

Tiki:



a Guide TO San Diego's Tiki MODERN aRchITeCTURE



FANTASTIC AND WHIMSICAL expressions of exotic architectural escapism, San Diego's surviving Tiki Modern-style buildings are local manifestations of a nation-wide trend that once encompassed Polynesian Pop-influenced architecture, interior design, entertainment, music, food, and clothing. Whether it's called Tiki-Polynesian, Tiki Modern, or Atomic Tiki, the style typified the marketing of San Diego as a tourist destination where visitors could recreate in a semi-tropical paradise.





Although its modern roots reach back before World War II, the Tiki Modern style is a post-World War II phenomenon, reaching its zenith just prior to and after Hawai'i became the 50th state in 1959. During this time, local boosters promoted San Diego as “a little bit of Hawaii” in Southern California. Concurrently was the development of Mission and San Diego bays as tourist destinations. Soon a number of tourist-related hotels, motels, and even boat-tels for vacationing yachtsmen, sprang up on land made from harbor dredge. Eager to continue the Island Paradise imagery, architects designed them, and their associate restaurants and night clubs, in Tiki Modern or Marine-Oriented South Seas Modern-influenced imagery.

These Tiki Modern and Marine-Oriented South Seas Modern style buildings' outward appearances were supposed to evoke the architectural traditions gleaned from various Pacific Islander cultures: truncated-roofed *jonglos*, circular huts, or soaring A-framed *halau loa*, (big meeting house) and *halau wa'a*, (canoe sheds). The latter were often



Half Moon Inn and San Diego Bay; *next page* Half Moon Inn porte-cochere, photos by Sandé Lollis

featured on sway-back roofs, projecting out over porte-cocheres, with plain or highly decorative corbelled wood pole or squared ridge beams or rafters. Sometimes the latter ended in decorative canoe-bow finials or extended like outriggers all the way to the ground into brick or rock planters. Close up features included exterior wood plank siding, natural stone, especially lava rock, and earth-colored concrete bricks.



Located on or near large bodies of water, their landscape details were meant to accentuate a South Sea Island's land-water interface. Lush,

semi-tropical plants, including palms, hibiscus, plumeria, and impatiens, were located on islands surrounded by flowing streams, waterfalls, pools, and/or lagoons set amid real or faux-lava rock boulders. Shade-loving philodendrons, bromeliads, ferns, and orchids completed the effect.

Strategically located throughout the gardens were the style's eponymous Polynesian-inspired wood, stone, or cast concrete *Tiki* totem poles or *moai* statues.

While based on pre-European contact Native Pacific Islander building shapes and forms, these were modern buildings reflecting contemporary architectural, engineering, and marketing trends. Among these were heavy exposed laminated wood beams, steel framing, and plate glass windows and doors that blurred the delineation between inner and outer spaces. More *Googie* than Tahiti, their soaring A-frame roofs, rectangular and circular geometric shapes, were meant to serve as attractive Programmatic architectural marine-oriented and roadside landmarks.



HUMPHREY ST.
HALF MOON INN & SUITES

By 1968 the popularity of Tiki and Marine-Oriented modern styles had waned. Although there is a resurgence in their popularity, many of examples have been demolished or modernized beyond recognition.

Luckily, a good deal of San Diego's Tiki temples can still be found, especially in and around Mission Bay and Shelter Island, which may have the largest concentration of its kind in the nation.

Our hope is that this booklet may serve as an introduction to and inspire others to seek out other Tiki treasures in their neighborhoods. This in turn may lead to their recognition, preservation, and continued use by other generations of Tikiphiles.



BUILDINGS VISITED ON THE TOUR

Paradise Point Resort & Spa, originally named Vacation Village
1404 Vacation Road, Mission Bay

Built: 1962 • Architects: Eldridge F. Spencer of Spencer & Lee

This 44-acre tropical island village is laid out around a central lagoon. The lagoon's landmark observation tower provides breath-taking views of Mission Bay. Although remodeled recently, the dominant eyebrow gables of the main lobby, gift shop, and convention center's architectural style evokes a modern-day Bali resort island.

Trader Mort's Liquor Store, originally named Hooch Hut

2904 Shelter Island Drive

Built: c. 1966 • Architect: Ronald K. Davis, AIA

Built on compacted fill, which was part of the original causeway connecting Loma Portal to Shelter Island. A scaled-down version of a 1950's *Daisy's* restaurant, it features a rising *jonglo*-inspired truncated hip roof extending out over a lanai, with reversed rafters resembling a ship's ribs, wood shingles, lava rock-veneer, subtropical landscaping and Tiki god iconography, both inside and out.

Tikified Street Furniture

Shelter Island Drive, south of Anchorage Lane

Abstract wood and concrete Tiki totem poles used as street bollards, sign poles, fence posts, and sidewalk pedestrian rest area pergolas.

Stan Miller Yacht Sales, originally named Shelter Cove Marina & Yacht Sales

2540 Shelter Island Drive

Built: 1963-1965 • Architect: Robert Platt

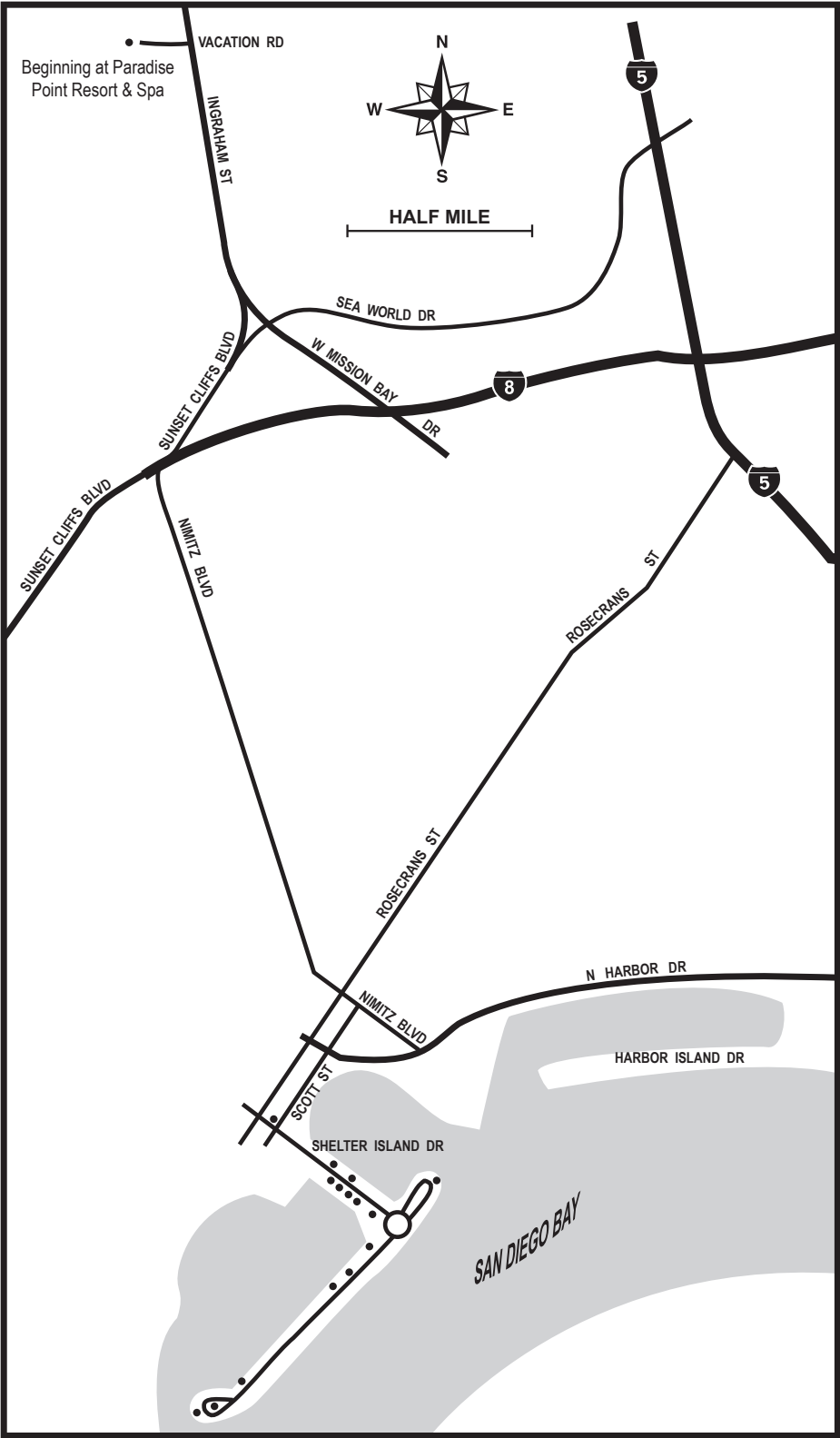
Another impressive Robert Platt design, it takes Tiki Modern/Nautical to the 'nth degree. It has all of the design features: a soaring cantilevered A-frame roof, protruding flying triangular gable, outrigger buttressing, yet without the Polynesian ebullience.

Hallmark Yacht Brokers

2525 Shelter Island Drive

Built: c. 1957 • Architect: Robert Platt

One of the few two-story Polynesian Maritime Modern style buildings on Shelter Island, its character-defining features include a cross-gable wood



Beginning at Paradise Point Resort & Spa

VACATION RD

INGRAM ST



HALF MILE

SEA WORLD DR

W MISSION BAY DR

SUNSET CLIFFS BLVD

SUNSET CLIFFS BLVD

NIMITZ BLVD

ROSECRANS ST

ROSECRANS ST

NIMITZ BLVD

N HARBOR DR

HARBOR ISLAND DR

SCOTT ST

SHELTER ISLAND DR

SAN DIEGO BAY

shingle roof, corbelled beam ends, broadly overhanging exposed rafters, and wide display windows along the ground floor. The stucco-clad ground floor resembles lime-plastered coral block walls typical of early 19th century Hawaiian missionary homes.

The Crow's Nest, originally named Chris Craft Boat Sales
2515 Shelter Island Drive

Built: 1957 • Architect: Robert Platt & Assoc.

Exotic landscaping and a magnificent view of the yacht harbor complement this L-shaped vertical batten-clad Hawaiian Ranch House. Its wood shingled roof features canted gables, exposed rafters, protruding corbelled ridge beams and purlins, supported by knee braced reversed flying buttresses.

Nielsen Beaumont Marine Inc., originally named Mauricio & Sons, Boat Building and Repair

2420 Shelter Island Drive

Built: c. 1965

A utilitarian blending of Mid-century Nautical Modern with Cape Cod and Craftsman style influences.

Pearson Marine Fuel Dock and Deli, originally named Baker Standard Marine Service/Gas Station

2435 Shelter Island Drive

Built: c. 1962

Another hybrid, its character-defining features include an eye-catching abstract Tiki Modern style wood-shingled A-frame roof joining twin rectangular flat-roofed board 'n batten boxes.

David L. Fraser Yacht Brokerage, originally named Gold Coast Anchorage, Yacht Brokerage and Naval Architects

2353 Shelter Island Drive

Built: 1960 • Architect: Robert Platt

While more characteristic of Abstract Nautical than Tiki Modern, it still presents a marine-oriented South Seas atmosphere. This can be seen in its centrally located A-frame roof, board-n-batten siding, triangular and square fenestration, flying buttresses, vent stacks, cleat door handles, and signage.





Pearson Marine Fuel Dock, photo by Sandé Lollis



Humphrey's by the Bay Restaurant, photo by Sandé Lollis

Humphrey's Half Moon Inn & Suites, originally named Half Moon Anchorage/Boat-tel

2303 Shelter Island Drive

Built: 1959 • Architect: Hiram Hudson Benedict & Assoc.

One of the landmark Tiki Modern resort hotels in San Diego, its soaring porte cochere/lobby entry emulates the protruding bow of a Polynesian fishing canoe, complete with hanging lantern used to attract fish.

Humphrey's by the Bay Restaurant, originally named the Tahitian 2241 Shelter Island Drive

Built: 1964 • Architect: Armet & Davis, Los Angeles

Reminiscent of a Polynesian men's meeting house or *halau wa'a* (canoe shed), the restaurant's entry and foyer is a classic swayback or broke-back A frame, with projecting gables, ridge beams, rafter buttresses, canoe-bow rafter tails, and irregularly laid "Barney Rubble" limestone walls.

Best Western Island Palms Hotel/Shelter Island Marina, originally named Shelter Island Inn

2051 Shelter Island Drive

Built: 1960 • Architect: Richard George Wheeler & Assoc.

The building's character-defining architectural features include a classic soaring A-frame lobby roof, with laminated redwood wood outriggers, flagstone and lava rock, and wood shingle roof. The lobby leads into the former *Portofino Room*. Its high ceiling, plate glass doors and windows blur the transition of outside to interior space. It currently sports a Bali-Thai motif, which makes it a hybrid example of Tiki Modern.

Silvergate Yacht Club

2091 Shelter Island Drive

Built: 1965 • Architect Robert Platt

An eclectic mix of maritime and modern suburban architectural features, it includes shiplap siding, plate glass windows, a mast and cupola. And a monolithic chimney and Atomic Age zigzag “George Jetson” roof treatment.

Yokohama Friendship Bell

Center of Shelter Island Drive's western traffic loop

Dedicated: December 11, 1960 “to eternal good will between San Diego and [Yokohama,] its Japanese sister city.” During its dedication ceremony, Bishop Yamada of Los Angeles' Zen Shu Buddhist temple pulled the lanyard on the bell's outside battering ram-like clapper to ring the bell 18 times. After the ceremony, the lanyard and planks across the moat were removed to “prevent mischief.”

Shelter Island Substation & Dock, San Diego Harbor Police Department

1401 Shelter Island Drive

A fusion of Hawaiian Territorial and California Modern Ranch styles with a utilitarian nautical flare. Just south is Pacific Rim Park, which contains two James T. Hubbell works: *Pearl of the Pacific* (1998) and *Pacific Spirit* (2002). A third sculpture, *Pacific Portal* (2002), can be seen *makai* of the round-about east toward the Bali Hai Restaurant.

Bali Hai Restaurant, originally named The Hut

2230 Shelter Island Drive

Built: 1953-55 • Architect: Raymond Frazier

Originally a local franchise of the Christian's Hut chain of Newport Beach Tiki bars, by the mid-50s its manager Tom Ham rechristened it after mythical forbidden isle of hidden native women in James Michener's 1946 book, *Tales of the South Pacific*, which was later made into the Broadway musical South Pacific in 1949. Look for the iconic "Goof" and "Mr. Bali Hai" sculptures.



Stan Miller Yachts, photo by Stephanie Rose Bevil

While Shelter Island contains the most Tiki and Maritime Modern style buildings in one location, there are other hidden Tiki Modern-influenced throughout San Diego County.

Islands Restaurant, Hotel, & Gardens at the Hanalei Hotel - 1965
2270 Hotel Circle North in Mission Valley

Mission Bay Park Tourist Information Center Building - 1968
Intersection of Clairemont Drive and East Mission Bay Drive

Mission Bay Automotive - c. 1960
1125 Morena Boulevard, Bay Park, San Diego

Catamaran Motor Hotel - 1958-69
3999 Mission Boulevard, Pacific Beach, San Diego

Windansea Surf Shack - 1947 to present
On the beach at Neptune Place and Nautilus Street in La Jolla

Balboa Mortuary and Crematorium - 1963-64
4266 Mt. Abernathy Avenue, Clairemont, San Diego

Balboa Branch, San Diego Public Library - 1971
4255 Mt. Abernathy Avenue, Clairemont, San Diego

1st Baptist Church of Clairemont - c. 1955
3219 Clairemont Mesa Boulevard/Luna Avenue

American Housing Group Homes - Mid-1950's
Boxford, Betlyhill, Berwick, and Chandler Drives, Northeast Clairemont

Campus Medical-Dental Center - c. 1958
6244 El Cajon Boulevard, Rolando, San Diego

West Coast Worship Center - 1971
8691 Echo Drive, La Mesa

Prescott Residence - c. 1958-1960
3744 Andrew Street, Spring Valley

The Flying Bridge Restaurant - c. 1958-60
1105 N Coast Highway, Oceanside

Hawaiian Gardens Suite Hotel - 1972
1031 Imperial Beach Boulevard, Imperial Beach



Yokohama Friendship Bell, photo by Sandé Lollis

GLOSSARY

A-frame roof - Triangular shaped, steeply sloping roof that extends to the ground on two sides; presents both a front and rear gables with deep-set eaves. While an ancient building shape, New York architect Andrew Geller popularized the A-frame house in 1957.

Abstract nautical - Maritime-related architecture stripped of all ornamentation down to its basic form.

Boat-tel - Mid-20th century name used to describe a marina which rented boat slips to vacationing yacht owners

Corbelled - An architectural member projecting from a wall that supports a weight; especially one that is stepped upward and outward from a vertical surface.

Cross-gable roof - A roof consisting of two connected perpendicular gable roofs

Finials - Architectural device employed to decoratively emphasize the apex of a gable, or any of various distinctive ornaments at the top, end, or corner of a building or structure.

Flying bridge - Open areas on top of or on either side of a ship's bridge or pilothouse serving as an officers' operating station for use in good weather or in docking procedures.

Flying buttress - A structural member used to transmit the thrust of a vault across an intervening space to reducing the load on the main wall

George Jetson/Barney Rubble - Mid-century Hanna-Barbera cartoon characters used to describe Space Age Modern as apposed to Stone Age primitivism-inspired design elements

Googie style - Late 1940s to mid-1960s futurist Space Age/Atomic Age programmatic architecture influenced by Southern California car culture; characterized by space-age designs that



Paradise Point Resort Gift Shop, photo by Stephanie Rose Bevil

depicted motion, upswept roofs, curvaceous, geometric shapes, and the bold use of glass, steel and neon.

Halau loa - Hawaiian for “Big Meeting House”

Halau wa’a - Hawaiian for “Canoe Shed”

Hawaiian Territorial Ranch style - 20th Century Hawaiian architectural style influenced by pre-contact Native, vernacular Euro-American missionary, plantation, and cattle ranch homes.

Jonglo roof - Truncated hip roofed vernacular building common to Bali and Java.

Laminated wood beams - Wood beams made from smaller wooden



boards glued and pressure laminated together

Polynesian Maritime Modern style - Euro-American-influenced building style reminiscent of maritime buildings found throughout the Polynesian Islands; also relates to signage and decoration

Porte-cochere - An open porch or portico-like structure at a main or secondary entrance through which an automobile can pass through so

that its occupants can alight under cover, protected from sun and rain

Programmatic architecture

- Wacky, unusually shaped buildings and other structures meant to serve as stand-alone visual icons; example: Google style, Tiki Modern

Surf Shack - Tropical style

Polynesian-style open-wall structure composed of palm fronds on simple wood pole frame used to provide shade for surfers and a platform to lean their surfboards.

Tiki Modern style -

Mid-century American architectural style noted used originally in Polynesian-style restaurants and clubs in the United States; noted for its geometric shapes, soaring A-frame gables, and use of authentic of faux Native art for architectural, decorative, and landscape features

Tiki totem - Name given

to large anthropomorphic carvings made by ancient and modern Central Eastern Polynesian peoples. They served as boundary markers of sacred or other significant sites. Known as “ki’i” in Hawaiian

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