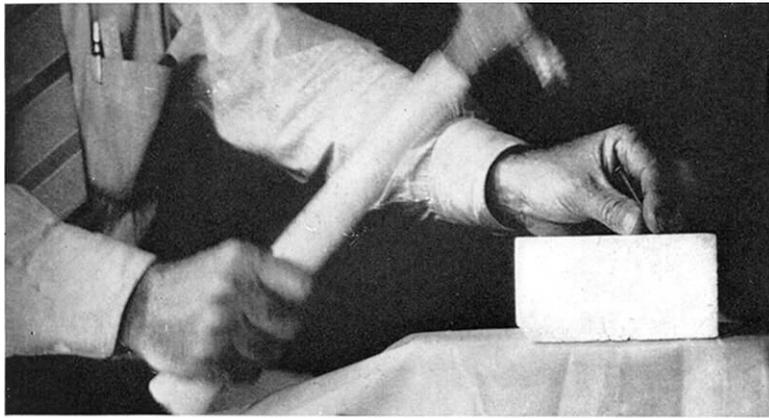
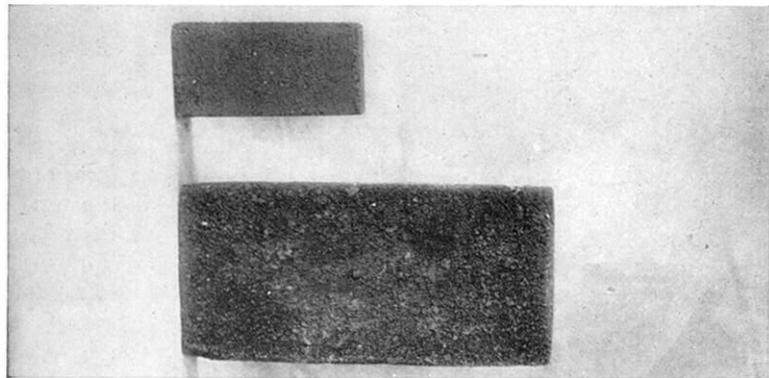


# DESIGN TRENDS



**This brick can be sawed, drilled, nailed, like wood . . .**



**and weighs 66% less than its predecessor . . . See p. 75**

ARCHITECTURAL  
RECORD

# LANDSCAPE DESIGN

by **GARRET ECKBO**  
**DANIEL U. KILEY**  
**JAMES C. ROSE**

"THERE IS A sentimentalism in America about 'the country' as a place to live," says Mr. Will W. Alexander in a report on rural housing. "Fresh air, the minds of many of our people—is particularly city people—is thought of as a satisfactory substitute for a decent income, wholesome food, medical care, educational opportunities, and everything else which the city dwellers think as necessary. . . ." Such a romantic attitude is all too apparent among American designers, who fail to see that the "old swimming hole" needs lifeguards and pure water, that the baseball field needs illumination, or that the farm boy may be quite as interested in aviation or theatricals as his city cousin. On the other hand, there is the danger that—once recognizing these needs—the building or landscape designer (because of his own urban background and experience) will uncritically apply *urban* design standards to a *rural* problem.

The irreducible requisite of any successful planning is that the forms developed will direct the flow of energy in the most economic and productive pattern. This is the criterion in the design of the power dam, the automobile, and the modern cotton field: it should also hold in landscape and building design, where the energy and vitality directed is that of human beings. But to organize the rural areas into the most productive pattern requires an intimate knowledge of the characteristics, rhythm, and potentialities of rural life. For if it is true that people differ little in the fundamental living needs of food, shelter, work, and play (regardless of the locality in which they live), it is equally true that the physical aspects of that locality (its topography, fertility, accessibility, exploitation, and industrialization) influence and condition the extent to which, and the method by which, it can be adapted to the needs of its people.

Homesteading and the rugged individualism of the pioneers determined the general characteristics of the rural scene. This system necessitated staking out claims and living in relative isolation to defend and improve these claims.

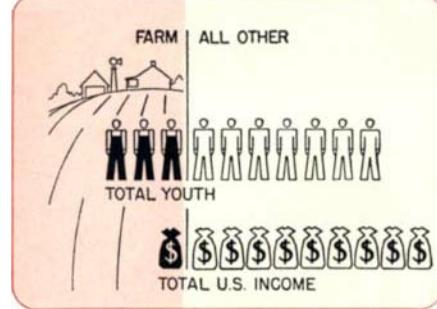
The family became the social and recre-



## HOW CAN MAN MOST CONSTRUCTIVELY USE HIS LEISURE?

What physical accommodations are essential to his recreation? How shall they be designed? In their first study (AR, 4/39, pp. 70-77), the authors explored such questions relative to the urban environment; this study covers the rural scene; the final one—scheduled for an early issue of ARCHITECTURAL RECORD—will analyze the primeval.

# IN THE RURAL ENVIRONMENT



Low incomes handicap rural youth.

ational unit, supplemented by the school and church in the village which grew up for trading purposes. But, as Mr. David Cushman Coyle has pointed out, with changing technology and local depletion of mine, forest, and soil, we find a new type of rural population which no longer fits into the pattern of living developed by the pioneer. Recent surveys show:

1. Mechanization of agriculture has cut in half the man labor required per bushel of wheat in 1919. In one county of western Kansas, it is cut to one quarter.

2. The nation's supply of farm land is steadily decreasing. The National Resources Board reports that as a result of soil erosion, 35,000,000 acres of farm land have been made entirely unfit for cultivation, while another 125,000,000 acres have had topsoil largely removed. A good deal of land to be inherited by farm youth is practically worthless, and will be abandoned.

3. In spite of decreasing birth rate, we have a large surplus of rural youth in proportion to farms available, and our expanding farm population is squeezed within a shrinking area of farm land. In 1920, for example, 160,000 farmers died or reached the age of 65; and in the same year, 337,000 farm boys reached the age of 18. In 1930, the surplus of boys with no prospects was 201,000. Vital statistics indicate that with the decrease in infant mortality, this surplus will increase.

4. The present and future farmer is also the victim of an accumulating drain of money from the farm to the city. He sells in a city market controlled by the buyer, and buys in a city market controlled by the seller. The farm youth is educated in rural districts, and then finds it necessary to migrate to the city to make a living. Dr. O. E. Baker, of the U. S. Department of Agriculture, estimates that this movement of population from 1920 to 1930 carried to the city human values that had cost over 12,000,000,000 dollars in private and public cash spent by rural districts.

5. The exhaustion of the farmland in some areas—such as Oklahoma or Kansas—and the simultaneous development of a



LOCAL ROADS are the first essential to any rural recreational system—good roads which provide quick, year-round, and economical access to recreation.



RURAL HOUSING is not only substandard technically but so scattered as seriously to impede the development of vigorous community recreation.



RECREATIONAL TYPES of primary importance in the rural environment are those which emphasize group activity—the farmer has solitude enough.



**ROADS:** The specialization in automotive transportation has led to a similar specialization in road design—the parkway (top), the trunk highway, the "freeway" (center). But these are of only secondary interest to the ruralite; most necessary to him is a good system of local-access roads (bottom) to carry him to school, to church, to market, and to play.

highly mechanized agriculture in others—California, Texas, or Florida, for example—has meanwhile given birth to a new rural phenomenon—the migratory agricultural workers. This group constitutes a quite special and pressing problem over and above that of the rural population generally.

#### Special characteristics of rural life

What do such trends as those listed above imply in the design of rural recreational systems? A recognition of the facts that first and foremost *the country must be redesigned for country people*—i.e., neither from the viewpoint of nor for the benefit of the urbanite. Second, in view of constantly changing social and economic conditions, that such systems should provide a plastic and flexible environment for both local and migratory farmers. Third, that such systems should be closely integrated with both urban and primeval areas, providing the greatest possible intercommunication between all three. Finally, that the following special and fairly constant factors of rural life be recognized:

1. The periods during which recreational facilities can be used by most rural inhabitants are more seasonal than daily. Whereas the city worker usually has a certain number of hours each day with a summer (or winter) vacation of short duration, the farmer has a majority of free time during winter months. This implies an emphasis on enclosed and roofed facilities.

2. Since rural labor is largely physical, and requires the use of the larger muscular system, it is reasonable to supply facilities for recreation which afford experience which is physically, mentally, and psychologically different from the major labor experience, i. e., folk dancing, swimming, arts and crafts, dramatic production, folk pageantry, etc.

3. The present relative isolation of farm families and dependence upon automotive transportation make it desirable for the entire family to seek recreation at one time. This places emphasis on the school, church, and country park as centers for recreation, and requires facilities for participation by all age and sex groups at one time.

4. Since the mobile fraternity has become such an important part of the rural scene, special facilities are necessary for the migratory laborers, the tourists, and the vacationists. It is necessary to provide for these groups, and integrate their activities with those of the more permanent residents without destroying the economic and social bal-

ance. The need here is for multiple-use and flexibility in design with particular emphasis on a system integrated with the highway, shore front, waterways, and spots of scenic, natural, and historic as well as scientific interest.

Thus it can be seen that rural recreation is based on an entirely different set of conditions than urban, and it can be approached only by detailed study of specific local requirements in their relation to the region. In general, one can say that whereas in the cities the need is for *more free space* (decentralization), the rural need is for *more intensive use of less space* (concentration) to permit and provide for the social integration of a widely distributed population. But the latter does not imply mere urbanization of the country any more than the former means mere ruralization of the city.\*

**Roads are first**

The first and most essential element of any rural recreational environment will necessarily be an adequate highway system. Yet, despite the gigantic advances in highway construction in the past decade, the fact remains that most rural communities are without a road system adequate for their needs. Consciously or otherwise, the majority of federal and state construction is designed to facilitate communication between one city and the next. "With the bypass or through-highway principle on the one hand, and the freeway or border-control principle on the other, we have the tools to adapt our future network to meet recreational needs . . . but that is only part of the highway problem. There are still the problems of local access and touring. . . . We must not only provide good trunk-highway access, but also good local-access roads. These local roads must serve directly the various cities, towns, and villages; and must open up recreational lands."\*\*

Consolidated communities mean better recreation

Closely allied with the problem of transportation is that of rural housing. As long as the traditional pattern remains—thinly scattered houses, one to each farm—it is quite possible that a genuinely satisfactory recreational environment will not be

\*See "Landscape Design and the Urban Environment" by Eckbo, Kiley, and Rose, ARCHITECTURAL RECORD, May 1939, pp. 70-71.

\*\*From a paper by Roland B. Greely read at the Outdoor Recreation Conference, Amherst, Mass. March 11, 1939.



**HOUSING:** Although designed for landless migrants, the physical organization of many of FSA's western projects is something the farmer may well envy (top). If multiple or row-housing (center) is strange to American rural traditions, there is the possibility of grouping single-family houses into tight communities with outlying farms (bottom).



Photos courtesy Picture Records Section, WPA

**RECREATIONAL TYPES:** Since the "major labor experience" of the farmer is manual and much of it lonely, it is not surprising to find the "get-together" an American institution. Whether for singing, dancing, baseball, or theatricals, the emphasis is on group activity, competition. The need for trained organizing and supervising personnel is at least as great as in the city where such personnel is a recognized necessity.

evolved. In this connection, it is interesting to note quickly *social integration* has followed *physical integration* in the new towns by TVA, FSA, and in the Greenbelt towns of the former Resettlement Administration. As a matter of fact, leading cultural economists are advocating similar consolidation—the regrouping of farmers into villages from which they can work their land within a radius of 5 to 10 miles of them. (This type of village is of course prevalent in Europe and in isolated spots of America). There is already a general trend towards consolidation and reorganization of schools and school districts. And the recent western projects of the Farm Security Administration—while of course signed for the landless migrants—clearly indicate the physical advantages of a similar concentration of housing facilities.

**What types of recreation are required?**

WPA research reveals that the age rural community needs provision for the following types of recreation:

1. Crafts and visual arts, graphic plastic. (These might well be organized around the rapidly developing science and manual arts curricula in most rural high schools.)
2. Recreational music, including door concerts, popular orchestras, g singing, etc.
3. Dancing—ballroom, folk, social square, tap, ballet, etc.
4. Recreational drama, including mari- onettes and puppets, plays, motion pictures, pageants, festivals, etc. The outdoor theater is recommended as an ideal form; it also encourages children in their own improvisa- tions.
5. Childrens' play center, including such equipment as slides, horizontal bars, swings, see-saws, trapezes, marble courts, sand box (preferably adjacent to the wading pool with an island m children can play and sail boats).
6. Sports and athletics (conditioned by the major labor), Including base softball, football, basketball, tennis, archery, horse- shoe pitching, swimming and water sports, snow and ice sports, hiking, camping, and nature study.

7. Other activities and special events: pic- nics require an area of several acres with out- door fireplaces, barb pits, wood supply, and provisions waste disposal (can also serve as a wayside camp for motorist). Occasional field days, community nights, agricultural fairs, carnivals, traveling circuses can occupy the largest free used for sports at different seasons.

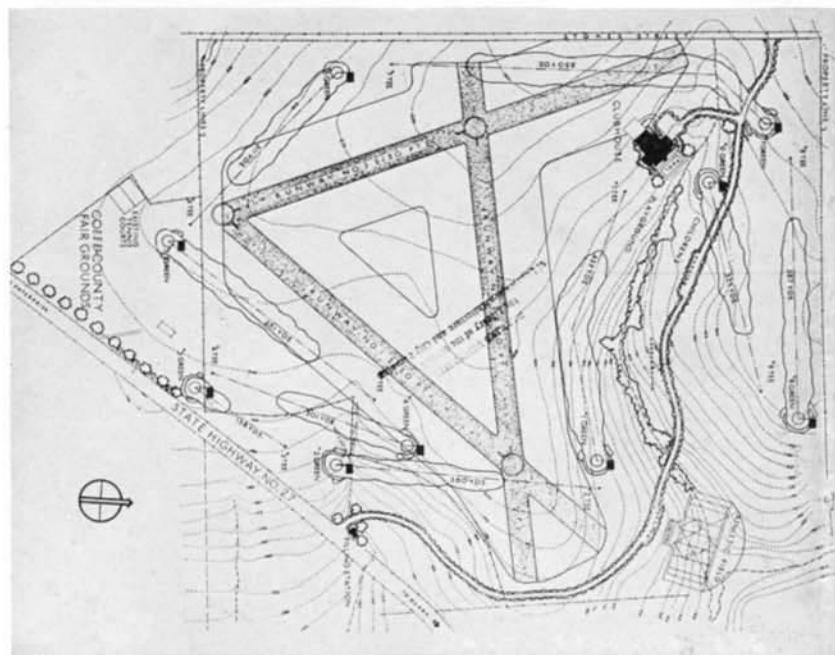
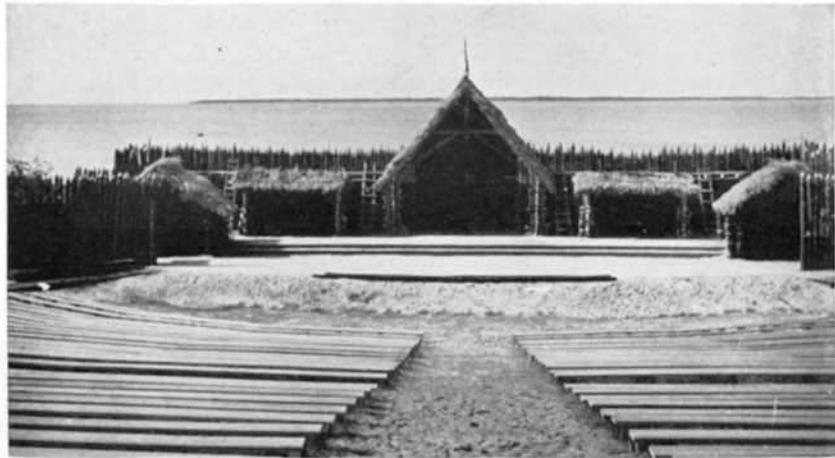
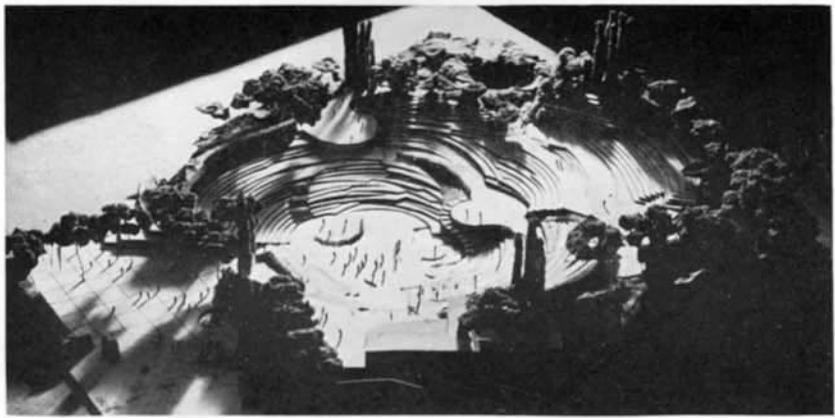
### What sort of facilities are implied?

All these activities require special equipment centering around the district school, rural park, or other location signed to serve the rural inhabitants rather than the urban overflow. The usefulness is multiplied by complete well designed flood lighting, since outdoor activities come in the summer—precisely when the majority of rural inhabitants are busiest during the day.

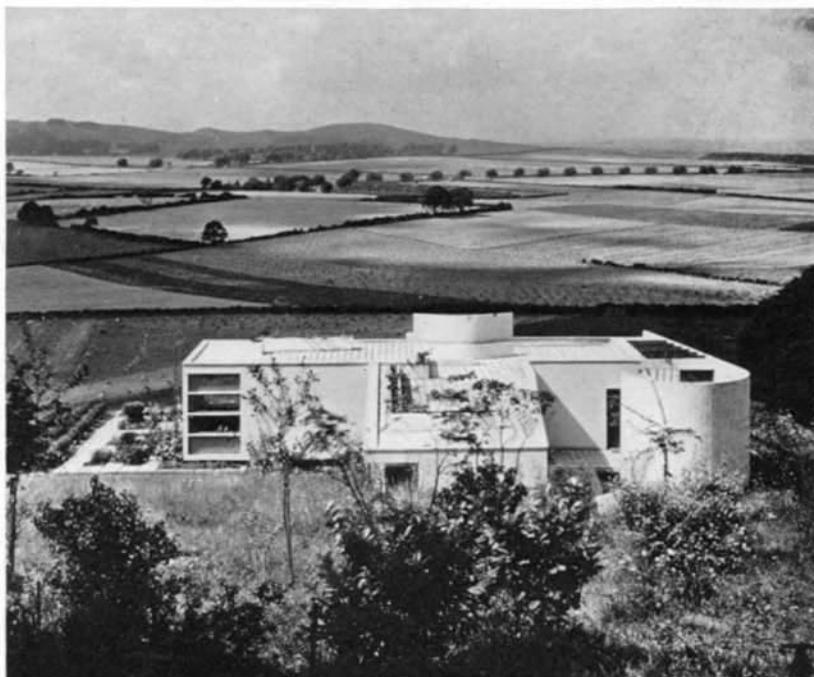
Although there is perhaps no single form which meets so well the various needs of the rural community, the door theater has never been satisfactorily reinterpreted as a present recreational form in its own right. Developed as an integral part of the rural park, and in a dynamic, three-dimensional pattern, it provides for all constant use by all age groups. Actual productions require the assistance practically all types of craftsman which are physically, mentally, and psychologically different from the major labor experience. With stages at different levels, following the natural contours, and seats ingeniously arranged to accommodate both large and small audiences (top, right); with the present perfection of sound amplification; with “scene-shifting” by spotlights instead of curtains, a type as flexible as the auditorium without its expense intricacy is achieved. Its utility is flexible as its organization, since it accommodates both large and small productions, festivals, pageantry, improvisations, summer-theatre groups, exhibitions, meetings, picnics, and talks.

Many opportunities are overlooked, by sticking too closely to arbitrary and static concepts of recreational planning. For example, the local airport is a form which deserves attention because of the interest and activity which surrounds it. Already a center of Sunday afternoon interest for many an American farm family, it orients the rural population a larger social concept of the world outside, as well as satisfying the characteristic American interest in the technical. The same thing might be said about the old canal, the abandoned railroad engine, and the automobile junk pile—all of which hold an endless fascination for small children.\*

\*Recently, a recreational expert, showing some distinguished visitors in Washington the advanced planning of children's play areas in one of the greenbelt towns, was somewhat chagrined to find them quite deserted. But, as they started back to Washington, they passed the town's children playing on a dump used for fill along the roadway. One of the ladies of the party turned to the expert and inquired brightly: “And I suppose you will plan something for these children, too?”



**RECREATIONAL AREAS:** Recognition of rural recreational needs is too recent to permit of much agreement as to design standards. An Alabama airport (bottom) has been designed to include a club house, golf course, athletic field, and tennis courts; an outdoor theater in North Carolina is already famous for its folk festivals; and Mr. Rose has designed an outdoor theater in which multiple stages surround the audience, permitting great flexibility of use, elimination of elaborate equipment.



**DESIGN:** The alleged "romantic informality" of the countryside is not borne out by the fields themselves. Here the face of nature is being quite as consciously reorganized by man for his increased welfare as in the city. These fields (top) do not "blend" with nature—they are in great contrast with it. Whence, then, the theory that landscape and building design must go rustic in the rural areas?

### Towards scientific landscape design

With the exception of urban infringement in the form of summer colonies, tourist camps and hotels, and commercial recreational facilities designed mainly for the use of urban motorists, little provision for recreation exists outside America's cities. Indeed, urban invasion—in the form of commercialized amusements, billboards, suburbanization and the "naturalism" of "preserving rural beauty" by screening out rural slums with a parkway prevents an indigenous and biological development of rural beauty. It is thus that we handicap ourselves with a static and inflexible environment, and lose the opportunity of developing forms which express the needs of the people and the qualities of the region.

This is particularly unfortunate as concerns landscape design. The country is thought of as a restorative for the exhausted city dweller, and a land of plenty for the farmer. When help is offered by well-meaning urban societies it is, as often as not, "for the preservation of rural beauties" which look well on a post card. Another group is afraid of destroying the "delightful informality" by intelligent and straightforward reorganization of nature for the use of man. They resort to "rustic" bridges, and "colonial" cottages which will "blend" with nature. Obviously this point of view can be held only by those who do not live on the land.

We may as well accept the fact that man's activities change and dominate the landscape; it does not follow that they should spoil it. Writing on the redesign of the American landscape, Paul B. Sears has said\*: "Not only must the scientist of the future work in awareness of social and economic processes, but he must clear a further hurdle. . . . The scientist must be aware of the relation of his task to the field of aesthetics. What is right and economical and in balance is in general satisfying. Not the least important symptom of the present decay of the American landscape is its appalling ugliness. . . . The landscape of the United States, with its two billions of acres for a potential population of one hundred and fifty million, or even two hundred million, can be made a place of plenty, permanence, and beauty. But this most assuredly cannot be done without the aid of science. Nor can such aid be rendered by men of science unaware of the task which confronts them."

\*"Science and the New Landscape," Harper's Magazine, July 1939, page-207.