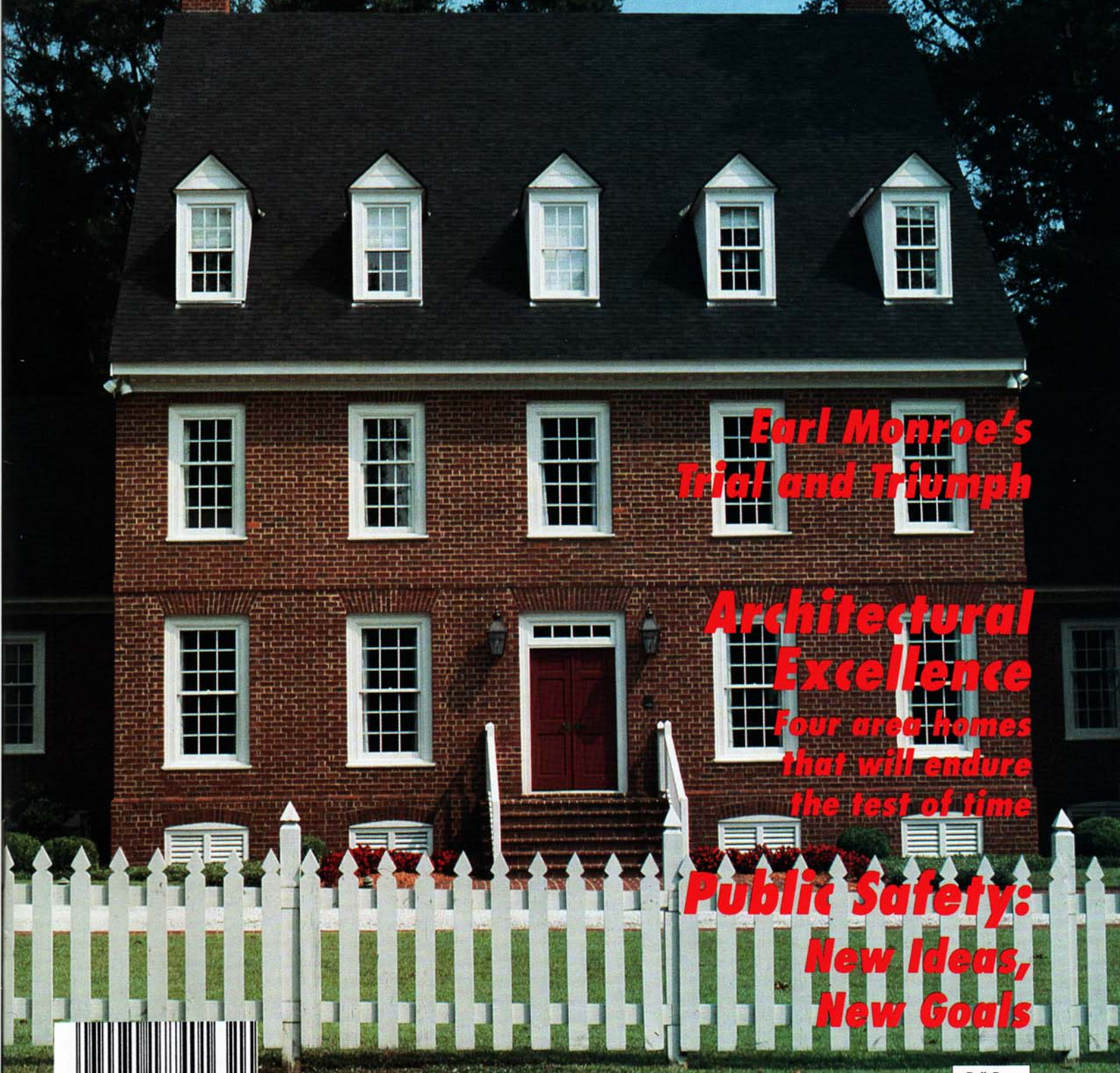


# MOBILE BAY

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October 1990 \$1.95

Volume V, Number 10



***Earl Monroe's  
Trial and Triumph***

***Architectural  
Excellence***

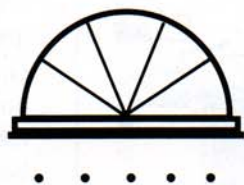
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# Architectural Excellence

by Suzanne Ashurst

**E**xamples of great architectural design can be found all around the world. Often a predominant style distinguishes one city from another or even one region from another. The range in form may vary as much as the geography and climate that it was meant to complement or contrast. In the United States for instance the majestic hillsides of Victorian design become the recognizable charm of San Francisco. While the Greek Revival high styled grand columned and porched homes clearly create visions of the deep South. The Spanish Colonial adobe-stucco homes capture the dry flavor of desert sun in southern California, New Mexico, Arizona and Texas. Georgian style was dominant in the English colonies during the 1700s and captures the image of New England which post cards often depict.

Combinations of these and countless other architectural styles merge with the lifestyles of today to create custom designed homes. Americans have caught a severe case of "House-Building Fever." And the cure is simple; find a lot, hire an architect, and build. The variable that makes the greatest difference in the final outcome and the long term quality of the finished house is very likely whether or not a qualified architect was involved.

One extremely talented Mobile architect, L. Craig Roberts, has been designing houses for 12

years. After one glance at his portfolio, one walk through any of his 36 or so residential accomplishments, and one conversation with any of his clients you immediately gain overwhelming respect for this young, meticulous, gifted man.

Craig explains, "A home will never lose its value when it is well designed. The integrity of the house should remain a constant." And for Craig, that means completing the final 20-30 sheets of drawings which take an average of six months. The drawings and designs include preliminary designs, construction drawings, and technical drawings (i.e., drawings for the general contractor who subcontracts for the electrical, plumbing, mechanical, etc.).

"Ideally, I would work with the landscape architect and interior decorator to follow-through on the overall concept and consistency in design of a particular period." He continues to explain, "To remain in keeping with the true style to the fullest extent while incorporating today's lifestyles and needs into that style is the ultimate test of good design."

Young professional couples are leading the way in today's new housing market. With love of "Old World" quality and grandness, they are combining the need for comfort and luxury with traditional architecture.

When the automobile came along, it provided

*Continued on p. 12*

- **Below: In the house**
- **of Mr. and Mrs.**
- **Victor T. Hudson each**
- **room has a wonderful**
- **view of the bay.**

• Photo by Ric Moore







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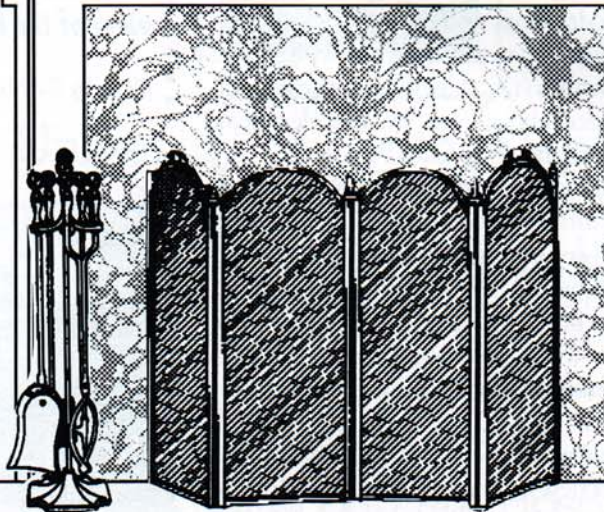
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From *Architecture* p. 11

a choice for our grandparents' and parents' generations to move away from the downtown neighborhoods that were located conveniently next to their places of business. The allure of the suburbs and their big sprawling yards then captured the desires of a newly mobile America and up sprang spec-house neighborhoods. Affordable housing with modern appliances gained appeal for Americans, and contractors built development after development of look-a-like neighborhoods known as "suburbia." Low ceilings and stock windows and doors became acceptable along with the era of fully carpeted floors. People wanted to get away from the old ideas of big homes, hard to keep wooden floors and oversized inefficient rooms and ceilings. Rebellious against the "old" invited contrast, and a great attraction to anything "new."

A very interesting period of architecture that grew to heights in popularity in the late 50s and into the 70s in the United States was the Modern Movement. Influenced by European architects such as Ludwig Mies van der Rohe, famous for his all steel and glass creations and his own furniture designed to complement his extremely minimalist style; the Modern Movement is best remembered as the "less is more" philosophy. "Contemporary architecture is somewhat like sculpture that is lived in. And the form follows the function," says Craig.

Again, Americans are returning to the need for quality. The houses that are currently under construction and design reflect the trend to acquire the best that one can afford. With the yuppie generation comes a new focus on luxury and comfort as well as a respect for the European influences of long-lasting classic design and detail.

Materialistic? Perhaps we've simply been influenced by our time, our advances in education, our accessibility to travel, our enriched cultural opportunities and our exposure to quality.

Making a home the best it can be has become a top priority among Americans. And Mobile is certainly no exception. Realizing that in certain situations building is more affordable than purchasing an existing home, couples of all ages are reconsidering the possibility of building. With a home being one of the largest



investments of your lifetime, extensive research is required before making your final decisions.

There is an option for everyone. Purchased house plans may be just right for your needs, and a contractor may be capable of interpreting your ideas. But to insure authentic design, the expertise and experience of a qualified architect will make your life easier and will prove to be worth the investment!

Craig recommends that you interview the architects before selecting one, and ask about their qualifications. You should also ask to see a typical set of their drawings.

Mobile has a remarkable resource of custom designed homes with a wide variety of architectural styles that complement our southern heritage. French, Italian, and Spanish influences are dominant with Greek Revival continuing to thrive. "The key is in keeping the appropriate proportions for each style, and in the incorporation of today's lifestyles," Craig emphasizes. He continues "The perfect house is attainable and poor reproductions will not withstand the test of time."

"Outstanding architectural designs are pleasing to the eye with great attention given to even the smallest detail, harmony, authenticity and consistency," Craig allows.

Quite often clients bring their architect a collection of photographs of architectural styles they admire. Other times client and architect drive around together from house to house locally or out-of-town, getting precise ideas of what they love. It is not unusual for a client to copy the architectural style of an old home and just have the architect adapt the floor plan and actual square footage to his personal needs and lifestyle. To work with an architect in building a home is certainly a very educational and awakening experience.

Craig and I have selected examples of period architecture tucked away in perfectly divine avenues and neighborhoods from Mobile to Daphne.

A perfect example of classic Georgian architecture is found in the grand Williamsburg style home of Dr. and Mrs. John E. Stone, Jr. Architect Bill Phillips designed this stately home and it was completed in 1987. The details include such

*Continued on p. 14*



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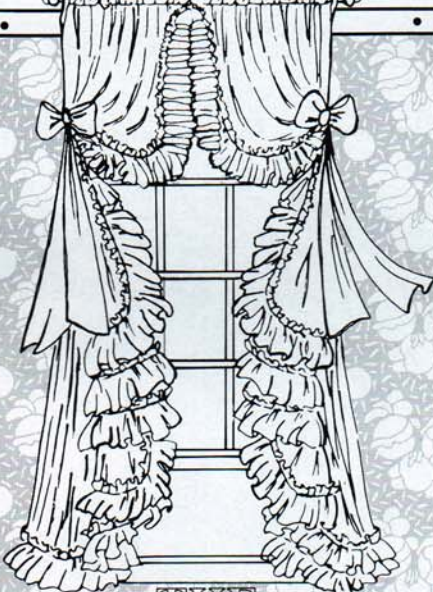
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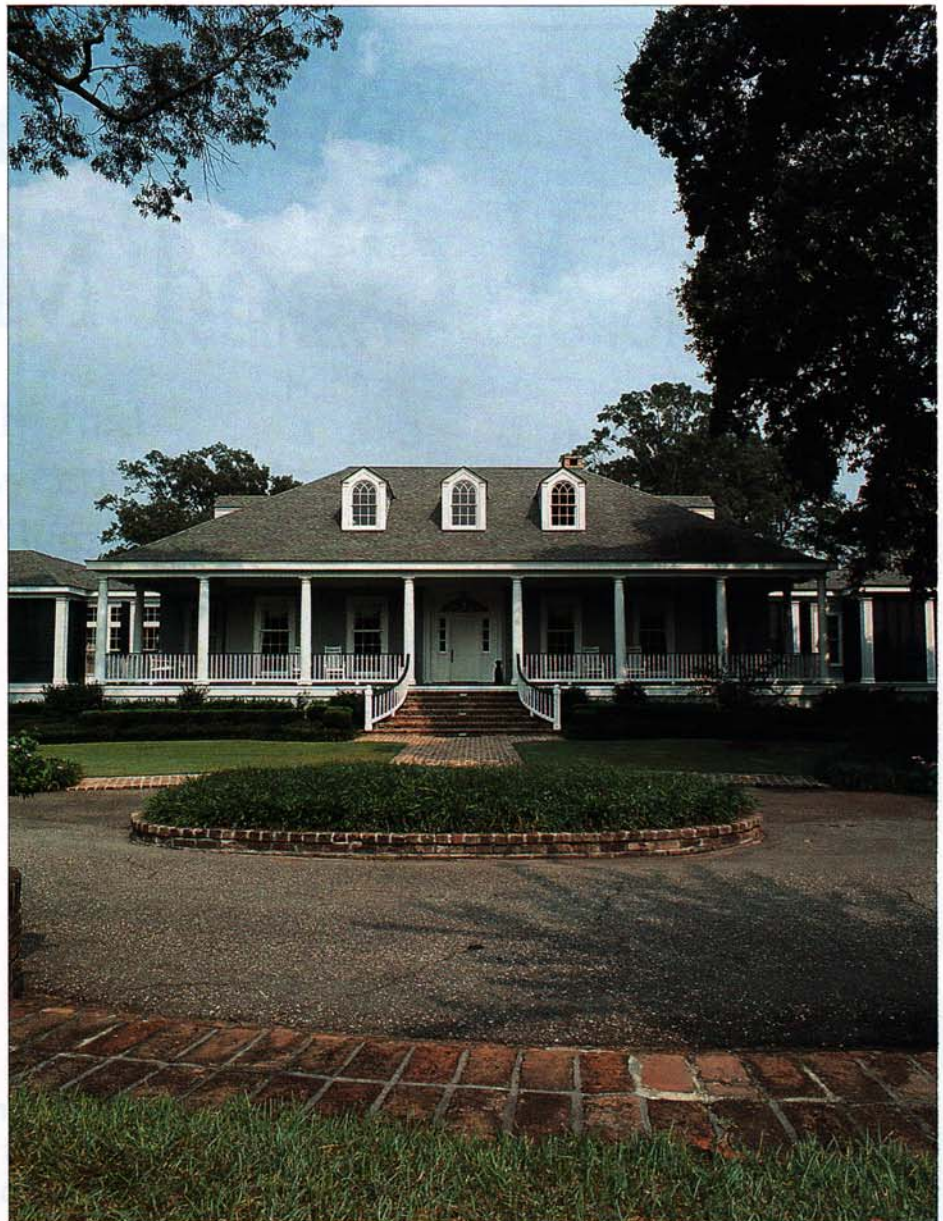


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specifics as the nine pane windows and the proper amount of wood around the windows, the dental work and the dormers are perfect in size, narrow and tall. The important absence of any porch or overhang is characteristic of Georgian and the overall symmetry and balance of the home is perfect all the way through to the simplicity in landscaping and the punctuating picket fence.

Tucked away on a quiet cul-de-sac one French Eclectic style home appears aristocratic and timeless. The pale beige shade of stucco with its coins (stacked stone adorning sides of walls and doors) and proper chimneys with clay chimney pots atop the typically French roof gives this design its regal appeal. L. Craig Roberts designed this exceptional home for Mr. and Mrs. Arthur Outlaw. Attention to detail is carried out with the appropriate small pane casement windows, curved top dormers, the double two-panel front door, the transom, and especially the custom wrought iron scrollwork. The limestone stoop and the copper gutters and downspouts and brass handrails complete this impressive and magnificent example of French Eclectic architecture.

Mimi and Tom Hudson's home is hidden away on Mobile Bay in a pleasurable state of captivity. Mimi insists that their recently completed home is so perfectly suited to their lifestyle and passions for views that she never wants to leave it! Indeed every square foot of their living space is actually lived in and opens up to captivating views of the peaceful bay waters. Architect Roberts worked with the Hudsons to design a home that was not pressed into any one period of style, but evolved from the inside out. In addition, Craig's angled designs worked to achieve complete privacy from the relatively close neighboring homes, while allowing each room to open out to fantastic views. In that respect the design follows the concepts of contemporary architecture while incorporating different rooflines and overhangs for shading and weather protection. The roof itself makes a grand impression in enameled metal with copper finish. The use of multiple vaulted ceilings and skylights dramatize the contemporary approach and invite balance and spaciousness for classic



**At left: The home of Mr. and Mrs Arthur Outlaw reflects French Eclectic architecture. Above: French Colonial architecture ensures an elegant home for Mr. and Mrs. Earle W. Long, III.**

Photos by Ric Moore

choices in interior design. Contemporary but classic design finds a refreshing place in architecture by the bay.

The shaded oak trees gracefully frame a subtle grey stucco and white columned French Colonial style home and quietly takes you back in time. Designed in the Gulf Coast style, and completed in 1985 this elegant example of outstanding architecture is the home of Mr. and Mrs. Earle W. Long III. This period of style was selected by Mrs. Long years ago when she fell in love with a similar home in Natchez, Mississippi that had been built in the 1970s. Taking basic influences from the Natchez home and combining their per-

sonal lifestyle, architects designed a very refined and balanced interpretation of period architecture that glorifies life in the South.

These homes inspire an appreciation for quality of design, and establish a respect for the pure talent and integrity of the outstanding architects who designed them.

Suzanne Ashurst is a contributing editor of *Mobile Bay Monthly*.