The Ordinary Iconic Ranch House is about the mid-20\textsuperscript{th}-century Ranch House in Georgia. It is presented in six parts.

Part III (this part) documents the emergence of the Ranch House nationally as the favored house type at the middle of the 20\textsuperscript{th} century.

Other parts of The Ordinary Iconic Ranch House tell other parts of the Ranch House story.
World War II may have put the brakes on the housing industry, but not on people’s dreams of new houses.

A housing report issued just as the war was ending advised prospective homebuyers that “a California-styled house ... like the ranch type ... is your best bet for the post-war.”
And, as if to make the point, in 1946 a demonstration “Post-War House” was built in Los Angeles:

A fabulous, ahead-of-its-time, Contemporary-style Ranch House ...

sponsored by a consortium of architects, landscape architects, appliance manufacturers, and builders led by Ranch House architect Fritz Burns.
The house was widely publicized in popular magazines and newspapers.

Also in 1946, a national housing survey found that the typical American homeowner-to-be did in fact favor what was described as “the low, rambling ... Ranch House which has come out of the Southwest.”
This book, edited by California Ranch-House designer Cliff May and published by *Sunset Magazine* in 1946, perhaps best illustrates what was “coming out of the Southwest” at that time:

long, low, linear Ranch Houses ...
linear Ranch Houses with “clusters” of bedrooms at one end, an integral garage or carport at the other, and open family living spaces in between ...

L-shaped or half-courtyard houses (in actuality, the linear Ranch House bent in the middle) ...
full courtyard houses ...

and the sprawling “rambling” Ranch House.
May also included numerous sketches showing different exterior treatments for these new Ranch Houses.
Two other books also published in 1946 help illustrate what was “coming out of the Southwest” at that time.

Both were by Paul R. Williams, a California architect and contemporary of Cliff May.

Williams is best known today for his modernistic commercial buildings and his contributions to the signature building at the Los Angeles Airport as well as the many glamorous homes he designed for Hollywood’s rich and famous.
But in his two 1946 books he also promoted the new Ranch House in a variety of forms including this one with its clustered bedrooms ...

this one with its “L” shape forming a half-courtyard ...
and this one with its rambling form and interchangeable exteriors.

Williams also presaged the emerging Contemporary-style Ranch House with this modern interpretation of a California half-courtyard house.
A popular home-and-garden magazine also reveals what was "coming out of the Southwest" right after World War II.

In 1946, Better Homes & Gardens magazine published a special issue on new house designs ...

highlighting the "new" California Ranch House.
Also featured were a long, linear Ranch House with a cluster of bedrooms at one end and a garage at the other end ... 

this rustic-style L-shaped ranch house with its shed roof, zoned interior layout, and open-plan living area ...
and with this combination living-dining area, open to the kitchen, which the architect conceded "had no name at the present time" (and which we now call the "family room") ... 

and this up-to-date interpretation of the traditional courtyard Ranch House, turned sideways on its suburban lot to maximize exposure to the sun -- and with the courtyard now referred to as a "patio."
This banner headline pretty well sums up the 1946 *Better Homes & Gardens* house issue!

Books and magazine articles were not the only things "coming out of the Southwest" at this time. Also coming out of the Southwest were houses -- lots of houses. And, in particular, lots of the new *Ranch Houses.*
Developers picked up right where they had left off before the war, adapting the new Ranch House designs to a middle-class market ...

and promoting the carefree outdoors California lifestyle.
Using the new "mass-production" techniques perfected during World War II, builders were putting up new Ranch Houses in record numbers in new subdivisions across the Southwest.

Their popularity is attested by scenes like this:

All these people, waiting in these incredibly long lines, to get a look at the latest houses in Maryvale, Arizona:
The truncated courtyard Ranch House on the left, and the L-shaped Ranch House on the right.

During the late 1940s, while all this was going on, a new style of Ranch House architecture had appeared on the scene. Called the *California Contemporary*, it had a more modern, less historic appearance.
In one version, the Contemporary style reduced the Ranch House to its essential structural components:

posts and beams, walls, windows, and roof ...

deliberately stripped of all picturesque details, all historicism, all rusticity.

This design theme carried through to the interior of the house as well.
In another version, the Contemporary style reduced the Ranch House to its essential form with minimal structural expression ...

And with similarly simplified interiors.
Like so much else about the Ranch House, the new style was first *promoted* by Cliff May, in his 1946 *Sunset Magazine* book ...

... and he continued to promote the Contemporary style a decade later in his 1958 book.
Between books, he established a partnership with Chris Choate called “Cliff May Associates” which provided plans for the new Contemporary-style Ranch Houses to builders and developers.

Here are two typical examples of Cliff May Homes.
This illustration documents how Cliff May worked with builders, developers, and real estate agents to market his new houses.

Here’s an as-built example of the kind of Contemporary-style Ranch House the new partnership was promoting.
Here’s another example, this one a new interpretation of the traditional California courtyard house.

Working from his new studio at Taliesin West outside Scottsdale, Arizona, Frank Lloyd Wright also contributed to the popularity of the new Contemporary style ...
with more versions of his unconventional Usonian Houses.

The relationship between these two pioneers of the Contemporary-style Ranch House – Cliff May and Frank Lloyd Wright – is not entirely clear. But we now know, from the editors of Sunset magazine, that May was a great admirer of Wright ...
and that from time to time he would fly his personal airplane from Los Angeles to Scottsdale to visit Wright at his new Taliesin West studio.
Cliff May was closely shadowed and perhaps even eclipsed by a new player in the field whose name would become synonymous with the Contemporary-style California Ranch House: Joseph Eichler.

Eichler, like May, was an unlikely candidate for ranch-house fame:

A New York City native, he had moved to San Francisco in 1925 where he sold dairy products and, at one time, rented a house designed by Frank Lloyd Wright.

In 1947, almost on a whim, he decided to go into the house-building business.
His first houses were unremarkable, to say the least. He was a developer, not a designer, and an inexperienced one at that.

Recognizing the problem, in 1949 Eichler retained two young San Francisco architects, Stephen Allen and Robert Anshen, both recent graduates of the University of Pennsylvania School of Architecture.

They lost no time in providing their client with some striking new contemporary designs.
Two years later, they created what was then and is still today known as the “Eichler house” with its trademark roofline, blank wall panels, and expansive use of glass.

Eichler’s houses took the new Contemporary style to its extreme, reducing the California Ranch House to its essential form and structure.
They also embodied a new modular post-and-beam construction system on top of the prevailing concrete-slab foundation, allowing for more flexibility and open space in the interior.

Here's a picture of Eichler's new Ranch Houses with the equally modern 1950 Ford "Custom" sedan.
Eichler's new houses were striking -- too striking for many people's tastes.

Sensing opportunity, other designers toned down Eichler's designs, keeping the trademark roof, but adding front windows and providing clearly visible front doors.
Still others offered more varied wall surface treatments and introduced some purely decorative elements such as screen walls.

An Eichler rival in southern California was William “Bill” Krisel who with Dan Palmer headed up a design and development company that specialized in these kinds of Contemporary Ranch Houses as well as starkly Modernist houses.
Indeed, Palmer & Krisel’s designs blur the distinction between “Ranch” and “Modern” to the point where they represent something unique.

They also introduced an aura of *glamour* into their new Ranch Houses.
After 1956, the inverted gable or “butterfly” roof became their trademark, as did the twin palm trees planted in front of many of their houses in Palm Springs.

Working closely with builders and developers, they designed and oversaw the construction of thousands of these new Ranch Houses across the Southwest from the mid-1950s through the 1960s.
The Alexander Construction Company built so many Palmer & Krisel-designed houses in Palm Springs that they were known locally as “Alexanders.”

The new Contemporary style was quickly adopted by other California builders and developers, as evidenced by this 1950 real-estate advertisement.
Leading the trend was San Francisco merchant-builder David Bohannon, who successfully downsized the new Contemporary-style Ranch House for a broader middle-class market ...

all the while continuing to promote the southern California Ranch House lifestyle, even if it was just on the new backyard deck, with its new sliding glass door.
Not to be outdone by their West Coast counterparts, some East Coast architects like Royal Barry Wills, better known for their traditional house designs, adapted the new California Ranch House to their more tradition-oriented clientele ...

by adopting its new, open, zoned floor plans ...
but dressing them up in traditional East Coast colonial styles more familiar to their traditional clients.

These hybrid designs were based on Royal Barry Wills’ belief that “the wisest attitude seems to be to understand fully and sympathetically all the advances in planning techniques made by the extreme modern school and utilize them in a conservative manner."

And in this they succeeded, to the point where the underlying “ranch house” designs are almost hidden from casual view.
However, with a little help from their junior partners, like Hugh Stubbins, these architects could, when pressed, offer up some credible modern Ranch Houses ... along with some interesting ranch-house interpretations of the traditional New England saltbox house.
Evidencing the growing popularity of the new Ranch House across the country, some homebuilding companies began marketing these houses on a national scale.

Chief among them was the National Homes Corporation of Indiana.

National Homes provided its potential customers with a portfolio of designs for their new Ranch Houses.

The houses were then prefabricated at the company’s Indiana factory and then shipped them by truck to the building sites where franchised builders assembled the prefabricated components into finished houses.
The results were startling to homebuyers accustomed to long on-site construction delays – not quite instantaneous, but pretty quick compared to traditional housebuilding methods.

In 1954 National Homes Corporation updated its entire line of prefabricated houses. The company hired Charles Goodman, a noted Modernist architect practicing in the Washington, D.C., area, to design its new houses. The result was a portfolio of new Contemporary-style Ranch Houses aimed at the mid-section of the new house market.
First advertised in 1954, the new Ranch Houses were unveiled through nationwide open houses hosted by National Homes franchised builders in 1955.

The variety of mid-market Ranch Houses was mind-boggling, as was their instantaneous popularity – evidenced by the fact that National Homes Corporation claimed to be building one of every 48 new houses in the country at the time!
Another national company building the new Ranch Houses was the Aladdin Readi-Cut Homes in Michigan.

Like the other national companies, Aladdin offered a wide range of houses aimed at a middle-class market.
But unlike National Homes, Aladdin houses were not prefabricated. Rather, all the building materials such as lumber, windows, doors, and roofing were gathered at the Michigan staging area and then shipped to the building site by rail or truck where the houses were “stick-built” by hand using traditional on-site methods.

Yet another company to market houses nationally was the Lustron Company in Ohio.
Like National Homes, Lustron manufactured the components of its new houses in a single factory, and like Aladdin Homes, the Lustron components were then shipped by truck to the assembly site.

But unlike both of its competitors, Lustron houses were made entirely of steel.
Most of the attention that these houses have received has been because of their novel construction materials and techniques.

But equally novel was their design: highly abstracted versions of the new Ranch House, with the new Ranch House plan.
Although never successful commercially, because of their novelty, Lustron houses advanced the idea of the Ranch House nationally.

The new Ranch House set off a post-war mass-media frenzy.

You could not pick up a popular magazine at the time without seeing or reading something about the new Ranch House.
At the forefront were the many home-and-garden magazines, aimed at all those new post-war homebuyers, featuring new house designs including lots of Ranch Houses.

They ranged from high-brow to the do-it-yourselfer – but they all featured the new Ranch Houses.
Some magazine publishers, like *Better Homes & Gardens*, produced special editions featuring the new Ranch House designs ...

... and the new casual, outdoors lifestyle associated with them ...

... while others, like *House Beautiful*, presented the new Ranch House as part of a glamorous new mid-century lifestyle.
There also was an explosion of “choose-your-own” house-plan books, all featuring the new Ranch House.

A good example of a commercial plan book is this one published by the Garlinghouse Company of Topeka, Kansas, in 1953, one in a long series of plan books by this company.

From a truly mind-boggling array of houses, the prospective buyer was invited to "select the design for your new home ... and send for the complete plans [and] specifications."
Many buyers chose from a palette of fairly modest California-builder designs like these.

For the more adventurous, there were more up-to-date designs like these ... described as "suitable for either a city or suburban setting."
And for the truly daring homebuyer, there were over-the-top “modernistic” designs, with bold, angular forms and details.

Of special interest to us here in Georgia is this example of the hip-roofed, red-brick Ranch House that we are so familiar with.
Garlinghouse increased the circulation of its plan books by offering them to local lumber yards and builders who then used them to advertise their products and services.

Another good example of a wide-ranging plan book is this edition of *101 Homes for Every Purse and Person* published slightly later, in 1957.
101 Homes presented another mind-boggling array of Ranch Houses, ranging from conservative designs like these ...

to Contemporary-style designs like these.
Also included were Ranch Houses with low, wide gable roofs and inverted or "butterfly" roofs ...

and houses with combination shed-gable roofs and flat roofs.
"Standard" Ranch Houses like these, with their broad hipped roofs and minimal stylistic detailing, were presented throughout the plan book.

Other plan books were published by trade and industry groups, promoting their building materials, but also promoting the new Ranch Houses.

This one was published by the Structural Clay Products Institute in 1947, promoting the use of brick.
It included designs for the brick "rambling" Ranch House ... and this California "bungalow" Ranch House.
This plan book was published by the Lumber Dealers Research Council to promote the use of new wood products in the new Ranch Houses.

It presented family-oriented Ranch Houses like these ...
featuring the use of redwood and cedar siding and other wood products.

Most of the popular plan books presented the new Ranch House in a suburban or neighborhood setting. But this one, published by the University of Illinois, was aimed at farmers.
Here's a typical layout, accompanied by pairs of views of all four sides of the farmhouse, showing two different versions of the new Contemporary style.

Several *books* about new houses also played an important role in promoting the new Ranch House.

This one, published in 1946, with its somewhat boring-looking title page, was a *primer* on new houses aimed at all those first-time homebuyers in the post-war marketplace.
In addition to lots of hard-nosed advice, this book also "legitimized" the new Ranch Houses by lumping them in with the tried-and-true Cape Cods and Georgians, as if to say: nothing radical or dangerous here!

The editors included a number of new Ranch House designs, ranging from this traditional California Ranch House with stucco walls and tile roof but also with a non-traditional zoned and open floor plan ...
to this (slightly) rambling "one-floor house" in Texas ...

and this ultra-new non-traditional Ranch House in the emerging Contemporary style.
For those of us in Georgia, this book contained a particularly interesting new Ranch House, one designed by a Georgia Tech architect, W. Montgomery Anderson. It featured a long, low form, with a cluster of bedrooms at one end, a carport/garage at the other end, and family living spaces between – including a wide-open, front-to-back living room.

Also published in 1946 was a book that had far-reaching *behind-the-scenes* consequences for the new Ranch House. It was published for a consortium of banks and other financial institutions which were in the business of underwriting mortgages for new homes.
In order for new houses to be successful in the marketplace, they had to be "accepted by" (or "acceptable to") mortgage brokers.

And in this trade book, the new Ranch House got its stamp of approval -- several stamps of approval, in fact -- with this "compact" Ranch House ...
this sprawling L-shaped or half-courtyard Ranch House with its zoned interior floor plan ...

described as "rambling, picturesque, and supremely livable ... "

this rather avant-garde flat-roofed courtyard Ranch House ...
and this Frank Lloyd Wright-inspired "linear" Ranch House.

Even the nation’s newspapers got into the promotional act with the Associated Press distributing weekly articles about the new Ranch House.
This one featured a Ranch House designed around another new mid-century phenomenon -- the television set -- which because of its central location and swivel stand could be seen from almost every room in the house!

And speaking of television: In 1955, California builder Joseph Eichler took to the airwaves to promote his new Ranch Houses nationally ...

and not through spot advertising, but on a network television show called “The House that 'Home' Built.”
The "Home" show was hosted by Arlene Francis and Hugh Downs ...

and it aired in the morning right after the “Today” show.
This "Eichler-style" Ranch House closely resembles the house that was featured on the show.

In the 1950s, as many as 70% of all the new houses built across the country were Ranch Houses, making the Ranch House the single most popular house ever built in this country.
This concludes Part III of *The Ordinary Iconic Ranch House*. The story of the Ranch House in Georgia continues with Part IV, "The Ranch House in Georgia: An Overview."