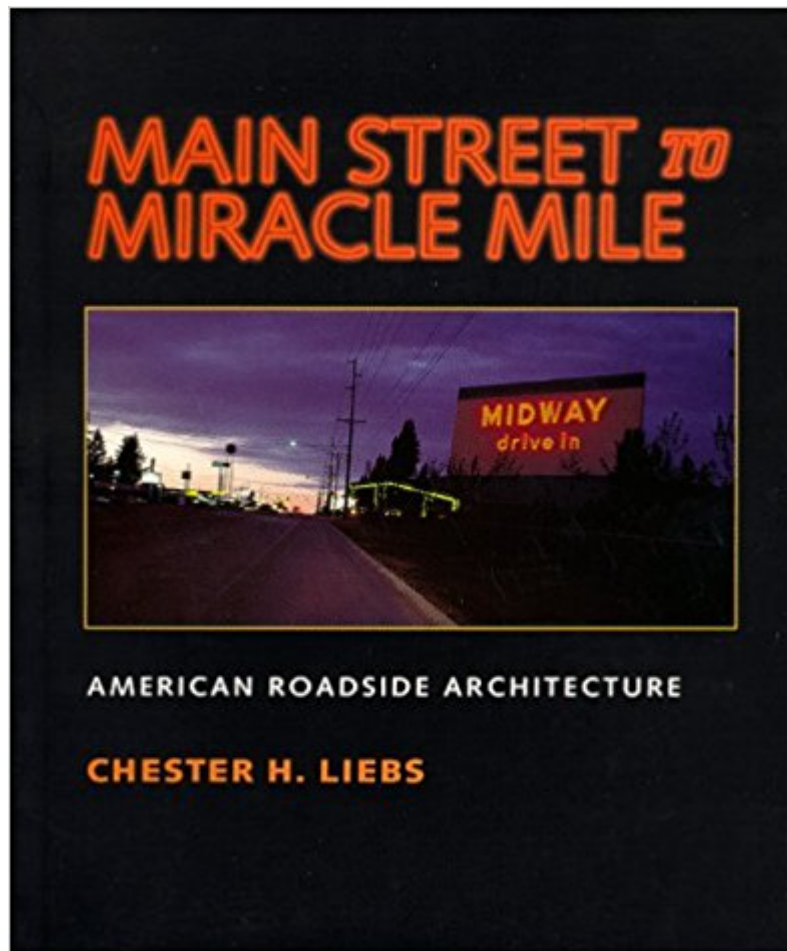




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# Main Street To Miracle Mile: American Roadside Architecture



## Synopsis

First published in 1985, Chester Liebs' *Main Street to Miracle Mile* established the twentieth-century roadside landscape as a subject for serious study. Liebs traces the transformation of commercial development as it has moved from centralized main streets, out along the street car lines, to form the "miracle miles" and shopping malls of today. He also explores the evolution of roadside buildings, from supermarkets and motels to automobile showrooms and drive-in theaters. Both an historical survey and invaluable guide for reading highway landscapes, this classic work—which has inspired numerous studies, museum exhibits, and preservation efforts—is now back in print with new commentary by the author.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

Recent books have taken up single facets of American roadside architecture, e.g., J.J.C. Andrews's *The Well-Built Elephant and Other Roadside Attractions* ( LJ 3/15/84) and Richard Gutman and Elliott Kaufman's *American Diner* ( LJ 2/1/80); but this is the first overview of the subject. Lieb, as a "windshield archeologist," is concerned with that package of building, sign, and image which lures the motorist off the highway. Seven building types get in-depth treatment: auto showrooms, gas stations, supermarkets, miniature golf courses, drive-in theaters, motels, and restaurants. There is an excellent bibliography, and numerous photographs chronicle the evolution of this ever-changing landscape. An extensively researched work that will appeal to both scholars and general readers. Highly recommended. Douglas Birdsall, North Dakota State Univ. Lib., Fargo

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"A wonderful, ground-breaking book... A serious cultural history by the leading authority in the field, who views his topic with wit and irony." (Robert Campbell Boston Globe)"When Mr. Liebs analyzes the commercial environment as 'a visual medium containing dozens of exhibits that mirror swings in the national mood' he brings us up against ourselves. This is history you can pick out in your own life in your own town." (Denise Scott Brown New York Times Book Review)" Main Street to Miracle Mile is the first book I have found that treats our contemporary American roadside architecture with the serious attention it deserves. Every traveller will relish the insights Liebs provides, and urbanists and architectural historians will welcome the treatment of the strip as a form of contemporary vernacular." (J. B. Jackson)"A serious book but what fun!... Combining great pictures with lucid, insightful, and often witty text, it tells the story of what has been growing up along the nation's highways over the last 80 years as the commerce of the cities expanded into the countrysides." (Clarence Petersen Chicago Tribune)" Main Street to Miracle Mile is a classic study and will probably remain the standard history of roadside architecture for years to come." (Philip Langdon Historic Preservation)

This is the classic book by Chester Liebs about the architectural evolution of the American commercial strip. Written at a time when interest ran high about this topic, propelled primarily by Learning from Las Vegas by Robert Venturi, this is a scholarly examination of the evolution of this prominent building type in America. Unfortunately, interest in this has since waned even though commercial strip development has continued its onward march unabated. It is high time for a new examination to update this classic book. For the connoisseur of late twentieth-century architectural history, especially vernacular architectural history, this is an essential book for one's library.

Very well written and fascinating treatise on the evolution of commercial signage and architecture and, ultimately, urban sprawl. During my seven decades of life I was observer to so much of this and now to be able to read an academic description of what I always had taken for granted has been very interesting. Even though academic, it is certainly not dry or stuffy but, to the contrary, a very comfortable and enjoyable read .

Cheap. Ok condition, I got it used, but great price

An excellent book covering the trends during an important period of economic change.

"Main Street to Miracle Mile" is an excellent introduction to the development of American cities in this century. What's more, it takes what could be a dull topic and makes it lively by looking at such structures as gas stations, motels, and shopping centers and showing how the changes in the architecture of these businesses reflect the changes that were taking place in American society. Good photographs from many parts of America illustrate the impact a more mobile population has had on the location, size, and design of the buildings that serve us. While this book has been used as a text for college classes, it also can be very enjoyable for the casual reader.

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