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To view all 23 color stories for the Mid-Century Modern period, visit www.californiapaints.com

1960-1980 — Post Modern Signature Color Stories

Draft Card - Neutral light tans became popular in the 1970s when “natural” colors such as almond made their way onto kitchen counters and appliances. This shade was used throughout the interior, and provided a contrasting background for the saturated browns, rusts, golds, and oranges of upholstery, rugs, bedspreads, and bold artwork of the period.

Some political leaders felt the elimination of the draft in 1973 would ease anti-war protests. It was hoped that those protesting the Vietnam War may lose their dedication to the cause if the possibility of being drafted was eliminated.

Skyscraper - This pale, baby blue comes from a 1960s interior paint. Originally offered only as a custom mix of two pre-mixed shades, this color (probably intended primarily for the bedroom, bath or kitchen) reflects the limited range of custom tints available to consumers before modern in-store custom paint mixing became standard.

During the 1960s a new structural system for skyscrapers was developed by structural engineer Fazlur Khan. With greater economy efficiency, skyscrapers were appearing more frequently. During the early 1970s, every architect wanted to have the biggest and tallest building in the world. The most noteworthy buildings of the time were John Hancock Center in Boston, Sears Tower in Chicago, and the World Trade Center towers in New York City.

University Square - Rustic browns were a favored siding color for mid-century modern houses and ranches. This golden brown, a 1980s exterior color, would also suit the arts and crafts-style home.

As the war in Vietnam progressed, students gained more power in the 1960s as they continued the anti-war movement. The centralized gathering place for student activism during the Post Modern era was often university campuses. This youthful force found power in numbers as the rate of college enrollment increased during this politically charged time.

To view all 38 color stories for the Post Modern period, visit www.californiapaints.com

Historic New England Property Signature Color Stories

Belfry Green - Henry Sleeper’s artistic genius lay in creating vibrantly unified colored interiors such as the Belfry Chamber, a rooftop bedroom with paneled walls in this rich, leafy, apple green. The sloping walls of this guest-room, which features a secret staircase, are lined with an early 20th-century reproduction of a hand-blocked 1832 French wallpaper -Décor Chinois. Alive with birds, butterflies, and flowers, this paper also adorned the Park Avenue dining room of author and tastemaker Edith Wharton’s New York City home.

Folk Art - As interest in restoration paint colors took off with the first historic paint cards produced at Colonial Williamsburg in the 1930s, other serious students of the colonial period sought to conduct their own research into historic colors. Folk art collectors, Bertram and Nina Fletcher Little, worked to restore the 18th-century colors in their 1728 farmhouse, Cogswell’s Grant. They favored rustic shades similar to the colors found in their extensive collection of redware pottery, painted 18th-century furniture, and primitive paintings and portraits. When paint colors were scraped down to identify the earlier layers on the fireplace paneling in the Little bedroom, a deep warm-brown used to paint the wood in imitation of cedar was discovered and replicated.

Pristine Pink - On the second floor deck of the Gropius House in Lincoln, Massachusetts, one wall was painted in this clear pink when noted architect Walter Gropius found that the sun’s reflection off the bright white siding proved too intense for the outdoor space. Hidden from public view, the pink wall is an unexpected and light-hearted field of color in the otherwise pristine and formal white exterior of this 1938 landmark of modern architecture.



Historic New England is the oldest, largest, and most comprehensive regional heritage organization in the nation. They bring history to life while preserving the past for everyone interested in exploring the authentic New England experience from the seventeenth century to today. Historic New England owns and operates thirty-six historic homes and landscapes spanning five states. The organization shares the region’s history through vast collections, publications, public programs, museum properties, archives, and family stories that document more than four hundred years of life in New England.

For more information, please contact Historic New England, 141 Cambridge Street, Boston, Mass. 02114, 617.227.3956 or visit on-line at www.HistoricNewEngland.org

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20th Century™ Colors of America- Color Guide



This guide provides historic documentation for the signature colors featured in California Paints’ 20th Century Colors of America. Throughout history, interior and exterior paint colors have been influenced by the social, political, cultural, artistic and literary trends of the time. This guide will reveal each color’s unique and distinctive story.

The 20th century marks one hundred years of social change, technological advances, and cultural diversity. From the invention of the internal combustion engine through the manufacturing and construction booms to the start of environmentalism, color has played a significant role. California Paints, in conjunction with Historic New England, has researched each color of the 20th Century Colors of America collection to bring you the most authentically documented historic color palette available today.

More than 30 of the colors in this collection are taken from house museums owned by Historic New England, the oldest, largest, and most comprehensive regional heritage organization in the nation. As a pioneer in documenting period paint colors and the steward of museum houses dating from the 1660s to the 1930s, Historic New England exemplifies authenticity in interior and exterior paint and decorative color.



20TH CENTURY™
COLORS OF AMERICA

1900-1920 — Arts and Crafts / Craftsman

The Arts and Crafts style emphasized the hand-crafted and the natural in all aspects of the home. In the natural grains of woods, especially golden oak, and in the textures and variegated shades of stone, tile, leather and metals, the Arts and Crafts palette includes earth tones as well as unexpected shades of copper, garnet red, olive and gold, and bright highlights of azure, imperial purple and turquoise.

1900-1920 Signature Colors: Call of the Wild, Cozy Bungalow, Combustion, Craftsman Gold, Rustic Green, Enamel Blue, Ballroom Blue, Ivory Cottage, Belfry Green*

1920-1940 — Art Deco / Art Moderne

The Art Deco / Art Moderne color palette reflects a shift to light, neutral shades with metallic undertones of silver and gold added to sand, gray, beige, and peach. Accents in exotic pastels such as orchid, seafoam green, coral, and pink were popular, along with saturated shades of orange, royal blue, Chinese red, and dark green.

1920-1940 Signature Colors: Inlaid Wood, Art Deco, Emerald City, Stainless Steel, Dust Bowl, Natural Wood*, Jazz Age, Seascape Jade*

1940-1960 — Mid-Century Modern

The post-World War II housing boom and the popularization of modern architecture brought bold colors in deep tones into popularity once again. Earth tones dominated exteriors, while interiors featured sophisticated, modulated neutral shades like bone, gray-beige, pearl gray, and taupe alongside saturated accents in fuchsia, teal, evergreen, charcoal, and chocolate with strong contrasts in chartreuse, tangerine, gold, and sulfur yellow.

1940-1960 Signature Colors: Construction Boom, Conservative, Peyton Place, Hot Tin Roof, Fahrenheit, Teal Accent, Pop Art, Modern White

1960-1980 — Post Modern

Strong contrasts characterize the colors of the Post Modern / Cold War era: pale neutrals and pastel tints, used both inside and outside the home, contrast with bright, clear accent colors. Deep shades of gold, yellow-green, red-orange, or red-brown, and bright blue, mint green, and turquoise provide bursts of color in houses painted in warm beige, tan, avocado, peach, or cinnamon tones.

1960-1980 Signature Colors: Green Leisure, Pristine Pink*, University Square, Urban Prosperity, Earth Day, Post Modern, Draft Card, Skyscraper

1900-1920 — Arts and Crafts / Craftsman Signature Color Stories

Call of the Wild - this strong avocado green dates not from the 1960s but from 1916: originating as an exterior paint, this color would have been familiar to painters of Queen Anne style houses where similar shades were used on window sashes and accents and would not be amiss on the trim or doors of a mid century modern. The name of this color is inspired by one of the most read books of the era, The Call of the Wild, by Jack London.

Combustion - a rich berry red, such as this color found in a 1907 wallpaper, was a staple of the Craftsman dining room; wine-colored walls in burgundy and claret have been a popular color for dining rooms since the early 19th century. The color is aptly named due to the wide spread use of the internal combustion engine and mass production of the automobile during this time.

Enamel Blue - called Pure Blue in a 1916 paint guide, this shade was intended for outside use, not for the siding of a house, but perhaps for shutters, window sash and doors. The use of enamel in saturated colors become an iconic trend for jewelry designed during this era.

Cozy Bungalow - the terracotta pink in this 1916 paint color was used both inside and outside: typical for a stucco bungalow in the Spanish Colonial Revival style; or a living room, library, or stairhall would be equally at home with this warm neutral shade.

To view all 47 color stories for the Arts and Crafts period, visit www.californiapaints.com

1920-1940 — Art Deco / Art Moderne Signature Color Stories

Art Deco - one of the most popular shades of the 1930s, this lavender, known as orchid, was used in bedrooms, bathrooms, kitchens, and as an accent for painted furniture and was often grouped with peach and seafoam green in interiors, where the ceiling might feature a light tint of one of those three colors; plumbing fixtures in orchid were among the most fashionable trends of the 1930s bathroom.

Emerald City - based on a 1939 paint, deep spinachy green such as this, mainly intended for exterior use (as a sash, door, or shutter color for example), also showed up in some of the “new” rooms of the 1930s and ‘40s, the den, sunroom or playroom, informal leisure spaces in a basement or an enclosed porch that featured casually furnished seating areas, games, or a bar, and often a durable painted or linoleum floor in a neutral dark color. The 1939 release of The Wizard of Oz detailing Dorothy’s quest to arrive at the Emerald City is one of the best known films of all time.

Dust Bowl - warm sandy beige was a popular choice on walls in the 1930s interior; also a useful trim or stucco color for the bungalow or Tudor Revival house. The Dust Bowl or the Dirty Thirties was a period of severe dust storms causing major ecological and agricultural damage to American and Canadian prairie lands from 1930 to 1936.

Jazz Age - this deep Spanish blue, used both inside and outside the home, comes from a 1939 paint; as the sunny California culture began to influence the national taste, elements of Mediterranean architecture appeared in houses across the country. On the outside of a house, shutters and doors, traditionally painted dark green, might sport a lively dark blue, while inside, the kitchen table and chairs might be repainted or a border of Spanish blue tile added to a bathroom. The beginning of the Art Deco period saw the rise of the Jazz Age – a time when innovation and energy was the common theme in all aspects of culture.

To view all 38 color stories for the Art Deco period, visit www.californiapaints.com

1940-1960 — Mid-Century Modern Signature Color Stories

Construction Boom - blues such as this, found in wallpapers of 1948 and 1965, were seen as an old-fashioned and somewhat patriotic color choice in traditional households throughout the mid 20th century. Colonial style decorative schemes of the 1940s might feature a living room with all of the woodwork, including built-in bookcases, painted in a uniform slate blue; in the 1960s, this color held a similar appeal for country kitchens and cozy bedrooms. The post war construction boom of the 1950’s sparked a rise in home construction and an upswing in the American economy.

Hot Tin Roof - this brilliant scarlet red is among the most favored colors of the modern style; Johannes Itten, the foremost color theorist of the twentieth century and a teacher at the influential Bauhaus school of architecture, formulated his color wheel around the three primary colors, and red, used in striking contrast with bright white and black, became one of the modern movement’s signature colors. Cat on a Hot Tin Roof, a play by Tennessee Williams, won the Pulitzer Prize for Drama in 1955.

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Fahrenheit - a 1909 wallpaper provided this deep red-brown typical of the saturated earth tones of the Arts & Crafts interior; saturated colors such as this made a comeback in the 1940s and ‘50s in mid century modern wallpapers, upholstery and furnishings. Fahrenheit 451 is a dystopian novel by Ray Bradbury which was first published in 1953. There are mixed interpretations of this iconic novel ranging from the examination of censorship to the role of technology and its impact on literature.