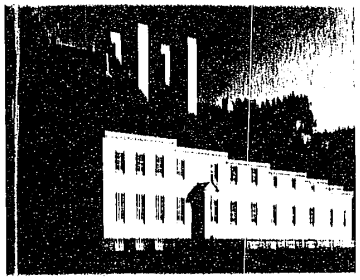

Architect Hugh Howell Jacobsen of Washington designed the front of a house in Pennsylvania (left) in a traditional "telescope" look to blend in with its surroundings, while contemporary features desired by the client were provided in the back (above). (Philadelphia Home Service photos by Robert Cameron)

Dog obedience class set

Registration for a Detroit German shepherd Dog Obedience Training Club class will be 7 p.m. April 9 for beginners and 7 p.m. April 1 for advanced.

The classes, open to dogs of any breed, will be given at the club at 27776 Grand River in Farmington.

Dog owners must have a veterinarian's health certificate indicating the dog has up to date shots, including parvovirus vaccine. Heartworm and negative worm checks are also required.

Helene Gothan at 476-4456 will answer questions.

Architecture

Housing design gears up for economics of the '80s

From Philadelphia Home Service

The single family house some made fabric is as obsolete as that other ex-stickible icon of American life, the tail finned, chrome plated, mind numbing gas guzzler.

Yet despite soaring mortgage rates and operating costs, the old home is still a bulwark of the American dream — albeit one now in reach of only about 10 percent of potential home buyers.

A related reason for this demand, says architect Warren Cox, moderator of a recent Philadelphia Resident Area chats lecture series on the look, history and problems facing the American house, comes down to this fact of life: The house — like the inhabitant's dog — is often a tangible reflection of the class, culture, aspirations and, not infrequently, the actual appearance of the residents themselves.

TODAY, IT seems, architecture is in a period of pluralism not seen since the Victorian age.

There are solar-designed houses whose functional requirements dictate their appearances.

There is a new interest in earth-sheltered houses.

There are mass-produced houses spreading across the landscape, some of them praised for their design "honesty" and other condemned for their "misuse" of materials and architectural styles.

But just as the house of the 19th century reflected the lifestyles of that period with such features as cellars for food storage, verandas for summer nights and dining rooms to accommodate large families today's economic realities are dictating the look of contemporary homes.

BECAUSE OF inflation, high interest rates and energy costs, the trend is now toward smaller houses, way down from the 4,000-4,000 square feet of the 1980s. And more apathy, generations of families are sharing the same home, says Charles Moore, former chairman of the Yale School of Architecture.

The problem of affordability is an aligned problem," Fred Good building Robert Fisher agrees. "We are now seeing two unrelated families buying houses together, and in San Francisco, we are taking units and dividing them in half."

"Large picture windows are no more," Fisher says. The windows now going into houses are carefully considered for function and location. For example, passive solar systems, so simple in principle, call for windows on the south side of buildings to catch the winter sun and depend on awnings and nearby trees to provide summer shade.

Houses that rely on this approach still need conventional heating, but they may use as much as 75 percent less fuel than regular buildings, according to a recent Worldwatch Institute report.

IN ADDITION, there are certain characteristics that Americans yesterday and today seem to admire and seek in their houses.

"I think," Warren Cox says, "that Americans have a distaste for heavy ornamentation in their houses. In their heart of hearts, I don't think they like all the elaborateness of European houses. Americans seem to like houses that basically are boxes with simple door cups."

Take a look at the earliest American houses: a simple one-room half of the 17th century and the Cape Cod of Cape built by the pilgrims. They were stark, public-minded straight lines with modest embellishments.

The later classic houses of the 19th century and early 1900s contained though more elaborate products of careful design in large degree contained the earlier attributes of restraint that did not, Cox says, "indicate showing off."

Now jump to the 20th century (the Victorian period was another matter altogether), and examine those severe glass and steel houses designed by Mies van der Rohe and his contemporaries who spent their lifetimes connecting man's comfort from architecture.

More than anything else, Mies was a Pavilion Lux Dilulo. He was adversary to unnecessary embellishment. He stuck to these ideas. They were sincere and because they were the attitude of this nation.

The reformers of this international style are in dispute now, but the basic concepts, flaked as they are to simplified by remodelers, linked. A house should deliver what it promises," says Jacobsen, whose contemporary residences reflect those themes.

"Some houses, with their great doors and elaborate street image, but nothing beyond, make you wonder why you ever came in."

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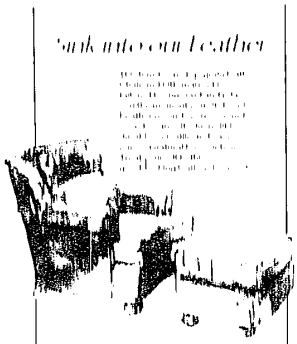

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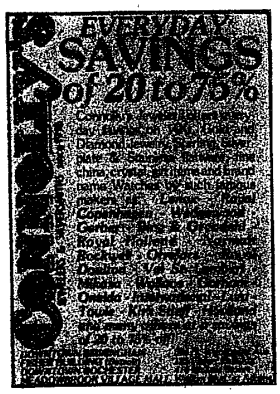

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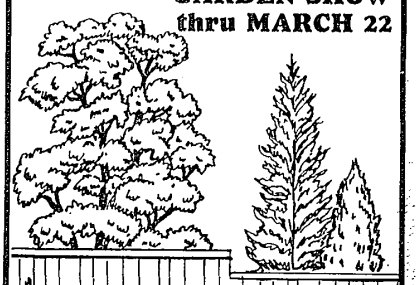

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