4 Side yard requirements:

| Lot width (meters) | Number of property lines to which the building can be attached to | Notes   |
|--------------------|---|---|
| < 16               | 2   | _____   |
| 16 < width < 22    | 1   | With a minimum set back of 3 m. from the opposite property line |
| > 22               | None  | With a minimum side garden of 3 m. in each side.                |

4.1.5 Front yard requirements: the original front yard dimensions shall be respected according to the following list. The resulting area shall be retained as a landscaped absorbent garden.

| CALLE             | ENTRE  | VEREDA PAR                       | VEREDA IMPAR                     |
|-------------------|--|----------------------------------|----------------------------------|
| C. Larralde       | Aizpurúa y Andonaegui  |                                  | 1,95m                            |
| 20 de Febrero     | Andonaegui y M. Camino<br>M. Camino y Burela<br>Burela y A. Storni<br>A. Storni y Aizpurúa | 2,20m<br>2,10m<br>1,80m<br>2,00m | 1,80m<br>1,95m<br>2,15m<br>1,80m |
| M. Fernández      | Aizpurúa y Andonaegui  | 2,30m                            | 1,60m                            |
| A. Williams       | Andonaegui y C. Pellegrini   | 2,80m                            | 2,80m                            |
| A. Williams       | C. Pellegrini y Aizpurúa   | 2,70m                            | 2,70m                            |
| A. Guttero        | Andonaegui y R. Yrurtia  | 1,80m                            | 1,80m                            |
| C. López Buchardo | Andonaegui y A. Williams   | 1,60m                            | 2,30m                            |
| C. Gaito          | A. Williams y Aizpurúa   | 1,70m                            | 1,70m                            |
| C. Pellegrini     | Aizpurúa y R. Yrurtia  | 3,00m                            | 2,40m                            |
| C. Pellegrini     | R. Yrurtia y Andonaegui  | 2,00m                            | 3,00m                            |
| R. Fournier       | Andonaegui y R. Yrurtia  | 2,80m                            | 2,80m                            |
| Athos Palma       | R. Yrurtia y C. Pellegrini   | 2,70m                            | 2,70m                            |
| R. Yrurtia        | Gerchunoff y Andonaegui  | 2,70m                            | 2,70m                            |
| A. Gerchunoff     | A. Williams y R. Yrurtia   | 3,00m                            | 3,00m                            |
| Aizpurúa          | C. Larralde y C. Pellegrini  |                                  | 4,00m                            |
| Aizpurúa          | C. Pellegrini y R. Yrurtia   |                                  | 3,00m                            |
| E. Banch          | Aizpurúa y M. Fernández  | 1,80m                            | 1,90m                            |
| E. Banch          | M. Fernández y R. Yrurtia  | 1,90m                            | 1,80m                            |
| A. Storni         | C. Larralde y R. Yrurtia   | 1,95m                            | 1,95m                            |
| M. Camino         | C. Larralde y R. Yrurtia   | 1,90m                            | 1,90m                            |
| Andonaegui        | C. Larralde y C. Pellegrini  | 4,40m                            |                                  |
| Andonaegui        | C. Pellegrini y R. Yrurtia   | 4,70m                            |                                  |
| Burela            | C. Larralde y M. Fernández   | 1,80m                            | 1,80m                            |

(...)

4.1.6 Maximum building height: 8.50 meters from grade plane. Water tanks may surpass this height only if designed with architectural treatment and distanced a minimum of 0.60 meters from the division line. Also, chimneys, antennas, lightning protection, and ventilation ducts may surpass the maximum height.

4.1.7 Special Regulations:

- Roofs: shall be pitched with an angle between 25° and 40°, covered with red *tejas coloniales* (tapered mission tiles) or similar ones.
- Balconies: shall be open, with a maximum projection of 1.2 meters from the front line.
- Fences: fences at all property lines shall have a maximum height of 1.80 meters (...) and they must allow visual continuity. Parapets shall not be taller than 0.40 meters.
- Sidewalks: shall be covered with yellow, 20 x 20 cm limestone tiles.
- Forestation: the existing trees must be maintained. Any type of intervention must ensure the maintenance and increase of leaf mass.
- Underground garages: the access ramp cannot invade the front yard.

4.2 Zona B: bounded by the streets Alberto Williams, Carlos E. Pellegrini, Rogelio Yrurtia, and Carlos E. Pellegrini.

4.2.1 Obligation to protect:

- Church: located in the block bounded by the streets R. Yrurtia, A. Storni, A. Williams, and Miguel Camino. It is subject to cataloguing.
- Multi-family buildings: located in the following blocks bounded by the streets: A) A. Guttero, R. Yrurtia, Miguel Camino, and A. Williams; B) A. Storni, R. Yrurtia, E. Banch, and A. Williams. They are subject to cataloguing.
- School: located in the block bounded by the streets A Guttero, A. Williams, C. Pellegrini, and R. Yrurtia. It is subject to cataloguing.
- Commercial Center: located in the block delimited by the streets C. Pellegrini, A. Williams, Enrique Banch, and R. Yrurtia. It is subject to cataloguing.

(...)

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