

Database of the Annual Seattle Area Parade of Homes 1949-1960



Washington State Department of Archaeology & Historic Preservation
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Seattle Area Parade of Homes 1949-1960

The Seattle Times newspaper, through the Seattle Association of Home Builders, first sponsored the Seattle Area Parade of Homes in 1948. As a major marketing event for the Association, the Parade continued to be a significant promotional effort through the 1980s. As the main sponsor of the event, the newspaper also contributed articles and advertisements relating to home construction and remodeling.

The purpose of the parade, developed in conjunction with National Home Week, was to highlight the work of local builders, showcase innovative construction techniques and products, and introduce potential buyers to new residential developments. The parade covered dwellings in Seattle as well as in outlying communities such as Bellevue and Kirkland on the east side, Shoreline and Kenmore to the north, and Renton and Burien to the south. In 1952, the Parade even highlighted a home as far away as Bremerton. The following study focuses on the years 1949 through 1960. Unfortunately, specific information about the first annual Parade of Homes was not featured in the newspaper, and due to a strike at The Seattle Times, data on the 1953 Parade of Homes is also missing.



From 1949 to 1960, most Parade of Homes model dwellings served to highlight soon-to-be developed residential areas of the various communities. Some models were also located in clusters, such as the newly developed Newport Hills subdivision in Bellevue, and Talbot Hills in Renton.

The exact number of model homes featured each year fluctuated greatly, beginning with 30 homes in 1949, and reaching a high of 82 homes in 1959. Each year, the parade was highlighted by a multi-page spread in the newspaper accompanied by a list and map of the featured properties. Additionally, the newspaper added a variety of home building related stories and advertisements. While this format remained fairly consistent, the 1955

Parade of Homes stands out as unique; featuring a stand alone 8 ½" x 11" insert describing the properties. The 1955 Parade of Homes also tried a different marketing strategy by featuring swimsuit clad models who competed to become "Miss Parade of Homes" and "Miss National Home Week."

The attached spreadsheets detail the Parade of Homes listings in order to better understand Post WWII residential architectural styles and types as well as to document the builders who constructed them. While most studies highlight architect designed homes of prominent citizens, this study offers a realistic look at the more common dwellings and building trends typical of the era.



The eleven year time-span of the data also provides an opportunity to observe changes over time. For example contractors such as Albert Bach and E.B. Vick participated in the Parade of Homes in multiple years with multiple entries, perhaps indicating their dominance in building industry during the post war period. However many homebuilders are represented in the list, some of whom participated in the Parade of Homes for just one year. Builders also offered a wide variety of residential styles and types, and from the data, the Ranch House and Spilt Level are introduced during this period. Be aware that residential development in Seattle may differ considerably from other communities across the state, particularly small towns. The data is a starting point for learning more about

Post WWII architectural styles and residential development. Local historic contexts should be developed to understand regional and community variations.

The data was collected solely from The Seattle Times newspaper. I have only field checked a few of the properties. Some are likely to be intact, while others may exhibit significant changes in their design.

The printouts that follow sort the database in two ways. The first is sorted by parade year, map ID # and builder. The second list is sorted by city, and development/subdivision to facilitate locating developments by geographic area.

The Parade of Homes occurred each fall, though the actual dates ranged from early September to late October and the event was typically held for one week.

Parade of Home Dates

Year	Dates of Show
1949	September 11 – 18 th
1950	September 10 – 17 th
1951	September 9 – 16 th
1952	September 14 – 21 st
1953	No data available
1954	September 19 – October 3 rd
1955	September 9 – 16 th
1956	September 29 – October 7 th
1957	September 8 – 15 th
1958	September 7 – 14 th
1959	September 13 – 20 th
1960	September 11 – 18 th

SPREADSHEET ORGANIZATION

Builder

Specific names of builders are provided if known.

Address/Street Name

Unfortunately not every model home had a specific street address. Some locations in the database are street intersections. In many instances, the builder only provided the address of a single model home but made reference to others that had been constructed nearby. Where additional models were advertised, a comment is provided in the "Notes" field.

City

Current names are used for most cities. Some of the developments originally occurred in unincorporated areas that were later incorporated or annexed into existing municipalities. For these properties, the current city name is used when found.

Development/Subdivision

Subdivision or development names are noted when provided in the various source materials.

Model Price

The price of the featured model house is noted when provided in the source materials. Some developers provided only a starting price with no upper limit. Others noted only that their prices began at "less than" some dollar amount. In a few cases, builders cited only a sales price for the featured model. If prices for additional models were given, a range is provided.

Number of Bedrooms

The number of bedrooms in the model homes is noted when provided in the various source materials. Note that it appears that the standard number of bedrooms jumped from 2 to 3 by 1952, most likely reflecting the Post WWII baby boom.

Square Feet

The square footage of the model homes is noted when provided in the various source materials. While many are not noted, homes in first two years of the parade tend to be small, some under 1,000 sq ft.

Model Style

The style of the dwelling recorded in the list was based on images and/or architectural renderings that were provided in the various source materials. These are informal determinations and were not field checked.

Notes

I made note of specific or unique design details, the name of the model home, or clever marketing slogans.

Architect

A fair number of designers of the model homes are named in the news articles. They range from builders who served as their own architects, to plan service companies, to well known established architectural firms. While some of these names are well known today, during this time, many were unknown designers searching for work and a way to make a name for themselves.

Note: Please contact Michael Houser, WA State Architectural Historian at DAHP if you would like the spreadsheet in another format or if you discover inaccuracies in the data.