MIDDLE TENNESSEE STATE UNIVERSITY

# "OUR UNWITTING AUTOBIOGRAPHY:"

# PLACE-PRODUCT-PACKAGING

# AND THE AMERICAN ROADSIDE 1930-2005

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# “OUR UNWITTING AUTOBIOGRAPHY:”

## PLACE-PRODUCT-PACKAGING AND THE AMERICAN ROADSIDE, 1930-2005

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ABSTRACT

"OUR UNWITTING AUTOBIOGRAPHY"
PLACE-PRODUCT-PACKAGING
AND THE AMERICAN ROADSIDE 1930-1980

By Aaron Marcavitch

Modern American roadside architecture reflects the influence of place-product-packaging, a form of business franchising that standardizes the architecture and symbols of the business. This standardization is best expressed through three major roadside buildings – gas stations, fast food restaurants, and motels. This thesis explores the history of each property type followed by an exploration of the elements of place-product-packaging as it relates to each property type. Specific case studies of each property type identify the defining characteristics of these buildings and structures. These case studies show how each building type is an example of the development of place-product-packaging. Finally, this thesis examines issues related to preservation of roadside resources, within the context of a cultural landscape, as well as some methods for roadside preservation. A sense of place is an essential part of the successful preservation of roadside resources.

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Lastly, thank you to my parents, family, and friends who constantly needled me about finishing my "master work." To them I say – I now know where "my people" come from. Thank you.

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# CHAPTER ONE

## INTRODUCTION: PLACE-PRODUCT-PACKAGING

Roadside architecture is an essential part of modern American culture because it reflects how the automobile and auto travel influenced consumer culture in twentieth-century America. Although scholars have devoted a multitude of books, articles, exhibits, and symposia to the “serious” study of roadside architecture, few scholarly efforts have extended beyond the mere championing of an alleged neglected architectural resource. Yet, roadside architecture deserves better. It is more than "nostalgic" architecture, or ugly commercial clutter for the masses. Rather, understanding the roadside provides an important way to identify and explore the cultural values of modern society.

A critical approach for understanding modern roadside landscape architecture is to study the standardized elements of these commercial places. The standardization of American culture is a telling indicator of cultural values. Non-standardized commercial architecture indicates the tastes of a minority of business people who are generally responding only to local values. Standardized commercial architecture, however, responds to a larger cross-section of American cultural patterns.

At the height of the standardized commercial architecture development in the 1950s, the consumer culture largely reflected a landscape of consensus. Corporate leaders responded to patterns of domesticity and travelers' desires to have "comfortable" experiences during travel. This easily recognized and comfortable landscape assured families that a restaurant, motel, or gas station was safe, clean, and easily accessible.

The solutions of the 1950s-1960s were to rely heavily on a standardized roadside-one much like the emerging interstate highway itself, where a traveler could be in Pennsylvania, or Tennessee, or Colorado experiencing the same highway design and same look to the architecture. The standardized commercial architecture of the roadside contributed to a landscape that today is cluttered with commonality. Fast food restaurants both look and taste the same. Motels have the same levels of service and the same types of beds. Gas stations, having abandoned gas pump attendants, have only their attached convenience stores to set them apart. The uniqueness of early standardized and non-standardized commercial architecture often lapses into the lowest common denominator.

### *Defining Place-Product-Packaging*

In order to understand what caused the rise of standardized commercial architecture, one must understand several major definitions. "Franchising" is the most obvious place to start, because corporations used this business technique to spread their influence. Without franchises, a truly economical method for quickly spreading and growing commercial places would have been difficult. Standardization as a business and marketing strategy helped to make franchises exist in the most economical way.

Franchising is the process of granting a business owner (a "franchisee") the right to sell the products or services that a corporation (the "franchiser") produces. At first, franchises were company agreements to sell products with standard logo imprints. Later, franchising became groups of business owners who agreed to follow similar business practices, use common products, and maintain standard logo imprints.[1] The downside to this method was that often owners could build their gas stations, motels, and restaurants in any manner they wished.

However, by the 1930's, companies began to establish the modern idea of a franchise. Corporate leaders searched for methods to streamline their companies' expansion and imprint their image on the American public. Along with the rights to sell their products, a franchiser usually required franchisees to use standard advertising, training methods, common architectural designs for their buildings, and common elements of the franchise package. This standardization of the components in a franchise would come to be called "place-product-packaging."[2]

John Jakle, a geographer, and Keith Sculle, a historian, are authors of the three influential books, *The Gas Station in America, The Motel in America*, and *Fast Food: Roadside Restaurants in the Automobile Age*. They argue that to understand the true significance of standardized roadside architecture, one must be familiar with the concept of place-product-packaging (PPP). PPP, as defined by

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[1] Thomas Dicke, *Franchising in America*: *The Development of a Business Method, 1840-1980* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1992), 2.

[2] John Jakle and Keith Sculle found that the first instance of this phrase was at Cooper Hewitt's exhibit ("Place-Product-Packaging," January 20 - March 20, 1978), but "business format franchising" was a commonly accepted term by the 1950s.

Jakle and Sculle, describes "commercial places formed through coordination of architecture, décor, product, service, and operating routine across multiple locations—the chain of stores that conforms to a set business system."[3] Thomas Dicke, in discussing "business format franchising" states "the parent company sells far more than just the right to use its trade name or distribute its products." The company sells "a complete system, including an established name, training, and a host of professional services such as site selection, managerial assistance, and national advertising, all of which lay beyond the reach of the typical small-business person."[4] Furthermore, PPP encompasses messages embedded in the built environment through the standardization of landscape product and service over space and time with an emphasis on the territorial aspects of market creation. Jakle and Sculle state that "corporate territoriality refers to the trade territories created as different corporations compete with one another for market share using place-product-packaging."[5] These two components, organized advertising and corporate territoriality, are both critical components of PPP and have advanced its influence considerably.

Product-place-packaging, developed to standardize image, labor, products, service, equipment, and architecture, became more and more common practice from 1940 onward. The often-used method of implementing PPP was to mix elements of

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[3] John Jakle and Keith Sculle, *Fast Food: Roadside Restaurants in the Automobile Age* (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1999), *x*.

[4] Dicke, 154.

[5] Jakle. *Fast Food, x*.

architecture, signage, and landscaping into a "place," usually by an industrial designers or relatively unknown architects. This trend tended to make roadside architecture based on designs from mass culture. Franchisers then incorporated place with standardized services and products to form "packages." Franchisers use this total package to convey messages about their particular corporate values to the consumer. The important part of this definition is the conforming of franchisees to follow methods set out by a franchiser.

***Methodology***

The most tangible evidence of place-product-packaging is with the physical remains of roadside architecture. Material culture fieldwork is an important part of primary sources for the research of this thesis. Business trade magazines of the mid-twentieth century, such as *Fortune* and *National Petroleum News*, are additional primary sources. These periodicals provide information on the motivations of businesses and architects, as well as underlying themes in consumer culture of the period.

Secondary sources furnish the context and justification for this thesis. To understand the development and significance of place-product-packaging, it is necessary to read widely scattered and disparate sources. Knowledge of the history of suburbia and America at the middle of the twentieth century explains the context in which standardized architecture developed. Studies of American consumer culture shed light on the changes in motivations of the public. Architectural studies provide background on the corporate design process. Books and articles on the symbolism of architecture underline the importance of corporate image to a community's "sense of place." Documents from the

preservation movement and statements from preservationists provided valuable contextual material. Lastly, material written about the modern landscape is important to developing methods for the interpretation, preservation, and planning of the American roadside.

***Scholarship***

The major goal of this thesis has been to tie sources together so that this document will add to a body of work, not solely in history, but in historic preservation. It contributes to, or reflects, the work of several important historians and preservationists. With that in mind, several scholars form the foundation of this thesis.

Primarily, this thesis builds upon John Jakle's and Keith Sculle's three major works, *Fast Food*: *Roadside Restaurants in the Automobile Age*, *The Gas Station in America*, and *The Motel in America*.[6] In general, their work may be categorized as cultural geography, stemming from Jakle's work on diffusion of roadside architecture. However, Sculle's work as an architectural historian is evident in the history of each particular roadside element as the second most integrated architectural history of any author writing about the roadside, only surpassed by the writings of Chester Liebs. Furthermore, as the only major authors to recognize the importance of place-product-packaging, their work stands out in the historiography of roadside architecture.

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[6] Jakle, *Fast Food*; John Jakle and Keith Sculle, *The Gas Station in America* (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins Press, 1994); John Jakle, Keith Sculle, and Jefferson Rogers, *The Motel in America* (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins Press, 1996).

Jakle and Sculle in *The Gas Station in America*, and with Richard Jefferson in *The Motel in America*, create a simple pattern for exploring each of the topics. They document the basic typologies and the specific historical background to the major players in the particular volume. In *Fast Food*, they write about individual types of buildings, followed by a study of national operations such as McDonald's. Each volume then explores corporate territoriality of each roadside type. Lastly, they examine a selected community and the impact an element has had upon that community.

Chester Liebs' book, *Main Street to Miracle Mile*, serves as the second major basis for this thesis.[7] Liebs, a former historic preservation professor from the University of Vermont, divides his research into three areas – space, image, and type. These three areas provide a way to study each of the elemental parts of the roadside. *Space* provides a method to understand the context and historical development of the roadside. *Image* – subtitled "Architecture for Speed Reading" – serves as a discussion of the architectural concepts of roadside architecture. *Type* is Liebs' method to focus on the more formal architectural history of auto showrooms, gas stations, supermarkets, miniature golf courses, drive-in theaters, motels, and restaurants. His discussions on the three major elements, gas, food, and lodging, also contribute to this thesis. In his epilogue, he also discusses the future of these resources and provides insight into the preservation of these structures. His work, groundbreaking in many ways, remains one of the most integrated and well-written monographs on the subject of roadside architecture.

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[7] Chester Liebs, *Main Street to Miracle Mile: American Roadside Architecture* (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins Press, 1995).

Following Liebs' work closely is Philip Langdon's *Orange Roofs, Golden Arches: The Architecture of American Chain Restaurants*. This particular book is essential to the study of roadside places because it is the first major book specifically focused on standardized roadside restaurants. It provides a great deal of insight into the development of these places – from early restaurants to modern drive-thrus – through Langdon's architectural history perspective. Although there is little integration into larger historical concepts, it provides much more substance than *Main Street to Miracle Mile* on the topic of standardized roadside restaurants.[8]

Daniel Vieyra's *Fill'er Up: An Architectural History of America's Gas Stations* provides an expansive history of the American gas station.[9] Its central discussion point is the use of the stylistic nomenclatures for designs. His four stylistic types are "Domestic," "Respectable," "Functional," and "Fantastic." Vieyra does not focus explicitly on standardized roadside gasoline stations but does provide an in-depth history and a way to understand how to identify gasoline stations.

Warren James Belasco's *Americans on the Road: From Autocamp to Motel, 1910-1945* provides a historical context of the development of the motel. While this work does not provide information on the standardization of roadside places, it rounds out contextual information, in the way that Langdon and Vierya provide for gas stations and fast food restaurants. Without this background, one would not understand the basic

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[8] Philip Langdon, *Orange Roofs, Golden Arches: The Architecture of American Chain Restaurants* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1986).

[9] Daniel Vierya, *Fill er' Up! An Architectural History of Gas Stations* (New York: Macmillan, 1979).

elements of motel development. Furthermore, Belasco's focus on the early history of motels provides a level of depth that is unavailable in Jakle or Leibs works. [10] Unfortunately, Belasco nor Vierya adequately address why the companies that ruled the roadside moved so quickly to a regimented standardization.

To expand and understanding of the historical context, broader historical scholarship was crucial. Kenneth Jackson's *Crabgrass Frontier: The Suburbanization of the United States* is a history of American suburbs, which provides some insight into the evolution of the American roadside.[11] Jackson's work is the synthesis of many primary sources and journal articles about twentieth century suburbs and provides contextual history of suburban development. Jackson's argues that the federal government's actions in housing, increased mobility and the new drive-in culture all contributed towards the creation of modern suburbia. The many facets of suburban culture indicate the way corporations perceived themselves and how that perception influenced PPP's evolutionary process.

Following the theme of complacency and modern middle class is W.T. Lhamon's *Deliberate Speed: The Origins of a Cultural Style in the American Fifties*. Lhamon's book is an examination of the 1950s American culture, a period of speed and change, which was intended to move away from the problems and issues of the world wars.[12] Out

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[10] Warren James Belasco, *Americans on the Road: From Autocamp to Motel, 1910-1945* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1981).

[11] Kenneth Jackson, *Crabgrass Frontier: The Suburbanization of the United States* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1985).

[12] W.T. Lhamon, *Deliberate Speed: The Origins of a Cultural Style in the American Fifties* (Washington, DC: Smithsonian Institution, 1990).

of this culture of "escape" and speed came a standardized "land of flight" that gave rise to increased travel and therefore the need for companies to connect with roadside travelers easily, creating standardized roadside architecture.

In *The Unfinished Journey: America Since World War II*, William Chafe discusses the changes in America in the last fifty years of the twentieth century. Chafe's chapter on "Suburbia and Consumerism" is particularly strong in describing the forces in American economy in the 1950s. Finding that "the emergence of suburbia went hand in hand with an encore performance of the automobile revolution," Chafe argues that the changes of the mid-twentieth century society influenced the consumer culture and, therefore, suburban development.[13]

Major works by T. J. Jackson Lears about American consumer culture are essential to understand the psychology behind consumer spending and actions. Lears is most significant in consumer culture studies for his work *No Place of Grace: Antimodernism and the Transformation of American Culture, 1880-1920* but also for editing several different books, including *The Culture of Consumption: Critical Essays in American History 1880-1980*.[14] He created much of the framework for understanding American consumerism and his theories incorporate other major historical ideas. Although consumer culture often does not acknowledge the importance of the roadside, it

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[13] William Chafe, *The Unfinished Journey: America Since World War II* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1986).

[14] Lears' major works include: *No Place of Grace: Antimodernism and the Transformation of American Culture, 1880-1920* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1994) and Richard Wrightman Fox and T.J. Jackson Lears, *The Culture of Consumption: Critical Essays in American History 1880-1980* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1983).

does recognize that America is a changed society in the twentieth century, a necessary concept for evaluating the impact of the automobile and roadside.

A more limited body of scholarship exists on the standardized architecture associated with roadside franchises and their architecture. In his 1965 essay in *Design and Planning*, Richard Huppertz outlines several key points about corporate or industrial design. According to Huppertz, "corporate design is the professional design effort to develop an appearance for the corporation that is consistent with its character." Franchise operators must coordinate the various owners to create a unified image. Huppertz further notes that corporate design is not "a corporate image." Corporate design must go deeper into the company to influence all levels. Therefore, in the case of PPP, corporate design must incorporate the architecture, landscape, staff uniforms, staff training, rather than just advertising and signage. More than just marketing, PPP represents a type of "super-marketing."[15]

Talmadge Wright, in the anthology *Architecture in Cultural Change: Essays in Built Form and Culture Research*, writes about the "Deliberate Design of Nondescript Architecture." Wright finds that until recent years roadside places were "designed by contractors, not architects, as pragmatic, functional machines for the rendering of roadside services." He observes that the "subordination of architectural design to engineering and marketing is not surprising." He goes on to argue that massive design changes are often "perceived as a threat to the corporate image" because the change

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[15] Richard Huppertz, "Corporate Design: A Business Tool for Corporations," in *Design and Planning* , ed. Martin Krampen. (Ontario, Canada: University Press, University of Waterloo, 1965), 106.

signals an unstable company. Wright also argues that marketing plays a major role in subverting the role of architecture. By emphasizing the needs of the company to attract attention and to differentiate between products, franchise operators have to create false dichotomies between products, such as a perceived difference between a hamburger and a "Big Mac." [16] Designers reflect these perceived differences with sign graphics and tacked-on decorations, which attempt to convince customers that franchised units are independent operators.

To interpret the roadside landscape created by PPP, the context of cultural geography must be understood in tandem with the historical and architectural concepts. Cultural geography has produced useful insights on the mechanics of PPP and has been essential to understand how standardized roadside architecture has spread across the American landscape. In addition to John Jakle's work, J.B. Jackson, Peirce Lewis, and John Stilgoe have contributed to the basic understanding of roadside landscapes.

J.B. Jackson was the first major geographer to discuss roadside landscapes. His articles, published in his magazine *Landscape,* have had a great influence on cultural geography, and have legitimized the importance of the roadside. His major argument about the roadside is the roadside holds important secrets about how the use of architecture influences consumers, especially how design may limit choices. However, his writings, including the seminal article on commercial architecture entitled "Other

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[16] Talmadge Wright, "Deliberate Design of Nondescript Architecture," in *Architecture in Cultural Change: Essays in Built Form and Culture Research,* ed. David Salie (Lawrence, KS: University of Kansas, 1984), 83.

Directed Houses," often left many more questions than answers.[17] Only now are some of the questions about this critically important understanding of American society starting to be answered.

Peirce Lewis is well known for his "Axioms for Reading the Landscape," in D.W. Meining's *Interpretation of Ordinary Landscapes*; a treatise on reading and understanding the landscape. He writes that "our human landscape is our unwitting autobiography" and therefore reflects our taste, values, aspirations, and fears. Central to these axioms is the argument that vernacular landscapes are important to understanding our culture. He states several corollaries which allow for the broad changes over time that occur in our landscapes and cause a regional identity to become more homogenized. Axiom number two is of particular interest because he writes that "nearly all items in human landscapes reflect culture in some way." These items "are no more and no less important than other items." Therefore our standardized roadside gas station is no more and no less important to American culture than, perhaps, Monticello.[18]

Another specialist in reading the landscape is John Stilgoe. His most recent treatise, focused on modern roadside landscapes, is *Outside Lies Magic: Regaining History and Awareness in Everyday Places.*[19] Both a study of everyday places, such as

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[17] J.B. Jackson, *Discovering the Vernacular Landscape* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1984) and Helen Lefkowitz Horowitz, ed., *Landscape in Sight: Looking at America* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1997).

[18] Peirce Lewis, "Axioms for Reading the Landscape," in *Interpretation of Ordinary Landscapes: Geographical Essays,* ed. D.W. Meining. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1979), 11-32.

[19] John Stilgoe, *Outside Lies Magic: Regaining History and Awareness in Everyday Places* (New York: Walker and Company, 1998).

roads, parking lots, telephone lines and fences, and a critique of modern life, *Outside Lies Magic* is Stilgoe's discussion of a method for seeing the places missed on a daily basis. This form of observation is critical to seeing the standardized places described in this thesis. However, this book also provides a strong critique of the modern landscape which provides the counterpoint for those studying the roadside.

Still other writers address what place-product-packaging seeks to do through advertising and standardization in a field called semiotics. Dennis Alan Mann, in his article "Architectural Icons: The Best Surprise is No Surprise," emphasizes the use of icons as elements that structure behavior. He argues that Americans tend to select common and familiar places in our selection of architecture. Next, Mann argues that Americans depend on the reliable identification and that icons bear "a direct resemblance to something familiar." Lastly, Mann finds that humans "learn to identify types of buildings with a familiar look with the content of those buildings." Therefore, when Americans see signs for McDonald's or Holiday Inn, they identify those buildings as dependable services because of experienced with the quality of service. [20]

One of the most integrative books on the topic of architectural signs and meaning is Robert Venturi's book *Learning from Las Vegas*.[21] Venturi, and his collaborators Denise Scott Brown and Stephen Izenor, synthesize the ideas of signs as language and create a method for reading the landscape. Venturi is one of a small group of architects

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[20] Dennis Mann "Architectural Icons: The Best Surprise is No Surprise" in *Icons of America*, ed. Marshall Fishwick and Ray Brown. (Bowling Green, OH: Popular Press, 1978), 37.

[21] Robert Venturi, Denise Scott Brown, and Steven Izenour, *Learning from Las Vegas*, Revised, (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2000), xi-xiv.

to examine the roadside, place it within a semiotic framework, and provide a method for analysis. This analysis of our common landscape met with resistance by architectural critics and diminished the importance of Venturi's book. Unfortunately, too often architectural critics find the banality of the roadside not worthy of study and the criticism of *Learning from Las Vegas* provides a sharp counterpoint.

Scholars exploring the modern "sprawl" landscape also have contributed to the study of standardized roadside architecture. The most outspoken critic on is James Howard Kunsler and his book *The Geography of Nowhere*.[22] In this highly opinionated book, Kunsler documents the various ways that sprawl has claimed the American "sense of place." Kunsler argues that modern sprawl landscape is an uninspired place that drains the life from people. Using ideas from studies in history, architecture, symbolism, culture, and consumerism, Kunsler takes Jakle and Sculle's work to a logical conclusion.

[22] James Howard Kunsler, *The Geography of Nowhere: The Rise and Decline of America's Man Made Landscape*, (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1993).

# CHAPTER TWO

## GASOLINE STATIONS: INNOVATORS OF PLACE

Gasoline, compared to hamburgers and lodging, is the most difficult product to indicate demonstrable differences between brands. Therefore, early petroleum companies had to innovate and create a method to differentiate between competing versions of the same product. Petroleum companies marketed "place," rather than product, to show their differences. These companies created standardized forms of architecture, standardized logos, and standardized services to distinguish one company from another. Differences were used to build customer loyalty to a brand and, therefore, a product.

As early innovators in the product-place-packaging tool, gasoline station architecture shaped other standardized roadside buildings. Using logos, colors, advertising, and services like oil checks or service persons to pump the gasoline, petroleum corporations created an image of their product without experiencing the product. Branding of architecture and signage to build brand loyalty became commonplace along the American roadside in motels and fast food restaurants, both of which followed in the footsteps of the petroleum companies.

***History of the Gas Station***

Blacksmith shops and livery stables, where owners sold gasoline by the bucket, were the first "gasoline stations." Furthermore, local grocers and hardware store shopkeepers distributed gasoline in the same way they might sell milk or nails. These proprietors considered gasoline another element of their retail sales. The process of transferring the product from the seller to the buyer was the difficult part. Kenneth Jackson found that "the entire process was inefficient, smelly, wasteful and occasionally dangerous." The drivers "had to pour gasoline from a bucket through a funnel into his tank."[1] Several inventors saw the necessity of providing a safer version of this process, but one in particular found the solution. (Image 1)

Defined by the haphazard nature method of dispensing, marketing, and selling gasoline, early twentieth-century station designs were ramshackle buildings. However, the innovation of a "filling station" in 1905 signaled the first tentative steps in real gasoline station construction. "C.H. Laessig of St. Louis equipped a hot water heater with a glass gauge and a garden hose and turned the whole thing on its end," thereby inventing the first gas pump.[2] Laessig and his company, the Automobile Gasoline Company, then "constructed a small brick building, paved the yard behind, and erected four gas pumps," which all drew from "safer, more advanced, underground tanks."[3] Until then, early sellers of gasoline constructed simple utilitarian buildings built around the storage units and were usually located in warehouse or factory districts. Owners

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[1] Jackson, *Crabgrass Frontier,* 256. For more see "America enters the gasoline era," *National Petroleum News* 76 (February 1984). 46-174.

[2] Jackson, *Crabgrass Frontier,* 256.

would use some sort of eye-catching architecture or signage to attract customers. Laessig's invention and his gasoline stations changed the course of these vernacular structures.

During the 1920's, a new demand for gasoline, the opening of more oil fields, and the development of concrete roads launched a boom in automobile usage that lasted even during the Great Depression. Consumers purchased staggering amounts of vehicles. The booming automobile sales led to increased gasoline station development.[4] During this expansion, gasoline companies began aggressively to increase their sales territories. Companies developed standardized logos and imagery to reassure the customer that their product was the same throughout the sales territory. The strong acceptance of a standardized image encouraged companies to streamline the production of standardized architecture – reinforcing the image – throughout their territories.

One of the first companies to create a standardized architecture for their stations was Shell Oil. Their "A" station made certain the company image was property displayed, even within franchise agreements that operated without support from the company. John Jakle and Keith Sculle describe the "A" station in *The Gas Station in America* as "a roof some 32 feet long and 15 feet wide, half supported by columns and covering a driveway with pumps, and half covering an office space walled with glass-paneled 'factory sash.'"[5] Packed in warehouses and shipped to their locations, workers assembled various pieces to create a building complete "with pumps, tanks, pumping

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[3] Vieyra, 7.
[4] Jakle, *The Gas Station in America*, 51-52.
[5] Ibid., 55.

**Image 1:**
**Curbside Gasoline Pumps, Comstock, WI, 1939.**
*(Wisconsin Historical Society Archives, http://www.wisconsinhistory.org)*

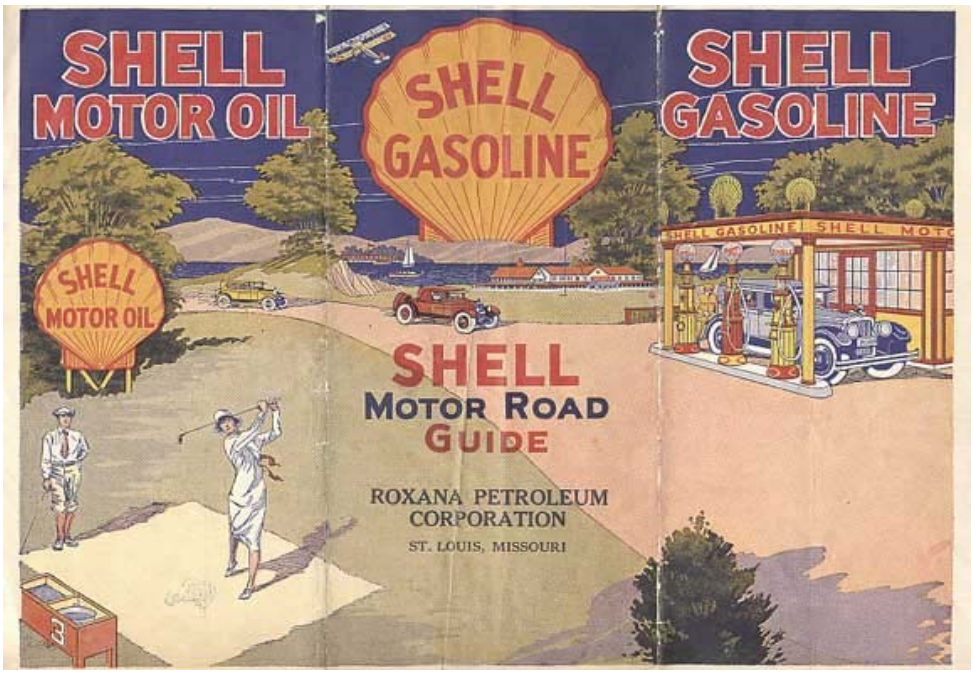


**Image 2:**
**Roxana Petroleum Map Cover with Standard Oil "A" Station**
*(University of Southern Main, Osher Map Library, http://www.usm.maine.edu/maps/)*


**Image 3:**
**Shell Petroleum Map Cover with Standard Oil "A" Station**
*(University of Southern Main, Osher Map Library, http://www.usm.maine.edu/maps/)*

**Image 4:**
**Standard Oil Station, Atlantic City, NJ**
*(Debra Jane Seltzer, http://www.roadsidenut.com))*

equipment, a graded drive, and signage."[6] Built in about ten days, from site selection to final details, all stations were to be outfitted in orange paint and red trim. Standard Oil in response to Shell "launched its chain of look-alike gasoline stations in 1914." The stations were "small houses with attached canopies, each building uniformly painted and identified by common signs."[7] (Images 2-4)

Development during these early years was done through chain operations, not the now common franchise system. John Jakle and Keith Sculle write that for "some stations in a given chain, land, buildings and other improvements might be owned by the corporation." However, "other stations, land might be leased but improvements owned, the corporation leasing the land from a local owner usually at a stipulated annual rent for a set term of years with renewal options."[8] Companies would lease stations to local businessmen, after already establishing the site, design, and necessary items. Even more varied were methods of management. Some were run as independent businesses, while others depended on the company for support. However, all companies required lessees to maintain their stations to certain specifications, which created a unified image of the company.[9] These methods of increasing sales territory created the first major American franchises. Names like Standard, Shell, Pure, and Sunoco became common words on the lips of travelers. Not only was the roadside changing, so was the American landscape.

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[6] Ibid.
[7] Ibid., 132.
[8] Ibid., 56-57.
[9] Ibid., 52-56.

During the decade of the Great Depression, the number of gasoline stations rose from 15,000 to nearly 125,000. However, gasoline prices dropped with the discovery of more oil wells.[10] Companies worked against dropping prices by adding personalized service to their stations. They added service bays to repair automobiles and offered a wide range of accessories, such as batteries and tires. They used the term "service station" to differentiate between those offering only gasoline and those offering the wider range of options.[11] Companies built stations at points that were easily accessible to the interstate traveler.

During this period, designers made significant innovation in the standardized images of gasoline stations. Most important was the development of different types of building styles and types, classified by Daniel Vieyra and Jakle and Sculle. Each of their types will be discussed in the next section. Pure Oil Company's architects developed a domestic style building in an "English Cottage" design. Companies such as Boston's Beacon Oil Company built stations that included a respectable style with "imposing dome, emphasized by a heavy carved railing." In the south and west, Gulf Oil often constructed mission style buildings, including tiles and stucco. Some companies created Colonial Revival designs with giant columns and gabled roofs.[12] Companies strove to fit in their communities and created complex building types that were assets to the setting. This variety of innovation, however, had its drawbacks. Constant design and innovation took away from profits as companies pushed research, design, and architectural limits.

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[10] Ibid., 65.
[11] Ibid., 66.
[12] Ibid., 29-32.

Companies soon would find a way to streamline their buildings as well as their methods for profit in their next step.

Not everyone welcomed the new corporate chains. "Local grocery and drugstore merchants, hurt by the Depression, sought legislative relief" and Iowa was one of the first states to respond. Iowa taxed each store in a chain $155 per year, plus ten percent of all gross income up to one million dollars.[13] In response, Standard Oil devised a plan, the so-called "Iowa Plan," to convert each of its stations to lease operations to take advantage of a major tax loophole. Each station was individually owned, and therefore not legally a part of a chain, avoiding state taxes, such as Iowa's. This new method of lessee operation, or franchise operation, would create aggressive development along the roadside during the later years of the decade.[14]

Companies worked out common image requirements for each lessee. Standardized services, standardized uniforms, and standardized building styles and shapes, all parts of the chain style of operation, were kept in place, but spelled out in the lease. The Iowa Plan had an unintended consequence when it actually spurred the creation of more stations because of their cheap, easy entrance into complex money-making ventures. Fast food restaurants and motels would each have their own parallel revelations, which catapulted each into their golden period.

By the 1940s, gasoline stations had become a critical component of the American roadside. As troops moved across the country, they brought their own

[13] Ibid., 66.
[14] Ibid.

brand loyalties. Standardized gas stations played to this loyalty and provided "a touch of home." As would happen in the fast food industry, this standardized image of America was a powerful method for developing new owners of gas stations after the war.

Automobile manufacturers pushed hard to win the dollars and loyalty of the newly returned veterans. Kenneth Jackson states that "the best symbol of individual success and identity was a sleek, air-conditioned, high-powered, personal statement on wheels."[15] With new families, these veterans sought the good middle class life in the many new suburbs, such as Levittown, New Jersey. Along with them, these new suburbanites brought ideas about zoning as a tool to fight such unwelcome uses as gasoline stations. These single-use residential areas, however, unwittingly contributed to the expansion of the gasoline station. Suburban residents, many of whom still worked in the city, sought more accessible, cheaper gasoline stations and fast food restaurants to supplement their travel and home life. Jackson writes, with complaint,

> commercial, residential, and industrial structures have been redesigned to fit the needs of the motorist rather than the pedestrian. Garish signs, large parking lots, one-way street, drive-in windows, and throw-away fast-food buildings – all associated with the world of suburbia – have replaced the slower-paced, neighborhood –oriented institutions of an earlier generation.[16]

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[15] Jackson, *Crabgrass Frontier*, 246.
[16] Ibid., 269-270.

Throughout the 1950s, designers gave the gasoline station new forms and designs that enhanced the increased automobility, increased station ownership, and innovation on the part of the companies. The decade was the heyday of the gas station and personalized service. Of course, elemental to the development of the gasoline station is its relationship to the automobile and the highway. The huge surge in automobile ownership spurred the development of gas stations. Furthermore, Congress' establishment of the Interstate Highway Act in 1956 changed the positioning of the stations to be nearer the interstate exits to attract customers. Gasoline stations on interstate exits pushed larger signs and quicker service locations. The increase in road travel, automobile uses, and easy methods for transportation were all part of the explosive boom for gas station construction.

Newer, quicker highways and a rise in the leisure time of American increased the amount of family travel. Women joined their husbands on long trips, and companies saw that they had to change from industrial looking service buildings to clean, efficient stations. Companies tweaked established organized operating procedures for franchisees to make sure they operated the station in a method that was more family friendly.[17] Companies developed new images for their stations. They simplified the designs, organized the layout, and created logos easily seen from long distances. Most significant was the rapid embrace of television's potential to market a company's image and product. Texaco used its star symbol when supporting television programs. The company used the catchy slogan "trust your car to the man with the star" with friendly looking gas attendants designed to appeal to families.

As the sixties dawned, companies placed a renewed emphasis on quick, clean service. They also introduced new areas of gasoline service. By 1969, about 2,000 truck stations had multi-use areas, such as motels, restaurants, and laundromats.[18] During this period, companies pushed consumers toward a new reliance on the self-service pump. Until the sixties, state laws required that only pump attendants were able to serve cars. However, states began to allow self-service pumps and by the 1980s about 83 percent of all stations had converted to self-serve.[19] The service station almost disappeared.

Companies also reintroduced convenience stores, with the creation of lines of grocery items. Until then, most stations stocked small amounts of gum, candy, soda, and automobile-related parts. However, the circle of gasoline as a complementary product, not the central product, had begun to be completed. Today most "c-stores," as they are known in the petroleum industry, are quick service grocery stops, many integrating delis, coffee shops, and newsstands into the station building. Kenneth Jackson observes in the 1980s that:

> the operators of such establishments have now gone full circle since the early twentieth century. Typically they know nothing about automobiles and expect the customer themselves to pump the gasoline. Thus, the man 'who wears the star' has given way to the teenager who sells six-packs, bags of ice, and pre-prepared sandwiches.[20]

During the 1960s and 1970s, gasoline companies came under criticism for their station designs. Stations near the interstate highway exit continued a trend of

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[17] Susan Spellman, "All the Comforts of Home: The Domestication of the Service Station Industry, 1920-1940," *The Journal of Popular Culture* 37 (2004): 463-477.

[18] Jakle, *The Gas Station in America*, 72.

[19] Ibid., 79.

[20] Jackson, *Crabgrass Frontier*, 257.

streamlined, futuristic symbolism, but they continued to become bigger as they integrated the "c-store" and the self-service pump. Larger station canopies were constructed, obscuring the main building and focusing on the pumps. Ronald Lee Fleming wrote in 1994 that "in recent decades, the automobile has held sway in our culture, and the architectural schools have been dominated by Modernist and Post-Modernist practitioners and theorists who deemphasized the townscape values in favor of the heroic expression of the individual architectural design." Fleming complains, "This approach tended to create isolated buildings seen as sculptural objects, the proverbial table-top architecture, which further eroded cityscape values."[21] Just as fast food restaurants began to tone down their image by integrating more residential looks, petroleum companies hoped that by constructing stations near residential areas in a Ranch-style home style they would avoid confrontations with neighbors. Daniel Vieyra documented this particular change. "Shell's 'suburban house' service station," he pointed out, featured "a pair of gently sloping gable roofs, one over the office, with the other higher roof over the service bays, reminiscent of a split-level ranch house." Companies returned to a more residential look to placate local communities, many of whom were beginning to feel that national gasoline companies were cluttering their town environment with meaningless buildings.[22]

Criticism about gasoline station design, coupled with the OPEC-initiated gasoline shortage, caused many companies to turn from image-focused profitability to price-based

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[21] Ronald Lee Fleming, *Saving Face: How Corporate Franchise Design Can Respect Community Character* (Chicago: American Planning Association, 2002), 4.

[22] Vieyra, 52.

profitability.[23] The rise of historic preservation and community concern also contributed to this change. Fast food restaurants and motels moved to this environmental version of the standardized design; critics labeled it the "browning of America."

By the 1980s, architectural review boards and preservation planning advocates began to take up arms about the overpowering use of lights, garish design, and standardized buildings that did not reflect community character. They mandated new sets of designs to better harmonize with the community and create a stronger "sense of place," ironically the same goal early station designers had been seeking. Most companies today have found that changing standardized architecture is not an easy process – again harkening back to the large amounts of time and money that was necessary for research and design in the first decades of the twentieth century. Many companies fought the process, some winning against towns, some losing, and some changing their basic plans. Standardized architecture for gasoline stations is still much in use, but a crack in the process has developed with the modern community attention to sense of place.[24]

***Place-Product-Packaging of Gas Stations***

Gasoline companies were the earliest innovators of the product-place-packaging process. They found that having four major areas of standardization (design, service, image, and product) was essential to the development of a national image. They

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[23] Jakle, *The Gas Station in America*, 76. For more on the changes in taste about gasoline stations is in "Service Stations: An Unwanted Blight," *Fortune* 74 (September 1966): 159-160.

[24] Terry Schwarz "Defending Regional Identity: Strategies for Reshaping Franchise Architecture," (Paper presented to City Futures Conference, Chicago, July 8 - 10, 2004).

coordinated national or regional building and color schemes. Uniforms and clean looks identified standardized service providers, such as the Texaco employees and the "man with the star." Of course, the "star" was the icon or image essential for identifying the Texaco station. Lastly, because the product could not be seen the elements of service, icon, and architecture were critical.

The product was the defining part of the gasoline station. However, almost all gasoline is the same. Only small differences separate the types. Some have higher octane ratings than others. Some may be colored a bit different. Others may be slightly cleaner burning. As Daniel Vieyra points out "gasoline could not be judged on the basis of sight, taste, smell, or anything else within the ken of most motorists."[25] Visible flow pumps, like Laessig's, where the product could flow into a large glass cylinder to confirm the correct quantity of gasoline placed in the car, were developed. They dyed gasoline to indicate a particular brand or demonstrate quality. Vieyra writes that "a sparkling clear gas dyed a royal purple, for instance, announced its high quality."[26] With all the similarity companies found it necessary to base customer loyalty on something more visible. Companies developed highly sophisticated logos designed to draw attention to their station. Station owners provided free road maps, each with different designs and logos. Oils in different bottles, special drive-in services, and even free air for tires were parts of the product provided at the gasoline station.

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[25] Vieyra, 8.
[26] Ibid.

Company service also set gasoline stations apart. Companies provided different levels of service, from gas pumping to oil checks and window washing. Men in clean jumpsuits with logos emblazoned on them would greet arriving drivers. One man would pump the gas, while others would check tire pressure, clean the windows, or check the oil. They were all required to wear standardized uniforms with identical looks. Perhaps they would set themselves apart with a quick note of their name below the logo. The men would need to be clean, especially because stations were perceived to be dirty. The management scripted all their movement, their efficiency, and their greetings.[27]

Standardized architecture was the most important part of the development of PPP for gas stations. Companies, such as Pure Oil, went to great lengths to make all their filling stations designed and built in the same way. Blue tile roofs, white painted walls, large Tudor half beams, and cottage style touches were all essential to the design of the building. Roadside travelers would immediately identify with the architecture of the building. Standardized design was so elemental that authors have been able to sort out and define different typologies and identifying patterns that have made gasoline station styles easily identifiable.

The first type in John Jakle's and Keith Sculle's gasoline station typology is the "curbside," which was a pump on the side of the road, usually in front of a hardware store or grocery store. Their second type is the "shed," or a simple utilitarian building, not

[27] Vieyra, 12. and Spellman, 473.

much differentiated from "the buildings of lumber and coal yards or petroleum tank yards."[28]

Their third type was the "house," one of the most popular types of gas station. The "house" was a common typology in the decades before and during World War II. The "house" type does not imply that the main building was always in the form of a traditional house. A "house" type implies a small building used as an office, with enough house-like design details to distinguish it from a shed or other utilitarian structure.[29] "Resistance to the destruction of old houses and the disruption of residential neighborhoods lent support to zoning and other land use controls generally feared by gasoline interests," Jake and Sculle point out. "The oil companies sought to build stations that blended into residential neighborhoods, thus to reduce opposition to their real estate practices."[30] These buildings took on elements of nationally popular types of residential architecture. Pure Oil capitalized upon the trend of using Tudor Revival styles in the 1930s by building small "English cottages." Generally, these buildings had a small office, a storage room, and public restrooms. Almost all the house types were pre-fabricated buildings, usually of steel construction, faced with brick or stucco.[31] (Image 5)

A close modification of the "house" type was the "house with canopy." This type was the basic "house" form, but with the roof or cross gable projected forward to create a canopy. Following this type was the "house with bays." Expanding upon the "house

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[28] Jakle and Sculle, *The Gas Station in America*, 137.
[29] Ibid., 141.
[30] Ibid., 138.
[31] Ibid.


**Image 5:**
**"House" style gasoline station, Murfreesboro, TN**
*(Aaron Marcavitch, http://www.marcavitch.com)*

**Image 6:**
**"House with canopy" style gasoline station, Preston, CT**
*(Debra Jane Seltzer, http://www.roadsidenut.com)*


**Image 7:**
**"House with bays" or "Domestic" style gasoline station, Cleveland, OH**
*(Debra Jane Seltzer, http://www.roadsidenut.com)*

**Image 8:**
**"Oblong Box" or "Functional" style gasoline station, Harrisonburg, VA**
*(Debra Jane Seltzer, http://www.roadsidenut.com)*

with canopy," the "house with bays" expanded to the left or right with a service bay. This not only changed the look of the building, but it also expanded the services of the station. These types replaced specific outbuildings such as the car washing building or oil changing building.[32] (Images 6-7)

During and after the Great Depression, stations began to take on an "oblong box" shape. John Jakle quotes from the *National Petroleum News* that "the handy porcelain-and-glass box look; canopy reaching out from the office to shield islands from the elements; front bays, commonly two, left or right" was the most common design.[33] The oblong box was the evolutionary next step from the "house with bays." Details were stripped and outlines simplified. The bay and the canopy were still common, but they were also simplified. Stations became streamlined with flat roofs and wide expanses of plate glass. The Texaco design, from industrial designer Walter Teague, was an especially influential oblong box design. These buildings were often concrete block overlaid with porcelain enamel. Later designs would use exposed concrete block or vinyl siding. These types of gas stations were among the first structures to be built specifically for the roadside. They were not designed to fit with the neighborhoods, as the "house" types had done. Stations were intentionally garish to attract attention. Neon tubing, white porcelain, and clean glass all indicated the sleekness of modern architecture and modern travel.[34] (Images 8-9)

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[32] Ibid., 142.
[33] Ibid., 74.
[34] Ibid.

However, after clashing with the landscape and the public, designers began to use softer tones, cedar shingles, gable roofs, and other tacked-on elements to better blend with a community. Designers used the basic "oblong box," "house with canopy," or "house with bays" forms, but added on necessary elements to make the building more appealing. This trend, called "the browning of America" or the impact of the environmental movement, was intended to blend stations into neighborhoods, which had grown towards the roadside. This was a form of corporate apology for building designs that had become commonplace.[35]

Daniel Vieyra has taken a different method to categorizing the styles of gasoline stations. He looks at gasoline stations through the lens of style instead of form. He categorizes the styles as "Functional," "Domestic," "Fantastic," and "Respectable." These styles cover the typologies Jakle and Sculle created, but provide a more architectural-based perspective of gasoline stations, versus the very functional definitions of Jakle and Sculle.

In Viyera's categories, Domestic styles were the first truly standardized styles, as they were the easiest to reproduce across the nation, without offending local residents and their regional style. Domestic types were often houses, with the picturesque rustic cottage serving as the base model. Buildings had "irregularly laid, multi-toned shingles cover[ing] the prominent, spectacularly swooping roofs."[36] Some had stucco, brick, half-timbering. Others had shutters, chimneys, or bay windows. During the development of the "super-service stations" with various oil and service elements, they "assumed the look

[35] Ibid., 144-152.

of Tudor stables" with defined courtyards.[37] Vieyra writes that "Tudor super-service stations might have been small-scale imitations of country estates but, ironically, they rarely appeared in the country."[38] (Image 7)

Even during the 1950s and 1960s, the Domestic style remained in use. "Dramatically sloping shed roofs with overhanging eaves dominate the [Shell design]. With its large, canted plate-glass windows, the roof form suggests the cathedral ceilings that adorned many contemporary suburban dream homes." When Congress passed the Highway Beautification Act of 1966, many streamlined station owners would put on "hats" of mansard roofs, some with dormers "reinforc[ing] the residential imagery." Vieyra finds that "by the late sixties, large petroleum companies had developed standard procedures for converting 'Functional' boxes into sprawling ranch houses."[39]

These "Functional" boxes were the most common streamlined buildings of the 1950s. However, their design and development stemmed from the earliest designs for gas stations. Of course, the gas station is a functional place; therefore, form followed function. Early styles included steel-framed glass boxes and brick/stucco boxes. "Carefully groomed shrubbery and manicured flower beds often surrounded such stations. An apology rather than a contradiction, the overlay softened the impact of the structure's frankly industrial appearance," Vieyra notes.[40] Today these "Functional" stations tend to be little more than giant canopies with small glass boxes in amongst the

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[36] Vieyra, 41.
[37] Ibid., 45.
[38] Ibid.
[39] Ibid., 51.
[40] Ibid., 56.

pumps. This "new" type comes full circle from the earliest versions of the "Functional" stations.[41]

During the Modern movement of architecture, the stations often integrated "Modern" details. Taking Walter Teague's Texaco design as an example, stations had "continuous glass wall[s] that created a light, elegant volume. Colored enamel plates formed a narrow red cornice under which a white band announced the company name in red lettering."[42] Other designs brought in the influences of architects such as Frank Lloyd Wright or the influences of specific place-related designs, as in California, to the gas station. (Image 8)

Spinoffs from the Modern architecture gas station were ones that leaped to "googie," or "hip" styles of architecture and became "Fantastic" styles. Giant sloping roofs with pointed ends shot toward space. These buildings became "at once the roadside sign and the building" much like Robert Venturi's "ducks."[43] Streamlined models came forward with slick walls and curving end elements. These stations "project a sensation of speed through their aerodynamic imagery, conveying an aura of futuristic transportation."[44] (Image 9)

The fourth type Vieyra discusses is the "Respectable" station. These stations were designed to fit in with the community in a better way than the Functional, but perhaps not as much as the Domestic. Respectable stations were monuments to gasoline. Associated initially with the City Beautiful movement, "some petroleum companies built

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[41] Ibid., 75.
[42] Ibid., 59.
[43] Ibid., 64.

small pavilion stations that appeared as monuments of civic beauty, embellishing the lavish urban boulevards so much a part of most City Beautiful schemes."[45] These buildings would have pressed metal columns and pilasters attached to standardized pre-fab buildings.[46] Small gardens, fountains, and other "street furniture" were also part of the overall design.[47] (Image 10)

Although most classically shaped buildings were in the East, many stations assembled in the South and West took on the "architecture of the Spanish missions."[48] Often they would have bell towers and sloping roofs with large arches, in many ways having a "relationship with ecclesiastical architecture."[49] In the South, colonial architecture was the main theme. Taking on the elements of plantation buildings or other Colonial Revival structures, they featured fanlights, balustrades, or even a "majestic Palladian window."[50] Later, preservation activists would save a Colonial Revival style station in Charleston, South Carolina, bridging the preservation of historic buildings and modern services. (Images 11-12)

During the 1940s and 1950s, the "Respectable" style station took the church cupola and the simple pediment of Greek Revival styles. Vieyra writes that "the recent Respectable stations refer only subtly to dignified architectural forms, creating scaled-

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[44] Ibid., 66.
[45] Ibid., 27.
[46] Mac Daniel, "When domes were all over the Hub," *Boston Globe*, 22 July 2001.
[47] Ibid., 29.
[48] Ibid., 30.
[49] Ibid., 33.
[50] Ibid., 31.

**Image 9:**
**"Fantastic" style gasoline station, Corbin, KY**
*(Aaron Marcavitch, http://www.marcavitch.com)*


**Image 10:**
**"Respectable" style gasoline station, Woburn, MA**
*(Debra Jane Seltzer, http://www.roadsidenut.com)*

**Image 11:**
**"Respectable" style gasoline station (Spanish Mission type), LA**
*(Library of Congress, http://memory.loc.gov)*

**Image 12:**
**"Respectable" style gasoline station (Colonial Revival type), Pocomoke City, MD**
*(Debra Jane Seltzer, http://www.roadsidenut.com)*

down versions of the earlier gleaming, lavish monuments." [51] Today, architectural review board members often dictate Respectable designs, calling for a broad mixture of traditional details and respect for the community's architecture.

These gas station property types, either the form-based definitions of Jakle and Sculle or the architectural-based definitions of Vieyra, are elemental to the standardized image of petroleum companies. Of course, without service or image the architecture would mean little for the product. However, as the first innovator in place development, the architecture of the station is a defining element. To explore this theme further, a close study of Pure Oil stations is useful, since the company was a major innovator in the standardized design of gas stations.

***Pure Oil: A Case Study***

Pure Oil was an Ohio-based company, formally incorporated in 1914 as Ohio Cities Gas Company, a public service company providing natural gas and petroleum for much of Ohio. Investors formed the earliest version of Pure Oil "in 1887 as the Producers Protective Association. In 1891, they renamed the company The Producers Oil Company, Ltd, and still further changed to The Pure Oil Company in 1895."[52]

Charles, Beman, Rufus, and Henry Dawes purchased Pure Oil in 1917, "after having been asked to evaluate it for other investors." They reorganized the company in 1920. Henry Dawes became president in 1924 and undertook a study to understand the

[51] Ibid., 35.

[52] Petroleum Collectibles Monthly, "Still Sure with Pure," http://www.pcmpublishing.com/articles/12.html

needs of the company. He also purchased major competitors in Ohio, South Dakota, Georgia, Alabama, Florida, Virginia and Mississippi, creating a south and mid-west distribution base. Officials also established the Pure Oil Company of the Carolinas "to establish a marketing base in amongst their previous purchases in those areas where no Pure Oil stations yet existed."[53]

Dawes also began to re-evaluate the company's station design. A standardized form was already in place, designed by Columbus, Ohio, designer E.C. Miller and built in a standardized kit by the Edwards Manufacturing Company. Dawes however, found the design lacking. He gave his nephew Carlos Dawes the task of designing a new building form. The younger Dawes' initial plan was only a modified version of the current building and the company rejected the plan.[54] The company next hired C.A. Petersen, an architect with experience in the gasoline industry from the Gulf Oil Company.

As a designer for Gulf Oil, Petersen designed its "sandbrick design used in the late 1910's and early 1920's." He had also designed a cottage style building that the company rejected. In October 1925, Petersen became the head of Pure Oil's station design and construction department. [55]

The first order of business for Petersen was to create a complete, highly visible image that could be applied throughout the country, from suburbs to urban settings. He sought a design that could use materials "supplied by the average lumberyard…otherwise used in house construction." He sought a way to create a home-like, but commercial

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[53] Ibid.
[54] Jakle, *The Gas Station in America*, 165-167.
[55] Petroleum Collectibles Monthly, "Still Sure with Pure."

design. From his own scrapbook of designs, he selected one previous prepared for Kenmore Oil in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania.[56]

Petersen's "English cottage" design for Kenmore Oil included a low ridge line, a small cross gable, two chimney masses which protruded slightly from the sides, and a large central window. Eventually his Pure Oil station designs used a much taller ridgeline without a cross gable. The chimney masses became incorporated into the structure, often with a stylized "P" on them. The large window was reduced slightly and a door with a hood was inserted. Petersen's standardized design was clearly associated with the suburban home.

The roof was the most striking part of the design. "The roof with this tile was a broad glistening plane, uninterrupted by any other architectural feature, faced outward toward traffic and inclined so steeply that it was practically another wall atop the wall enclosing the office beneath."[57] It was an almost vertical plane and stood out as a sign for the company. Clad in a bright blue tile, the rest of the building was white with some contrasting blue highlights. (Image 13)

The design's associations of domesticity soon made this station a national roadside icon. Jakle and Sculle found that the "Pure Oil's stations sought to convey the soothing reassurances of a private home, in part belying the company's profit-making motive. Customers were to feel comfortable in a homelike environment that had implication of class and status rooted in domestic tradition."[58] Contained upon its plot of

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[56] Jakle, *The Gas Station in America*, 167.
[57] Ibid., 169.
[58] Ibid.

land, the gas station could be anywhere in the United States and the idea, the look, and the services would have been the same.[59] It was a "package advertisement for Pure products, the shiny blue enameled terra-cotta roof a familiar sight in many towns, even today. Much like the package embodied by Coca-Cola bottle representing the brand, the Pure cottage became the package from which Pure Oil products were dispensed."[60]

The station design tapped into the nostalgic and domestic images that were important to the American culture of the time. It also was perfect for the Dawes vision of their stations. Henry Dawes "awarded Petersen a $750 check…against his personal account, not the company's." By August 1927, the station was adopted for "its corporate sign along the roadside."[61]

Future changes to the design came slowly. Sites demanded small changes or different looks. Minor changes were made only after much discussion. One station in McMinnville, Tennessee, recently added to the National Register of Historic Places, has a large canopy carrying forward the blue roof, turned towards the crossing highway. Positioned on the historic Memphis-to-Bristol Highway, it also stood on the edge of a residential area and off the main street.[62] Another Pure Oil station, located in Indianapolis, Indiana, was an expression of multi-structural massing, with a central office

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[59] Ibid., 170.

[60] Petroleum Collectibles Monthly. "Still Sure with Pure."

[61] Jakle, *The Gas Station in America*, 174.

[62] Initial fieldwork in McMinnville, Tennessee conducted by Dr. Carroll Van West and Aaron Marcavitch, spring 2001. Subsequent visits in summer and fall 2001 to photograph the structure.

and a set of lower structures, each branching off the sides of the central cottage.[63] (Images 14-15)

The service part of the station was also essential to the development of Pure Oil. Company officials ordered owners to keep their stations clean. Cultural norms encouraged cleanliness, but a company newsletter also called out the need for well-kept stations. Jakle and Sculle note that "Pure demanded that everything at the stations be kept in place. Parts and tools lying around the station lot were branded as junk." The stations were to be kept much like little houses. The newsletter "proudly recorded cases in which females specifically approved the company's maintenance policies."[64]

Images of the station were essential parts of the overall development of the station. There were "birdhouses and radios fashioned as English cottages." A "half-scale replica of the English cottage with a child's lounge inside "was part of in the Pure exhibit at the Century of Progress exposition in New York City in 1933."[65] Motels, connected with Pure, even took the image and created small cottage courts of little blue roofed cabins. (Image 16)

The company protected its successful station design. "The English Cottage was patented to prevent its unauthorized use. Petersen's department stipulated the features that had to be removed when a station was withdrawn from the Pure chain."[66] Eventually, as modernism and franchisees demanded changes, the company moved away

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[63] Fieldwork conducted in Indianapolis, Indiana in December 2000 and August 2001 by Aaron and Andrea Marcavitch.
[64] Jakle, *The Gas Station in America*, 179.
[65] Ibid.
[66] Ibid., 176.


**Image 13:**
**Pure Oil Station, Highland Park, IL**
*(Debra Jane Seltzer & Larry Shure, http://www.roadsidenut.com)*


**Image 14:**
**Pure Oil Station/Pure Art Gallery, McMinnville, TN**
*(Main Street McMinnville, Inc., http://www.mainstreetmcminnville.org)*


**Image 15:**
**Pure Oil Station/Pesco Pest Control, Indianapolis, IN**
*(Aaron Marcavitch, http://www.marcavitch.com)*

**Image 16:**
**Pure Oil Company Motel, Atkins, VA**
*(Debra Jane Seltzer, http://www.roadsidenut.com)*

from the station. During the 1950s, Petersen's design department created an oblong box, developed to better fit in with the modern roadside. Both the aesthetics and cost were more in keeping with the post-war era.[67]

Pure Oil encountered tough times in the 1960s. Unlike its competitors, Pure Oil had to buy on the open market just to keep service stations pumping and refineries operating. Pure began looking for potential merger partners and found one with Union Oil in 1965. "Overnight, much needed capital was pumped into ailing Pure, and a station modernization program, Interstate site building program, and expansion of the successful truck stop concept were among the projects that got a much higher priority." The end came in 1969 when the company announced that there would be a complete changeover to the "76 brand" within one year."[68] Although recently small oil jobbers have adopted the old Pure Oil logo in the southeast, the 1969 switch ended the era of Pure Oil.

Pure Oil should be considered among the pioneers in standardized roadside architecture. By tying together the ideas of standardized service, standardized product, and a standardized architecture – all of which were intended to induce customer loyalty – Pure Oil vaulted ahead of its independent competitors. Pure Oil was an excellent example of the type of company that built brand loyalty through its iconic architecture. Fast food restaurants, the next element on the roadside development pattern, would soon adopt this approach to design and create strong connections to its products.

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[67] Ibid., 178.
[68] Petroleum Collectibles Monthly, "Still Sure with Pure."

# CHAPTER THREE

# FAST FOOD RESTAURANTS: INNOVATORS OF PRODUCT

Gasoline stations originated the product-place-packaging idea, but fast food restaurants refined the concept. Fast food restaurants pushed forward the "product" elements of PPP. Food is quick service, prepared with standardized methods, and has a similar experience of taste. A consumer desire for food that tasted "like home," or at least was consistent from location to location, fueled the push toward a standardized product. Fast food is America's meal of choice when dining out and fast food restaurants are a defining element of the American roadside landscape.

## *History of Fast Food Restaurants*

Fast food restaurants had an inauspicious beginning. In early stagecoach days, taverns provided a rest stop for those traveling by the rutted roads across early America. Yet, this style of eating was still dependent on the slow cooking methods common in the time. Meals were prepared in large kitchens with central hearths. Bread was baked on site, milk often came from the farm, and food was prepared throughout the day. Menus were most often fixed, although deviations with sandwiches and small products were

common. It was not until major migrations and mass movement across the United States that the preparation of food became quicker and often more standardized. Chester Liebs writes in *Main Street to Miracle Mile:*

> the eat-and-run cuisine of the Civil War encampment, the legendary chuck wagon of the Old West, the station-restaurant where meals were hastily consumed during railroad stops, and the railroad dining car, where food was prepared in postage-stamp-size kitchens [which] helped to introduce Americans to fast cooking and fast eating in this period of westward settlement and rapid industrial growth.[1]

Philip Langdon documents much of this development in *Orange Roofs, Golden Arches.* His narrative begins with "Harvey Houses," established along the western railroads at various stopping points by Fred Harvey as early as 1876. These restaurants served quick, pre-prepared meals to travelers with standardized service. Employees consisted of women primarily, all of who were required to wear uniforms and stay in common dormitories.[2] One of Fred Harvey's hallmarks was his ceaseless attention to details and cleanliness. Harvey made random inspections and occasionally fired "restaurant managers who failed to uphold his rigorous standards."[3] A focus on cleanliness and a need for rigorous standards made his restaurants a major staple of railway travel in the late nineteenth century. Later fast food restaurant developers followed Harvey's operational styles and pushed for a focus on cleanliness and speed.

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[1] Liebs, 193.

[2] Langdon, 6.

[3] Ibid. For more information on Harvey Houses see James Henderson, *Meals by Fred Harvey: a Phenomenon of the American West* (Fort Worth: Texas Christian University Press, 1969).

Railroad dining cars, most built by the Pullman Company, dominated other markets. These rolling restaurants satisfied non-stop train trips and railroad-side restaurants closed. Passenger railroads went into decline in the early part of the twentieth century and profits began to fall. The dining car tended to be first in reductions of rolling stock since their operation required large amounts of stock and staff to run them. The railroad and the dining car were in full decline after less than sixty years on the rail. The automobile had arrived and had begun to take over the railroad's monopoly on transporting people around America.[4]

Furthermore, huge social changes were underway in America. People worked outside the home, often going without domestic help. New technologies helped pack and store food. Restaurants began to rise in their popularity and the prices began to meet with incomes. These shifts hastened a change to a society that ate out more. "By the decade after World War I, the nation had entered a full-fledged eating-out boom, with the estimated number of restaurants jumping 40 percent between 1910 and 1927." Automobiles encouraged new methods of eating out. "[T]he restaurant could both serve the hungry motorist and provide an opportunity to make a trip in the car more pleasant. The car, in turn, made it all the easier for people to go out and eat as a form of recreation."[5] Competition increased and owners sought newer innovations to beat their challengers. An analyst from 1931 remarked, "now every restaurant owner 'needs…a

[4] William McKenzie, *Dining Car Line to the Pacific* (St. Paul: Minnesota Historical Society Press, 1990; reprint, St. Paul: University of Minnesota Press, 2004), 32-55.

[5] Liebs, 196.

four-year course in advertising, accountancy, architecture, and psychology.'"[6] Restaurant owners, synthesizing these disparate elements, had taken the first tentative steps in the creation of place-product-packaging for quick-service restaurants.

In the first two decades of the twentieth century, three distinct paths developed for fulfilling a traveler's eating needs. All quick service restaurants have their basis in the sit-down restaurant. The first path followed the traditional sit-down and became the "quick-service" version of the family restaurant. The second path starts with the same basic beginning, but was smaller in scale, developing into the tearoom and small storefront eateries, and eventually becoming the diner. Finally, the third path became the quick-service drive-up/walk-up type of facility, which integrated quick service, small size, and a small staff.

***Quick Service Family Restaurants***

In the first branch, the first real innovator was not an architect, such as Pure Oil's C.A. Petersen, but a simple variety-store proprietor, Howard Johnson. Johnson, in 1925, bought a "financially ailing combination drugstore, newsstand, and soda fountain in a taxpayer block in Wollaston," just outside of Boston, Massachusetts. In order to attract more customers and resurrect the business, Johnson hit upon the idea of "manufacturing ice cream with a butterfat content far exceeding the product's legal minimum." This sweet treat immediately appealed to the "Prohibition-induced sweet tooth of his

[6] Liebs, 196.

neighbors."[7] He then began to open a few ocean-side stands and made a large profit on the summer crowds. On one fateful trip to the Cape Cod seashore, Johnson revolutionized his thinking about his customer base. He opened his first restaurant in Orleans, along the arm of Cape Cod and a popular destination for travelers from Boston. By 1935, he owned a small handful of operations along the Massachusetts coast. (Images 17-18)

In 1935, Johnson began to permit agents to set up their own buildings "according to the general specifications and standards of the parent company."[8] Warren J. Belasco writes in his article, "Toward a Culinary Common Denominator; The Rise of Howard Johnson's 1925-1940," that "like the mass-produced diner, every Johnson restaurant was carefully designed by company architects for maximum kitchen efficiency." Efficiency was a central tenant and Johnson oversaw almost every part of the company. "The company 'Bible' detailed every procedure, from frying potatoes to cleaning washrooms. Undercover inspectors reported violations directly to the main office." According to Belasco, franchising allowed Johnson "to expand his system rapidly without having to finance every new restaurant" while his "central office furnished the architects, the managerial expertise, all the supplies, and the advertising and market research."[9] Not only did the Johnson parent company provide restaurant management expertise but also standardized food products, such as ice cream. "He kept an ever-watchful eye on [his

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[7] Liebs, 199.
[8] Ibid., 200.
[9] Warren Belasco, "Toward a Culinary Common Denominator: The Rise of Howard Johnson's 1925-1940," *Journal of American Culture* 2 (Fall 1979): 513.


**Image 17:**
**Howard Johnson's first store, Wollaston, MA**
*(The Hanlon Family of Nahant, http://www.nahant.com)*


**Image 18:**
**Howard Johnson's first franchise, 1935, Orleans, MA**
*(The Hanlon Family of Nahant, http://www.nahant.com)*

agents] as well, assessing how well they kept his standards, which were crucial to the success of the chain." Johnson's business strategy solidified.[10]

Johnson built "an empire of roadside restaurants, with more than 125 units (only about a third of them company owned) stretching from Maine to Florida doing a gross annual business of fourteen million dollars a year" by the beginning of the 1940s.[11] Johnson's biggest coup was to secure the rest-stop contract for the first American superhighway, the Pennsylvania Turnpike. At these rest stops, he presented an image of home, using multi-paned windows and classical details to attract travelers along the highway. The turnpike would play host to thousands of people before, during, and after World War II. Some wartime travelers took Johnson's idea and turned it into their own local version during the 1950s.[12] This cultural diffusion of ideas was one of the major reasons why the idea of standardized quick-service restaurants spread so quickly.

Johnson would eventually merge the ideals of quick-service diners and sit-down meals into his restaurants. He had a "dining area with a homey tearoom ambience where wholesome-looking waitresses dressed in prim uniforms provided service." On the other side of the building, he had a "counter rimmed with stools where customers could order hot dogs, ice cream, and other simple, fast fare." This two-part restaurant allowed one-stop eating for the entire family.[13]

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[10] Liebs, 200.
[11] Ibid.
[12] Ibid.
[13] Ibid., 202.

He also mixed a classic home look in his residential-styled buildings, using cupolas, low hipped roofs, clapboards, or even, in the case of the Pennsylvania Turnpike, stone construction, often with the garish color of orange for the roofs. This was similar to what Pure Oil was doing with their Tudor-esque stations with bright blue roofs. "The entire ensemble functioned as a beacon of traditional values, yet at the same time managed enough flash to catch the attention of the passing motorist."[14] Uniquely, Howard Johnson's restaurants before the 1950s were not truly standardized. Retaining common elements, they played on different themes. A full staff of architects worked with the agents to design appropriate buildings. Furthermore, "agents could select a variety of individual details as long as the basic formula of white clapboards, orange tile roof, and cupola remained inviolate."[15] (Image 19)

During the 1950s, standardization became more important than ideals of "home" in the design and operation of Howard Johnson restaurants. The company expanded into motel building and added restaurants to the hotel service. By the mid-1950s the company operated or franchised upwards of 500 shops, with and without motels. Company designs became more stylistically Modern in appearance with the cupola a "fantastic mutation of its former colonial self, abstracted into a turquoise pyramid rising from a stack of ray-gun-like fins."[16] Unfortunately, Howard Johnson's restaurants are on the wane. Sold to a British company in the late seventies, Howard Johnson's restaurants are

[14] Ibid.
[15] Ibid., 203.
[16] Ibid.

**Image 19:**
**Howard Johnson "colonial style" restaurant, Williamstown, MA**
*(Debra Jane Seltzer, http://www.roadsidenut.com)*

**Image 20:**
**Howard Johnson "modern style" restaurant, Springfield, VT**
*(Debra Jane Seltzer, http://www.roadsidenut.com)*

down to less than a dozen stores. During 2005, many Howard Johnson fans kept a death watch on the last remaining stores in America.[17] (Image 20)

Today, the quick-service family restaurant has both kept its traditional roots and mutated into the "concept restaurant." Places like Friendly's in the East or Shoney's in the South still maintain much of the character that Howard Johnson innovated. However, restaurants like TGI Friday's or Ground Round take "various themes or concepts" to create "distinctive 'place experience" symbolized by layout and décor" and to attract "consumers of distinctive lifestyles."[18] John Jakle observes that "places are created to appeal to specific appetites defined not only in terms of food, but also in terms of environment." Personal experience can attest to the fact that these places draw homogenous crowds all seeking the same experience. In places like Applebee's, walls covered in antiques and waiters with identical uniforms are directed to apply pins and buttons to distinguish themselves from each other.[19] Rainforest Café's and Bugaboo Creek's push the limits of food as the setting for entertainment.

***Quick Service Lunchrooms and Diners***

Born out of the industrial landscapes of the early twentieth century, the second path started as little more than street curb kitchens. Often called "beaneries, greasy spoons, and stool lunches," they provided an alternative to meals in the lunch-pail.

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[17] Clarke Canfield, "Howard Johnson's restaurants ride into the twilight," *Boston Globe*, 12 May 2005.

[18] Jakle, *Fast Food*, 277.

[19] Applebee's slogan is the "neighborhood bar and grill," seeking to provide a community meeting place and to convert our cultural expectations of a "bar and grill."

Cafeterias catered to office workers whom had begun to join the factory worker at the quick-service restaurant. Owners of delis and pharmacies soon installed "lunch counters over which a combination cook-and-server supplied food to customers, sitting on a long row of stools."[20] Luncheonettes followed these successful developments. Owners took empty storefronts, "installed a counter along one wall and some tables along others," and thereby created a new restaurant type.[21]

The lunchrooms were "small and often cramped shops, too utilitarian to enter the national folklore; they possessed neither the romance of the soda fountain nor the proletarian charm of the diner."[22] Yet, the important part of the lunchroom was the refining of serving space and further development of efficient service. Operators would tinker with the layout of the counter, the organization of the kitchen, and the production of the food. This experimentation was crucial to the development of the quick-service lunchroom.

Following the lunchroom – and paralleled by the diner – came the "White Castle" building. Historians of the quick-service lunchroom consider the mass-produced White Castle building, and its various knock-off competitors, such as White Tower and Krystal, as the most significant development in the history of the fast food restaurant in the first

[20] Liebs, 194.
[21] Ibid., 195.
[22] Langdon, 9.

half of the twentieth century. Only the indoor walk-up type of store would surpass them in impact on the modern landscape.[23]

In Wichita, Kansas, Walter Anderson, a short order cook, was working diligently on developing a hamburger that would be more appealing to the American public. Anderson knew people "distrusted the typical short-order hamburger because they suspected its thick meat patty had been padded with gristle and bad or old beef."[24] "The secret," Langdon observed, "lay in flattening the meat into thin patties and then searing them on both sides to seal in the natural juices."[25] He used "only good beef in uniform-size patties, cooking them on griddles for prescribed cooking times." Anderson took the simple idea of flattening a patty on the griddle and adding onions to it and turned that into a standardized process. This standardization produced a consistent quality for a quick product. White Castle produced a standard product through standardized operation, a critical development for the future of quick service lunchrooms.[26]

Anderson and his new business partner Edgar "Billy" Ingram, a former insurance salesman, began to open several shops around the Wichita area during the early 1920s. They named it White Castle because, as Liebs quotes Ingram, "'White' signifies purity and 'Castle' represents strength, permanence and stability.'" Therefore, the design was a white painted, concrete building with crenellated parapets and a corner tower. They

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[23] For more information on the history and development of White Castle, see David Gerad Hogan's *Selling 'Em by the Sack: White Castle and the Creation of American Food* (New York: New York University Press, 1997).

[24] Liebs, 207.

[25] Langdon, 29.

[26] Liebs, 207.

constructed them of "blocks with a rough, rocklike face - rusticated concrete" and began to use a "chunky imitation of the crenellations found on castles" and towards the back "a crenellated turret."[27] "The tiny, castle-like design adapted easily to a variety of sites, cost relatively little to build, and served as an instant advertisement and drawing card for the chain."[28] (Image 21)

The buildings were small ten-foot by fifteen-foot boxes with a single counter and five stools. However, "not an inch was wasted, even on the griddle; the patties and buns were square to utilize the entire cooking surface!"[29] The company used porcelain-enamel on the exterior of the building, eventually designing a building that was moveable and made of porcelain-enameled steel panels, which would earn the buildings and the company the name "porcelain palace."[30] White Castle was borrowing heavily from the diner in building production ideas since pre-fabricated porcelain enamel diners had been in production for several years. (Image 22)

Langdon quotes from a 1932 brochure by White Castle that states "even the men who serve you are guided by the standards of precision which have been thought out from beginning to end. They dress alike; they are motivated by the same principles of courtesy."[31] Photographs of the ideal employee were available to waiters and grill men and served as a type of checklist, including such things as "Be prepared to speak

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[27] Langdon., 29.
[28] Liebs, 207.
[29] Ibid., 33.
[30] Ibid., 33.
[31] Ibid., 30.

**Image 21:**
**White Castle Restaurant, Indianapolis, IN**
*(Aaron Marcavitch, http://www.marcavitch.com)*


**Image 22:**
**Interior, White Tower restaurant, Baltimore, MD**
*(Debra Jane Seltzer, http://www.roadsidenut.com)*

pleasantly," "Brush teeth," or even "No flashy jewelry."[32] This attention to employee dress and cleanliness was a habit of the industry that would set the standard for fast food restaurants.

White Castle was the first major innovator in the standardization of fast food image. Often located in inner-city empty lots near manufacturing centers, White Castle set up a common style to be copied throughout the United States. People from around the country borrowed its design and modes of operation. Paul Hirschorn and Steven Izenour, in *White Towers*, write that "locations near large factories were desirable, particularly when the factory worked more than one shift," and that "location along major transit lines was equally desirable, especially at major transit interchanges or points of cross traffic." White Tower was a direct competitor and copied many of the White Castle tricks.[33] (Image 23)

Created at nearly the same time, the diner can be considered the first roadside restaurant type. Diners – shaped like a railroad car – capitalized on the railroad's demise. Originally, diners were geographically centered in the manufacturing city of Worcester, Massachusetts, home to the Worcester Lunch Car Company. However, in the years following World War I, diners would find a new home in New Jersey and throughout the United States – limited only to the ability to ship the diner cheaply. Built like dining cars for the railroad with wheels or loaded on flatbed trailers for transport to their site, they had standardized interiors for "turn-key service." New owners could simply show up,

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[32] Ibid., 32.

[33] Paul Hirschorn and Steven Izenour, *White Towers* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1979), 4.

unlock the doors, and begin cooking. A small business owner needed little knowledge of how to develop a restaurant and could focus on the cooking. Diners provided a quick income producer for many of America's small town businesspeople and returning war veterans.[34] (Image 24)

Designers arranged diners for the most efficient use of space. Usually a lunch counter with several stools stood along the far wall. Grills would be behind the counter or in a separate "kitchen box." Eventually booths would be developed, originally to draw women, who in their skirts did not appreciate sitting at stools. Jukeboxes would be placed at the ends of the diner or, later in their development, at the booth. Waitresses would be able to move from the table to the kitchen with a minimal amount of movement. (Image 25)

Unfortunately, their major drawback for the traveler was the unpredictability of diners, in both food and service. Andrew Hurley wrote in *Diners, Bowling Alleys, and Trailer Parks: Chasing the American Dream in the Postwar Consumer Culture* that diners were unable to stave off the inherent benefits of the standardized roadside eatery:

> Most importantly, franchising endured a degree of reliability and consistency that eluded the diner industry. As prefabricated structures, diners were standardized to a certain extent. They were certainly the defining mass-produced restaurants of their era, and much of their popularity can be attributed to the mental associations that issued forth from a distinctive architectural design. The motorist who passed a stainless-steel diner along the roadside had a fair notion of what he or she would find on the inside…But the motorist who passed a Howard

[34] Jakle, *Fast Food*, 37; and Daniel Viveiros. "The Rise and Fall of American Diners, 1920-1960," (Ph. D. diss., Salve Regina University, 2000).

> Johnson's or McDonald's had an even clearer idea and ran a smaller risk of being unpleasantly surprised by the food, service, or premises.[35]

Yet, there is something about the romance of a diner that other standardized quick-service restaurants could not create. Jakle writes

> The diner came to symbolize a kind of commonplace theater…The cook juggled orders at the grill, performing a kind of ballet. Waitresses scurried to refill coffee cups when not delivering plates or cleaning away dishes. The smell of coffee and frying bacon permeated the air. At the counter sat business proprietors, construction workers, clerks, and truck drivers – a cross section of America, the nation's democratic ideals apparently validated. [36]

Diners and White Castle (and its imitators) moved into a battle of fast food.[37] Diners struggled to standardize their image and food styles. White Castle, Langdon explains, "was the first extensive restaurant organization to have a completely uniform architectural image."[38] This uniformity was essential to break from the unpredictability of the diner and the lunchroom.

Today, diners are enjoying a resurgence, thanks in large part to a renewed interest by "baby-boomers." Their interest in all things retro have fueled the development of new diners, such as Park Diner's in Pittsburgh or Dave's Diner in Middleboro, Massachusetts. (Image 26) White Castle and the various quick-service lunchrooms have suffered a downfall, labeled in much the same way diners were, with the stigma of uncleanness and

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[35] Andrew Hurley, *Diners, Bowling Alleys, and Trailer Parks: Chasing the American Dream in the Postwar Consumer Culture* (New York: Basic Books, 2001), 99-100.

[36] Jakle, *Fast Food*, 37.

[37] Eventually the diner would move to the highways, starting a trend of fast food on the highway. White Castle, again, would soon follow diners.

[38] Langdon, 30.


**Image 23:**
**White Tower Restaurant, Milwaukee, WI**
*(Wisconsin Historical Society, http://www.wisconsinhistory.org)*


**Image 24:**
**Rosebud Diner, Somerville, MA**
*(Aaron Marcavitch, http://www.marcavitch.com)*

**Image 25:**
**Interior, Jigger's Diner, East Greenwich, RI**
*(Debra Jane Seltzer, http://www.roadsidenut.com)*


**Image 26:**
**Park Diner (part of Eat & Park chain), Pittsburgh, PA**
*(Aaron Marcavitch, http://www.marcavitch.com)*

inconsistent food. Most of the major quick-service lunchrooms instead opted to appropriate the image of the next path, the quick-service food stand.

### *Quick Service Food Stands*

Alongside the development of the family restaurant and the quick-service lunchroom came what Chester Liebs calls the "food stand." Jakle and Sculle refer to this type of structure as a walk-up. Either name implies a simple shack-like building developed from a ramshackle kitchen serving roadside fare – often with mysterious, low-grade meats. It took a fusion of Howard Johnson's ideals and the quick griddle of the diner and lunchroom, along with nearly thirty years of incubation, to create the style of restaurant most commonly known today as McDonald's.

Jakle and Sculle write, "as automobile ownership increased to embrace even the lower middle class, the market for 'road food' grew, inviting contexts for roadside eating less pretentious than the tea room."[39] Tearooms, small roadside eateries innovated by local women and businesspeople to service travelers, were often fancier style buildings with ornate, or at least cozy, décor. The new food stands were generally "rectangular one-story, wood-frame shed[s]" with simple counters for taking food and little decoration.[40]

Not only was the architecture low brow, but the food at these stands was often substandard. "Free of the scrutiny of health inspectors and mindful of the transience of the typical 'eat and run,' one-time customer, owners of roadside stands were often

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[39] Jakle, *Fast Food*, 42.

tempted to offer substandard cuisine and poor sanitation."[41] Of course, owners also took a great deal of liberty with the design of these places. They used every style from simple box shapes to ice cream cone shapes to donut shapes.[42] Some developed simple home styles to demonstrate their relationship with quick service, family restaurants. However, "roadside meal stops constantly endured a barrage of criticism for their unprepossessing, ramshackle appearance."[43]

Following World War II, fast food restaurants became more popular. The need for family-focused food eateries, especially in the suburbs, was critical. No longer were people willing to go downtown to restaurants or to grimy diners. They were seeking a place for the whole family, a place they could drive to that was cheap and safe. Drive-in style restaurants, served by attendants, often females on roller skates, were beginning to become popular. Usually designed with large parking lots and plenty of places to "hang-out," drive-ins discouraged many families from patronizing them since large gaggles of teenagers patronized the businesses. (Image 27)

As costs went up for hiring more attendants, roadside food operators stripped the drive-in to its essential parts. Customers would walk up to a window, order, and eat in their car or at picnic tables. "Many buildings were prefabricated steel-frame structure covered with glass and porcelain enamel." Jakle and Sculle found that "restaurants were geared to rapid, large-scale sandwich, drink, and dessert production. Electric frying vats

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[40] Ibid.
[41] Liebs, 204.
[42] Jakle, *Fast Food*, 43.
[43] Liebs, 206.

and grills, and automated ice cream, shake and drink machines, as well as cup and plate dispensers, were all arranged to effect assembly-line production." [44]

These drive-ins and walk-ups were becoming quite common in the first part of the 1950s. In California, considered the birthplace of the roadside food stand, the McDonald brothers were building a small drive-in restaurant. They served the common foods of the time, hamburgers, French fries, and milkshakes. In 1954, Ray Kroc, a milkshake machine salesman, made a deal with the McDonald brothers to purchase their name and their services. He transported the ideas back with him to Chicago and established the first McDonald's. All other innovators that followed would strive to achieve the same amount of success as McDonald's. The importance of McDonald's is so critical to the development of the fast food restaurant that a later case study will investigate this company in depth.

After McDonald's initial success, food type after food type became a standardized recipe matching or simulating McDonald's model. The architecture of the restaurant matched beat for beat for McDonald's developments – including prefabrication and garish but not offensive colors. (Image 28) The training of new employees was often taken from the training guides of McDonald's. However, industry innovations did not come from McDonald's, a relatively conservative corporation, but from other industry sources. The most critical innovation is the drive-through (or drive-thru) window.

Developed in the early 1950s, the same time as McDonald's was taking off, "Jack in the Box" owner Robert Petersen developed the drive-thru concept. He refined the idea

[44] Jakle, *Fast Food*, 57.


**Image 27:**
**301 Drive In Restaurant, Florence, SC**
*(Debra Jane Seltzer, http://www.roadsidenut.com)*


**Image 28:**
**Burger King, Murfreesboro, TN**
*(Aaron Marcavitch, http://www.marcavitch.com)*

and tested several ideas to create the most efficient use of the speaker and window. Jack in the Box's testing would lead to Burger King adopting the windows. However, shortly after beginning their use, Burger King stopped using them because research showed that the windows implied a place to move thorough quickly, not a place to sit and eat. Furthermore, the staff would often ignore the customers inside to serve the drive-thru window, frustrating the customers.[45] Not until the 1970s did company's return to the drive-thru. Wendy's owner Dave Thomas began using them at his facilities during the early 1970s. The windows saved Wendy's early start-up capital because less space was needed for parking and the sit-down areas. Specific crews and registers were dedicated to the windows which speeded service and customers used them in droves. Even McDonald's recognized the need for drive-thru windows and began using them in the 1980s.[46]

The history of fast food is marked by refinements and new foods constantly tried on the American public. Fast food branched out into pizza, tacos, and other ethnic foods. The product has been changing but not the standardized architecture, service, or icons. Today's innovators tend to segment a splintered field of architectural images. While the quick-service restaurant has developed the concept restaurant and the diner is experiencing a resurgence, the quick-service food stand has stagnated in its design. Only because companies are seeking innovative "shells" in which to fit their systems are designs gravitating towards historic buildings, downtown locations, and alternate designs.

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[45] Langdon, 104-105.
[46] Ibid., 144.

***Place-Product-Packaging of Fast Food Restaurants***

The standardization of fast food restaurants is evident in four specific areas: uniforms and image, service and training, the product, and of course, the architecture. No major monograph or article has been written on the history or development of the first three elements, and nothing has begun to synthesize the four areas. Only the company manuals provide some insight into the operations of these places and these manuals are not easily obtainable by the public. On-site observation, however, provides valuable insight into how companies combine these four elements for success.

Training and uniforms are the most basic part of the standardization process. First, by establishing good workers who will generally abide by the rules and standards that are established, the restaurant has begun the process of indoctrinating the employee. Fred Harvey's restaurants used only girls recruited from the East Coast and had them stay in dormitories together. White Castle only recruited young men and made specific rules regarding their looks. McDonald's and many others followed suit, often first hiring men. "Though not spelled out in [McDonald's training] manual, an unwritten rule during McDonald's first decade prohibited the hiring of women in the stores."[47] In quick-service restaurants, such as Pizza Hut, employees were required to wear common uniform shirts with the choice of pant in the color black. Employees could use a company T-shirt to alternate between the standard shirts with collars. Waiters and waitresses would be required to wear pins indicating the specials for the month. Drivers were permitted to

[47] John Love, *McDonald's: Behind the Arches* (New York: Bantam Books, 1986), 142.

wear company hats. Other fast food operations tend to have very similar patterns for uniform, with concept restaurants pushing the range of pins and standardized "flair."[48]

Service is the second tenant of the standardized fast food restaurant. Employees are required to provide a smile and cheery demeanor, but to do it quickly. Jakle writes that "as Ford is believed to have mechanized automobile manufacture, so Kroc is thought to have put hamburger-making on assembly lines. Time and motion studies at McDonald's did produce a system capable of delivering a hamburger, fries, and shake every 50 seconds."[49] In the example of Pizza Hut, employees had a script from which to practice for phone-orders. Drivers had to deliver food within a set period or a discount was required. In all cases, service was friendly but practical. Chatting with friends or family could result in dismissal.[50]

The product in the fast food restaurant is the important element of the place-product-packaging. Most restaurants build their menus around a simple set of choices, limiting what you can order. They provide sufficient amounts to make a customer think they have a choice, such as Burger King's assertion that "Have it Your Way." However, the customer is often limited to what they can request and the range is often quite small. Food production is made simple for the employees. In Pizza Hut, employees use photographs on laminated sheets. They use pre-prepared racks of dough and vegetables. McDonald's has a production line that is critical to the creation of each element of food.

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[48] Personal Observations made at Pizza Hut, Waynesburg, Pennsylvania, summer 1997 while as a driver for the period of three months.

[49] Jakle, *Fast Food*, 57-58.

[50] Personal Observations made at Pizza Hut, Waynesburg, Pennsylvania, summer 1997.

Taco Bell uses images and cues to remind employees on the proper construction techniques. Food is severely limited in its production techniques.[51]

Hamburgers and french fries are core products for most restaurants, but McDonald's developed a revolution with their "Chicken McNuggets," eventually selling enough to become the biggest chicken retailer in the world.[52] These minor revolutions in the types of food available at a fast food restaurant are often painfully slow in development. Furthermore, development often comes from the independent franchisers, such as the McDonald's franchiser at Uniontown, Pennsylvania, who invented the Big Mac.[53] In Pizza Hut, there was the opportunity for local franchisees to offer specialty foods, such as a "taco pizza." Today, many retailers are following the diet and food trends in the marketplace and responding with more salads and low-fat foods. Subway has built an entire market on the production of standardized submarine sandwiches that are promoted as healthy.

The standardization of the architecture through signage, layout, and overall design is actually a very accurate version of form following function. Finding faster and faster methods of serving foods has created a design that most efficiently routes customers through the door, to the food, and back out the door. Interiors are to be pleasant, but not overly warm. Seats are generally comfortable, but will become uncomfortable after short periods. Playgrounds are often included to serve parents, acknowledging the family connection to most restaurants. They are not so overly thrilling as to captivate children,

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[51] Personal Observations by author made at various food eateries.
[52] Love, 345.
[53] Ibid., 295.

requiring long stays, but they attract children back to the restaurant again and again. Signage is often flashy, big, and effective. Only local zoning and historic district regulations have created signage that is outside the normal design specifications. Parking layouts allow for quick entry and quick exit. The drive-thru window is positioned to provide access from both short and tall cars. Clear, understandable lettering with pictures provides quick comprehension of the menu. [54]

McDonald's, as stated earlier, is the major innovator of standardized architecture, service, and icons in the industry. They have a particular hold over modern tastes and expectations for standardized products. Therefore, a deeper case study of their methods is necessary to have a complete picture of the development of PPP in fast food restaurants.

***McDonalds: A Case Study***

The first McDonald's was a standard sized drive-in in Southern California. Ray Kroc, the eventual owner, wrote that it was "a smallish octagonal building, a very humble sort of structure situated on a corner lot about 200 feet square."[55] Operated by the McDonald brothers, who had moved there from New Hampshire, this operation came to Kroc's attention because it required so many milkshake mixers. When they ordered eight mixers for their store from a company called Multimixer, which were sold by Kroc, he flew out with the order from his home base in Chicago to observe the business first-hand.

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[54] Liebs, 212-216.

[55] Ray Kroc, *Grinding it Out* (Chicago: Henry Regnery Company, 1977), 6.

Kroc watched the stand come to life from across the street. He writes in his memoir that "I parked my car and watched the helpers begin to show up – all men, dressed in spiffy white shirts and trousers and white paper hats." He then watched them start to move supplies into the small building from a shed in the back of the property. Kroc remembers that "they trundled four-wheeled carts loaded with sacks of potatoes, cartons of meat, cases of milk and soft drinks, and boxes of buns into the octagonal building." He was amazed with the steady flow of arrivals. "Then the cars began to arrive, and the lines started to form. Soon the parking lot was full and people were marching up to the windows and back to their cars with bags full of hamburgers."[56] Kroc writes that the customers commented on the quick service, the high quality, and the cleanliness of the operation. (Image 29)

Mac and Dick McDonald, the owners, met with Kroc that first day to discuss their operation. Kroc noted that "each step in producing the limited menu was stripped down to its essence and accomplished with a minimum of effort. They sold hamburgers and cheeseburgers only. The burgers were a tenth of a pound of meat; all fried the same way, for fifteen cents. You got a slice of cheese on it for four cents more. Soft drinks were ten cents, sixteen-ounce shakes were twenty cents, and coffee was a nickel." The brothers were also looking at expanding and constructing a new building. During the first meeting, Kroc and the brothers went over to the architect who was working on the new design for the company. Kroc writes that the building was "red and white with touches of yellow, and had snazzy looking oversized windows. It had some improved serving

[56] Ibid., 6-7.

area features over those being used in the McDonald's octagonal structure." Kroc was most impressed with the use of images of arches. The first design had "a set of arches that went right through the roof. There was a tall sign out front with arches that had neon tubes lighting the underside."[57]

Later Kroc, recounting the setbacks for the company, wrote how the brothers had designed their operation. The McDonald brothers had a tennis court on their land and invited their manager to come layout the most optimal operation. They drew out "the whole floor plan with chalk, actual size, like a giant hopscotch." The men had it all ready for the architect to come copy the plan. "That night there was a terrific rainstorm in San Bernardino, and every chalk mark on that tennis court was washed away."[58]

Kroc spent the evening and the next day pondering the functions and production that the McDonald brothers used for making their food. He scrutinized the making of hamburgers, shakes, and especially the french fries. Finally, after watching for another day, he sat with the brothers and suggested opening a "series of units" based on this original plan. The brothers, while not completely convinced initially, finally relented and agreed to sign a contract with Kroc to open new stores. [59]

The new contract stipulated that Kroc had franchise rights throughout the United States, except Arizona and California. He received "1.9 percent of the gross sales from franchisees" and the brothers got .5 percent of that remainder. [60] However, all of the new buildings had to have the name McDonald's and had to conform to the design that the

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[57] Ibid., 8-9.
[58] Ibid., 90.
[59] Ibid., 11.

brothers had recently created. Kroc could also charge $950 for a franchisee fee to cover his expenses for "finding a suitable location and a landlord who would be willing to build to our specifications."[61]

Kroc built the first example of the new McDonald's in Des Plaines, Illinois, on a lot near his commute to Chicago, where he was currently operating another business. However, this first building immediately ran into problems. Kroc explains that the original design "was designed for a semi-desert location. It was on a slab, no basement, and it had a swamp cooler on the roof."[62] Therefore, the first of Kroc's buildings was built with a basement for a furnace and storage. This storage area would eventually be significant to the building's use. The first store opened on April 15, 1955. (Image 30)

Early architectural problems included the use of ventilation. Kroc writes that he "brought in architectural consultants one after another in an attempt to solve the problem of exhausting the stale air and replacing it with fresh cool or heated air." His problem was "that the fans for the griddle and fry vats would exhaust all the heat the furnace was putting out and continually blow out the pilot light."[63] In the summer, Kroc wrestled with the reverse problem. The inside temperature would fluctuate between extremes.

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[60] Ibid., 67.
[61] Ibid., 68.
[62] Ibid., 69.
[63] Ibid., 71.


**Image 29:**
**First McDonald's Restaurant, San Bernardino, CA**
*(McDonald's Corporation, http://media.mcdonalds.com)*


**Image 30:**
**McDonald's #1, Des Plaines, IL**
*(Debra Jane Seltzer, http://www.roadsidenut.com)*

One of the most phenomenal inventions in the standardizing process was to discover how to deal with the french fry. Kroc tried several times to create the same fries that he had tasted at the McDonald's main restaurant. However, every time he made them they came out either mushy or bland. After discussions with the "Potato and Onion Association," he discovered that the McDonald brothers had been storing the potatoes in chicken wire bins which were a natural curing method. Kroc worked the method until he began air drying the potatoes in the originally unplanned basement and blanching them to infuse them with oils. Eventually Kroc developed the standardized French fry that is one of the most desired fast foods in America.[64]

Kroc followed Holiday Inn and the gasoline franchisers by using his leverage as the head franchiser to obtain low cost supplies. He writes that "the corporation was not going to get involved in being a supplier for its operators." He felt that could not treat the franchisee as a partner and a customer without short changing the franchisee. This method of internal diversification appears to be a critical element for those developing place-product-packaging.[65]

Kroc also worked for a clean family image. He decided early on to ban "pay telephones, juke boxes, no vending machines of any kind." He also suggested that crime families ran vending services, a relationship which he wanted to avoid.[66] Throughout his early development, he constantly returned to the idea of a clean operation (even going as far as to mop the floors himself) that was dedicated to family. This focus, one that

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[64] Ibid., 72-73.
[65] Ibid., 79-80.
[66] Ibid., 80.

gasoline stations and motels also adopted, meant that the structures had to be unobtrusive and express themselves in the simplest way. Structures were intended to be background, not showy stages.

Kroc was also working on ways to standardize the training of employees and the preparation of food.

> Our aim, of course, was to insure repeat business based on the system's reputation rather than on the quality of a single store or operator. This would require a continuing program of educating and assisting operators and a constant review of their performance. It would also require a full-time program of research and development. I knew in my bones that the key to uniformity would be in our ability to provide techniques of preparation that operators would accept because they were superior to methods they could dream up themselves.[67]

Kroc worked diligently refining his process. He and his staff worked to encourage local bakers, growers, and meat producers to make it their way or they would take their buying power elsewhere. The purchasing agreements also balanced each other inside the process. A set number of patties and a set number of buns were worked together so that in the end they would come out even. If they did not, then the store operator could see that there was something missing. This attention to small details which shaved seconds off of the process of food preparation made the standardization of McDonald's service and product a national model.[68]

Even Kroc's hamburger patties and their design had a high level of attention paid to them. Each patty was exactly 19 percent fat and the "grinding methods, freezing

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[67] Ibid.
[68] Ibid., 94.

techniques, and surface conformation" were all controlled tightly. Kroc acknowledged the contribution that White Castle made to his understanding of food.

McDonald's continued to grow throughout the 1950s and 1960s. One place where the company image was dull was in California, the home of the original McDonald's. One of Kroc's assistants suggested a television advertising campaign be launched to attract the new and growing market. Kroc writes that the "advertising campaign we put together was a smash hit. It turned Californians into our parking lots as though blindfolds had been removed from their eyes." He goes on to say that the experience "was a big lesson for me in the effectiveness of television."[69] Eventually Kroc would launch Ronald McDonald and sponsor the first Superbowl.[70] The company formed the Operators National Advertising Fund to "launch into national television." The fund is "supported by a voluntary contribution of one percent of gross sales by licensees and company stores that belong to the program." Kroc quips that "what small businessman wouldn't cheerfully give up one percent of his gross to get our kind of commercials…to promote his store?" Advertising was run by Paul Schrage who helped form the image of Ronald McDonald. Kroc notes that "a great deal of study had gone into creating the appearance and personality of Ronald McDonald, right down to the color and texture of his wig."[71]

Research and Development, along with the company's new Hamburger University in Oak Brook, Illinois, enhanced the company's commitment to place-

[69] Ibid., 131.
[70] Ibid., 142.
[71] Ibid., 152.

product-packaging. The engineers in the R&D office were able to make a computer that would time the blanching of the French fries, so that the consistency was equal across all of the operations. At Hamburger University, managers learned the "gospel of Quality, Service, Cleanliness, and Value." Kroc held "eight to ten two-week session a year" with an "average of twenty-five or thirty students."[72]

By late 1963, McDonald's counted over 640 stores around the country. Kroc decided to divide the country into regions. Each region would have a regional manager. McDonald's corporation started with the establishment of the West Coast Region. Having regions enabled the company to segment its operations and focus more precisely on markets.[73]

In 1966, the company realized it had begun to outgrow its red-and-white buildings. Kroc writes that 'there also appeared to be a movement among our customers away from the idea of eating in their cars."[74] In July 1966, the first restaurant with indoor seating debuted in Huntsville, Alabama. "It was pretty primitive compared to the kind of seating we have now – a narrow counter with stools and a couple or three small tables – but it was a big step forward."[75]

One of Kroc's employees, Luigi Salvaneschi – a former Latin professor – was always pushing for better architecture and better design. Kroc put him in charge of real estate for the California area. Salvaneschi told Kroc that "California is setting the trend

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[72] Ibid., 131.
[73] Ibid., 136.
[74] Ibid., 142.
[75] Ibid., 143.

for the rest of the country in community planning…How can we go into these towns and propose to put up these slant-roof buildings, which are absolute eyesores."[76] Kroc remembers that he would often toss Salvaneschi out of his office when he discussed aesthetics, but Kroc was coming around to the idea of changing the look.

Finally in 1963, Kroc approved a new architectural image, a brick and mansard roofed design. Kroc writes that "it's worth noting that after this new style was adopted and had spread across the country it became the object of much serious discussion in architectural classes." Kroc remembered writers of the time commenting "as the taste of the average consumer becomes more sophisticated, pressures are generated which might transform the visual and psychological energy of the American commercial strip into a cultural asset." Kroc admitted that "it was a drastic change in the image we'd established in which we had a big investment."[77]

*Progressive Architecture*, in a 1978 discussion of McDonald's architecture, noted that "while the first McDonald's reinforced an ideology of America on the move, of time as a valuable commodity, the second prototype, of 1963, showed a drastic change." McDonald's, the magazine states, developed "a secure, conservative, attractive environment housed in a traditional brick building." This essentially created the appearance of "a safe, stable, permanent home that was not too pretentious or daring, but safe and quaint."[78]

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[76] Ibid.
[77] Ibid., 161.
[78] David Morton, "McDonald's," *Progressive Architecture* 59 (June 1978), 65.

The *Progressive Architecture* article is significant because McDonald's design had reached a point where it was recognized as "architecture." However, its vernacular design had few elements that are "articulated to create enhancement and sensuality," but the mass-produced elements that are used "have become instantly recognizable and symbolically rich to millions of American, thereby satisfying their caprices."[79]

Interestingly, the *Progressive Architecture* essay gave valuable insight into how the decisions are made about McDonald's architecture.

> First, demographic and psychographic data are gathered and analyzed; then, ideas and concepts are discussed by corporate executives and translated into possible physical form by the corporate architects. It is in the design feedback phase, however, that McDonald's deviates from established architectural methodology. The corporation constructs life-size mock-ups of both buildings and signage, which are scrutinized as to "felt" rightness or wrongness, and then modified until they are right.[80]

The article also provided a glimpse into how standardized roadside architecture is largely functional in its design. The double-hip roof, for example "was originally designed in such a manner for the purpose of hiding kitchen air-handling equipment." Furthermore, the roof overhang "was originally determined by the Butler steel joist detailing employed." Even more telling is the use of the entrance of the building by the side "paralleled in the suburban home, which, except in special occasions, is usually entered from a side or back door."[81]

After the major overhaul of the architecture, McDonald's began to align the company with various changes. By "increasing minority hiring, and organizing a

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[79] Ibid., 65.
[80] Ibid.
[81] Ibid., 66.

program to bring in qualified black and women operators," Kroc noted, "we also have made energy consumption in our stores more efficient than in the average home for preparing equivalent meals."[82] Also during this period McDonald's broke ground into the breakfast business with the introduction of the Egg McMuffin, invented in Santa Barbara in 1972.[83]

With the "product," hamburgers and fries, the "place," the candy-striped walk-ups (and later the brown and beige mansard-roofed buildings), and the "package," a national advertising campaign, McDonald's became the leader in the fast food industry. Others would follow. Pizza Hut specialized in pizza, Long John Silvers' produced fish, Arby's led the production of roast beef, and Kentucky Fried Chicken pushed southern fried chicken. The standardization of their architecture, the standardization of their products, and the standardization of their advertising echoed McDonald's pioneering work.

[82] Kroc, 158.
[83] Ibid., 164-165.

# CHAPTER FOUR

# MOTELS: INNOVATORS OF PACKAGING

The motel is the roadside's truest form of packaging both place and product together. Motels are the roadside element most related to vacationing and leisure, which points to one major reason why standardized motel development did not occur until after the Second World War. The increased post-war mobility of the middle class hastened the further development of the tourism industry and the motel.

After driving all day, weary American travelers sought refuge for the night. They sought something that reminded them of home and provided protection against the elements. Two words, motor and hotel, were combined to produce the word "motel." Both words are descriptive of the aims of the motel, both to have a place of lodging for travelers, and to serve those who are arriving by motor car. Throughout the twentieth century, operators used a range of different terms for the motel: motor court, tourist courts, cabins, cottages, tour-o-tel, or villages.

Most important for a motel is its orientation to the highway. They are not large and typically lack formal spaces, such as ballrooms and lobbies. They are not designed for destination travel. However, as happened with other roadside elements, motel

operators eventually defied this definition with the creation of the roadside hotel, epitomized in the 1980s by such new chains as Hampton Inn and Residence Inn. The motel had returned full circle back to its hotel form, albeit a newer watered-down form designed for efficiency.[1]

***History of the Motel***

The roadside precursors of the modern motel were small inns, taverns, roadside lodges, and camps. During the American turnpike period, wayside taverns and inns served food and offered lodging, though it was lodging only in the widest definition of that word. These places provided a basic form of sleeping – occasionally shared – and common sleeping rooms for all except the most important guest. Other travelers had to sleep in homes or small campsites along the road.

Railroads brought with them a new form of lodging. Instead of businesspeople setting up random taverns along a pathway, railroads demanded centralized lodging at their stops. "The downtown hotel, with its easy access to the railroad station, had long been indispensable to train travelers."[2] Many hotels were constructed as city center additions with some sort of dining parlor to entice traveling salesmen (or drummers as they were known) to stay in their city. These hotels were generally more than three stories, had stone or brick facades, and had adequate space for sleeping. Some hotels

[1] Jakle, *The Motel in America*, 18-19.
[2] Liebs, 169.

began to expand into large edifices with penthouses, dance halls, banquet rooms, giant lobbies, and the staff to suit. Most also had the prices to match this expanding size.[3]

As the century turned over, few operators adapted their hotels for automobile travelers. "When guests arrived by automobile in the years before World War I, their vehicles were shunted off to distant livery stables or storage garages."[4] Of course, these people had to step into a grand lobby, often covered with the grime of their recent travel. Unfortunately, for the road traveler "parading through dingy commercial-house lobbies was not always a pleasant prospect."[5] Therefore, more and more travelers began to find ways to avoid these hotels. "[A]utoists began to exercise the new freedom to stop the car and get out of any place along the route that had been lacking in railroad travel. They brought camping gear, found an attractive spot along the roadside at day's end, pitched a tent, lit a fire, and then slept in their own makeshift camp."[6] As John Jakle points outs, "money that might have been spent on accommodations could be spent on gasoline and longer trips."[7] The only real options for travelers throughout the first decade of the twentieth century consisted of hotels or roadside camping.[8]

When the 1920s dawned, travelers often rejected the downtown hotel because they "were difficult to reach, especially during the evening rush hour." Furthermore, "hotels…charged high prices for rooms kept deliberately small in order to reduce

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[3] Jakle, *The Motel in America,* 29.
[4] Ibid., 23.
[5] Liebs,169.
[6] Ibid., 170.
[7] Jakle, *The Motel in America,* 33.
[8] Belasco's *Americans on the Road* covers the early years of camping quite comprehensively, but does not cover modern motels as completely.

construction and operating costs."[9] However, as more travelers camped on the roadside, landowners became frustrated by the constant mess strewn across their property. "Landowners began to object to the litter; pollution; destruction of crops, fences, and foliage; and invasion of privacy that inevitable resulted from the unregulated use of the roadside for free accommodation. Soon barbed wire and "no trespassing" signs greeted campers at favorite overnight spots."[10]

Towns began to step into the rising roadside camping craze. They offered municipal camps near town, usually free, with toilets, showers, water and firewood. Some had commissaries where provisions were available. A few commissaries, such as a massive one along the Lincoln Highway in Denver, included "a lunchroom, a laundry, and a large playground for children."[11] If campers stayed nearby, they would use the local restaurants and stores. Communities around the country soon were building municipal tourist camps where visitors stayed and contributed to the local economy.[12]

Travelers, though, took advantage of this municipal generosity. Lingering for months, out of work campers "moved slowly from campground to campground."[13] Municipal campgrounds became associated too often with unsavory individuals. Middle-class tourists moved on, avoiding the hordes that had settled into these camps. "Many of these fears and apprehensions were grounded solely in class prejudices," noted Chester

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[9] Ibid., 26.
[10] Liebs, 170 and Belasco, 74-75
[11] Jakle, *The Motel in America,* 33.
[12] Belasco, 76-78.
[13] Jakle, *The Motel in America,* 33-34.

Liebs.[14] Towns found the easiest method to keep transients out was to charge a nightly fee. Private competition then found its "foot in the door" to making money on these travelers. They offered better services at a lower price and began the first major steps in the development of the motel.

Auto camps and tourist courts were the first incarnations of what would become the motel. Auto camps are the private version of the municipal campgrounds for motorists. Jakle states that "fireplaces, picnic tables, coin operated stoves in community kitchens, electrical outlets, electrical lighting, tent floors, and even tents were provided."[15] Competition heated up between operators and camps began to add new amenities. "Discovering that travelers were willing to pay additional money for more permanent yet completely private accommodations, owners began providing cabins for rent as an alternative to tent sites."[16] This was the next step, from auto camp to cabin camp. (Image 31)

Cabins were generally small one-room buildings, often with a parking spot in front or a small covered carport on the side. Furnished with rustic décor, cabins offered basic amenities like a "simple iron bed with straw stuffed mattress, a few benches, a table, a water pitcher and bowl, and perhaps a coin operated gas plate." Cabins "were more watertight, resistant to wind and storms, and slightly more like a hotel room, yet they offered the privacy and inexpensiveness of a tent."[17] Cabin camps grew slowly from

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[14] Liebs, 172 and Belasco, 106-121.
[15] Jakle, *The Motel in America,* 34.
[16] Liebs 173-174 and Belasco, 131.
[17] Ibid.

the auto camps, which were disorganized affairs, to a more organized design. Owners would form small clusters of cabins; many were joined by a carport, creating a continuous row of buildings. Cabin camps began to be the first standardized images on the roadside. Companies offered prefabricated kits to owners. "Popular magazines, farm journals, and other trade publications regularly carried plans showing how to erect simple cabins."[18] *Popular Mechanics*, a haven for tinkers and gadget lovers, offered easy-to-assemble kits, most of which could be delivered to your doorstep in pieces. Even more significant was a need to arrange these buildings properly. Planning had to include an "obvious pathway leading from highway to office to cabin-side parking place."[19] Owners "formed state and regional trade associations in order to share information and to set specific standards for operations. These standards had definite building implication. A rather restricted design vocabulary developed." Cabin sizes and shapes were standardized boxes with simple gable roofs. Construction materials were common wood types, with standard window and door types. Site layouts were usually L-, U- or half-circle shapes. Operators turned to standardization so that within trade organizations a motel would look like a motel is expected to look.[20] Yet, this standardization signaled a point where place-product-packaging of motels was starting to make inroads into the industry. (Image 32)

The amount of cabin courts grew drastically, integrating the development of the tourist court. Travelers were on the road more often. As the Great Depression overtook

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[18] Jakle, *The Motel in America,* 36-39.
[19] Liebs, 175.
[20] Jakle, *The Motel in America,* 39.


**Image 31:**
**Tourist Camp and Picnic Grounds, Lake City, MN**
*(Andrew Wood, San Jose State University, http://www.motelamericana.com)*

**Image 32:**
**Blue Anchor Cabins, Poland, NY**
*(Debra Jane Seltzer, http://www.roadsidenut.com)*

America, people used their cars as escapes from the problems of the world. Court owners took liberal advantage of this increased mobility. "The Federal Housing Administration also aided the business by liberalizing its regulations in the mid-1930s to permit the financing of cottages under two thousand dollars with no down payment."[21] These were moneymaking ventures in the middle of the Great Depression, due in large part to the transient population, rather than tourist groups.

*Fortune* magazine discussed the cabin court in an article entitled "The Great American Roadside." The author observed "you find a small, clean room, perhaps ten by twelve. Typically, its furniture is a double bed – a sign may have told you it is a Simmons, with Beautyrest mattress – a table, two kitchen chairs, a small mirror, a row of hooks. In one corner a washbasin with cold running water; in another, the half-opened door to a toilet." He added that "inside you have just what you need for a night's rest, neither more nor less. And you have it with a privacy your hotel could not furnish – for this night this house is your own."[22] The cabin court was the first tentative steps toward the anonymity travelers now take for granted.

Following the development of the small cabin type of motel was the tourist or cottage court. The term court "better defined the little hamlet of cabins, and it connoted enclosure and safety – a respectable enclave." The use of the word court signifies that the property contained a defined central open space with organized buildings, rather than an open plot of land with randomly located cabins. In rural areas "U-shaped, crescent

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[21] Liebs, 179.

[22] "The Great American Roadside" *Fortune* 10 (September 1934). http://xroads. virginia.edu/ ~MA02/amacker/roadscape/fortune_1.html

shaped, or inline rows parallel to the road" were the most desirable because they were visible, yet provided privacy. In more urban areas, straight or L-shaped courts, perpendicular to the road, were often favored.[23] Designed to look like little suburban homes, court buildings often had "rugs, dressing tables and bureaus, radios, and the like."[24] Some even had attached garages. Most significantly, a tourist court distinguished itself from cabin camps by the inclusion of private bathrooms, as opposed to the common bathrooms in cabin camps, and usually some sort of storage space. They were easy and cheap to build. By the late 1930's, "construction cost averaged from $1,100 to $1,500 for a unit 12 feet by 14 feet and a bath 6 feet by 9 feet – wood frame, tile roof, and no basement. The average size of an operation was then 20 units, small enough to remain a man and wife operation with one or two maids added on days of full occupancy."[25] (Images 33-34)

With the central court, the evolution of the motel quickly turned to the motor court. In as little as two decades the motel went from simple auto camp to formalized motel. Tourist courts grew dense around the central court and owners integrated buildings, creating one facade with individual rooflines. The motor court refined this look by integrating the roofline pattern of cottage, garage, and cottage into one building. Some included "coffee shops or restaurants as part of an integrated complex."[26] The interior was similar to the tourist court buildings, with a simple bed, a bureau, and a table.

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[23] Liebs, 175.

[24] Jakle, *The Motel in America,* 43.

[25] George Podd and John Lesure, *Planning and Operating Motels and Motor Hotels* (New York: Aherns Book Company, 1964), 32.

[26] Jakle, *The Motel in America*, 43.

Motor courts tended to have a pool located in its center and a restaurant as part of the complex. The main door to each of the rooms was on the outside of the motel near a parking lot, while a patio door was located on the court.[27] Motor court owners eventually jettisoned the attached garage in favor of a large paved parking area. (Images 35-36)

The motel, therefore, was essentially a motor court without the garage. Some early motel operators would reject the U-shape, which centered on a parking lot, and instead focus on an internal court that held family activity areas. These amenities became increasingly attractive in the "Baby Boom." Motels would have pools or other recreational facilities, restaurants, or even dining rooms and meeting rooms, none of which was necessarily a central attraction. The registration desk would be a small lobby. Rooms would have bathrooms, usually with a vanity and separate toilet.

After World War II and the end of gasoline rationing, the nation's traveling public returned to the road, and "the gradual gains that had been made by motor courts in luring business from hotels…now turned into a rout."[28] This boom within a decade was intense. "Motel construction boomed in the late 1950s and 1960s, and by 1964 there were at least 61,000 motels in the country."[29] This increase in growth signaled the next change for roadside motels. The focus had changed from service and offering a quick, cheap room to making money and standardized design.

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[27] Ibid., 45.
[28] Liebs, 182.
[29] Jakle, *The Motel in America,* 45.

**Image 33:**
**Star-Gables Motor Court, Harrisonburg, VA**
*(Debra Jane Seltzer, http://www.roadsidenut.com)*


**Image 34:**
**Rock Village Court, Springfield, MO**
*(Andrew Wood, San Jose State University, http://www.motelamericana.com)*


**Image 35:**
**Sky Top Motel, Dover, NJ**
*(Debra Jane Seltzer, http://www.roadsidenut.com)*

**Image 36:**
**Motel Murfreesboro, Murfreesboro, TN**
*(Aaron Marcavitch, http://www.marcavitch.com)*

Jakle, Sculle, and Rogers write that the revised 1954 tax code caused much of this growth. The motel business was:

> characterized by higher cash flow than most other types of real estate investment, thus interest and principal on loans could be easily amortized…Banks and insurance companies looked favorably on motel investments and required small cash down payments. Such leverage produced higher rates of cash return on initial investments, enabling investors to gain more appreciated value when motels were sold.[30]

However, beyond increasing new construction, the tax code also "tended to limit the life expectancy of motel buildings, thus precipitating short-term ownership and cyclical renovation and modernization." Depreciation was accelerated through the early part of the ownership cycle and after about ten years the purchaser got out of the game, took their long-term capital gains, and started on a new motel project. The tax code did not reward owners with investing maintenance and repair, thus "buildings deteriorated until a change in ownership brought renovation, often embracing the latest fads and fashions in construction and styling." This tax code also encouraged people to buy old motels and fix them up to earn quick cash, while it also "encouraged builders to put up junky, flimsy buildings and to otherwise foster impermanence on the roadside. In 1960 the average life span of a motel building was calculated to be only nine years."[31]

This major swing in motel production signaled something more. "The small businessman dominated the motel industry until the 1950s, when motor-inn construction began to require vast capital outlays."[32] Although the businessperson could get the

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[30] Ibid.
[31] Ibid., 45-47.
[32] Ibid., 49.

money to construct a motel, most banks sought assurances through motel chain affiliations. Chains, such as Holiday Inn, began to provide the stable brand image that the industry had been seeking. These new corporations also brought "substantial regimentation to motel architecture. Not only did motels have to look like motels where expected to look, but ideally, motels within a given chain should look alike."[33] Companies pushed local franchisees to use standard designs, which were larger sprawling buildings, commonly called motor inns and later highway hotels.

Podd and Lesure's book about motel management even suggested that franchised chains were a better method for the person seeking entry into the field.

> Franchise organizations offer to the motor hotel field the advantages of their national reputation, the successful merchandising of a tested pattern of establishment and services and the advantages of direct affiliation…These organizations assist in the selection and development of the site, have basic plans and requirements for construction and furnishing as well as for operation, accounting and control. Uniformity of design for easy recognition and identification is stressed and each has its own entrance sign, emblem and slogan, providing the advantages of a brand name or trademark in advertising, sales promotion, referral and advance registration programs.[34]

These major companies were the forces behind development of the highway hotel, or the stacked motel, designed for maximizing usage in a small lot. Using modular rooms stacked sometimes as high as six or seven stories, major chains pushed for bigger, cheaper, and quicker. The highway hotel provided many of the amenities of a downtown hotel, while offering cheap rooms and services. Motel operators toed the line between hotels and motels as close as possible without crossing the line back to hotel. Podd and

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[33] Ibid., 51.
[34] Podd and Lesure, 221.

Lesure wrote that "because of higher land costs and limited lot size within the city limits," these new "'horizontal hotels' or 'vertical hotels'" could barely be differentiated between motor hotels and conventional hotels. The term "highway hotel" was no longer descriptive of the motels in or near the center of town."[35] The chains that had formed from these earlier motel groups owned or franchised most highway hotels and could provide the level of standardization unable to be provided by small business people.

Modern motel development was driven not by the need, but "the profit incentive focused on the construction activity itself." Investors bought into motels because they could get leverage. "Cash flow tended to be greater for motels than for other businesses similar in size, making leverage easier."[36] For many operators, "a relatively small cash down payment produced a relatively high rate of cash return on the initial investment." However, "under the 1954 tax code, 67 percent of the cost of constructing a motel could be written off in five years by the so-called double declining-balance method."[37] This boom lasted up until the mid-1980s. "[T]he Tax Reform Act of 1986 substantially decreased the attractiveness of motel investment by eliminating the investment tax credit, lengthening the depreciation period from 19 to 31.5 years, restricting deductive passive losses, lowering individual tax rates, and raising taxes on capital gains."[38] This meant that during the 1990s the motel industry slumped considerably. Motels are still found abandoned on the side of the road, jettisoned as the economy changed.

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[35] Ibid., 8.
[36] Jakle, *The Motel in America,* 52.
[37] Ibid., 54
[38] Ibid., 54

***Place-Product-Packaging of Motels***

Typically, PPP is what the motel-goer does not notice. The exterior architecture should blend into the background, but not so much that the whole building disappears. Service and the room, acting as the product, are unobtrusive as possible, while still being comfortable and welcoming. The room should be like your bedroom at home, but not as individualized. The service, outside of the front desk staff, should be largely invisible. Once you check in with a representative, you often have no additional contact with the staff, except perhaps to request room service. Corporate icons should vaguely stick with you. Many remember the Holiday Inn "Great Sign," but most do not recognize the Red Roof corporate image. Rather than impressing upon the traveler strong feelings, the motel seeks to provide a person with as little to remember as possible.

Motel rooms serve as the nexus between the patron and the place-product-packaging of the motel. The room is the visible symbol of "product" for the motel. Therefore, careful attention is to be paid to the design and construction of the room. Podd and Lesure write that, "serious consideration should be given to standardization of room sizes. A limited number of standard room types can be incorporated more easily in the layout than rooms with a wide variety of specification. Standardization further offers distinct advantages in construction costs."[39]

Interior designers took great pains to create a hotel room that could be replicated easily across many different places and not alienate guests. They chose colors to be

[39] Podd and Lesure, 79.

vibrant but not garish. They placed art on the walls designed to evoke certain responses. They located lighting to be easily accessible from the bed. Televisions, attached to the stand, were located at well-orchestrated distances. Beds became increasingly more comfortable, in response to an increased desire for luxury. Usually large sliding doors would open onto a balcony or deck, even if it was a view of the parking lot. Roadside motel rooms generally had a large glass window facing the sea of cars and scattered parking lot landscaping. Podd and Lesure noted that "most noticeable is the trend toward more living space, which has extended the function of the guest room considerably. Thus it is now a place for relaxation as well as rest, providing space for reading, writing, and visiting."[40] One of the most interesting indicators of standardized layout is when Podd and Lesure write, "in deciding the length and width of the guest room one should keep in mind that there are standard measurements for carpeting. If wall-to-wall carpet is planned it is advisable to design room dimensions to conform to these standard widths."[41] They found that standard rooms were 9 x 12 x 13.5 feet, a small space indeed.

Bathrooms provided needed amenities: sinks, showers, and a toilet. However, the reach for a roll of toilet paper, a towel, or even a bit of tissue paper was never too far. Buckets for ice, from down the hall, were always provided. Hairdryers and irons became standard features as more women and families become part of the motel clientele. Most rooms now provide suit presses and coffee machines for the modern business traveler

[40] Ibid., 48.
[41] Ibid., 110.

Podd and Lesure also perceived shared spaces in motels and hotels as crucial image-making elements. In recreational areas "a pool does add much to the atmosphere of leisure and has become to an extent a "status symbol" for motels. Shuffleboard, putting greens, a children's playground, and similar facilities are also common recreation features of motels." They also observed that shopping was becoming a common element in modern motels. "Most common are the cigar, news and gift counters often found in the lobby area of the motel. Many motels also have barber, beauty, drug, haberdashery, dress and gift shops on the premises."[42] Podd and Lesure, in discussing about the common practice of adding a restaurant, believed that these eating places should only "contain as a minimum the number of seats that might be required for breakfast service at normal room occupancy. A rough rule would be one seat for two guest spaces."[43] Exteriors and entryways were important for setting first impressions: "Considerable attention should be paid to creating an inviting atmosphere from the start, with special emphasis on the appearance of building exteriors, signs and landscaping."[44]

***Holiday Inn: A Case Study***

Born in Memphis, Tennessee, Kemmons Wilson was an early entrepreneur, owning a popcorn stand, a pinball concession around Memphis, 110 cigarette machines, a Wurlitzer phonograph dealership, and eleven movie theaters all before he was in his twenties. As he developed networks with local businessmen, he began to build a name

[42] Ibid., 48.
[43] Ibid., 82. The authors also include a large section on pages 131-149 about the various methods for laying out a restaurant in a motel.
[44] Ibid.

for himself. However, it was the construction of his mother's home in Memphis that changed the course of his entrepreneurial skills. He began to build houses, buying the lot and building the home cheaply and selling it for more than the construction cost. Many in the Memphis area admired his speculative skills in real estate. Eventually, Wilson built so many houses that he bought his own lumber yard so that he could purchase at wholesale rates. He diversified even further, by becoming a realtor and buying up properties during the 1930s. He would soon buy up "more than $4 million worth of property in Memphis."[45]

After serving in World War II, Wilson returned to Memphis and again plunged into homebuilding. One of his key tactics was to sell slightly larger houses than the normal homebuilder would construct. Wilson found that by building slightly larger he could sell them for more, but not increase his costs significantly for construction. He also was one of the first local homebuilders to equip houses with air conditioning.[46]

However, it was a rare vacation to Washington D.C. in 1951 that changed the course of Kemmons Wilson's life and brought him the idea of Holiday Inn. Kerr and Wilson wrote that "if he had been like most 38-year-old family men at the time, he would have already had endured enough vacations to take for granted the reality of such trips. He might well have regarded shoddy accommodations and extra charges for children as inevitable circumstances – not the opportunity of a lifetime."[47] Wilson was frustrated from the lack of places to stay that were cheap enough for his large family of five

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[45] Kemmons Wilson with Robert Kerr, *Half Luck and Half Brains: The Kemmons Wilson, Holiday Inn Story* (Nashville, TN: Hambleton-Hill Publishing, 1996), 29.

[46] Ibid., 37.

children, Wilson wrote that "I told Dorothy, 'I'm going to go home and build a chain of motels that will never charge for children as long as they stay in the same room as their parents.'" Wilson estimated that it would be a chain of about 400 motels. At that time the *Wall Street Journal* estimated only about 20,000 roadside lodging accommodations in the United States, and a chain of 400 motels was certainly not considered.[48]

Wilson felt that the motels of the time were generally "too often hot, dirty, noisy and cramped." Furthermore, he found few onsite restaurants and even fewer that served good quality food. The trip solidified his interest in providing motels that would appeal to children, as their "happiness was the key to satisfied parents." He recognized the need for an onsite restaurant to cater to tired travelers, too weary to find a place to eat with the family.[49]

Along the way Wilson measured rooms and eventually developed a method for determining the "ideal dimensions for efficiency and comfort," a formula that was still in use forty years later. Wilson concluded that the rooms should be "12 feet by 18 feet, not counting the bathroom. That would provide space for two double beds and the chairs and other furniture, and still have open area to move about the room easily." [50] During World War II troops filled most rooms, but afterward the "transportation industry was changing, and the hotel-motel business was ripe for development."[51] Wilson conjectured that the

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[47] Ibid., 44-45.
[48] Ibid., 46-47.
[49] Ibid., 47-48.
[50] Ibid., 49.
[51] Kemmons Wilson, "The Holiday Inn Story," Remarks given to Newcomen Society Meeting, Memphis, TN, 1968.

downtown hotels were falling out of favor due to their location and price. However, Wilson's observation only matched a national phenomenon that had been underway for some time.[52]

He built his first motel, a 120-unit version, on the land in front of his own lumberyard at 4941 Summer Avenue. Financing was hard to come by for a design that was three times larger than the common size motel. Wilson, though, had a deep network of friends and contacts through which he was able to work out the financing at an insurance company that provided the money after construction. He then could turn around and ask for the money for construction from a traditional bank knowing that the money was going to come in after the construction.[53] (Image 37)

The "Great Sign" was designed at the same time as the first motel. Using his knowledge of movie theaters, Wilson understood the importance of drawing in customers through the use of a marquee or flashy sign. Eventually the image would be "reproduced on Holiday Inn napkins, placemats, coasters, matchbooks, plastic bags, postcards, clocks and even laundry bags." The company even developed a department that was "devoted specifically to the care and promotion of the Great Sign, assigned to supervise and maintain rigid standards for all uses of its image."[54]

Wilson stressed the need for rooms that were well lit and well ventilated.[55] His own mother decorated his first fifty Holiday Inns, since she had spent much of her time decorating the apartments that he built. "The new hotels lobby had walls of hunter green,

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[52] Wilson, *Half Luck and Half Brains* 51.
[53] Ibid., 51-52.
[54] Ibid., 53.

with chartreuse draperies and furniture upholstered in Chinese red. In guest rooms, some 30 different color schemes were employed, meaning no one look would be duplicated in more than four or five rooms." [56]

The spirit of the project took hold quickly. "In the September 1952 full-page newspaper ad in which he announced the open house for the first Holiday Inn, he listed the sites for his next three: Highway 51 South, promised to open the next month; and Highway 61 South and Highway 51 North, both scheduled to open in 1953."[57] Wilson made deals and connections with others in town to attract business to the hotel. He worked out a deal with the airlines at Memphis airport to send people over to the hotel in bad weather. He put full-page ads in the newspapers with other companies paying for their own "ad within an ad" in which he thanked them for their work.

These deals, however, did not bring in the income Wilson needed to build the rest of his 400 motels. He teamed up with a fellow house builder, Wallace Johnson, to create the basis for his 400 hotel idea.[58] Johnson was similar in many ways to Wilson; the same "rags to riches" story of growing up; the same ability to network and politic; and the same ability to take bold moves for earning a buck.[59] Johnson was vice-president of the National Home Builders Association. "If I could get all the big homebuilders that were members of the Homebuilders Association to built one in their hometown," Wilson thought, "I could get 400 real quick." In exchange for working the deal, Wilson granted

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[55] Wilson, "The Holiday Inn Story."
[56] Wilson, *Half Luck and Half Brains,* 54.
[57] Ibid., 55.
[58] Ibid., 56.
[59] Ibid., 58-60.

Johnson half interest in the Holiday Inn idea. Johnson and Wilson never worked out the legalities, but relied on a handshake.[60]

Using his knowledge of the homebuilders association, Wilson and Johnson soon started to call their friends and acquaintances to make some connections and push forward the idea of a franchised set of motels. Wilson intended his 400 motels to have "a national reservation system and marketing program for all the hotels." He sold each of the homebuilders the plans and a license, thereby creating one of the first motel franchise systems. Interestingly, Wilson seemed to barely have any idea that this had been happening in gasoline station companies for years or in restaurants nearly simultaneously. Wilson was too occupied with his own work to have done much of the market research on these similar groups. Therefore, one of the most significant producers of place-product-packaging was barely aware it existed.[61]

The first Holiday Inn franchisee opened its doors in Clarksdale, Mississippi, in 1954. Franchise rights had been bought for $500 with a nickel royalty on each room used. Franchisees paid their own costs for construction.[62] Surprisingly the homebuilders were largely content with their own work and only three took up the offer to build a Holiday Inn. Most did not recognize the ability to make money from the franchise system. Wilson writes that "Lucky, we didn't sell too many at that price, or we never

[60] Ibid., 62.
[61] Ibid., 62-63.
[62] Ibid., 63.

could have done it. Even if they built a 120-room hotel, that would only be $6 a night in royalties."[63]

Wilson began to offer better package deals designed for those who might not know how to build, but had the capital. Wilson built some Holiday Inns, the company supervised others. "Holiday Inn began offering franchisees a turn-key package in which their new inn could be completely furnished and provided with a trained manager as part of the franchise deal." Wilson even began to offer land specialists for surveying sites and recommending building types. The company could provide architects, mortgage brokers, interior designers, trainers, and accountants for each franchisee.[64]

Most of the early Holiday Inns were opened in the South or Mid-West: Alabama, Oklahoma, Texas, and Kansas. As the franchisees grew they began to appear in places like South Carolina, Nevada, Florida, Georgia, Arizona, and even a foray into Pennsylvania. As promised, Wilson provided each motel with a pool, air-conditioned rooms, and soft-drink and ice machines. Motels were constructed on the edges of towns, providing the traveler the ability to "relax outside their rooms on pleasant evenings and enjoy the peace and quiet."[65]

In 1956, only four years after the first Holiday Inn opened, Wilson and Johnson hired lawyer Bill Walton as the chief operating officer. They asked him to help fix more of the legal woes caused by the "simple handshake" that had been used by most of the franchisees. Wilson writes that he asked Walton to "put some meat on the bones of this

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[63] Ibid., 64.
[64] Ibid.
[65] Ibid., 64-65.

naked franchise…we want to protect the name Holiday Inn. We want to set up a franchise system. And we want a corporation that can go public."[66]

After a conversation with the Coca-Cola Company, Walton figured out that the Holiday Inn idea had already established a unique package. Walton, quoted in *Half Luck and Half Brains*, said that "Those standardized, special services became 'the meat on the bones of that 'naked franchise.'" The "Great Sign" was copyrighted and franchise agreements were written so that owners could not deviate from the standard plan. Walton wrote an operating manual and created the standardized training system. *No Vacancy* signs were eliminated and hotel clerks were instructed to find patrons room anywhere if there were no rooms available at that Holiday Inn.[67]

Clyde Dixon, hired in 1956, founded the Innkeepers Supply Company and ran the products division providing soaps, towels, and other necessary elements. Warren Andrews, Dixon's assistant, ran the Merchants Supply Company, which provided all the restaurant supplies. This idea was the use of Wilson's lumberyard in the early days taken to the Holiday Inn company level.[68] Operations were acquired to supply the company and its franchisees "all at reduced prices through volume purchasing and specialized know-how."[69] Subsidiaries that Holiday Inn owned included Institutional Mart of America for supplies, Holiday Woodcraft for counters and cases, Modern Plastics for lamps, Johnson Furniture for stereo and television cabinets, Champion Lighting for

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[66] Ibid., 70.
[67] Ibid., 72-73.
[68] Ibid., 74.
[69] Ibid., 132.

commercial lighting fixtures, and even General Innkeeping Acceptance Corporation for financing.[70]

Holiday Inn also began to target the business customer. They sought conventions to be held at the Inn, welcomed civic groups on the "Great Sign," and asked business travelers to reserve all their travel stops through the reservation network. Wilson noted that the "traveling man is the biggest part of our business in every part of the country except a few resort areas."[71] By the beginning of the sixties, the company expanded nearly fifty units in a year. By 1962, Holiday Inn averaged nearly double that amount. It was in that year that Wilson's target of 400 Holiday Inns opened in Vincennes, Indiana.[72] Inn operators were allowed leeway in architectural matters as long as the result was in compliance with the "Holiday Inn look." Senior Vice President Jack Ladd, who headed the marketing department, suggested that the look was based in "spaciousness and enjoyment without arousing fears of excessive charges." Ideas, such as a log style inn, were rejected. Unlike the strict regulations that fast food restaurants and gas stations had instituted for their franchisees, Holiday Inn relied on a free market method of standardization. "Most early Inns were one- or two-story, concrete-block and brick structures, built in a square or U-shape around the pool."[73] (Image 38)

The chief architect for the chain was Bill Bond who had been hired in 1954, only two years after the first motel had opened. Tom Wells, who had worked as the interior

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[70] Ibid., 133.
[71] Ibid., 78.
[72] Ibid., 79.
[73] Ibid., 80.


**Image 37:**
**First Holiday Inn, Memphis, TN**
*(Andrew Wood, San Jose State University, http://www.motelamericana.com)*


**Image 38:**
**Holiday Inn, Sioux Falls, SD**
*(Andrew Wood, San Jose State University, http://www.motelamericana.com)*

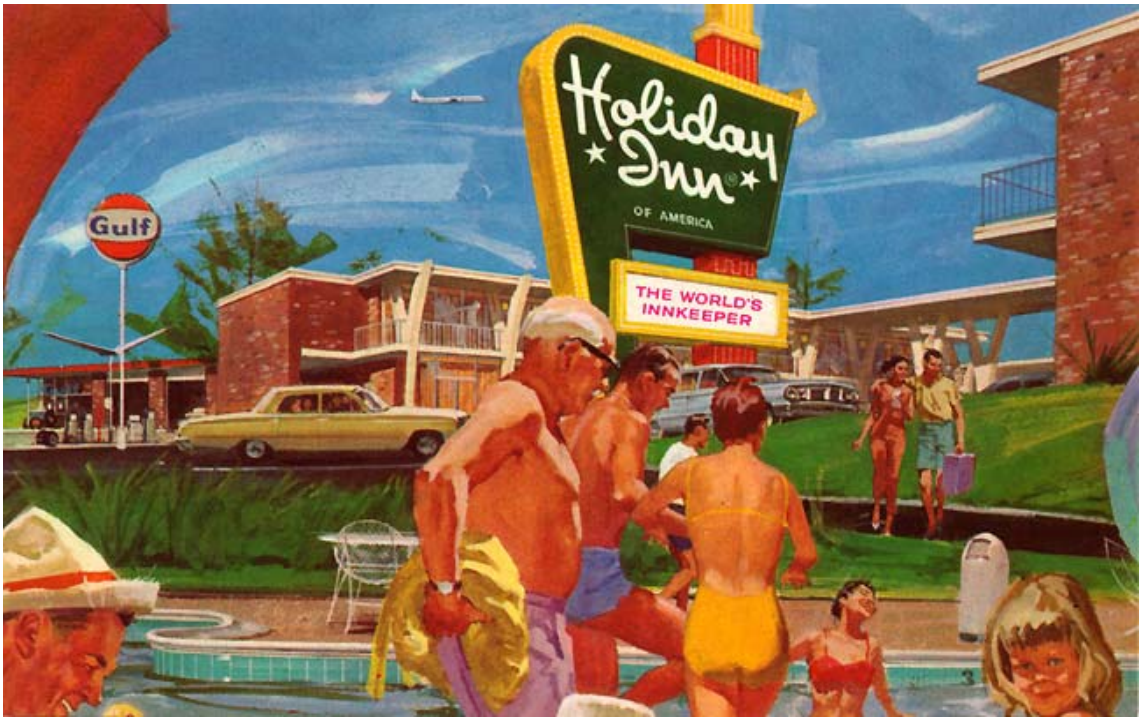


**Image 39:**
**Holiday Inn Advertising Image, circa 1960**
*(Andrew Wood, San Jose State University, http://www.motelamericana.com)*

designer for a Holiday Inn in Montgomery, Alabama, was hired as the chief interior decorator. He told a reporter that "there's too much matching in decorating. We never match anything."[74] However, it was the ability to use simple colors for the standardized look and mix on top of that simple base that made his work so well known.

By 1964, the franchise fees were $10,000. In Podd and Lesure's book on motel management, they write:

> the licensee then plays a royalty of 15 cents per room per night, or 2.5 per cent of gross rentals, whichever is larger. The licensees receive direct advice and assistance on feasibility analysis, basic plans and financing. All units are of similar design, with standard room sizes and appointments specified by the company. All are air-conditioned, offer swimming pools and other recreational facilities, restaurants and meeting rooms.[75]

Wilson's legendary attention to detail held his company above others in the motel industry at the time. Much in the same way that Pure Oil and McDonald's' advocated a clean and orderly environment, Holiday Inn was dedicated to keeping their image as squeaky clean as possible. Wilson asserted that "every inn is inspected at least quarterly, by a rotating staff of Innkeeping School graduates." This inspection was "based on 300 different factors" and if the hotel did not pass inspection "the franchise-holder is warned to improve in 30 days."[76] Furthermore, "managers who failed inspection and failed to correct problems could be fired. In serious cases, the franchise could be revoked." This was a similar method that gas stations and fast food restaurants used to ensure that their image was not tarnished by a franchisee. Holiday Inn inspectors looked for consistency

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[74] Ibid., 81.
[75] Podd and Lesure, 223.
[76] Wilson, "The Holiday Inn Story," 12.

in things like the cleanliness of the bathroom, if the shrubs were trimmed, and if the staff was being courteous to guests.[77]

Holiday Inn developed the Innkeeper's School in Memphis, much in the same way McDonald's developed its Hamburger University, in Oak Brook, Illinois. This program was designed for all franchisees from various levels of experience.[78] It included several weeks of classroom time and two weeks as an intern at a Holiday Inn.[79] In *Half Luck and Half Brains,* Kerr and Wilson writes "trainees would work under simulated, on-the-job conditions. Training-film strips were distributed to inns to teach waitress how to serve meals most pleasantly and to show maids how to make a bed in less than three minutes." There was even a "32-page booklet on how to clean a bathroom." The minutia necessary for standardized service was lengthy. This attention to service, however, was most critical to keep Holiday Inn the "Innkeeper to the world." Service was Holiday Inn's primary product. With the standardized architecture and the standardized service, Holiday Inn could focus on the selling of its image as its packaging. "By the early '60's, each inn was required to contribute 8 cents a room daily to the national advertising campaign, which included buying prominent space regularly in national magazines such as *Time* and *Look,* in national newspapers such as *The Wall Street Journal,* and on television, radio and billboards." Holiday Inn used reciprocal agreements, much as Wilson had done in the early years of the Inn. One example was an agreement with Pan-Am Airlines in which they referred travelers to Holiday Inn and the Inn referred guests to

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[77] Wilson, *Half Luck and Half Brains,* 82.
[78] Wilson, "The Holiday Inn Story", 15.
[79] Ibid., 16.

use Pan-Am. The same method was used with Greyhound buses.[80] The Inn accepted Gulf Oil credit cards for lodging and food, which was a major step in the infant world of credit cards. In return, Gulf Oil was granted rights to build next to many of the Holiday Inns.[81] (Image 39)

Movement during the early 1960s was also made to buy back some of the franchise agreements. Costs were such that the company could make more profit from owning the motels themselves. Holiday Inn only owned about a fifth of its inns while the rest were operated under franchise agreements. The company also sought to build more motels in the commercial centers of cities. In Chicago, Holiday Inn opened a 33-story structure and an 18-story hotel in New York were opened. Some were built in circular shapes, others with revolving restaurants on top. This began the slow return to a style of hotels in the downtown. [82]

In the same stroke of brashness that characterized Wilson's other management methods, Holiday Inn began using computers in 1964, more than a generation before personal computers were common. Up to this point, the Inns had only been calling each other to find out about reservations. Wilson "reached and agreement with IBM to install a system that would allow travelers to instantly make reservations or find out what rooms were available at any Holiday Inn anywhere." The "Holidex" system was brought online with all inns sending information to computers in Memphis. This was, at the time, the

[80] Wilson, *Half Luck and Half Brains,* 82-83.
[81] Ibid., 84.
[82] Ibid., 83.

largest commercial computerized communications system in the world.[83] Patrons requested over 100,000 reservations in 1967. The significance of these systems was that it could advise patrons if a room was available, and if other rooms were open nearby. Therefore, making reservations became streamlined and standardized around the world in a matter of moments. This represented one of the biggest gambles for the company, especially at the price tag of $8 million dollars, secured on the names of the Wilson and Johnson. However, in Wilson's style, it paid off.[84]

"In 1960, Montreal became the site of the first Holiday Inn built outside the United States. In 1963, the company's first off-continent inn was opened in Puerto Rico." The first Holiday Inn in Europe was built in Holland in 1968. Eventually Holiday Inns were built in England, Italy, Germany, Greece, and Portugal. By 1968, the company had opened in South America and the Caribbean. Africa's first Holiday Inn opened in 1969 in Morocco. During the 1970s, the company began to open throughout Australia, Oceana, and Asia.[85] By 1970, the company was grossing a billion dollars a year. With the opening of a Holiday Inn in Anchorage, Alaska, the company had a motel in each of the fifty states. "In 1972, the $5 million Holiday Inn University was dedicated on an 88-acre campus with library, dormitories, study halls and 175,000 square feet of classroom space in Olive Branch, Mississippi."[86]

However, the company was still run like a small family business. Wilson would often pick sites for new Holiday Inns himself. Wilson routinely bought land immediately

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[83] Wilson, "The Holiday Inn Story," 17-18.
[84] Wilson, *Half Luck and Half Brains*, 85.
[85] Ibid., 104.

after seeing it, feeling that land should be "no more than 10 percent of the total cost of the hotel to be built on it." He liked locations that were highly visible, situated on the right-hand side of the road as drivers were heading into a city, and came with extra acreage in case he wanted to expand.[87] He also looked for such things as "traffic flow, surrounding road systems, distance to airports, average income in the area around the site, potential for business development and the strength of any motels in competition nearby." He commonly bought up the land and turned around some of the costs by selling to Gulf Oil, as part of their agreement.[88]

Eventually the company changed course. Wilson resigned in 1979 and was replaced by Roy Winegardner. Winegardner's assistant Mike Rose said "there comes a point in a company's development where it needs a less entrepreneurial style of managing and more of a systems approach as it gets bigger and bigger." This approach meant that the company closed many of the motels and revoked franchises licenses. The company had outgrown itself and had to consolidate to slow the losses.[89] The new leadership replaced the "Great Sign" in 1982 with a small, interior lit, green sign with white lettering. Wilson complained that "now Holiday Inn's sign looks like any old fast-food sign." Rose countered "Nobody stays in a hotel because of the sign, but they might get an image of the hotel if the sign appears dated. And we felt like The Great Sign that Kemmons had put on the first holiday Inn in 1952 spoke of an era that had passed."[90]

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[86] Ibid., 87.
[87] Ibid., 92.
[88] Ibid., 93.
[89] Wilson, *Half Luck and Half Brains*, 152.
[90] Ibid., 153.

The original motel in Memphis was operated until 1973 when it was sold for $720,000 with a policy that it is kept to the same Holiday Inn standards for twenty years. In 1994, the new motel was torn down and the land put up for sale.[91] The first Holiday Inn only has a historic marker to locate it. Owners donated furnishings from one of the guest rooms and one of the "Great Signs" to the Pink Palace Museum in Memphis. The chain was sold to a conglomerate in 1989. However, Holiday Inn remains a major brand name. There are still well over 2,000 Holidays Inns around the world.[92]

Holiday Inn is a strong example of the integration of place, the architecture and room design, and product, the rooms, into a complete package. However, the abandonment of motels in the 1990s signals something more disconcerting for those interested in standardized roadside places. As these properties are abandoned, preservationists and historians need to find a way to save and interpret these places for future generations.

[91] Ibid., 205.
[92] Ibid., 207.

# CHAPTER FIVE

# ROADSIDE PRESERVATION: IS THERE A FUTURE?

The goal of this thesis has not only been to educate and illuminate the idea of the roadside as a cultural artifact, but to provide a useful document about understanding standardized roadside architecture for preservationists. Furthermore, its goal has been to provide a new view on standardized roadside architecture. This chapter, then, will explore methods and techniques for preserving and interpreting elements of place-product-packaging. However, before this exploration can begin, one must understand the question of significance.

## *Questions of Significance*

If we remember what Peirce Lewis wrote about our human landscape and its reflection of our own autobiography, then the truth of the roadside then tells us something about ourselves and our habits as travelers and autoists. The *significance* of the roadside is how it documents modern habits and tastes.

Preservationists and historians must constantly focus on the determination of significance as they explore and understand the built environment and historical artifacts.[1] Deborah Abele and Grady Gammage write that "To preservationists, 'significance' is the critical term of art – the filter through which we exercise professional judgment; the touchstone to justify our battles; the framework for every discussion, every evaluation."[2] Without the question of significance settled, there is little reason to consider any other question.

Bernard Herman, preservationist and architectural historian, writes, "significance, according to National Register guidelines, derives from broad patterns of history, architecture, association with notable persons and events, and the likelihood of yielding additional information. These are criteria rooted in the recognition of context."[3] Context, to extend this definition, is the surrounding buildings, landscapes, and culture which provides a larger frame of reference than a single building can provide. Therefore, what are the criteria for understanding the significance of standardized roadside architecture? What is the context associated with roadside architecture?

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[1] Michael Tomlan, ed. *Preservation of What, For Whom?: A Critical Look at Historical Significance*, (Ithaca, NY: National Council for Preservation Education, 1998). This book is an essential reader on the subject of significance. Although the book does not speak specifically to roadside preservation, it tackles many challenges of preserving elements outside the mainstream.

[2] Deborah Abele and Grady Gammage, "The Shifting Signposts of Significance." In *Preserving the Recent Past II Conference Proceedings*, ed. Deborah Slaton and William Foulks, (Washington D.C.: National Park Service, 2000); available from: http://www.cr.nps.gov/hps/tps/recentpast/signpostarticle.htm.

[3] Bernard Herman, "Fleeting Landscapes and the Challenge for Historic Preservation," *Historic Preservation Forum* 3 (June 1994) available from: http://forum.nthp.org.

Cultural landscapes provide a method of creating context but the establishment of the criteria for standardized roadside architecture's significance is much more difficult. Questions occur more often than answers. Are roadside places important enough to recognize them as parts of our national historical fabric? Should Americans strive to preserve and protect places that are standardized and replicated over the entire roadside landscape? How do we determine which are the best examples of the standardized roadside architecture? If we do seek to preserve these places, do we lower the ultimate worth of the National Register and of historic landmarks in general?

If one assumes that there is worth in preserving these places, then are they to be living, breathing buildings adapted to a new use? Should these buildings be preserved statically, like a museum piece? Do we consider the whole context and preserve it as complete landscape? Alternatively, should we explore options of documentation and demolition, to save its memory if not the actual structure?

Furthermore, as Ray Luce, an expert in the field of recent past preservation, finds that "this conflict over what is significant can be even more complicated if the evaluation of resources pits preservation disciplines against one another."[4] Those seeking to preserve a turn-of-the-century central business district may find the preservation of roadside "intrusions" inappropriate. When the historic preservation field divides internally, the whole movement can break down with infighting.

[4] W. Ray Luce, "Kent State, White Castles, and Subdivisions: Evaluating the Recent Past," *Forum Journal*, 10. (No. 1, 1995). Available from: http://forum.nthp.org.

So with what can one determine significance? Those seeking to understand the preservation of roadside architecture are left with more questions than answers. However, a few National Register nominations provide a bit of insight into where they can begin.

In the nomination for the Wigwam Village No. 2, located in Cave City, Kentucky, authors Claudia Brown and Keith Sculle stated, "Wigwam Village No. 2 is nationally significant as the hallmark of a type of hostelry that developed in direct response to the proliferation of the automobile during the 1930s." The author also lists the use of unique standardized architecture and its link to transportation as elements of significance. The author conclude by noting that:

> knowledge of the history of a creation such as Wigwam Village No. 2 is essential to an understanding of the cultural landscape engendered by the automobile. The enduring popularity of this proto-motel demonstrates that novel commercial concepts merging the product and architectural form continue to capture our imaginations by providing escape from the mundane which has become all too pervasive in our culture.[5]

This indicates that the significance is due to the innovative design, even if the standardized building was one of many parts. In the same way, innovative versions of gas stations, motels, or fast food restaurants can find the same significance. (Image 40)

In the nomination for the Coral Court Motel in St. Louis, Missouri, the author was nominating a building under fifty years old. The author indicates that the building is "a property of exceptional significance" by both being an "outstanding example of Art Deco

[5] Claudia Brown and Keith Sculle, "Wigwam Village No. 2" Cave City, Kentucky. National Register of Historic Places Inventory – Nomination Form, U.S. Department of the Interior, National Park Service, Washington, D.C., January 1988.

**Image 40:**
**Wigwam Village, Cave City, KY**
*(Aaron Marcavitch, http://www.marcavitch.com)*

**Image 41:**
**Coral Court Motel, St. Louis, MO**
*(Shellee Graham, http://www.coralcourt.com)*

or Streamline Moderne architecture" and as the "premier surviving example" of a motel during the period of significance.[6] This demonstrates the level of proof necessary for buildings under fifty years old. The author goes on to indicate that commerce is one of the areas of significance for this building. Therefore, both of these nominations base their significance on architecture, but one is based largely on transportation history while the other bases itself on commerce, or economic, history. (Image 41)

Many modern preservationists acknowledge that these standardized roadside places contain some type of significance, especially if they are like Wigwam Village or Coral Courts which have significance because they are the last of a type. If preservationists are beginning to agree on the significance of roadside elements, then what is the next step for saving and preserving these places?

***Roadside Preservation***

The movement within the past thirty years to understand the roadside as a cultural phenomenon and to identify and interpret historic resources of the roadside has taken on the name of "commercial archaeology," which references the study of above ground objects as cultural and economic indicators of modern commerce.[7] Paralleling traditional

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[6] Esley Hamilton, "Coral Court Motel" St. Louis, Missouri. National Register of Historic Places Inventory – Nomination Form, U.S. Department of the Interior, National Park Service, Washington, D.C., April 1988.

[7] Society for Commercial Archaeology Journal lists the SCA's statement of purpose is to "recognize the unique historical significance of the twentieth century commercial built environment and cultural landscapes of North America. The Society emphasizes the impact of the automobile and the commercial process." Available from http://www.sca-roadside.org

archaeology's use of above and below ground resources to understand the past, this field uses artifacts and resources to understand the built environment. Commercial archaeology seeks to understand, document, and preserve the landscape of buildings used for trade and commerce, specifically those on the roadside and generally within the last 125 years.

Most commercial archaeologists are interested in the roadside from the vantage point of written and visual evidence, but others are seeking better ways to interpret the roadside to the general public. Confronted with a dizzying array of technical challenges, such as the reuse of these buildings, a myriad of public education roadblocks, and the National Register's presumption that most properties should be at least fifty years old, interpreters of the roadside are inventing new ways to understand and interpret the roadside.

The reuse of roadside structures is difficult for most preservationists. Many commercial structures have survived to the present day only because they were serving a purpose. When their purpose has been outlived, new uses must be found. Uses can come in many guises. Roadside gas stations can become visitor's centers, art galleries, and restaurants; motels can become shelters; fast food restaurants have become office spaces.[8] (Images 42-45)

[8] Carole Moore, "Running on Empty," *Preservation Online*, (25 March 2005). Available from: http://www.nationaltrust.org/magazine/archives/arch_story/032404p.htm and Jane Lotter, "Last Chance for Gas," *Preservation Online*, (27 August 2004). Available from: http://www.nationaltrust.org/Magazine/archives/arch_story/082704.htm

**Image 42:**
**Converted Pure Oil Station (Two Guys Subs), Asheville, NC**
*(Debra Jane Seltzer & Rick Weaver, http://www.roadsidenut.com)*


**Image 43:**
**Converted Diner (Enterprise Rent-a-Car), Knoxville, TN**
*(Debra Jane Seltzer, http://www.roadsidenut.com)*


**Image 44:**
**Converted Gas Station (Maney Avenue Market), Murfreesboro, TN**
*(Aaron Marcavitch, http://www.marcavitch.com)*


**Image 45:**
**Converted Fast Food Building (D'Angelos Subs), Shirley, MA**
*(Aaron Marcavitch, http://www.marcavitch.com)*

Although historic preservation is usually cheaper for older buildings than new construction, renovation of modern era structures can be very expensive. There have been advances in replacement materials in the past years but costs for historically accurate materials remains high. H. Ward Jandl emphasizes:

> Enormous challenges…face architectural conservators, engineers, and architects who are beginning to rehabilitate and restore twentieth-century resources; the materials in need of conservation are not only the traditional brick, stone, wood, and iron of yesterday but more complex materials such as plywood, fiberglass, stainless steel, and plastics…How does one preserve twentieth-century materials that may be identified with significant health problems?[9]

Furthermore, a population of lawmakers and laymen who do not understand the inherent worth of such buildings challenges preservationists. Laypeople traditionally have difficulty understanding how vernacular landscapes such as the roadside can be important, especially when it stands in the way of new growth and development. This trend has changed in recent years with the heritage area phenomenon. More work must be done with the lawmakers to make sure they understand roadside preservation.

"Seeing" the roadside is not easy for the professional, let alone the layperson. Richard Striner in *Forum Journal* quotes Catherine Bishir's statement that "Everyday citizens may sometimes view the concerns of preservation professionals, especially the sorts of concerns that are academically derived as nonsensical esoterica, the work of Mandarin elitists who have nothing better to do than to frustrate hard-working citizens

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[9] H. Ward Jandl. "Preserving the Recent Past: An Introduction" *Forum Journal*, 10. (No. 1 1995) Available from: http://forum.nthp.org. More information on 20th century materials can be found in the National Park Service's *Twentieth Century Building Materials: 1900-1950 NPS Reading List* (Washington DC: Department of the Interior, 1993.)

who want to put some vinyl siding on their houses."[10] When a roadside preservationist suggests that the retention of a historic gas station, many are greeted by raised eyebrows and surprised expressions. Proper planning and public discussions are important to the process of roadside preservation, which facilitates the sharing of knowledge. Unfortunately, all too often preservationists are unaware how important the public discourse and education is to the process of roadside preservation.[11] Furthermore, preservationists must take Striner's final comments to the public as much as possible. "Our challenge today is to bring to public focus a truth…the truth that we are very much in the process of history, that we are making the historical process at every moment."[12] Only by bringing history to the people can preservation of the recent past take the next step and become public acceptance.

Critics of the roadside "are appalled by what they see as its tawdry vulgarity, crudity, and lack of aesthetic refinement," while many that champion the roadside see "vitality and flash of historic roadside architecture."[13] The conflict is nothing new for roadside preservation advocates. From the early parts of the twentieth century, when some advocated for the "clean-up" of tacky billboards and unkempt roadside food stands,

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[10] Richard Striner, "Scholarship, Strategy and Activism in Preserving the Recent Past" *Forum Journal*, 10. (No. 1 1995). Available from: http://forum.nthp.org See also John Stilgoe's *Outside Lies Magic.*

[11] Carol D. Shull and Beth L. Savage, "Trends in Recognizing Places for Significance in the Recent Past" *Forum Journal*, 10. (No. 1 1995). Available from: http://forum.nthp.org

[12] Striner.

[13] Daniel Bluestone, "Roadside Blight and the Reform of Commercial Architecture" in Jan Jennings, ed. *Roadside America: The Automobile in Design and Culture* (Ames, Iowa: Iowa State University Press, 1990), 170.

to today with the new anti-sprawl movement, this conflict rages on. Where one preservationist finds interesting elements of the landscape as part of our "unwitting autobiography," another preservationist finds a draining element that has ruined the landscape. Even more complex are those who can feel both aspects have validity and must struggle with strong anti-sprawl feelings coupled with a desire to save historic reminders of that sprawl development.

Another problem with preservation of the roadside is that a main tool of preservation, the National Register of Historic Places, does not generally recognize buildings or landscapes that have been highly altered or that are less than fifty years old. When the National Register was established, only 3 percent of the total resources invoked the Criteria G, the under 50-year rule. Today, that percentage remains the same. As of "January 2003, 2,332 of the nearly 76,000 listings" invoke Criterion G.[14] Just as the burden of proof for the Coral Courts was high, so must many rise to that level of significance. Without recognition as a "historic" building or landscape, many of America's vernacular places disappear to development. The roadside is a classic example of a vernacular landscape that changed constantly and is therefore redefining itself often. Roadside places are inherently designed to have a life span of less than twenty-five years, unlike many residential landscapes or large industrial complexes.[15] Jeanne Lambin and Adrian Scott Fine suggest that roadside (and recent past) advocates "question the 50-year rule" and work to eliminate age restrictions. They write that the 50-year rule is an

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[14] Jeanne Lambin and Adrian Scott Fine, "Rallying Support for Resources from the Recent Past," *Forum Journal*, 18. (No. 4, 2004). Available from: http://forum.nthp.org

[15] Jandl.

"artificial filter, especially because so many significant resources are lost before their 50-year mark."[16]

Often, the likelihood of nomination to the National Register of Historic Places is small for roadside places because they supposedly lack *integrity*. Integrity refers to the "location, design, setting, materials, workmanship, feeling, [and] association" all maintaining a high level of relevance from the past to the present. Therefore if an element has been highly altered, even if it is important to the history of the roadside, it may fail the integrity test.[17]

Without the National Register listing, a property can still obtain protection from local or state registers of historic places. Many times these are more effective than the National Register. However, most states do not recognize properties except those eligible for the National Register. Local historic registers may be more willing to be flexible, but the local government must be educated properly to understand the importance of the roadside. At all levels there is a general hesitancy to consider something historic if it is less than fifty years old.

***Solutions for Preserving the Roadside***

After acknowledging that the roadside has many philosophical reasons for and against its preservation those fighting for its survival can turn to the methods and issues related to the actual preservation of the roadside. Preservation of the roadside and its

[16] Lambin.
[17] Jandl.

context as a cultural landscape, museum preservation of key elements, and real world preservation of major elements are the three most common methods for preserving places along the roadside. Each approach has its own benefits and limitations.

One of the most innovative ways of preserving the roadside is to preserve it as a cultural landscape. This could includes changes to zoning ordinances, creation of overlay districts, or other planning measures to maintain current resources and to promote growth that will be compatible with the rest of the landscape. Other methods are through non-profits or state government-based coordinating groups that seek to pull all interested parties to the table. Cultural landscape preservation the least invasive to individual elements, but is often the most burdensome to landowners. Many owners will be resistant to maintaining and preserving their buildings, especially if their structures are not considered historic in the traditional sense. Landowners must be educated about the realities of historic preservation and landscape preservation during planning processes.[18]

Cultural landscapes, as defined in *Preservation Brief 36,* are "a geographic area, including both cultural and natural resources and the wildlife or domestic animals therein, associated with a historic event, activity, or person or exhibiting other cultural or aesthetic values." Furthermore, these landscapes can be defined as historic sites, historic vernacular landscapes, historic design landscapes, and ethnographic landscapes. Roadside landscapes are commonly "historic vernacular landscapes," since they sprang

[18] Arnold Alanen and Robert Melnick, eds., *Preserving Cultural Landscapes in America* (Johns Hopkins University Press, Baltimore, 2000). This book provides insight into preservation of cultural landscapes, although does not specifically reference roadside preservation.

from unregulated growth and development, not guided by any one planner. *Preservation Brief 36* states that these vernacular landscapes "reflect the physical, biological, and cultural character of those everyday lives. Function plays a significant role in vernacular landscapes."[19]

Heritage areas are an example of how to preserve vernacular cultural landscapes. With owner cooperation, federal or state officials establish regulations to maintain the current development practices and to promote future development at a compatible rate. Areas, based on a wide range of historical significance, try to maintain the "sense of place" in the district. A few of these heritage areas are state maintained, but most are under the jurisdiction of the National Park Service. One new National Heritage Area started in Detroit is based on the many automobile resources that still survive in the surrounding area.[20]

The Lincoln Highway and the National Road Heritage Areas are two of the nine state-run heritage areas in Pennsylvania and are part of the Paths of Progress National Heritage Corridor. Focused on the road and the roadside, both are still functional roadways, but provide interpretation and buildings to explore along the roadside. They

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[19] Charles A. Birnbaum, ASLA, *Preservation Briefs 36 "Protecting Cultural Landscapes."* (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Department of the Interior, n.d.) Available from: www2.cr.nps.gov/tps/briefs/brief36.htm, See also Charles A. Birnbaum and Christine Capella Peters, *The Secretary of the Interior's Standards for the Treatment of Historic Properties with Guidelines for the Treatment of Cultural Landscapes* (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Department of the Interior, n.d.)

[20] Motor Cities National Heritage Area. *Motor Cities: Experience Everything Automotive.* Available from: http://www.experienceeverythingautomotive.org

are both committed to helping boost the economic base of the area through heritage tourism. They may provide support to "real world" preservation projects, but do not specifically seek out and preserve elements. Acting more as a governmental agency that oversees the heritage tourism programs, the two parks provide a link between landowners and those seeking tourism on older style roads.[21]

The National Road Heritage Park is "a corridor celebrating and commemorating the history and heritage of the 90 mile stretch of what is now U.S. Route 40. The Petersburg and Searights toll houses and the stone 'S' bridge provide a glimpse back to those earlier days." The park boasts forty-eight buildings that were inns or taverns from 1818 to 1853, the heyday of the National Road. On the last weekend of May every year the National Road Festival is held which provides a larger introduction to the roadside landscape through vendors and interpretive events.[22]

The Lincoln Highway corridor is touted as providing "nostalgic Americana at its best." With one hundred and forty five miles of corridor, the park passes though several communities, all of which participate in the tourism boost that the corridor provides. Several important landmarks are located along the route, including the Coffee Pot and the S.S. Grandview Ship Hotel (tragically destroyed in a fire in 2004). Several sections of the highway are original. Part of the interpretation strategy includes collectible hats, shirts, signs, books, and paintings. They also publish a driving guide.[23]

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[21] Pennsylvania Department of Conservation and Natural Resources. *Pennsylvania Heritage Areas* (Harrisburg, PA: Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, 1999).

[22] Ibid.

[23] Lincoln Highway Heritage Corridor. *The Lincoln Highway Driving Guide* (Greensburg, PA: Lincoln Highway Heritage Corridor, n.d.).

Route 66 is another great example of preserved landscapes. Peter Dedek, in his dissertation "Journey's on the Mother Road: Interpreting the Cultural Significance of US Route 66," discusses some of the challenges of preserving a cultural landscape. Although largely fragmented, the road and its roadside accoutrements still exist in different levels of preservation or decay. Dedek writes that "if appropriately preserved and interpreted, roadside structures and landscapes along the Route can serve as a linear monument to transportation and culture in America."[24] Dedek indicates that three major issues surface in the preservation of Route 66. First, the neglect of the resources stands as the most critical issue facing the corridor. Second, coordinating the volunteers and professionals provides a logistics puzzle. Third, the cultural meanings for such a well-known highway present issues with historical interpretation.

Dedek suggests that the first step advocates of roadside resources should take is to perform a "historic resource survey," as was suggested by Birnbaum in his *Preservation Brief 36*. This survey would allow for determining where to put the energy of volunteers and professionals. Furthermore, this survey provides an opportunity to create a preservation plan for the corridor's future. Preserving the remaining segments "in a holistic manner that includes historic structures, original highway alignments, significant natural features, and prominent viewsheds," is the next step proposed by Dedek.[25]

Dedek comes to the crux of the problem for preserving roadside resources in a cultural landscape method by stating that in performing these surveys one must "pay

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[24] Peter Dedek, "Journey's on the Mother Road: Interpreting the Cultural Significance of US Route 66," (D.A. diss., Middle Tennessee State University, 2002), 280.

[25] Ibid., 286.

careful attention to cultural landscapes, because the essential character and essence of Route 66 exists…in how these structures relate to each other, to the historic road, and to natural landscapes." He goes on to write that "without at least some of its original open landscape, a historic motel or historic roadside trading post is only a sad reminder of a lost and dead past.[26] Therefore, the example returns to the question of context and growth within the context of this open spaces.

Another way to view these historic resources is by considering the preservation of a "historic transportation corridor." Christina Cameron in *Cultural Resource Management*, a journal by the National Park Service, writes that the historic transportation corridor "is a linear cultural landscape, which combines the natural and cultural environment." She writes that roads, such as Route 66 or the Trans-Canada Highway are both examples of significant corridors offering insight into historic development. She writes:

> transportation corridors should probably be treated holistically. The whole – or at least the inter-relationship of the parts – may be more important than the individual components themselves. Transportation corridors are significant because of what they represent, not because of the individual resources which may be in themselves be mundane.[27]

Paul Daniel Marriott, a preservationist committed to saving historic roads, made an important point about the philosophical issues in preserving the roadside in his book *Preserving Historic Roads*:

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[26] Ibid., 286-287.

[27] Christina Cameron, "The Challenges of Historic Corridors," *Cultural Resource Management* 16. (No. 11, 1993), 5.

> The adequate preservation of historic roads involves more than just appreciation for history. Historic roads constitute one of the most difficult resources to preserve. By their nature, they generally traverse great distances and include a broader contextual landscape. The ability to preserve, maintain, and protect the integrity of the corridor through which they travel is important. They represent a resource that, in many instances, is still functioning as originally designed. They are a misunderstood resource--how can something still in use be historic?[28]

The preservation of the cultural landscape is not easy. Birnbaum writes that the "documentation, treatment, and ongoing management require[s] a comprehensive, multi-disciplinary approach." He goes on to write that "professionals may have expertise in landscape architecture, history, landscape archaeology," or a variety of other fields. Critical to this work is the careful planning of how to take on the facets of this planning. "Historical research; inventory and documentation of existing conditions; site analysis and evaluation of integrity and significance" as well as "development of a cultural landscape preservation approach and treatment plan; development of cultural landscape management plan and management philosophy; the development of a strategy for ongoing maintenance" are all elements necessary in determining the plan of action for a cultural landscape.[29]

Another method for preserving the roadside is within a museum setting. Curators physically remove elements from the landscape and transport them to a museum or warehouse. There the item is cataloged, repaired, and placed into a collection. The element will receive more attention with a museum than if it was in the care of an

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[28] Paul Daniel Marriott, *Saving Historic Roads* (New York: John Wiley & Sons, 1998), 3-4.

[29] Birnbaum, *Preservation Briefs 36*.

individual. Cleaning, maintaining, and interpreting the element is critical to its preservation. Two of the biggest drawbacks of this method are the loss of integrity and the removal of the element from its context.

Examples of museum preservation includes the removal of a piece of historic Route 66 roadbed to the Smithsonian, the housing of "the Great Sign" from Holiday Inn, portions of a Piggly Wiggly grocery store at the Pink Palace Museum in Memphis, Tennessee, and a portion of the Coral Court Motel in the Museum of Transportation at St. Louis. Most items are donated or purchased through legitimate means, often in a "move it or lose it" situation, but in some rare cases elements have been removed through other means, like theft. Highway mileage markers from the National Road occasionally show up in museums without consent of the landowner.[30]

Smithsonian Institution, through the National Museum of American History, recently held a major exhibition entitled "American on the Move." The exhibition showcased the elements in the Smithsonian's collection that were relevant to the people and how they moved in America. In the exhibition are items related to four areas, "communities, commerce, landscapes, and lives." On display are such items as an Atlantic Refining Company advertisement from 1915, a Wayne clock-face gasoline pump from 1932, or even a tourist cabin. The tourist cabin, collected in 1983 and dating from about 1930, is a "wooden cabin with lap siding, porch, front door, screen door, and one window on left and right sides." The building is 10 x 12 and 10 feet high. Smithsonian,

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[30] Frank Brusca. *Route 40-National Road*. Available from: http://www.route40.net/news/import.htm

when it collected the building, even kept the heaters, lamps, and mirrors to best show how roadside architecture was built. All of the various artifacts are "classic" examples of museum preservation of roadside artifacts.[31]

Of the three options for preservation, "real world" preservation is the more traditional method to save buildings. When employing this method, the building or structure is preserved in place, or may be moved a short distance within its context. National Register listing or other local recognition can be an important part of this step. Individual landowners usually must consent to this type of preservation, but some governments may exert the right of eminent domain to take an abandoned property. (Image 46-47)

Owners have maintained several examples of roadside architecture. The Wigwam Motel #2 in Cave City, Kentucky is a particularly rare example, most significantly because its use has not changed. The National Register of Historic Places nomination for the Wigwam Motel states that it "is perhaps the most whimsical and eye-catching architectural landmark in Barren County, [Kentucky]." Made of "18 steel and concrete teepees," the buildings are used as a gift shop and motels, although the gasoline station has been removed.[32] "Although the uniforms and Indian rugs and blankets have been gone for years, a certain degree of place-product-packaging survives." The owners "are

[31] Smithsonian Institution. *America on the Move.* Available from http://americanhistory.si.edu/onthemove

[32] Brown and Sculle.


**Image 46:**
**Sanders Court Museum, Corbin, KY**
*(Aaron Marcavitch, http://www.marcavitch.com)*

**Image 47:**
**Lorianne Motel (Civil Rights Museum), Memphis, TN**
*(Aaron Marcavitch, http://www.marcavitch.com)*

proud of their motel and have taken steps to ensure that it is preserved after they retire."[33] Maintaining these buildings over time has allowed them to be preserved for enjoyment today.

Reuse of buildings as part of real world preservation is a common path to preservation. Diners are a type of building that can be reused easily. Daniel Viveiros, in his dissertation on "The Rise and Fall of the American Diner, 1920-1960," writes that diners "have been converted into storage containers, barber shops, antique shops, ice-cream parlors, concession stands, ticket booths and cocktail lounges." He notes that some have even been shipped overseas for reuse.[34]

Another example of "real world" preservation is the "Coffee Pot" in Bedford, Pennsylvania. Long neglected, this structure is a former gas station and restaurant in the shape of a large coffeepot. It has been undergoing renovation as part of the Lincoln Highway Heritage Corridor into a tourist center. The "Coffee Pot" was moved from its current location to the local fairgrounds, thereby altering its context but is still being reused in a sensitive way.[35] (Image 48)

The McDonald's in Downey, California, built in 1953, is a classic example of modern product-place-packaging and a perfect example of real world preservation. It was a very difficult structure to preserve initially because the regional office of McDonald's resisted the listing of the building on the National Register. Only after local

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[33] Ibid.
[34] Viveiros. 2
[35] Lincoln Highway Heritage Corridor, "Lincoln Highway Heritage Corridor," Available from: http://www.lhhc.org

pressure and a Section 106 review did the company relent.[36] In one of the early cases of the roadsides recent past preservation, the store was put on the National Register when it was only thirty-one years old. Unfortunately, its classic roadside details limited the structure to anything but a McDonald's. The National Trust for Historic Preservation's *Forum Journal* detailed the fight:

> The only operating red and white tile, walk-up McDonald's remaining of the 1000+ built from 1953-1968; it is the third McDonald's built: the second red and white, and the oldest stand in the chain of 19,200 restaurants world wide...Perseverance, patience, leadership, and a multi-faceted strategy that focused on public education and public opinion were the hallmarks of the campaign…During the lengthy preservation effort, there was a change of leadership in the regional corporate office that led to a reversal of the company's policy toward the restaurant. McDonald's recognized the value of heritage tourism and included a small museum and gift shop adjacent to the restored restaurant.[37]

The Los Angeles Conservancy, who spearheaded the preservation effort, worked to create an advocacy strategy to call attention to this recent past specimen. They worked at "persuading elected officials at the local, state, and national levels to publicly support the [food] stand's preservation" as well as "persuading McDonald's major California stockholders to publicly support preservation." Furthermore, they had the building named to the National Trust for Historic Preservation's "11 Most Endangered" list.

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[36] Section 106 is the process which a Federal agency must have their proposals reviewed for consideration of historic preservation. The Downey McDonald's had to be reviewed because it was damaged in an earthquake and therefore would fall under Federal Emergency Management Agency review. Thomas King, *Federal Planning and Historic Places: The Section 106 Process* (Walnut Creek, CA: Altamira Press, 2000).

[37] National Trust for Historic Preservation. "Preserving the Recent Past: Downey McDonald's Drive-In. Downey California, 1993-1996." Solutions Database #268 <http://forum.nthp.org/subNTHP/displaySolutions.asp?sol_ID=240> (April 2001).

These methods all came together in the end to open a "dialog with the corporation to explore preservation alternatives."[38] (Image 49)

In Peter Dedek's dissertation, he covers how real world preservation can actually be a setback to the current context of the Route 66 corridor. He states that "many old roadside structures could be left as ruins rather than rehabilitated." Dedek takes a view that "there is no need to make every motel functional again, or turn every old gas station into a visitor center. In fact, to do so would destroy the vacant, eerie quality that many Route 66 visitors come to see and enjoy."[39] This attitude promotes preservation of ruins over the rehabilitation of useful places is actually quite similar in many ways to European models of conservation. If Dedek's plan for Route 66 is considered, it may be a first of its kind for America.[40]

Even with these three types of preservation, the future of the roadside is still cloudy. Problems with appropriate growth and discovering what constitutes a meaningful roadside are difficult. Forecasting the future of the roadside does not have any great assurances. Hopefully, with the knowledge of how this landscape works and how product-place-packaging functions, good decisions will be made about its future.

The Smithsonian exhibit, the Downey McDonald's, and heritage areas preserve roadside elements that fall into the category of "classic" roadside. The public, especially the baby boomer generation, has sought out these places of their youth. They seek out

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[38] Ibid.

[39] Dedek, 302.

[40] For more on English models of conservation which promote the use of "modern ruins", a great reader is John Earl, *Building Conservation Philosophy*, (Whiteknights, Reading, UK: College of Estate Management, 1997).


**Image 48:**
**Coffee Pot Museum, Lincoln Highway, Bedford, PA**
*(Lincoln Highway Heritage Corridor, http://www.lhhc.org)*


**Image 49:**
**Oldest McDonald's, Downey, CA**
*(Debra Jane Seltzer, http://www.roadsidenut.com)*

old cruising spots and former vacation areas. Retro kitsch has become popular during the rise of the baby boomers. Denying the popularity of the "classic" roadside would be hard for any corporation. McDonald's has recently started to build new outlets in brand new diners, capitalizing upon the demand for these classic places. This new appreciation for "retro" places is a trend which preservationists may favor if they choose to save the roadside for future generations.

***Towards a Conclusion: Learning from the Roadside***

Kevin Lynch, in "Designing and Managing the Strip," wrote that the "commercial strip has many deficiencies – its noise, its confusion, its harsh climate, its monotony, its inhospitality to man on foot, its overwhelming ugliness."[41] Those who seek these classic roadside places often only find placelessness. Tom Vanderbilt asked his readers in the journal *Terra Nova,* "Is There a There Anywhere?"

> There is a place I know, a quaint, prewar Main Street of a classic American small town, whose scale and legibility evoke the comforting grace of reminiscence. On this street, though, most storefronts are vacant, and curled "For Rent" signs hang dimly visible through streaked glass.…To shed the gloom that accrues in such a setting, I go in search of a cup of coffee and some sign of vitality, preferably in the local diner that my imagination tells me just has to be around the corner. It isn't, however, and so I soon find myself a short drive away, in another place, sitting in some chain restaurant, looking out onto an anodyne commercial strip with its colorful signs, arrayed in a brusque line.[42]

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[41] Kevin Lynch, *Designing and Managing the Strip*, (Cambridge, MA: Harvard-MIT Joint Center for Urban Studies, 1974), 579.

[42] Tom Vanderbilt. "Is there 'There' Anywhere?" *Terra Nova: Nature and Culture* (December 1998), Available from: http://www.terrain.org/Archives/Issue_6/Vanderbilt/vanderbilt.html

Other voices have joined the reaction against the placelessness of America. In his article, "Kentucky Fried Design," Douglas Yorke wrote "what is disconcerting about franchise architecture...is that as it becomes increasingly ubiquitous, it spreads its blandness freely, creating environments oblivious to local traditions and regional flavor."[43] This lack of "local traditions and regional flavor" is a direct by-product of standardized architecture. Ronald Lee Fleming wrote that:

> shouldn't we be distinguishing between such early auto-oriented eccentricities, technological innovations, or the recognition of particular roadside styles and the massive homogenizing assault of standard corporate franchise objects that reduce our countryside and townscapes to miasmic sameness?[44]

This yearning for "local traditions and regional flavor" is what creates a sense of place. Sense of place is an internalized knowledge that our surroundings are indicators of the community in which we live. It provides people a context in which to exist. "Place" also requires physical buildings and spaces. James Kunstler wrote that a sense of place is "the idea that people and things exist in some sort of continuity, that we belong to the world physically and chronologically, and that we know where we are."[45]

According to Ronald Lee Fleming, the standard marketing method of gasoline and fast food companies is to "promote the security of sameness by replicating a standardized brand image, often in garish colors and shapes designed to catch the eye of the consumers passing in their cars." Fleming finds that this method of operation, is "clearly self-serving" and tends to be "indifferent to the interest of supporting local community

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[43] Douglas Yorke, Jr.. "Kentucky Fried Design," *Southern Exposure* 8 (1980): 70.
[44] Fleming, 8.
[45] Kunsler, 114.

**Image 50:**
**Abandoned Stuckey's Restaurant, Corbin, KY**
*(Aaron Marcavitch, http://www.marcavitch.com)*


**Image 51:**
**Roadside Signs, Cave City, KY**
*(Aaron Marcavitch, http://www.marcavitch.com)*

**Image 52:**
**Aerial view of sprawl, Pittsburgh area, PA**
*(Aaron Marcavitch, http://www.marcavitch.com)*

identity." Fleming contends that this method is "detrimental to communities struggling to establish that proverbial 'sense of place.'"[46]

Douglas Yorke sounded the call in 1980 to preserve the sense of place in the South by writing, "judiciously exerted, the power of control rests with us, if we want it, to preserve that remaining Southerness."[47] His contention was that the standardized elements were draining away any sense of regionalism. Yet, the conundrum is that to understand American culture we must preserve aspects of the standardized roadside architecture if we are truly interested in preserving America's development.

Preservationists must make a decision on how they want to remember the past. They must understand place-product-packaging, and understand its part in modern placelessness. Preservationists, especially those concerned about interpretation, must also recognize the inherent worth of the roadside and determine if it should be kept.

Donald Appleyard, Kevin Lynch and John Myer wrote in *The View from the Road* that perhaps it would be possible to use the highway, and by extension the roadside, for education. "The highway could be a linear exposition, running by the vital centers, exposing the working parts, picking out the symbols and the historical landmarks."[48] Chester Liebs takes a similar view when he writes that the roadside, both road and building reveal "the American landscape; while the images in which the buildings were case reveal how the national psyche has been reduced and encapsulated into twenty-

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[46] Fleming, 1.
[47] Yorke, 71.
[48] Donald Appleyard, Kevin Lynch and John Myer, *The View from the Road* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1966), 17.

second commercials. The significance of this staggering environmental transformation is still just beginning to come into focus."[49] John Fraser Hart wrote in "The Bypass Strip as an Ideal Landscape," that the strip is a place where every American can feel at home, no matter where he or she happens to be, because it is so familiar, so standardized, so universal – and so placeless!"[50] Writer Andrei Cordrescu found that "roads are intrinsically narrative" but that "most roadside architecture does not exploit the narrative nature of the road." Furthermore, he goes on to suggest that modern roads are losing this narrative and that this quick change over to a landscape without narrative is "leaving behind the detritus of a bizarre archaeology."[51] To accept these views of how to interpret the roadside takes a new way of thinking. It takes an understanding of the history and architecture of the roadside and a feel for how it has changed American society. It takes a shift in thinking that encompasses the development of modern America into our historical fabric.

This new form of thinking about roadside resources shifts it to part of our everyday life. Perhaps then the plan should be to think like Appleyard, Lynch, Liebs or Hart and acknowledge the roadside as a critical part of our sense of place. Or perhaps we should think like Codrescu and make the roadside part of our narrative. Either way, the charge must be to think broadly about the roadside, both standardized and eclectic, and incorporate it into historic preservation.

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[49] Liebs, 227.

[50] John Fraser Hart, "The Bypass Strip as Ideal Landscape," *Geographical Review* 72 (April 1982): 218.

[51] Andrei Cordrescu, "Road Trip," *Architecture* 87 (May 1998): 96.

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