

Eichler Revival on Hall Lane

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CB Financial Services personnel on Hall Lane.

Photo Sophie Braccini

“Joseph Eicher’s inspiration was to bring modern architecture to the average American,” says Hansen. A developer, not an architect or contractor, Eichler was heavily influenced by the architectural giant, Frank Lloyd Wright and built approximately 11,000 homes, mostly in Northern California. They

were typically single story two- or three-bedroom homes, less than 2,000 square feet, with gabled roofs characterized by their low pitch and exposed beams; below the gables, tapered transom glass was often used to create a light and airy feel within.

The first structure to be renovated by Hansen’s

company, Aspen Building Technology, Inc., was at 3406 Hall Lane. In 1996, Christopher and Conchita Bocard purchased the building, which was occupied only by several feral cats. “The structure was in a state of complete disrepair,” remembers Hansen. “The slab foundation and all of the walls had to be completely reconstructed while the roof beams were elevated and left intact.” To avoid a lengthy design review process, the renovated structure was built in the original footprint, and the overall profile was maintained. The insulation, electrical, gas and water services were upgraded to current code standards.

“I like simple, and to me Eichlers are refreshing,” says Hansen, “but from a builder’s perspective these homes need help. It is a great concept, but they don’t measure up to today’s code and energy requirements.” In post-war America, the Eichlers were popular because they embodied the California way of life, bringing the outside in for those who loved to entertain, “but people didn’t have the energy concerns we have today,” he notes.

Eichlers are known for their poorly insulated walls, single pane floor-to-ceiling windows, vaulted ceilings and no attic insulation, as well as concrete slab floors and radiant heating systems that often failed after 20 years. The Bocard renovation was completed in six months and has since served as the office for CB Financial Services.

Four years later, in 2000, the building on the corner of Hall Lane and Brown Avenue was purchased by the Hansens to house Aspen Building. Formerly Betsy’s Knit and Stitch, this building was completely reconstructed in the original footprint, adding a modern design by local architect Stephen Elbert. In 2003, the building was honored by the Lafayette Garden Club as the most improved building and landscape in Lafayette. The roof was raised 12 inches and the pitch was increased from the typical 2/12 pitch to 3/12, thus permitting the use of asphalt shingles rather than the original tar and gravel. As with the CB Financial building, the failing slab foundation was demolished and completely re-poured in the original footprint.

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