

## Herb Greene's Crazy 1960s Prairie Chicken House Was a Green Design Before its Time



We were happily surprised to find that in addition to being a totally eye-catching piece of iconic architecture [Herb Greene's crazy 1960s Prairie House](#) was an early example of conscious green design. We have featured several examples of pre-industrial age architecture that had no choice but to incorporate green thinking into their design, as well as everything that has been developed since the 1970s environmental movement, but Greene's personal home (dubbed the "Prairie Chicken House" by Look Magazine) was conceived a decade before green thinking even became popular. Everything that we now associate with smart architecture can be found in this, ahem, interesting house: [natural materials](#), passive design, natural

lighting and ventilation, energy efficiency, and careful site placement. Technology has come a long way since Herb Greene and Julius Shulman took these rather grainy photographs, but we thought our readers might enjoy a small glimpse at this design that came before its time.

Herb Greene was definitely going for something that would stimulate the senses when he built this home. He chose a 2 acre site on the prairies of Norman, Oklahoma where no other houses could be seen, and oriented the house to resist fierce winds and absorb sunlight. The kitchen and family room receive the early sunrise rays while the main bedroom captures the stronger afternoon sun.

Framed with simple timber construction, the unfinished cedar shingles make the house look like a “chicken.” Partially inspired by Frank Lloyd Wright and other modernists, Greene didn’t really have a chicken in mind, but he was going for a warm and feathered effect. In the 1960s, using cedar would have made perfect sense, though now we would hope for the FSC-certified variety of wood. Women were said to have cried when they entered the shaggy home, while one man asked if the house had been hit by a tornado! In any case, it’s inspiring to know that even the earliest starchitects had nature on their minds while considering their designs.



*images via Herb Greene and Julius Shulman*

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