Austin Architect AD Stenger

Arthur Dallas Stenger first began building homes in the 1940s in Austin, mostly on Arthur Lane in the Barton Hills area, which was named after his father (the first Arthur Dallas Stenger), who was also an architect. Though Stenger attended architecture school at the University of Texas after returning home from World War II, he never graduated. He did get his architecture license as an undergraduate, and began building homes for post war Austinites.

Though FHA loans had design restrictions built into them, it didn't stop Stenger from creating unique homes that were moderately priced, even if he had to help the homeowners find loans. He also worked differently from other builders, by purchasing land (mostly in the Barton Hills and Pemberton Heights areas), finding a buyer, and building a home without making his clients sign contracts. There was no pressure for the buyer to take the house upon completion, though clients rarely backed out after seeing the home.

A Stenger home will stand out, with signature low peaked roofs, clad with concrete, wood rock and other organic materials. He also used rock and stone quarried from the home site as siding or built into the fireplace, helping the house fit easily within its surroundings. Stenger had a love for long, low slung fireplaces reminiscent of 50s lounges, so every home he built included a wood burning fireplace, though not particularly necessary in the heart of Texas.

The houses also have many of the amenities that Austin's big modern building boom now cherish, with walls of windows and clerestory windows hanging just below the exposed roofline, and tinted concrete floors, now pricing out around 10 dollars a square foot. He also used the organic building theory of "bringing the outside in," by running exterior stonework through the house and into its interior.

Though Barton Hills was featured as "the world's largest air-conditioned subdivision" in the 1956 Parade of Homes, Stenger didn't build his homes with central air. Instead, he built large windows to catch morning light, and not the hot sun light of mid afternoon, and a floor plan to allow for a breezy pass through ventilation when the windows were opened.

In 1957, when Stenger's friend, radio host John Henry Faulk, ended up blacklisted as a communist in the McCarthy era, he built and financed a home for him, knowing his friend was swamped with legal fees. He took his other clients financial situations into account as well, helping offset furniture costs with several built ins, and pricing his houses between $18,000 and $22,000, though today they can range from $400,000 to $600,000.

Stenger built around 100 unique homes in the Austin area, building his last for his wife Jean in 1999, a few years before he died in 2002 at the age of 82. Today's battle lies between those seeking out Stenger houses for their originality and great use of space, and others who prefer to tear down these houses to build larger homes, since the locations are highly sought after for their land alone. About the Author Escapesomewhere is a company working in Austin Texas. Their site provides information about Austin real estate along with a Austin MLS search. They also provide insights on the Austin market on their Austin real estate blog.

About the Author

Source: http://www.scoopquest.com