2022

# MODELS FOR LIVING: CRITIQUES OF MIDCENTURY SUBURBAN DESIGN, WITH A VIEW FROM LOWER BUCKS COUNTY, PA

Christopher J. Palladino

# MODELS FOR LIVING: CRITIQUES OF MIDCENTURY SUBURBAN DESIGN, WITH A VIEW FROM LOWER BUCKS COUNTY, PA

A dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree of

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

to the faculty of the

DEPARTMENT OF HISTORY

of

ST. JOHN'S COLLEGE OF LIBERAL ARTS AND SCIENCES
at
ST. JOHN'S UNIVERSITY
New York
by
Christopher J. Palladino

Date Submitted:_____

_____
Christopher J. Palladino

Date Approved:_____

_____
Susan Schmidt-Horning, Ph.D.

## ABSTRACT

MODELS FOR LIVING: CRITIQUES OF MIDCENTURY SUBURBAN DESIGN, WITH A VIEW FROM LOWER BUCKS COUNTY, PA

Christopher J. Palladino

After World War II, millions of American servicemen returned home, anxious to put the war behind them, settle down, and begin a family. This resulted in an unprecedented spike in demand for housing, intensified by the low-interest loans granted by the G.I. Bill. Combined with an aggressive advertising campaign, longer term mortgages and an attractive and novel building plan made Levittown, PA an immediate success. Concurrently, geographical sectors of the United States witnessed an historical change in the manner in which homes were designed and constructed. Innovations such as mass production, the efficiency system, and the assembly line were expansively applied to the housing sector.

This project traces the development and influence of modern suburbia in Lower Bucks County, PA with a particular focus on Levittown, followed by similar nearby developments that were patterned after it, in the years between 1947 and 1980. Many other American communities followed these design and engineering models, constructed with a modernized infrastructure predicated on the use of the automobile. These developments are evaluated in their intersection with design theory, community concepts, national identity, Cold War ideology, advertising, gender as well as class and race, and the criticisms aimed at them. The history of design and corresponding philosophy and applications are analyzed and applied extensively. The methodology employed integrates

various disciplines to illustrate the expansiveness of design theory. An examination of advertising, personal walkability studies, tax records, the Bucks County archives, periodicals like *House Beautiful*, and various secondary and primary sources are pieced together to form a unique argument on the effects of postwar suburban design and the importance of this design on community, outlooks, and aspirations. The ramifications of this should cause us to reevaluate our built environment and consider the implications of how we engineer the spaces we exist in from roads to schools to shopping centers to the home. Design matters.

# DEDICATION

*To my wife*
*Heather Jane,*
*for everything*

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I have always been fascinated with architecture, and became more acutely aware of neighborhood design when we bought our first home in the Diamond Hill historic district in Lynchburg, Virginia. We spent hours enjoying neighborhood walks and exploring other historic districts near our own. I became fascinated with design and its origins. I found myself reading copiously about architecture and weaving it into my lessons as a young history teacher. The entire experience changed what I wanted in a neighborhood, and steered us away from Levittown and other neighborhoods that reflected its design when we moved back to Pennsylvania. The nagging feeling about the dynamic difference in the design prompted me to begin my research into design theory.

My gratitude goes to the St. John's University History Department, specifically my advisor, Dr. Susan Schmidt-Horning, and committee members, Dr. Mauricio Borrero, Dr. Timothy Milford, and Dr. Lara Vapnek, as well as Dr. Kristin Szylvian and Dr. Tracey-Anne Cooper for reading early sections and providing significant feedback. Dr. Nerina Rustomji continued to encourage me; Fran Balla's constant help, humor, and expertise kept my head above water. Outside of the university, archivists at the Mercer Museum Library helped me locate and make sense of documents, and Constance Carter and Nanette Gibbs at the Library of Congress were astonishing new friends and confidantes, making each trip a welcome adventure.

To my wife, Heather, the positive encouragement you lavished on me throughout this unexpectedly long journey did not go unappreciated. Your editing and revisions made carried me along and kept me going longer than I could have done alone. I am in your debt. You are a saint.

To Isabella and Nicholas, I am so proud of both of you, and grateful for the close relationship we have as a family. I have enjoyed our many trips through built spaces and appreciate that you value and are sensitive to proper design. I love you all so much.

To my many friends and colleagues, especially Dr. Brenda Mellon, who have been an encouragement throughout the process, knowing that it is hard to sacrifice research for teaching in order to research for writing. Thank you to those who read portions of this project, especially Allyssa Hampson, who provided content edits for the entire draft. Thank you to Stephanie Kaceli for painstakingly correcting formatting throughout. Lastly, to Dr. Leslie Gulden, who loaned me her cabin in the woods to think, write, and finally complete this project.

# TABLE OF CONTENTS

# LIST OF FIGURES

# INTRODUCTION

**"It is a one-class community on a great scale, too congested for effective variety and too spread out for social relationships…Mechanically, it is admirably done. Socially, the design is backward." - Lewis Mumford, 1952[1]**

Whenever I fly, I look over the landscape during takeoffs and landings. From a bird's eye view, it is clear that much of the built environment in the suburban United States is isolated streets where the residents are forced to drive for almost every trip outside the home. Even when schools or parks seem close by, it is obvious from the window of a plane that vehicles are still the safest way to get there. Yet these designs did not have to wind up this way. Suburban communities constructed prior to World War II were not solely predicated on the automobile, nor were those outside of cities around the world. Having flown into places like Oslo, Norway, Stockholm, Sweden, Vienna, Austria, Munich, Germany, Amsterdam, Netherlands, and Charleroi, Belgium, it is evident that many western nations chose a different built "path" than the United States. The choices about design made by developers, engineers, investors, and politicians at the local and state governments saddled the United States with a dilemma of community, aesthetics, ecology, healthy living, sustainability, and consumerism. Part of the challenge over the years for some researchers has been to bring attention to the shortcomings of design as more and more of these models are constructed and sold. The design of American postwar suburbia has become synonymous with the United States itself and the suburbanite as the archetype American.

---

[1] David Kushner, *Levittown: Two Families, One Tycoon, and the Fight for Civil Rights in America's Legendary Suburb*, (New York: Bloomsbury Publishing, 2009), 76.

**A Peek at Prospective Levittown Buyers**

At the war's end, millions of men returned from long overseas duties. Many of them just wanted to settle down, get married, and start a family. Part of the challenge in 1945 was the massive shortage of homes. Millions of young couples and new families occupied cramped apartments and urban homes. The crash of the stock market in 1929 and the Great Depression had witnessed such a decline in home construction that the inventory of new homes was only at a trickle by the end of the war. Yet, demand was spiking. Satisfying the need with innovative construction and engineering feats was a problem in need of a solution.

Imagine a young husband and wife living in a cramped 500-700 square foot apartment in a century old row home in Trenton. Desiring to have children someday, they looked around and wondered how they could raise them there. The appliances are remnants of the Roaring Twenties, worn and kept in working order by frequent repairs. While the plumbing does work, it struggles at times. The streets are narrow, dingy, and although the closest food store is only a few blocks away, it does not feel entirely safe and is sparse despite the ending of the war and the rationing.

On a Sunday after church, this couple drives from their urban setting in Trenton, NJ to visit a model house in Levittown, PA, just across the river in Lower Bucks Country. Like many their age, they had heard of the new homes built by the same architect as the now famous New York suburb. They are curious about the brand-new neighborhood with the winding and curvilinear streets, and eager to see it for themselves. They anxiously cross the "Trenton Makes" Bridge into Morrisville, Pennsylvania, an older community. After Morrisville, the roads open up into the countryside. Driving

with anticipation, they talk nervously about the homes, the neighborhood, and the low cost. They find themselves practically giddy with the idea of owning their own home. Eventually they turn from Woodbourne Road onto Trenton Avenue, and can see some of the homes on brand new streets in a treeless expanse (see Figure 1). They turn one more time, pulling onto a newly constructed street with homes being erected as far as the eye can see. They are witnessing an exciting vision of American progress and the postwar economic boom.[2]

Anticipation is in the air as they cautiously park the car amid the other onlookers, potential customers, or even neighbors. Walking up the driveway, they admire the tidy lawn, and join the line to await their turn. As they enter the model home, they are struck by a clean sweeping view of a home so different from their current situation. In a daze, the wife gravitates towards the shiny new kitchen, where it seems as though appliance advertisements literally come to life. She imagines life being more efficient and that a modern kitchen would make her life easier.[3]

Meanwhile, the husband imagines the luxury of his own driveway, without having to fight for street parking. They both envision their children, playing safely in the spacious living room, or out back where they will plant a carpet of green grass. Driving away, they are intoxicated with the possibilities. Although fictitious, this scenario holds a powerful place as a depository for our dreams, and even begins to reinvent and reimagine the idea of the American Dream itself. The years overseas, the sacrifices made relationally, the wedding, and moving into an apartment in Trenton now appear to be a

---

[2] Diane Harris, ed. *Second Suburb: Levittown, Pennsylvania* (Pittsburgh, PA: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2010).
[3] Harris, *Second Suburb*.

long way off while standing in Levittown. This new development represented hope, aspiration, and a bucolic lifestyle.[4]

Now imagine a middle-aged couple of limited means but a local perspective. They inherited their catalog house, a home ordered by mail from popular catalogs of the time, built in the late nineteenth century by the husband's father. They took care of the husband's parents in the home before they passed. They know their neighbors, as he grew up with them, and they in turn also inherited their homes from the previous generation. The streets are narrower in comparison to those in Levittown, which encourages frequent interaction with others on the "block." Their children walk to the local elementary and even the local high school as her father did when he grew up there. The graduating class for their eldest son was 1947 and consisted of less than fifty classmates all of whom grew up together in the same community.[5]

This same couple was also curious about the new community being built in the nearby potato fields, just a few miles from home. The amount of trucks and other work equipment traveling through the main roads has both piqued their curiosity and caused some concern. On the same Sunday, they decide to drive to the same model house as the young couple above. However, their view is very different. Instead of being wowed by the newness or impressed by the expanded lawns, roads, and streets, their response was muted. Where the first couple saw progress, the second couple wondered about what might be lost in a new development. They feared the possible congestion on their roads,

---

[4] Harris, *Second Suburb*.
[5] Harris, *Second Suburb*.

he changes in the scope of their world, and an increase in many young people that will be crowding their stores.[6]

This imagined Sunday visit by these two couples illustrates the contrast between the old and the new. It represented where Lower Bucks County was and where it was going. The latter is partially captured in the approach to the advertising of these new homes. Consider the carefully planned General Electric advertisement designed to appeal to the returning soldier. A uniformed American soldier is sitting on a bench next to his sweetheart; her arm is around his shoulder (see Figure 2). Smiling, they both watch as he uses a stick to draw a home in the dirt on the ground. The advertisement has fourteen different appliances running along the bottom of the page, including an iron, refrigerator, and an electric fan, among others. At the top of the ad, in cursive font, it declared, "It's a promise!" According to the narrative, the soldier was either leaving or returning to his duties. Before he left, he not only promised to come back alive, but that their separation was worth it. Why? Because when he returned, they would be able to settle down in their own single home full of new appliances.

**Design, the Post-War Suburbs, and the Literature**

In 2016, *Money* magazine listed Levittown, PA as the forty-first best place to live in the United States. It was the highest ranked community in the entire commonwealth. The descriptor packed a great deal about community into the short paragraph: "A planned community that dates to 1952, this Philadelphia suburb is relatively new compared to its neighbors. Yet what Levittown lacks in history it makes up for with affordable homes,

---

[6] Harris, *Second Suburb*.

outdoor spaces, good schools, and humane commutes."[7] In a video describing the factors that were combined for the list the narrator explains that diversity, entertainment, cost of homes, and schools among many other combinations were considered.[8] The pattern of living that expanded from Levittown, New York to Levittown, Pennsylvania, "the Second Levittown," took a substantial new step in community and urban planning. The fact that this community still ranks in the top fifty after a half-century of development, construction, suburban planning, investment in infrastructure at the state and federal levels, and massive demographic trends is a testament to the values built and fused into the fabric of modern suburbia. And it represents what customers wanted despite the criticisms heaped onto this community. The comment "relatively new compared to its neighbors" hints to the juxtaposition between the two couples and their interpretations of Levittown referenced earlier.

Moreover, the fact that the Levittown communities are and continue to be imitated in countless ways since the Forties and Fifties stands as a testament to the longevity of the vision of the Levitts and others encouraging this new form of living. As Barbara M. Kelly, argued in *Expanding the American Dream: Building and Rebuilding Levittown,* "Levittown [NY] was the reduction of the American dream to the practical and affordable reality, made possible by the cooperative efforts of the government, the builders, and the banks."[9] The application of mass production, the design elements of these suburbs, and the subsequent effects of these made the Levittowns, New York and

---

[7] "Best Places to Live (#41: Levittown, PA)" *Money*, September 17, 2016.
[8] "How Money Finds the Best Places to Live in America," *Money,* September 19, 2016.
[9] Barbara M. Kelly, *Expanding the American Dream: Building and Rebuilding Levittown,* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1993), 44.

Pennsylvania especially, and other similar developments the sustaining force they have forged in our culture in making the United States, as Kenneth Jackson declared, a "suburban nation."[10] Suburban America is a place that still sells. New homes and new communities continue to be built. The demand, outside of a few economic hiccups and recessions, is an ever-rising line or increased sales from Levittown to the ubiquitous Mill Creek Estates or Sunny Acres in Bucks County. "… Levittown [became] a synonym for quintessential postwar suburban environment."[11] This makes it difficult to determine its influence on contemporary society. The debate revolves around the influence related to the democratic and American aspirations of this type of design and the pejorative mocking critiques from its detractors.

Much has been written about postwar suburbia, beginning in the late Forties when the first residents moved into the original model Levittowner in the state of New York.[12] Many authors, like social commentators Lewis Mumford and Vance Packard, along with novelists like John Updike and Richard Yeats, write about these "new" developments and critiqued these changes in living arrangements. Meanwhile, a small number of sociologists, designers, magazines and periodicals, and political voices supported them. There were architects like Victor Gruen and contemporary investors and planners like the Congress for New Urbanism (CNU) who are trying to fix what they see as the problems

---

[10] Kenneth Jackson, *Crabgrass Frontier* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1987).

[11] Kelly, 56.

[12] A history of suburban literature spans from critiques to analyses to ethnographic studies. Authors and books have included Gans' *The Levittowners*, Kenneth Jackson's *Crabgrass Frontier*, Lewis Mumford's *The City in History*, Vance Packard's trilogy on status and waste, and more recently, James Howard Kuntsler's *Geography to Nowhere*. Novels have also been used as a medium to convey the suburban landscape and culture. *Revolutionary Road* by Richard Yates is among the top analyses. Popular culture is another medium to tackle the subject of suburbia whether through music like Malvina Reynold's *Little Boxes* or the film, *No Down Payment*.

in suburban design. The CNU is joined by other groups who promote alternative suburban developments like "pocket neighborhoods"[13] in the Pacific Northwest. These are communities where the residents live in homes with shared outdoor spaces (as opposed to a private yard or lawn). They have homes that are in close proximity to one another and with parking on the fringe of the community requiring residents to walk through the community to the individual homes. Like Levittown, the design is thoroughly considered as the width of the porch railing is wide enough to support a cup of tea or coffee to encourage human interaction and community. One of the most famous and high-profile attempts at constructing a community in this vein is Celebration USA, Florida which originated as a project by the Disney Company.[14] Even the notion of the indoor shopping mall, which will be addressed later, was an idealistic means to create a space that was lacking in suburban design.

Many of the books and studies of postwar suburbia have aimed their criticisms at consumerism,[15] while others challenged the homogeneity that was a byproduct of living in "little boxes."[16] Others questioned the damage to the environment that suburbia inflicted, due to increased gasoline usage, and great expansions of asphalt, among other ecological challenges.[17] Race, gender, and class are issues and inquiries are part of the historiographical analysis of postwar living arrangements. The often-overlooked race

---

[13] Pocket Neighborhoods: Creating Small Scale Community in a Large Scale World, last updated August 14, 2021. https://www.pocket-neighborhoods.net/

[14] Douglas Frantz and Catherine Collins. *Celebration USA: Living in Disney's Brave New World* (New York: Henry Holt Publishing, 1999).

[15] *The Consumer's Republic, Satisfaction Guaranteed, The History of the American Dream, The Fifties*.

[16] Malvina Reynolds, "Little Boxes"" from *Little Boxes and Other Handmade Songs* (New York: Oak Publications, 1962).

[17] Stacey Mitchell, *Big Box Swindle: The True Cost of Mega-Retailers and the Fight for America's Independent Businesses* (Boston: Beacon Press, 2007).

riots in Levittown, Pennsylvania in the Fifties stands as an example of the intersectionality of these ideas.[18] On the other hand, the Women's Movement in the 1960s-1970s was partially brought to attention through the popularization of Betty Friedan's *Feminine Mystique*, a book questioning the lifestyle of the white suburban housewife.[19]

Many suburban analyses come across like Robert C. Wood's 1959 book, *Suburbia: Its People and Their Politics*. The first paragraph ends with, "This is another book about the American suburb and another criticism of the suburban character." Like Wood, this is also what I am not attempting to accomplish. He continues, "It is, however, a different kind of book with a different kind of criticism."[20] In the spirit of Wood's introduction, this project is a "different kind of analysis." Unlike other studies, it will place design and design theory at the center of the argument. Additionally, it will pull together disparate disciplines to make an argument that the design of Levittown and other modern suburban developments was a catalyst for many of the cultural changes and reinforcements for the decades to come, and that design continues to influence economic, social, and political outcomes.

Despite decades of examination and hundreds of articles and books written, supplemented by dozens of films and documentaries produced, an intentionally interdisciplinary study approach has been absent. In this project, history is joined with literature, the arts and humanities, and theological concepts among others to buttress and support the conclusions. It begins with the history and philosophy of design theory.

---

[18] David Kushner, *Levittown: Two Families, One Tycoon, and the Fight for Civil Rights in America's Legendary Suburb* (New York: Walker & Company, 2009).
[19] Betty Friedan, *The Feminine Mystique* (New York: W.W. Norton and Company, 1963).
[20] Robert C. Wood, *Suburbia: Its People and Their Politics* (Boston, Houghton Mifflin, 1959).

From there this study follows the thread design theory that is used to weave other ideas that come from such diverse disciplines as media ecology to philosophy. Threads from the richness of these vast sources are woven together, examined, and analyzed. At times, like the back of a tapestry, these various content areas might seem incongruent as interconnected fields of study. Academic disciplines, at times, stand like silos. However, intentionally breaching these walls and addressing the political, historical, poetic, artistic, and literary sources will illustrate the pervasive influences and effects of postwar suburbia and its design on the culture at large.

In the historiography of suburbia, the influence of design and the built environment is overlooked or under appreciated. Race, class, and gender respectively become the hub for the analysis. Design on the other hand when it is addressed is used tangentially. This thesis instead puts design at the center. Many times, I have heard students, colleagues, or friends claim: "It's just a building." This thesis attempts to dispel this simplistic notion. French intellectual and theologian Ernest Dimnet captures the importance of design when he stated: "Architecture, of all the arts, is the one which acts the most slowly, but the most surely, on the soul."[21] Frank Lloyd Wright even boasted, "The mother art is architecture. Without an architecture of our own we have no soul of our own civilization."[22] These two quotes can be accused of hyperbole, but the influence and power of the built environment and design and its transcendent nature are factors that must be considered. From the Gothic Cathedrals of the European Middle Ages to the deck of a suburban split level built in the eighties to the parking design at the Target

---

[21] Ernest Dimnet, *What We Live By* (Spokane: Musson Book Company, 1932), 5.
[22] Quoted in Robin Sommer, *Frank Lloyd Wright: A Gatefold Portfolio* (New York: Barnes & Noble Books, 1997), vii.

Center in the commercial district, the design is influencing behavior. This influence elicits the questions: How much does design function in human interaction in the suburban environment? What historical forces are playing a role in the choices builders like the Levitts made?

The postwar suburbs built between 1945-1960 contributed to a design trend that was reproduced on an extensive scale in subsequent decades, and still reproduced today. This design eventually contributed to the ideology divide in the Cold War, intensification of consumerism, exacerbated race anxieties, reinforced assumptions about gender, and ideas about the purpose of education. These new developments altered the landscape. The regions and the areas adjacent to them never looked the same again as sprawl spread in multiple directions. To thinkers like Kenneth Jackson and James Howard Kunstler, these alterations impacted an entire country. New developments demanded more designs as needs for roads, schools, churches, sidewalks, commercial areas, and recreational facilities increased exponentially in the new suburban areas. This dissertation will show how design played a role in the evolution of these new developments.

**Historical Context**

The concept of suburbia is neither new to the twentieth century nor to the postwar years, yet at this time, notions for suburban design changed dramatically. Demand for housing was unprecedented as millions of soldiers returned from the theaters of World War II. Although much of Europe and large sections of East Asia were rebuilding, the infrastructure of the territorial United States remained intact. For Americans, peace appeared to be attainable, and many of the soldiers who returned were looking to settle down, buy a house, and raise a family.

After the war, as marriage rates and subsequently childbirth rates spiked, more living space came at a premium.[23] In the midst of the Great Depression, legislation had been developed to form the Home Owners Loan Corporation (HOLC) and the Federal Housing Authority (FHA). These organizations greatly expanded the mortgage industry, and made the possibility of acquiring a loan much easier and accessible for more people. The federal government also established Fannie Mae for making long term loans more attainable, and the Veterans Administration insured mortgages as part of the postwar G.I Bill. These factors laid a foundation for one of the greatest demographic changes in the history of the modern world, altering far more than simply the places where people lived. The graph in Appendix A illustrates the effects of these changes in housing legislation in terms of the market.

The spike which began in the late Forties went above and beyond the housing market. Although there had been suburban development in the past, the postwar construction (see Figure 3) was unprecedented resulting in a massive shift in how people lived, communed, shopped, were educated, and valued. This shift caught the attention of sociologists, critics, politicians, school boards, advertisers, technocrats, investors, and developers almost immediately. Prior to the war, famed architects from Frank Lloyd Wright to Le Corbusier to Ebenezer Howard to Iakov Chernikhov had imagined utopian communities to meet the needs of these potential demands. Yet, none of these architects could anticipate how the demands of the postwar housing market would eventually be realized. The postwar American suburban experiment was new, untried, and full of possibility.

---

[23] Theodore Caplow, Louis Hicks, and Ben Watterburg, *The First Measured Century: An Illustrated Guide to Trends in America, 1900-2000* (La Vergne, TN: American Enterprise Institute Press, 2000).

Interestingly, the Federal Housing Authority established design recommendations for new developments. In their 1936 brochure, "Planning Neighborhoods for Small Houses," the FHA leaned heavily on the plans by George B. Post and Sons as an answer to what they saw as a problem with the often-used grid patterns (see Figure 4). On the page below illustrating the grid pattern, it reads, "This monotonous grid pattern has little character or appeal."[24] Part of the reason for the recommendations was to lessen four-way intersections that were deemed more dangerous for traffic flow. At the time, it was believed that "T" intersections were safer.[25]

The built environment surrounds, engages, and influences people. As humans interact with it implicitly or explicitly, consciously and subconsciously almost every day. Its sway may be undetectable or overt, but its impact is inevitable. Yet we rarely stop to consider the implications of the design: the direction of a pathway or a road, the placement of a door, the location of the kitchen in the home, the proximity of the home to the neighbor's, or the role of the garage or the front lawn. Each of these elements of design have their own history and a rationale of how they came to be regarded as an expectation, a necessary inclusion. One must look carefully at the intent of the builders, the views of the investors, and the impact of the wave of advertising that was fostering and accentuating such a new mode of living. Additionally, understanding the requisite infrastructure, the development of ordinances and zoning laws, and the history of suburban ideals, as well as their critics frames the importance of design.

---

[24] Federal Housing Administration, "Planning Neighborhoods for Small Houses," 1936.
[25] FHA.

Levittown, New York, was a bold plan promoted and constructed by the Levitt brothers. However, when it came to Levittown, Pennsylvania, the concepts of "how" and "what" were even bolder than the original plan in New York. In the first Levittown neighborhood, there were limited shopping centers, community parks, swimming pools, and other community-wide gathering areas. The Levitts learned from their initial blueprint and execution. For the Pennsylvania project, they sought zoning laws that allowed more commercial and township centers. As with so many other innovative ideas, the Levitts were improving on their ideas and altering them to attract even more customers.

After the success of the opening of Levittown, New York, the Levitts looked elsewhere to capitalize on this business venture. Just outside of Philadelphia near Trenton, New Jersey, they found a prime place. The recent construction of a steel plant in this part of Bucks County, Pennsylvania, provided a base for customer demands. In Pennsylvania, however, a greater network of commercial real estate, places of worship, and community-oriented activities were included. Therefore, the planned purpose of the second Levittown was slightly different. Evaluating the intentions of Levitt and Sons' second development and wondering whether they were realized provides historians, sociologists, and design theorists with plenty of material for research. Additionally, the critics, some who had already begun deriding the community with the construction of Levittown, New York, had time to hone their analyses, evaluations, and judgments. By the time Levittown, Pennsylvania opened their show houses for potential buyers to stake their claim on a future home, the critics already condemned it.

**Research Questions and Their Context**

Connecting the construction of Levittown, Pennsylvania in the postwar years and previous and subsequent developments in Lower Bucks County with the influence of design theory both expands the scope of an historical analysis and focuses on a unique window into an historic change in the way Americans sought to live. Inquiries into design theory provide the vehicle for various disciplines to intersect. The driving question revolves around design, and serves as a scaffold to others, which include but are not limited to: How did the design of suburban homes and community spaces in the post-war years influence practices of consumerism, social acculturation and perspectives, value systems, and ideas of community? How did the constructed environments during this time influence concepts of community and citizenship? What short and long term influences did these design concepts have on advertisements in relation to gender, race, education, and social class and where are the intersections? What caused the varied visceral responses to postwar suburbia and is design a factor?

The study of human beings staking out land, homes, and a place to live is rich and diverse. For millennia, living communities were described as either urban or rural; one lived in the city or in the vast farmlands. An *Economist* article in 2014 argued that suburbs have existed since ancient Rome (which gave the world the word), but it was not until the 19th and 20th centuries that first the train and then the bus and car brought them truly into their own—"the first places in human history where many people lived but far fewer worked."[26] While suburbs are not a modern creation, the design of postwar suburbs was new, as mass production and other Industrial Revolution innovations like the

[26] "A Planet of Suburbs: Places Apart," *The Economist*, December 6, 2014.

assembly line and the efficiency system were applied to housing on a large scale for the first time in the United States.

According to the United States Census Bureau, there are "two types of urban areas: Urbanized Areas (UAs) of 50,000 or more people; Urban Clusters (UCs) of at least 2,500 and less than 50,000 people. "Rural" encompasses all population, housing, and territory not included within an urban area."[27] The contrast between regions is sarcastically captured in the novel, *The Bell Jar*, by Sylvia Plath. She writes, "I stepped from the air-conditioned compartment onto the station platform, and the motherly breath of the suburbs enfolded me. It smelt of lawn sprinklers and station wagons and tennis rackets and dogs and babies."[28] The stereotype of postwar suburbia found in Plath's description may be the ubiquitous images that stand as a reference point. But the typology or classification of suburbia is debated within circles related to research from social scientists, urban planners, government officials, and even legislators arguing for or against redistricting policies related to the census.

Yet despite this history, the references in literature, the analysis of critics, and even official language from Census data, defining the suburbs can be difficult. Part of the challenge to find an agreeable definition is that various disciplines tend to view the concept from slightly to radically different ways, whether it is from a geographer, an urbanist, a population expert, or an historian. Harvard's *Journal of Planning Literature* even published an article entitled, "Defining Suburbs" as recently as 2012. The author of the study, Ann Forsyth, looks at the difficulties of defining the term and the possible

---

[27] United States Census Bureau, "About Geographic Areas: Urban and Rural," https://www.census.gov/programs-surveys/geography/guidance/geo-areas/urban-rural.html

[28] Sylvia Plath. *The Bell Jar* (New York: Harper & Row, 1971), 113.

outcomes of misunderstanding it. She argues that how one defines these places will inevitably result in considering the possible future of them.[29]

While these challenges are daunting, an historical approach can be defined a little easier. For the sake of this argument, the development of the suburbs is characterized based on the geography and history of Philadelphia, Pennsylvania and its surrounding counties. Philadelphia and its suburbs, particularly Bucks County (northeast of the city and situated between Philadelphia and Trenton, New Jersey), serve as reference points and historical trajectories. Other regions of the country from New York to Chicago, to locations in the Deep South, Midwest, and south and northwest are used as samples or shorter case studies reflecting the application of findings in Philadelphia. A comparative study of suburbs in international locations are drawn from to consider how alternative cultures, histories, geographies, climates, and more may influence how the suburbs can be imagined differently.

The term suburbia elicits a number of reactions from Americans both past and present. The concept might inspire the utopian dreams of yesteryear and an escape from the urban blight pictured in and made widely known in books like the late nineteenth century's *How the Other Half Lives* by Jacob Riis, and told in so many Charles Dickens novels. The image of suburbia conjured among some historians, populists, and political scientists is nostalgic. One resident recalled: "It was an idyllic illustration of the American dream for the middle class. It was just phenomenal."[30] Not only do situational

---

[29] Ann Forsyth, "Defining Suburbs," *Journal of Planning Literature*, 27, no. 3: 270–28, 2012.

[30] Jake Blumgart, "What Will Become of Levittown, Pennsylvania? The archetypal postwar suburb has less socioeconomic diversity—and hardly more racial diversity—than it did in the 1950s." *Bloomberg.com*, March 1, 2016. https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2016-03-01/what-will-become-of-levittown-pennsylvania (Accessed August 14, 2021).

comedies from the era reflect this yearning for a simpler, more innocent, and seemingly morally absolute time within the underlying turbulence of the Fifties, sitcoms from the cultural and socially turbulent Seventies also reflected this nostalgia in shows like *Happy Days* and *Laverne and Shirley*. Yet, this faux "innocence" is dissected quite critically in the 1994 film, *Pleasantville*. This film combines the pining for purity, the fondness of this portrayal through Fifties sitcoms, and the repression that hid beneath the surface. Modern promises to return to the past when life was simple play off of these sentiments and stoke the desire for so many Americans to return to a time that was seemingly less socially and geopolitically complex.

**Historiography and Interdisciplinary Approaches**

To do this research full justice, historians must draw from various disciplines, such as philosophy, art, media-ecology, education, sociology, anthropology, politics and economics, literature, and poetry. The interdisciplinary approach is not only necessary, but also accentuates the multi-faceted nature of the topic. To walk or drive down the road in Levittown, Pennsylvania specifically, or postwar suburbia generally, will alone require one to consider many of these disciplines. The more holistic approach is reflective of an integrated and comprehensive analysis. Therefore, it makes sense to take into account the historiographic record, alongside the poetry of John Updike and Malvina Reynolds, the literature of Richard Yates, the planned communities of architects like Le Corbusier and Frank Lloyd Wright, the cultural histories of different regions in the United States and abroad, the media ecology critiques of Marshall McLuhan, and personal walkability studies in various communities in Pennsylvania and around the world.

Furthermore, a walk or drive through a suburban development cannot be separated from the political or economic realities of home buying and even school district choices. Buying a house in 2020 is fraught with many considerations, from local, state, and national representation in political offices to resale values, school districts, zoning laws, and the concepts of "red-lining." Yet, many of these intersections are affected by design. The questions that follow elicit and induce interdisciplinary responses.

The historiography of design theory and suburban development must draw, like this thesis, on various disciplines. According to the twentieth century architectural philosopher and design theorist Christopher Alexander, buildings are more than just constructed arrangements. Within the context of Pattern Language and design theory, buildings have a greater influence on human activity and paradigms than we notice. His influence is still being felt today as cross disciplinary thinkers contend with fulfilling his dream of creating healthier, more holistic environments.

Two works inspired by Alexander include *Christopher Alexander: The Search for a New Paradigm in Architecture* by Stephen Grabow and *In Pursuit of Living Architecture: Continuing Christopher Alexander's Quest for a Humane and Sustainable Building Culture* edited by Kyriakos Pontikis and Yodan Rofe. The former is born out of extensive interviews the author had with Alexander, woven together in a narrative. The latter is a collection of essays from practitioners, architects, and historians analyzing his influence. Pontikis is one of only a handful of people who earned their Ph.D. under his tutelage.

One of the most prolific and influential writers on social theory in the mid-twentieth century was Lewis Mumford. While the first two Levittowns were being

constructed in New York and later in Pennsylvania, he became one of the most well-known critics of these suburban living arrangements. His works consider topics ranging from urbanization to city-planning, to the role of technology and communication, to socialization theory, to the history of utopia. He wrote as an historian, architectural critic, design theorist, sociologist, and media ecologist. Some of his ideas about design theory were put into practice in the famous suburbs at Vallingby near Stockholm, Sweden.

"After the Second World War, the two most 'modernized,' economically advanced, and affluent nations in the world – the United States and Sweden – faced a serious housing shortage. … Each of the two nations dealt with its urban housing problem in a very different way but one that was keeping with the character of its political and economic institutions." [31] So begins David Popenoe's *The Suburban Environment*, written twenty years after the opening of these two midcentury developments. The book compares Levittown, PA, and Vallingby, Sweden, roughly twenty years after their parallel construction dates. Having personally completed walkability studies of both of these neighborhoods, Popenoe's conclusions helped put into words what I observed. The stark contrast between these communities, the ideals communicated through design, and the effects on community and lived experiences were tangible. In Vallingby for instance, despite the wintry weather in March, people were coming and going through the main hub and commercial district by car but that was the smallest percentage of commuters. The majority traveled by train, bus, and most importantly on foot. A March walkability study in Levittown with spring-like weather demonstrated the pervasive use of the car and hardly a single person walking along the

[31] David Popenoe. *The Suburban Environment: Sweden and the United States (Studies of Urban Society)* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1977).

neighborhood. These walkability studies in both places was across different days and times of day

Sociologist Bennett M. Berger, a contemporary of Mumford, set out to study the suburban phenomenon in its infancy. In his 1960 ethnographic study *Working Class Suburb: A Study of Auto Workers in Suburbia,* he wondered if suburban transition altered the cultures of those who ventured out of the urban environment. In his conclusion, he defended the suburban design against what he considered elitism found in the screeds of people like Mumford.

Diane Harris edited a fine collection of essays, interviews, and recollections, *Second Suburb: Levittown, Pennsylvania* (2010), that tells the story of the Levittown phenomenon through these documents. The book is titled "Second Suburb" because the Pennsylvania town was initially overshadowed by the original New York neighborhood of the same name. The collection examines the neighborhood in two parts; first from the inside perspective, and then from those who did not live there. It is a valuable trove of primary sources directly related to the town itself, and suburbia in general.

Kenneth Jackson's *Crabgrass Frontier* is a seminal work for suburban historians. Written in 1985, his analysis of the mass migration of people that happened from the postwar years and continuing into the early Seventies and their subsequent effects culturally, socially, politically, etc. has served as a turning point in how the United States has been altered by these demographic shifts. He worried that, "A major causality of America's drive-in culture is the weakened 'sense of community' which prevails in most metropolitan areas. I refer to a tendency for social life to become 'privatized,' and to reduce feeling and concern and responsibility among families for their neighbors and

among suburbanites in general for residents of the inner city."[32] These observations from Jackson have political, social, economic, and racial implications that this dissertation will address.

The massive anthology, compiled in 2013 by Robert A.M. Stern with assistance from David Fishman and Jacob Tilove called *Paradise Planned: The Garden Suburb and the Modern City*, provided extensive details on the history of the garden city from its conception to the attempts to make it a reality. Wonderfully illustrated throughout with images of homes, streets, imagined blueprints, and aerial photographs, Stern argues for the importance of Ebenezer Howard's early twentieth century contribution in the progressive of living arrangements in suburbia.

Another massive work which also includes extensive illustrations is *Infinite Suburbia,* edited by Alan M. Berger, Joel Kotkin with Celina Balderas Guzman. This collection of essays is drawn from an international cast of thinkers and writers from various disciplines (i.e. history, sociology, geography, philosophy, engineering, business, government) personifying the rich interdisciplinary contributions to this research and history. Additionally, it is packed with statistical analysis of everything from the development of traffic patterns to ecological effects to the exporting of the postwar American suburb to places like China.

James Jacobs' *Detached America: Building Houses in Postwar America* aids this thesis by analyzing the evolution of space within the home and explaining how the floorplans changed with time as newer construction morphed from the original Levittown home. Furthermore, he explains the concept of "casual living" which was perceived as a

---

[32] Kenneth T. Jackson, *Crabgrass Frontier,* 272.

new type of outworking of neighborliness within these postwar communities. Considering this "new way of living" Jacobs' contrasts the newer developments with the older, multi-generational, and more ethnic urban settings suburbanites were coming from. Furthermore, he utilizes periodicals like *Better Homes and Gardens,* illustrating what historians can draw from the world of advertising.

Jeff Speck, in a similar vein, through his collaborative work *Suburban Nation: The Rise of Sprawl and the Decline of the American Dream* (with Andres Duany and Elizabeth Playter-Zyberk) has been instrumental in illustrating a perspective shift in how to look at design theory and community building. His work with the New Urbanist movement can alter how people view everything in an urban or suburban development from the contours of the streets, the distances between the homes, to the aesthetic values that these elements and their proportions employ.

Alain de Botton, a contemporary philosopher, architectural critic, educator, and prolific writer, has illustrated the validity and need for uncovering the intersections of disparate disciplines. His books *Status Anxiety*, *The Art of Travel*, and *The Architecture of Happiness* have yielded ways and means of navigating the questions and history of design. As a philosopher, he approaches thorny issues that historians might choose to avoid. However, his approach is rooted in an appropriate understanding of the past. His documentary series, "The Perfect House," has him traveling from Switzerland to the Netherlands to the United Kingdom probing for the elements of design that contribute to human happiness and contentedness.

Generations before Alain de Botton, there was Vance Packard. Packard's work serves as a great case study for a window into the angst felt by some in the Fifties as

modern suburbia began to sprawl. Although his works like *The Status Seekers* and *The Wastemakers* are somewhat dated, they illustrate how contemporary critics were already wondering about the effects that postwar suburban design would have on those who lived in these developments, as well as those who did not.

Marshall McLuhan's midcentury ideas and works are considered to be part of the foundation of a new discipline that emerged in the twentieth century called media ecology. His books include *The Mechanical Bride, The Gutenberg Galaxy*, and his seminal work, *Understanding Media*. Spanning from the late Fifties to the mid-Seventies, McLuhan's arguments about the importance and influence of "ecological" systems challenges scholars in other fields to consider the importance of non-human actors including design and architecture playing a role in the historical drama.

Media ecology is the study of media systems, technologies, and communications and how they influence and can even dictate the environment that is fostered. Writers and thinkers like McLuhan and Postman brought this discipline into prominence in the mid to late Sixties. Borrowing their ideas about the power of the "medium" and applying them to architectural and suburban systems has shed light on the subtle power dynamics found in the alteration of the environments that were constructed in the postwar years. Their ideas, along with those of philosopher Jean Baudrillard and his theory of simulation and simulacra, meaning degrees removed from reality, have proposed needed and substantial questions that the built environment has provoked. These concepts are applied to my own autobiographical housing and community journey as an example.

I have accessed decades worth of periodicals from *Better Homes and Gardens* to *House Beautiful* among other shelter magazines. *House Beautiful* is especially important

because editor-in-chief, Elizabeth Gordon was so influential in the development of American postwar taste. Her importance is highlighted in *Tastemaker: Elizabeth Gordon, House Beautiful, and the Postwar American Home* by Monica Penic. Not only is Penic's work important to understanding the influence of Elizabeth Gordon, but it also serves as an explanation for design history.

Lastly, Richard Yates' 1962 novel, *Revolutionary Road* , served as a warning signal from the fictional world of the potential effects of suburban living. The storytelling is vivid and captivating as it expresses the angst written by so many of the other critics while painting the dire possibilities in a humanizing way.

**Chapter Structure**

In Chapter One, I present a background of suburbia and design theory, beginning with a story of two imaginary couples, illustrating the contrast between the older suburbs and the new. Eventually, Levittown, New York and Levittown, Pennsylvania are introduced along with an explanation for the importance of postwar suburban design. Design theory is explored historically and philosophically, while the interdisciplinary approach is introduced as a means of considering many different perspectives and angles in suburban and housing history. The research methods, historical questions, and historiography are explained and analyzed. The chapter wraps up with the limitations of this research project and the methodology.

Chapter Two opens with my personal journey into evaluating the built environment, based on the neighborhoods in which I have lived. I then provide a description and explanation of place, and how it holds key connections to identity, sense of worth, economic health, and lore for human storytelling. A history of how place,

design theory, and enduring questions about human flourishing, the ideals of community, and the civil body politic are intricately connected and why the built environment matters. The housing boom in the postwar years produced a radically different environment for suburban living. When juxtaposed with the older railroad suburbs and small towns, manors, and villages in Lower Bucks County, Pennsylvania, these changes illustrate how different they were in scope and influence. Although the Levitts were not alone in this development, their name became synonymous with the changes, whether they were deemed beneficial or detrimental.

Chapter Three continues the stories about the two imaginary couples and their relationship to Levittown, Pennsylvania. It then takes the reader into the world of advertising and technological advances that enabled advertising to become increasingly ubiquitous. Considering design theory and the design of postwar suburbs, the deployment of the television had social and communal consequences that were exacerbated by marketing campaigns playing out within the contexts of consumption, affluence, individualism, status, and more. Nostalgic memories of this era are typically cast innocently despite the effects the changes had on gender, class, and race.

Chapter Four begins with the theory of walkability, and reviews, analyses, and evaluates the increasing criticisms of postwar suburbia. It answers the question related to design theory and the visceral response by critics of various disciplines. Analyses and evaluations of the postwar developments emerged from an assortment of backgrounds including sociologists, theologians, designers, political consultants, feminists, novelists, poets, entertainers, civil rights activists, and musicians. The “new” suburbia struck a polarizing chord with many different sectors of the country. Meanwhile, national and

international events unfolded in the backdrop of the Civil Rights Movement and Cold War, influencing and impacting suburban design and the people who lived there. Within the first decade of the establishment of postwar suburbia, homogeneity along racial lines were sown into the fabric of so many developments. In the same decade, the Soviet Union launched the first satellite to orbit the earth, Sputnik. The Sputnik Moment was a watershed event that influenced designs of schools, curriculums, and the American dream.

While drawing the thesis to a conclusion, the importance of design theory is again highlighted along with the built environment. The influence this has on the lives of the people who interact with it is revisited. Design is to be taken seriously as a means of human interaction, behavior, and aspirations. Buildings matter as to how, what, and why we build.

**Methodology**

At the heart of the methods of research has been an integrated and interdisciplinary approach necessitated by the questions being asked. I have read through and analyzed the Levittown, PA archives, urban and suburban planning documents, advertisements for Levittown and other developments, years of periodicals beginning extensively in the Forties, and dozens and dozens of books that have analyzed suburban design that date back as far as the mid-nineteenth century.

From the Bucks County archives in Doylestown, original Levittown newspapers, tax documents, tax maps, and the design elements in pre and postwar Lower Bucks County enabled me to establish the change in patterns in the way in which neighborhoods were constructed. For instance, the radical visual differences of the city of Philadelphia,

laid out in a grid, versus the winding loops, curvilinear streets, and cul-de-sacs of a suburban neighborhood are a stark contrast. I have read deeply and widely in relation to the history, philosophy, and theology of architecture and design, especially the influential works of Christopher Alexander, the founder of Pattern Language. Additionally, I have researched the stacks and archives of the Library of Congress, analyzing periodicals like *Good Housekeeping, House Beautiful, Look Magazine, Redbook, American Home,* and other popular magazines attempting to capture the spirit and presentation of suburban culture.

As part of the research, I began walkability studies in 2017, completed in various neighborhoods, at different times of the day, and different months of the year. Data collected and analyzed supported conclusions that our built environments matter for those who experience them, either as full-time inhabitants of visitors. How we choose to live, the houses we buy, the neighborhood the homes occupy, our perception of ourselves, our neighbors, our community, our counties, states, and nation are bound together in an interconnected web. We are a social species; how we interact depends a lot on the construction around us. Front doors, lengths of driveways, size or absence of a sidewalk, walkway leading to the garage or out to the front, and so many other designs shape our patterns for living. When one adds the aesthetic qualities of these accoutrements, even more layers of patterned living take effect. The suburban construction boom in the postwar years created a pattern that has been antithetical for enhancing sociability, community, healthy living, and has had consequences politically, economically, environmentally, and philosophically.

## CHAPTER 1: The Importance and History of Design Theory

This project is being done with the knowledge that there is a discrepancy between places and a difficulty in comparing one region to another. Yet, the themes that are teased out will ideally have comprehensive application. Universal theories within the arts and disciplines like philosophy. Mathematics, and theology abound. The combination and application of mathematical principles to questions revolving around beauty or spiritual balance have long held traditions in Islam to Taoism to Christianity. Design has and will be argued to be cross cultural in its effects.

Although this project will utilize many examples, here is a simplified one illustrating how design, engineering, and more ethereal concepts like philosophy, civic pride, concepts of place, and identity are woven together. These long held traditions, in the opening paragraph, are informing the work of people like Amanda Burden. As the chair of the City Planning Commission and director of the Department of City Planning in New York, Burden, posits that the particulars matter and that design transcends its appearance. Design should be evaluated based on how it makes people feel. She challenges planners and architects to consider the minutiae of the back of a bench, the distance between the bench and the ground, and the distance between benches. The greenery embedded into the design has to be intentional down to the shrubs and types of trees, as there are ecological as well as behavioral implications. One of her greatest accomplishments was transforming the waterfront in Lower Manhattan into Battery Park City.[1]

[1] Ralph Gardner, Jr. "Social Planner," *New York*, May 13, 2002.

Considering the work of Burden as a primer enables an analysis and evaluation for other regions and living areas. The Philadelphia region, like New York City and its surroundings, stands as a quality example to illustrate the contrast between design principles. With its long history, it has such a variety of living environments that can be explored, compared, analyzed, evaluated, and studied. The city has its origins in the seventeenth century when it was founded by a Quaker, William Penn, as a "Holy Experiment" for Protestants from various denominations to live together peacefully. The city grew from those simple beginnings and from the waterfront on the Delaware River westward. As the city grew, planners, architects, and engineers established the newly applied grid patterns to street design. A visitor to the city can still witness this while walking through the old brick and cobblestone sections along famous streets like Front, and Arch and Elfreth's Alley.

By the beginning of the nineteenth century, the city was the largest in the country and had played host to the First and Second Continental Congress, the Constitutional Convention, and served as the nation's capital while Washington, DC was being built. From there, the city grew with early suburbs like the famed Chestnut Hill and Germantown neighborhoods that were eventually annexed into the city itself. Since its founding, the region also experienced growth in the surrounding counties like Montgomery, Chester, Delaware, and Bucks, with small hamlets, villages, and boroughs, many of which were founded in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. In Bucks County for example, the opening of a 60 mile canal stretched along the Delaware River in 1832 broadened the commerce industry as it connected the Lehigh Valley mining centers through Bucks County to the city of Philadelphia. Old towns like New Hope in

Pennsylvania and Lambertville in New Jersey along the river and canal still draw hundreds of thousands of tourists each year to their pre-sprawl charm.

Therefore, for the ease of understanding this historically, the suburbs around Philadelphia are characterized in one of three ways, as either (1) pre-Industrial Revolution (1700s-early 1800s), (2) street-car and rail suburbs (late 1800s to early 1900s), or (3) as postwar or automobile suburbia (1940s to present). The idea of the suburbs in Philadelphia also include parts of the city-proper that were established as it spanned outward, such as Chestnut Hill, one of the earliest suburbs and pre-industrial, and Parkwood Manor, a far northeast community of row homes that was built during the Sixties and influenced more by the automobile than the railroads in previous neighborhood constructions.

These neighborhoods and communities were each planned with designs that originated from engineers, architectural firms, urban and suburban planners, and individual architects. The earlier example, Chestnut Hill, was more organic it is evolution, whereas Parkwood Manor was planned. Yet, each of these three eras had, to different degrees, an organic evolution. This means that neighborhoods and communities can evolve in certain ways that are unplanned or unintentional. Yet, this organic evolution springs from the original design, engineering, and architecture.

**Introduction to Design Theory**

The ubiquitous notion of suburbia in the United States, especially since the postwar years, may make defining terms simplistic or unnecessary. Yet, the concepts, ideas, and definitions that are drawn from in this chapter and the subsequent ones have been contributed to by architects, philosophers, writers, city planners, residents, and

critics. Since this work situates itself within the history of design theory, close attention is paid to the interdisciplinary nature of the topic. An example of this type of interdisciplinary thinking comes from one of the most thoughtful scholars in modern design theory. His name is Christopher Alexander and he served as a longstanding professor of architecture at the University of California at Berkeley. His extensive and developmental work in the Seventies blossomed into contributions to design principles, concepts, and theories and philosophies such as Pattern Language. Within the category of design theory, he attempted to strip down the built environment into smaller concepts to discover patterns found in architecture. One of his conclusions is a ratio between the "liveliness" of a public place with the average square footage per person. Taking other factors into consideration like nature, activities of the people, and the other built portions of the space, a crude estimation can be concluded. Following the work of Christie Coffin and the observations made around and in San Francisco, California, he writes, "at 150 square feet per person, an area is lively. If there are more than 500 square feet per person, the area begins to be dead."[2]

Design theory itself has been advanced in the early twentieth century by artists and philosophers from the French Symbolists to the Russian Supremacists and Constructivists. These movements attempted to find elements in design that were tangible and recognizable. To many artists, patrons, philosophers (of aesthetics especially), and sociologists, this seems obvious. Ideas like balance, emphasis, movement, and pattern are a few of the concepts that are close to universally agreed on by these groups. An example of the intersection of the artist, philosopher, sociologist,

---

[2] Christopher Alexander, *A Pattern Language: Towns, Buildings, Construction* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1977), 597.

theologian, and theorist can be found in early twentieth century Russian artists like Kasimir Malevich and Wassily Kandinsky, who struck out to experiment with these design concepts.

Kandinsky wrote *Concerning the Spiritual Art* in the Thirties. "Color directly influences the soul. Color is the keyboard, the eyes are the hammers, the soul is the piano with many strings. The artist is the hand that plays, touching one key or another purposively, to cause vibrations in the soul."[3] Reading Kandinsky's poetry expands on this notion, as the esoteric nature of this conception of art makes it a challenging application within design theory and in architecture and the built environment. However, Kandinsky is after more than just the surface or the immediate pragmatic experience, and others such as Malevich, were part of a vanguard of artists attempting to rediscover the interconnectedness of the material world with the immaterial world. They claimed that the material world matters beyond the surface; it is more than just atoms, and includes the aethereal. This is what Kandinsky means when he writes:

> If the emotional power of the artist can overwhelm the "how?" and can give free scope to his feeling, then art is on the crest of the road by which she will not fail later on to find the 'what' she has lost, the 'what' which will show the way to the spiritual food of the newly awakened spiritual life. This 'what?' will no longer be the material, objective what' of the former period, but the internal truth of art, the soul without which the body (i.e. the 'how') can never be healthy, whether in an individual or in a whole people.[4]

These thoughts of Kandinsky echo Ernest Dimnet's comment about architecture affecting the soul, mentioned earlier.

---

[3] Wassily Kandinsky, *Concerning the Spiritual in Art* (New York: Dover Publications, Inc., 1977).
[4] Kandinsky, *Concerning the Spiritual in Art*.

The ingredients to design theory mentioned above are more likely to be noticed in the visual arts. That is their assumed natural home. However, to stop there would be to close one's eyes to their application and power in other forms such as architecture, furniture, wallpaper and paneling, tableware, hallways, room layout, the front lawn, garage, roads, and to anything else constructed by human hands. This is one of the reasons the Russian Suprematists and Constructivists influenced the design of chairs, counters, and other furnishes. The works of Aleksander Mikhailovich Rodchenko spanned sculpture, painting, graphic and interior design, and photography. In the early twentieth century, architectural theorists like Walter Gropius, Le Corbusier, Frank Lloyd Wright, and the entire Bauhaus movement were considering and were influenced by these theories. This was especially true among the Avant Garde, the Expressionists, and Supremacists, whether implicitly or explicitly when designing homes and other buildings. It is with these ideas in mind that Levittown, PA particularly and many of the subsequent and surrounding neighborhoods of Middletown, PA are analyzed.

Tying these ideas into design theory requires venturing into different spheres and disciplines. One must engage sociological, anthropological, philosophical, and theological components and ideas. One needs also to consider geography, place theory, and culture. None of these disciplines and ideas can be separated from this endeavor. Even poetry and the arts, as seen above, need to be included to give an integrated and interdisciplinary approach more validity and to establish the potential truths across time and space.

**Media Ecology**

The Twentieth century as teeming with critical theorists applying concepts found above not only across disciplines but by applying these critical lenses, they were creating new ones. Considered the founder of Media Ecology, Marshall McLuhan, was one of the forerunners of this line of thinking with his 1964 groundbreaking book, *Understanding Media: The Extensions of Man*. His opening sentence reads, "In a culture like ours, long accustomed to splitting and dividing all things as a means of control, it is sometimes a bit of a shock to be reminded that, in operational and practical fact, the medium is the message."[5] The machines, devices, mechanisms, technologies, essentially the environment or ecologies we create alter, change, and sometimes even replace the messages that are being conveyed by such processes. McLuhan would argue that a hammer is an extension of the arm and that an automobile or the wheel is an extension of our arms and feet.[6] In describing this phrase more deeply, he writes, "Indeed, it is only too typical that the content of any medium blinds us to the character of the medium."[7] Another example he uses is the electric light explaining, "[it] escapes attention as a communication medium just because it has no content."[8] McLuhan is on to something related to media which he spends the next two hundred plus pages defending this. He was also followed by others in the growing field of media ecology. Among the next generation of Media Ecologists was Dr. Neil Postman, the longtime chair of the Media Ecology Department at New York University. Postman's famous critiques in media and

---

[5] Marshall McLuhan, *Understanding Media: The Extensions of Man* (Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 1994), 7.
[6] http://individual.utoronto.ca/markfederman/article_mediumisthemessage.htm
[7] McLuhan, *Understanding Media*, 9.
[8] McLuhan, *Understanding Media*, 9.

technology include *Amusing Ourselves to Death* and *Technopoly*. Considering this idea a few years later and in a different text, McLuhan slightly altered the famous phrase to, "the medium is the massage." Why the change? The medium, or how something is communicated, becomes the message received. However, the slight alteration to "massage" was a compromise of sorts where the medium influences the message. If people like McLuhan and Postman are onto something with regards to media, technology, and even education, then is it hard to believe that the same principles can be applied to architecture and design.

**Pattern Language**

Dr. Christopher Alexander and several of his colleagues in Berkeley, California collaborated on a series of books that were authored from the Seventies to the early twenty-first century. An ideal born from this research became a concept called Pattern Language. Alexander's texts include titles such as *Notes on the Synthesis of Form* (1964), *A Pattern Language* (1977), *The Nature of Order* (1981), *A New Theory of Urban Design* (1983), *Battle for the Life and Beauty of the Earth* (2012), and *A City is Not a Tree* (2015). In his 1979 book, *The Timeless Way of Building*, Alexander introduces the first chapter with a bold statement about human constructed spaces and echoing the sentiments of Churchill's Parliament reconstruction speech. "There is one timeless way of building. It is thousands of years old and the same today as it has always been … It is not possible to make great buildings, or great towns, beautiful places, places where you feel yourself, places where you feel alive, except by following this way."[9]

[9] Christopher Alexander, *The Timeless Way of Building* (Berkeley: Center for Environmental Structure, 1975), 7.

According to Alexander, buildings are more than just constructed arrangements. Within the context of Pattern Language and design theory, buildings have a greater influence on human activity and paradigms than we notice, such as argued by Gorringe and Churchill when it comes to architecture and Alexander's approach to design and his influence can be felt today. His arguments of cross disciplinary application is inspiring a new generation of thinkers as they contend with fulfilling his dream of creating healthier, more holistic environments. One of the offshoots of his ideas can be found in the goals and some of the design elements encouraged by and invested in by the Congress of New Urbanism (CNU).

One can find Alexander's fingerprints embedded in the Congress of New Urbanism (CNU) as well. The CNU is an international organization with the goal to reimagine and even reconstruct the built environment which has been determined to have failed in inspiring human flourishing. In the United States, much of their work has involved retrofitting downtowns, evaluating traffic flows and patterns in urban and suburban areas, enhancing walkability in neighborhoods (creating more foot traffic), and lobbying for more mixed zoning to accomplish these objectives. In the spirit of Christopher Alexander, the CNU brings together philosophers, artists, demographers, architects, developers, economists, politicians, and more.

The CNU view of design resembles Marshall McLuhan's mid-century research on media ecology. McLuhan was dissecting the increasingly pervasive media systems, what he called ecologies. Like Christopher Alexander taking our built environments apart and attempting to help us see them for more than just the atoms or electrons that make up the physical properties, McLuhan asked similar questions about environmental factors.

Alexander sought to atomize the patterns influenced by the constructed environment. Whether it is a highway and its relationship to the cloverleaf on and off ramps, a church and its relationship between the nave and the altar, or, getting even smaller in scale, a door and the patterns that are pinched together to create the pattern for the door, Alexander highlighted these interactions. He called these patterns in relation to each other, "interlocking nonmaterial patterns."[10]

Although these patterns, relationships, and connections may seem nebulous, esoteric, or even hyperbolic, a rational case can be made. Critics might contend that these are just buildings, freeways, and even doors that have practical value; how people use them determines what they become. McLuhan experienced similar critiques, as many of his detractors claimed that a technology was benign or neutral, that it only held moral claims by how it was used, and people were the only mechanism in its perception. McLuhan answered with a sharp reply: "[T]hat is the voice of the current somnambulism … There is nothing in that [argument] that will bear scrutiny, for it ignores the nature of the medium."[11] One could imagine a similar critique of Gorringe and Alexander, as well as a similar rebuttal.

In his 1976 essay, "Axioms of the Landscape: Some Guides to the American Scene," Pierce Lewis writes, "Our human landscape is our unwitting autobiography, reflecting our tastes, our values, our ideals, in tangible visible form. We rarely think of landscape that way and so the cultural record we have 'written' in the landscape is liable to be more truthful than most autobiographies because we are less self-conscious about

---

[10] Alexander, *The Timeless Way of Building*, 91.
[11] McLuhan, *Understanding Media*, 11.

how we describe ourselves … All our cultural warts and blemishes are there, and our glories too, but above all, our ordinary day to day qualities …"[12] Lewis goes on to critique our inability to "read" the landscape; that is mostly due to disciplines not willing to stop and look. From there, he lays out axioms which include Landscape as a Clue to Culture, Cultural Unity and Landscape Equality, Common Things, History, Geographic (Ecological).[13] Within the historic axiom, Lewis picks apart the American front lawn, asking how a lawn "works." Echoing the sentiments of McLuhan and Alexander, he follows the argument that the "invention" of the lawn is a byproduct of historical forces and designs established by developers and architects. The lawn is not natural, nor is it evolutionary, or inevitable. Instead, it is intentional, based on decisions made by designers, engineers, and developers in addition to the cultural forces which promoted it like advertising and television sitcoms. Its ubiquitousness is part and parcel due to social acceptance and expectations. Imagine today's reaction of proposing the construction of a middle-class suburban development of detached dwellings on curvilinear streets at the end of a cul-de-sac without front lawns. Lewis also wonders about how the advent of this accoutrement influenced ecological systems, the development of new technologies, and social effects, such as having to maintain it, and at times even curse at it.

**Design and Application to Art, Architecture, and Engineering**

The eclectic writer Bill Bryson takes his readers on a unique tour of the home as he attempts to answer some of these questions by looking through the physical history of the home, room by room, to tell the story of humanity. Part of his thesis in his book,

---

[12] Pierce Lewis, *"*Axioms of the Landscape: Some Guides to the American Scene" *Journal of Architectural Education,* Vol. 30, No. 1, Teaching the Landscape (Sep., 1976). 6-9.
[13] Lewis, "Axioms of the Landscape.*"*

*Home: A Short History of Private Life*, is that our homes are not some accidental evolutionary process or a haphazard collection of rooms that we ended up with. Instead, he postulates that the home has been molded by time and place. Nor are they providentially a sign of progress. Our homes and their layout came to be through a series of historical decisions and factors. We live in spaces that have a history and reasons for being that was not an inevitable environment. The forces then shape the home at the same time shaping the way we see ourselves and the world.[14]

Considering the utopian designs and plans of the late nineteenth and early twentieth century dreamers took all of these concepts very seriously. From Frank Lloyd Wright's Broadacre City to Ebenezer Howard's Garden City to Iakov Chernikhov's Architectural Fantasies, each of these imaginings integrated complex design principles. Whether found in the plans of these thinkers or in the construction of small villages, hamlets, and boroughs, certain design elements were followed. Artistic renditions may look overly fantastic to modern eyes[15], but there are cohesive and intentional and communal objectives being aspired to.

When Levittown, Pennsylvania was partially completed in the early Fifties, it was already clear to the customers and curious onlookers that the design principles were modified innovations from previous developers and architects in addition to the adoption of Taylorism (the efficiency system) and mass production (assembly line innovations). This was building on a much grander scale than Lower Bucks County or anywhere near this region had ever witnessed, especially in the short amount of time the neighborhoods

---

[14] Bill Bryson, *At Home: A Short History of Private Life* (New York: Anchor, 2010).

[15] Ellen Moody, Frank Lloyd Wright's "Living City" Lives On: Conserving the Broadacre City Model. MOMA https://www.moma.org/explore/inside_out/2014/02/03/frank-lloyd-wrights-living-city-lives-on-conserving-the-broadacre-city-model/

and the infrastructure were being fashioned. The rate of home construction was especially unprecedented when juxtaposed against older local suburban communities like the boroughs of Hulmeville, Langhorne Manor, Cornwells Heights, Croydon, or Penndel. These communities were made accessible by the early railroad systems and favorable to walkability, whereas Levittown was constructed with a modernized infrastructure predicated on the use of the automobile.

The reliance on automobiles became one of the important targets for critique in the history of suburbia. One such example was M. King Hubbert's theory on "peak oil," proposed in 1956. This perspective gained traction in the Seventies as many who witnessed the gasoline shortage and the environmental movement through this lens blamed American reliance on fossil fuels on poor design and consumer investment in suburbia. Hubbert's theory has been revived with every subsequent oil shortage, and there is a long-held tradition within the field of suburban criticism that continues to promote it. However, these critiques of automobile culture extended far beyond the use of fossil fuels. The design changes necessary to support the automobile as the main means of transportation forced designers to accommodate the demands. This led to an alteration of the streets in terms of width and length and shape, the distance between trips, and even the design of the home itself. These alterations influenced the people who moved in.

Despite the contrast in living environments and the transformation of design principles, the social, political, and cultural needs for housing in the postwar years were at an unprecedented demand in a region nestled between Trenton, NJ and Philadelphia, PA. This demand, combined with an aggressive advertising campaign, low interest loans

coupled with the G.I. Bill, and an attractive and novel building plan made this Levittown, like its predecessor in New York, an immediate success. Levittown illustrated a change in paradigms and intentions with builders, as neighborhood patterns changed with new communities constructed. The Levittown success was replicated in future developmental models that dotted Middletown Township and throughout other parts of Lower Bucks County. These replications continued to follow the model of automobile use as the primary source of transportation. One of the results of this model was the growth of parking lot surfaces. In previous generations, many retail spaces were roughly the size of parking lot needs. With the construction of post-war suburbia, retail square footage is now dwarfed by the square footage of parking lot allocation. The social impact of this will be measured later but an unintended consequence was the ecological effect this change in surface footage had on water runoff and the decrease in porous surfaces resulting in the potential for more flooding in heavy downpours.

The major alterations in the postwar suburban design reshaped the landscape. These modifications needed to be addressed with ever important questions related to the social, political, and philosophical spheres. This was not only a new way of living that influenced only a handful of communities. By the Seventies, it was ubiquitous, copied, advertised, and expanded on throughout the country. Interestingly, these were design choices made by developers, builders, local and regional municipalities, and ultimately by consumers.

**Theories of Architecture and Engineering**

Yet, the built environment needs to be approached very carefully. In the case of suburbia, more than just homes, streets, and recreational and commercial buildings are

being erected. The opening lines of T.J. Gorringe's book, *A Theology of the Built Environment: Justice, Empowerment, Redemption* read: "To be human is to be placed."[16] Gorringe sets the tone of his analysis with a series of rhetorical questions and brief descriptions of places that form what he calls the "fabric of our everyday lives."[17] Referencing theological giants from Aquinas to Calvin and even back to St. Paul, he concludes his opening paragraph with a bold statement about the role of the built environment. "Form Follows Function; buildings serve a purpose. For good or ill buildings, from the humblest garden shed to the grandest cathedral, make moral statements."[18] Essentially, buildings and therefore places are not neutral or benign. This is an indirect or cursory consideration of Foucault's *Discipline and Punish,* in which he corroborates this claim when applied to degrees of power dynamics.[19] If our constructed environments are not neutral, then the intentions of the builders and investors must also be considered as do the unintended consequences of the construction that are more closely akin to what the Suprematists and Constructivists were after.

Public buildings and engineering can serve as samples of how these ideas play out. Many who can recall the role of a train station in the heart of New York City are still trying to come to terms with the construction of Madison Square Garden in the 1960's. When the arena was built, it replaced the century old Pennsylvania Station. Designers, architects, and critics have filled hundreds of pages of the *New York Times*, the *New Yorker*, and dozens of other journal outlets slamming Penn Station as a "subterranean

---

[16] T. J. Gorringe, *A Theology of the Built Environment: Justice, Empowerment, Redemption* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 1.
[17] Gorringe, *A Theology of the Built Environment,* 1.
[18] Gorringe, *A Theology of the Built Environment,* 1.
[19] Foucault, *Discipline and Punish*.

temple to the horrible"[20] and as "The Most Awful Transit Center in America."[21]

Architectural critic Michael Kimmelman wrote:

> Train stations are more than just a bunch of platforms for getting places. They're portals. New York used to have two of the world's most ennobling entrances, announcing the city in all its ambition and glory, Grand Central Terminal and the old Pennsylvania Station. Half a century ago, it lost the latter to the wrecking ball, getting a shameful rat's maze instead.[22]

Why such visceral condemnation of a train station? Many of the critics of the construction of Madison Square Garden compare the change to a relatively unchanged parallel station only a few blocks away, Grand Central Station. In his book, *Grand Central: How a Train Station Transformed America*, Sam Roberts tells the story of the chief engineer of the New York Central Railroad, William Wilgis, who conceived and oversaw the construction of this city landmark, a secular cathedral of sorts. When the station was completed, Roberts wrote, quoting city newspapers, "Without exception, it is not only the greatest station in the United States, but the greatest station, of any type, in the world."[23] An exaggerated statement for sure, but insightful in how a train station could be viewed. It has the resonance of the sixth century's Procopius' glorifying words to describe his entrance into the Hagia Sophia, "overwhelming to all who see it."[24]

Decades later, the novelist Tom Wolfe wrote of Grand Central:

> Every big city had a railroad station with grand -- to the point of glorious -- classical architecture -- dazzled and intimidated, the great architects of Greece and Rome would have averted their eyes -- featuring every sort of dome, soaring ceiling, king-size column, royal cornice, lordly echo -- thanks to the immense

---

[20] Michael Kimmelman, "Restore A Gateway to Dignity," *New York Times*, February 8, 2012.
[21] Devin Leonard, "The Most Awful Transit Center in America Could Get Unimaginably Worse," *Bloomberg Businessweek*, January 10, 2018.
[22] Michael Kimmelman, "Penn Station Reborn," *New York Times*, September 30, 2016.
[23] Sam Roberts, *Grand Central: How a Train Station Transformed America* (New York: Grand Central Publishing, 2017).
[24] Procopius, The Building of Saint Sophia.

> volume of the space -- and the miles of marble, marble, marble -- but the grandest, most glorious of all, by far, was Grand Central Station.[25]

Having toured both stations on numerous occasions, I have found myself on multiple trips just basking in the space at Grand Central.

**Intersection of History, Theology, and Design**

In an 1865 *Harper's Weekly* article, Catherine Beecher testified to the redeeming principles of suburban or country living.[26] In her article titled "How to redeem a woman's profession from dishonor," Beecher encourages this type of living by linking democracy, Christian sacrificial living, and specific gender and family expectations together. Interestingly, one of her goals is to encourage the construction of environments that socialize people to be less individualistic, to care for the public good above one's own interest, and to secure the importance of the family. She states, "One of these changes will be in the style of house-building. When houses are built on Christian principles … When houses are built to honor women's profession … when women of refinement and culture build houses on the Christian and democratic plan"[27] As mentioned with the idea of beauty, the idea of a "theological", "Christian", or "biblical" home may sound outdated or even downright silly to our post-modernist ears, but within the context of the nineteenth century, these were perceived by many as absolute truths. The point is that transcendence and architecture and design were assumed to be connected, driving home the argument that design, engineering, and building are viewed beyond their utilitarian value. Architecture, design, and place *matters*.

---

[25] Tom Wolfe is quoted in the article by Sam Roberts.

[26] Catherine was the sister of Harriet Beecher Stowe, author of *Uncle Tom's Cabin (*1852).

[27] Catherine E. Beecher, "How to Redeem Woman's Profession from Dishonor," *Harper's Weekly*, November, 1865.

According to Beecher, these single-dwelling "Christian" and "biblical" homes were designed and imagined as multi-generational, with the assumption that the "aged parents or the infirmed and homeless relatives"[28] would also be welcomed as "suffering helpers" to the next generation. Having multigenerational families would root them into the past and teach the next generations the values and virtues that stood the test of time.

Beecher followed up this article with a book in 1869, *The American Woman's Home*, which became highly influential for home designs and concepts, and the gender expectations that coincided with design. Full of Christian and biblical references to entire passages, verses, and allusions from scripture, it suggested that men were meant to be "outdoor laborers and toilers" who seek out a home of their own. It points out that Jesus himself toiled with his hands for decades before he set off in his ministry at the age of 30. Wives were expected to have many children, as they are considered blessings. "Happy is the man that hath his quiver full of them."[29] Ironically, Beecher chastises the man who labors for his own cause and his own advancement instead of the good of others.[30] Beecher's overtly Christian objectives for home construction and living may seem quaint and idealistic. Yet, her passion for service to others, connections between generations, and her attempt to modify an individualism she sees as a threat to Christian beliefs, is exemplary. Unfortunately, as the design principles she advocated for would be embraced by coming generations, they would counter the social consequences she was hoping for.

---

[28] Beecher, *Harper's Weekly*, November, 1865.
[29] Psalm 137:5, KJV.
[30] Catherine Beecher and Harriet Beecher Stowe, *The American Woman's Home: Or Principles of Domestic Science*; *Being a Guide to the Formation And Maintenance of Economical Healthful, Beautiful and Christian Homes,* New York, J.B. Ford and Company, 1869.

**Christianity, the Home, and Designing Gender**

The history of suburbia and its design as imagined in the nineteenth century and its reimagined manifestations in the Twenties and postwar years during two waves the "cult of domesticity" emphasized and reinforced these lines of social expectations among men and women. The fact that after nearly five years of war with millions of women serving in the defense industry and finding access to once previously shutoff occupations, the United States would resort back to a new wave of domesticity. As Gwendolyn Wright writes when describing the nineteenth century suburban call, "What did the ideal expect of the middle-class home and the women who saw over it? First, home would be unlike the world of business and industry as possible. The spheres of men and women, city and suburbs, were cast as fiercely antagonistic to one another in every way."[31] From its inception, the suburban home divided and still divides social expectations between gender. From the expectations of the women's design and furnishing of the parlor in the nineteenth century to the "man cave" basement or reconstituted garage in the twentieth and twenty-first. The designs of suburbia and its geographical challenges reinforced by the media campaigns from early print advertisements in magazines to television continues to establish gender norms that are so pervasive, one would assume they are either true or have always been. The design of the post-war suburban home contributed to this return of domesticity for white women living in these arrangements. These expectations were marketed back at Americans through magazines, commercials, billboards, and television shows.

---

[31] Gwendolyn Wright, *Building a Dream: A Social History of Housing in America* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1983).

Amy Maria Kenyon confirms this in her work, *Dreaming Suburbia: Detroit and the Production of Postwar Space and Culture.* "The orchestration of interior space was such that a negotiation of togetherness and detachment helped to delineate the various working parts that constituted the well-oiled family machine. Fixed and stable gender relations … found its spatial projection in suburban house design."[32]

Gender assumed design though was ideological. It was in the construction objectives even if there were couples or families that broke out of those assumptions. They would be the anomaly. Some suburban homes in the early twentieth century were now being constructed with open floor plans and less compartmentalization of living space. Famed architect Frank Lloyd Wright emphasized this. The four-square Prairie style he helped launch in the Chicago suburbs in the early twentieth century was copied and mimicked all over the country. The goal of the design of these homes was family interaction, which would further the domestication of the men. This new ideal was even promoted by a United States senator, Albert Beveridge In his book, *The New Home*, he encourages his readers that, "apartments cannot be … converted into a home better a separate dwelling with a dry goods box on the table …" The home was a place for men to escape the city and all its trappings and anxieties and to become more domesticated by the family. But even with these attempts to conflate gender expectations, the location and other social forces were too great of an obstacle.

Part of the answer to this lies in geography and design of suburbia, as well as in nineteenth century assumptions that shaped Catherine Beecher's outlook. As one of many advocates for suburban relocation for women, children, and families as a means of

---

[32] Amy Maria Kenyon, *Dreaming Suburbia: Detroit and the Production of Postwar Space and Culture* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 2004).

living out a healthier lifestyle and environment, she promoted a style of housing and its objectives that captured her era, her worldview, and the subsequent results. "During the last decades of the nineteenth century, the cult of home and motherhood, which had emerged in the 1830s, reached its pinnacle."[33] This "cult" was tied intricately into social and physical health for women, their children, and the concept of the family which was so important to the Victorian Age. Wright affirms this: "Victorian ideology perceived women and children as especially close to nature, much more so than men, who could withstand the harsh demands of the supposedly unnatural city life – provided they had their retreats in the suburbs."[34] Women and children were to remain in suburbia, reside in suburbia, and be shaped by suburbia. Men on the other hand were still commuting into the city, experiencing a world of men separate from their family interaction, and assuming that their wives were holding on to and taking care of the home.

**Aesthetics and Public Spaces**

Throughout these examples from roads to religious architecture, there is a conflict at play between beauty and utility. In the opening pages of Oscar Wilde's novel, *The Picture of Dorian Gray*, he penned one of the most provocative statements with regards to art. He wrote in the preface, "the artist is the creator of beautiful things." But concluded in the same vein of thought, "all art is quite useless."[35] Sometimes misunderstood as a diatribe against art, aesthetic philosophers as well as Wilde himself would claim, this is why we need it. At the end of the 19th century, Lewis Mumford observed that when Wilde was writing, the anxieties between the philosophies of utility

---

[33] Becky Nicolaides and Andrew Wiese, ed. *The Suburb Reader* (New York: Routledge, 2006).
[34] Gwendolyn Wright, *Building a Dream.*
[35] Oscar Wilde, *The Picture of Dorian Gray* (New York: Dover Publications, Inc. 1993), vii.

and beauty were coming to a head. Industrialization, the scientific management of labor, the construction of bridges, tunnels, and means of transportation, the wonders of human enterprise, placed utility ahead of beauty and practicality ahead of aesthetics. In *The Condition of Man*, he writes, "The exuberance of the artist was now attached to machines and utilities. To the ancient categories of the true, the good, and the beautiful, a fourth was added – the useful. This was a valuable addition; but the utilitarians managed to spoil their contribution by treating it as a replacement … Truth is what worked. Beauty was what raised the price of finished goods … Goodness, human goodness, was the capacity to do more work."[36]

The branch of philosophy that engages the enduring questions of beauty is called aesthetics. Throughout history, the questions of beauty have been debated by not only philosophers, but theologians, mathematicians, architects, poets, artists, patrons, and even by those in political positions. The point is that the constructed environment is not to be taken lightly. And neither are the questions of aesthetics.

Author Gregory Wolfe used the line as the title of his 2011 book, *Beauty Will Save the World: Recovering the Human in an Ideological Age*[37]. The text is one part his own overarching and historical analysis and one part an analysis of contributions from various authors including theologians, artists, and novelists. In ending his prologue and rationale for the book, Wolfe cites the Polish born Nobel Laureate and poet, Czeslaw Milosz.

> And though the good is weak, beauty is very strong.
> Nonbeing sprawls, everywhere it turns into ash whole expanses of being,
> It masquerades in shapes and colors that imitate existence

---

[36] Lewis Mumford, *The Condition of Man* (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, Publishers, 1944), 302.
[37] Gregory Wolfe, *Beauty Will Save the World: Recovering the Human in an Ideological Age*, (Wilmington: ISI Books, 2011).

And no one would know it, if they did not know that it was ugly.

And when people cease to believe that there is good and evil
Only beauty will call to them and save them
So that they will still know how to say: this is true and that is false.[38]

The questions that should confront us are plenty. Beauty itself has been debated as only an emotional response, as individualized opinions, and as not being able to be proven within our current post-modern narcosis. Yet, if we take many of these nineteenth century ideas within the context of their age, and with the belief that beauty was possible to aspire to, then a different point emerges. That is whether this dichotomy between ugliness and beauty, as represented in the countryside and city, is true. If this dichotomy is true, then the implications of this need to be taken seriously.

Yet, if questions of beauty and utility when connected to design matters in these places, it begs to ask, then what about the home? Questions should abound when considering our dwellings. Do we wonder how we organize it and in turn how it organizes us? Do we wonder about layout, interiors, room sizes, entrance halls or rooms, closet space, storage space, and decorations, amid a host of other factors of living space and how they came to be? Do we consider what these arrangements project, state, or reveal about ourselves; our inner lives and the socialization of the eras in which we exist? Are we aware of how our predecessors arranged these aspects of their lives only a few generations or centuries ago?

On a trip to Stockholm, Sweden, my daughter and I walked the old city, Gamla Stan, many times and found ourselves pining for more, despite the wet, frigid March weather. Each alley seemed to beckon magically; each street was an invitation for our

---

[38] Czeslaw Milosz, "One More Day," *New and Collected Poems, 1931-2001.* New York: Ecco, 2003.

imaginations. Other cities left similar impressions: Antigua, Guatemala, Leuven and Brussels, Belgium, Regensburg and Nuremberg, Germany, Florence, Italy, Luxembourg City, Luxembourg, and Budapest, Hungary.

By the turn of the twentieth century, architectural sensitivities that had been considered and employed for centuries were increasingly replaced by more utilitarian approaches. Although Louis Sullivan, the influential American architect, is given responsibility for the building approach known as the three F's: form follows function, how they were applied by post-suburban planners was not his original intent. Just like many others in history, from John Calvin to Charles Darwin to John Dewey, the followers of an idea or a belief or the originator of a school of thinking frequently do not continue in the vein of the original intentions. In March of 1896, Louis Sullivan had laid out his philosophy in an essay published in the *Lippincott Monthly Magazine*. The title of the essay was, "The tall office building artistically considered." He wrote [emphasis mine],

> Whether it be the sweeping eagle in his flight, or the open apple-blossom, the toiling workhorse, the blithe swan, the branching oak, the winding stream at its base, the drifting clouds, over all the coursing sun, *form ever follows function*, and this is the law. Where function does not change form does not change. The granite rocks, the ever-brooding hills, remain for ages; the lightning lives, comes into shape, and dies in a twinkling.[39]

Reinforcing the concept that architectural design follows architectural laws, Sullivan draws a comparison between the urban skyscraper and architectural marvels that preceded it. "And thus the design of the tall office building takes its place with all other

---

[39] Louis Sullivan, "The tall office building artistically considered", *Lippincott Monthly Magazine,* March 1896. https://ocw.mit.edu/courses/architecture/4-205-analysis-of-contemporary-architecture-fall-2009/readings/MIT4_205F09_Sullivan.pdf

architectural types made when architecture, as has happened once in many years, was a living art. Witness the Greek temple, the Gothic cathedral, the mediaeval fortress.[40]

The structures referenced in the previous pages would cost the equivalent of millions or even billions of dollars and took years and sometimes decades to construct. The architects or commissioners who oversaw these projects were statesmen, civic or church leaders, former presidents, or corporate tycoons. Nevertheless, we ought to realize that the concepts and ideas articulated in the planning and realization of the buildings should not be detached from less grandiose plans.

The mere definition of a home is packed with historical, theoretical, economic, philosophical, and theological ideas. Even the simplest of definitions from Merriam Webster includes words and phrases such as a place to live (domicile), a social unit, familiar spot, and a place of origin.[41] These may seem simple on the surface, but when especially considered in light of the philosophy and history of architecture, they solicit questions to be raised and reconsiderations for the importance of their design. Even the etymological origin of the word promotes, expands, and deepens its meaning. "Old English ham, dwelling place, house, abode, fixed residence; estate; village; region, country."[42]

**Design and the History and Philosophy of Place**

Philosopher Jeff Malpas unpacks the enigmatic notions of Martin Heidegger's work on place and space. As one of the most notable researchers of Heidegger's work, his book *Place and Experience* provides background to this ethereal relationship between

---

[40] Sullivan, 1896.
[41] Merriam-Webster Dictionary
[42] https://www.etymonline.com/word/home

humans and their surroundings. "I simply want to establish the idea of place in such a way that it can begin to be seen, neither in terms merely of some narrow sense of spatio-temporal location, nor as some sort of subjective construct, but rather as that wherein the sort of being that is characteristically human has its ground."[43]

Keeping Gorringe's thesis in mind, the home deserves curious contemplation. Economics, culture, theology and religion, climate, resource material, styles, fads, and geographical region, among many others, are influencing how we build and in turn how we think about the home and place. In our contemporary age, despite spending so much time inside these structures and a good percentage of our annual incomes invested in their acquisition and upkeep, how often do we stop and wonder about them?

In the collection of essays edited by Wilfred McClay and Ted McCallister in *Why Place Matters: Geography, Identity, and Civic Life in Modern America*, author after author articulates from differing vantage points that where one lives including the streets, homes, locales, have deep psychological, emotional, physiological, and even spiritual effects. This would include the way we perceive the concept of place geographically. According to the text, humans, with exceptions, need a place to serve as identity, to conjure up memories, to find themselves connected to something more than just the individual and the individual's concerns.[44] The introduction to the collection of essays states, "Whether we like it or not, we are corporeal beings, grounded in the particular, in the finite conditions of our embodiment, our creatureliness."[45] In many ways, we cannot

---

[43] Jeffrey Malpas, *Place and Experience: A Philosophical Topography.* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1999).
[44] Wilfred McClay and Ted McAllister, ed. *Why Place Matters: Geography, Identity, and Civic Life in Modern America* (New York: Encounter Books, 2014).
[45] McClay and McAllister, ed. *Why Place Matters*, x.

escape the influence of place and determine for ourselves that we will not be affected. Like this project, the collection of essays is intentionally interdisciplinary. Contributing essays are architects, poets, philosophers, architectural and political historians, geographers, and political theorists. The philosopher mentioned here is the late Roger Scruton, who approached design and aesthetics from a very Neoplatonic perspective adding several layers of theology in his argument called, A Plea for Beauty.

Why place matters to "corporeal" beings is reflected in the rationale for the existence of North American Vexillological Association (NAVA). This is an organization that analyzes symbols, emblems, and other forms of representations of communities. Namely the organization partially exists to evaluate the use of flags and national, regional, and local coats-of arms and other civic declarations. NAVA posits that good flag design not only matters but is essential for drawing on human longings to belong and their cravings for community. Ironically, according to NAVA, the United States has some of the worst flag designs in the Western world. This critique extends to local, city, and state flags. Some of the worst include cities like Milwaukee, Wisconsin and Anaheim, California and states like Arkansas and Iowa. While some of the best include cities like Chicago, Illinois and Washington DC and states like Maryland and New Mexico. I wonder if the "plight" of poor flag design is partially connected to what I see as the plight of poor neighborhood design.[46]

In *Everybody's Autobiography*, Gertrude Stein once famously quipped about the city of Oakland, California that "there was no 'there' there."[47] This has been interpreted

[46] NAVA Flag Design Pamphlet
[47] Gertrude Stein, *Everybody's Autobiography* (New York: Knopf Doubleday, 1973), 289.

as a pejorative statement of the city and has become a phrase used in an exchange of barbs between Oakland and its immediate neighbor, Berkeley with the later placing a sign at the city limits with the former states "Herethere." Place matters and matters deeply and extensively. As human beings, we are more than just surface level influenced to the by our environment. We are acculturated by our surroundings. This influence, as one can see above, is nothing new and can be felt from generation to generation. Although debates swirl around the concepts of genetics and environment or nature and nurture, it is recognized by most if not all people that we are byproducts of, affected by, and fashioned through a complex interaction of variables. This might be an assumed and agreed on presupposition but it seems like we rarely consider the divergent or less obvious ones.

The environments in which we create, that surround us, that organize our lives have an influence on our daily and behaviors and can affect our lifetime aspirations, and worldviews. Our acculturation whether it is language acquisition, nutrition, and the era or age in which we are raised, contributes to the kind of people we become. Despite the debates between nurture and nature, whether we are what John Locke called "tabula rasa" or the expansion of genetic research, one must recognize that we are partly who we are as individuals and as communities due to ecological systems. Some of these systems are obvious and are recognized by just about anyone you ask informally. Family systems, race, language, national identity, education are examples of these more recognized systems.

In his book, *Detached America: Building Houses in Postwar Suburbia*, James A. Jacobs sets out to explain how the developers who were involved in the construction of postwar suburban design contributed to a new lifestyle among Americans living in these

newer neighborhoods. Subsequently, the simpler homes of the first suburbanites in the Forties and Fifties gave way to larger homes with growing complexity in their layout. This progression, according to Jacobs, led to a different attitude or spirit of living which he calls, "casual living."[48] Synthesizing this argument with design, Jacobs expands on the description of the split-level concept. He writes, "The lower-level recreation room was essential to the appeal of the split-level, split-foyer, and bi-level. The room's character and relationship to the rest of the house varied from type to type, but in all these forms it was a self-contained space for casual living. Generally, on the same level as the laundry, the lower-level recreation room functioned in a variety of ways that often-included domestic tasks and unstructured play." [49] He further illustrates the effects of this concept by describing that "casual living" would replace the lifestyles influenced by the more formal design plans in previous generations of suburban houses. He argues that the home design implicitly and explicitly altered the lifestyles of those who lived inside them. When there is an entire neighborhood of similar home styles and layouts, then the effects are exaggerated.

This sense of place and home has a long tradition in literature and poetry. In the post-Great War years, J.R.R. Tolkien went to work on his fantasy literature which had included *The Hobbit* and *Lord of the Rings* Trilogy. The war, from 1914-1918, left an indelible influence on Tolkien and his generation.[50] Although set in the fictional "Middle Earth," the reader gets a feeling that modernity and the alterations of design with mechanization, speed, technology, among other "advances" was threatening. Pining for a

---

[48] James A. Jacobs, *Detached America: Building Houses in Postwar Suburbia* (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2015).
[49] James A. Jacobs, *Detached America.*
[50] Tolkien and the Great War

simpler time when homes were carved into the Romantic countryside was of great appeal. The main characters in these stories, Bilbo and Frodo Baggins, despite their adventures or possibly due to their adventures, long and yearn to return home. Bilbo recalls his "hole in the ground" while beginning his adventure, "Bother burgling and everything to do with it! I wish I was at home in my nice hole by the fire, with the kettle just beginning to sing!"[51] While reading *The Hobbit*, one gets the sense that home for Bilbo is not just a dry place or a place of shelter, but one that is woven into his genes, that is a part of his DNA, and a sense of his identity. One could imagine that if the Shire had a flag it would be a damn good one.

The longing in Tolkien's story of *The Hobbit* extends to more than just Bilbo and the Shire. By the wizard Gandalf's urging, a number of Dwarves recruit Bilbo to accompany them on a journey in the opening chapters of the novel. After an unexpected dinner, the Dwarves hauntingly sing the tale of the loss of their kingdom at the hands of the dragon Smaug (the feature film has an edited version). Laced throughout the lyrics are wishes for home, for greater days before the apocalypse of Smaug, and memories of loss:

> The bells were ringing in the dale,
> And men looked up with faces pale.
> The dragon's ire, more fierce than fire,
> Laid low their towers and houses frail.
>
> The mountain smoked beneath the moon.
> The dwarves, they heard the tramp of doom.
> They fled the hall to dying fall
> Beneath his feet, beneath the moon.[52]

---

[51] J.R.R. Tolkien, *The Hobbit* (New York: Ballantine Books, 1937), 43.
[52] Tolkien, *The Hobbit* (New York: Ballantine Books, 1937), 27-8.

This song echoes the stories from displaced groups from Italy to Ireland to Russia from previous generations to Syrians, Chechnyans, and Kurdistanis in more recent years. Those who left their homes and hearth due to famine, natural disaster, or revolution were looking for a better life in many ways but pined for their ancestral homes and hearths. JRR Tolkien's own life was interrupted with the adventure and disaster of The Great War. This left an indelible imprint on him and his imagination. "Returning" to a simpler and less chaotic time was connected to the sense of place. His Christian faith also plays out in spiritual qualities of the story arc.

In both cases mentioned above, there are nostalgic qualities. Abraham Lincoln wrote a poem connecting nostalgia to his upbringing, despite stating in an early stanza that the memories of that place were not always pleasant.

> Near twenty years have passed away
> Since here I bid farewell
> To woods and fields, and scenes of play,
> And playmates loved so well.
>
> Where many were, but few remain
> Of old familiar things;
> But seeing them, to mind again
> The lost and absent brings.[53]

Nostalgia can be described as, "the state of being homesick" and "a wistful or excessively sentimental yearning for return to or of some past period or irrecoverable condition."[54] Barbara Cassin writes in her book *Nostalgia: When are We Ever at Home*, "I wanted to reflect and dream on nostalgia because, obviously, I love Homer, Odysseus,

---

[53] Abraham Lincoln, Excerpt from "Memory", *The Best Loved Poems of the American People*, edited by Hazel Felleman (New York: Doubleday, 1936), 541 .

[54] Merriam-Webster Dictionary https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/nostalgia

the Greek language, and the Mediterranean … This feeling, at once overwhelming and gentle, like every origin, a chosen fiction …"[55] This is an anecdotal introduction to the text that takes the reader to the island of Corsica, the home and place of origin of her recently deceased husband and the defining of the French term *hopites*. Another angle to this comes from Thomas Dodman's book, *What Nostalgia Was: War, Empire, and the Time of Deadly Emotion*. Surveying the history of nostalgia from the seventeenth to the twentieth centuries, Dodman highlights the medical diagnosing of soldiers in Napoleon's armies who are longing for home. The philosopher Martin Heidegger carries the concept of nostalgia even deeper into the concept of human longing while artist Norman Rockwell taps into this longing with many of his canvases.

The home even plays a role in traditional, religious, and conservative circles. Its history is steep in concepts like patriarchy, perspectives on masculinity and femininity, and assumed roles generated by ideas like complementarianism, the "curse of Eve" from Genesis, and the commands of the Apostle Paul for "wives to be submissive to their husbands." Despite the misapplication of these Christian commands and theologies, the concept of place and the home was intricately woven together. Ideas like these can be seen in the pages of Catherine Beecher Stowe to the advertisements in magazines and periodicals like Good Housekeeping and House Beautiful. When coupled with the ideas of Norman Rockwell and the power of nostalgia, the home is conflated with various meanings. As Christine Stansell writes in *City of Women, Sex and Class in New York 1789-1960,* "By the 1820s men and women of the urban bourgeoisie were coming to see the households as more than just lodging. The 'home', their own term for the domestic

---

[55] Barbara Cassin, *Nostalgia: When are We Ever at Home?* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2016), 2-3.

setting, had become for them a pillar of civilization, an incubator of morals and family affections …"[56] The deployment of the home by editors and authors like Elizabeth Gordon was nothing entirely new. The "home," especially the suburban or non-urban one, was so much more than a dwelling. It could generate what we consider virtuous. It could drive us to want to consume more. It could alienate us from our neighbors and influence us to turn inwards and become less communal. It could affect our political decisions and leanings. It could contribute to making us less sensitive to cultural and racial diversity. It could strengthen or reinforce the patriarchal structures of the family and society.

[56] Christine Stansell, *City of Women, Sex and Class in New York 1789-1960* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1987).

# CHAPTER 2: A History of a Vision for Suburban Design

As in almost all design histories, there are historical and philosophical contributions of various degrees from various schools of thought. There are also implicit or subtle and explicit or direct historical forces that have contributed in shaping the design of built environments. When historians begin to consider geographical, linguistic, and cultural forces, an understanding of design becomes more complex. It is with these ideas in mind that I considered my own "journey" in appreciating design, architecture, and the built environment.

## A Personal Journey in History, Design, and Architecture

I have been fascinated by design for decades. When I think back to my own history of where I lived, the houses and neighborhood I grew up in, and their geographical place, I am struck by how much it has influenced the way I think and feel about the environments I exist in, as well as the values I hold onto and the goals I strive to meet. Sociologists from Clifford Gertz and his work with Balinese cockfighting to Robert Putnam's analysis of the decline of social investment further this idea. Even pop sociologists like Malcolm Gladwell, and his retelling of stories like the Matthew Effect and how the date of birth of a person can influence their success in sports, has illustrated that there are sometimes minor influences that frequently go unseen in relation to shaping a person's outlook. A question that should be raised is, how often do we stop and consider these influencers? Reading these works among many others made me wonder.

How I became "me" or the more Socratic question of "who am I" were some of those questions I pondered frequently. A few years after finishing my undergrad work, I found myself living near downtown Lynchburg, Virginia. It was there that I began to

consider the influence of design in the places we build. I frequently walked or ran around this neighborhood which was located on one of the "seven hills." It was pleasurable. Initially I thought this was due to my love of history and the historic nature of the place. However, the longer I lived there the more I realized there was something deeper going on. What started as a mere curiosity has turned into a decades long consideration.

I was born in 1971, the sixth child of seven born to first generation Italian-American parents. I lived in a far Northeast Philadelphia row home for my first sixteen years, sharing a bedroom with my older brothers. This neighborhood broke ground in the Fifties, less than ten years after the first residents moved into Levittown, just five miles away.

Parkwood Manor consisted mostly of row homes with brick facades. Typically, there were seven to nine houses connected before a break, called a breezeway. It allowed some in the neighborhood to have somewhat larger back or side yards compared to the limited space behind a typical home. Homes were situated on different shaped and length streets, many of which were horseshoes, or cul-de-sacs. Due to the layout of the streets, most homes shared backyards with homes on other streets, creating an opportunity for people to get to know their backyard neighbors.

Parkwood Manor bordered Bensalem Township to the north and east, where it was located just over the city-line in Lower Bucks County. It was a sprawling suburban region, and one of the largest townships in the area, a clash of times and places. Bensalem includes some older pre-twentieth century sections like Andalusia, Croydon, and Cornwell's Heights, and older neighborhoods intermixed with developments and split levels constructed in the Seventies, Eighties, and Nineties.

To the south and west of Parkwood Manor, toward Philadelphia, were similarly built neighborhoods, although a bit older and designed with some different styles than the brick facades found in Parkwood. There were also many more twin homes in the adjacent developments, where just two homes were connected, with a breezeway between each set of twins. These neighborhoods consisted of names that locals from the Far Northeast could rattle off with ease and perspective. The power and sense of place created an identity. Growing up in Parkwood, there were established rivalries that influenced me to dislike, disdain, or envy other neighborhoods, such as Morrell, Chalfont, Torresdale, Bustleton, and Somerton. In particular, Somerton was "across the boulevard" where the more "wealthy" people lived; we considered that to be a fact because their houses were not "stuck" together like mine. The concept of identity was bound up in the neighborhoods, strengthened by athletic teams, elementary schools, and Roman Catholic parishes which further served as a means of identity. Proudly growing up in Saint Anselm's Parrish, I can recall resenting those from Saint Anne's, Saint Christopher's, and Christ the King's.

The layout of the Parkwood Manor neighborhood provided that the horseshoes and cul-de-sacs were adjacent to or a few blocks from several main arterial roads connecting the Manor with major routes such as Interstate 95, Route 1, and Roosevelt Boulevard. The interstate and boulevard allowed easy vehicular access to the central portions of the city in a southern direction and to the rolling hills of Bucks County and Central New Jersey in a northern direction, especially as Roosevelt Boulevard turned into US 1 when it crossed the city-line into Bensalem Township. Ample public bus transportation provided by the Southeast Pennsylvania Transportation Authority

(SEPTA) was also available with stops at the end of my horseshoe. Bus routes like "29," "81," and "14" still resonate with nostalgic qualities and extended travel into the county.

In terms of the natural setting, Parkwood Manor is bisected by Poquessing Creek, a small stream which serves as a tributary to the larger Pennypack Creek, and eventually empties into the Delaware River. Although limited, there are some green spaces that have not been developed in Parkwood Manor, that served as places to explore, and where we played games like round up tag and "freedom." We affectionately called these areas "The Woods," the giant water culvert at the heart of the green space "The Love Canal," and the large open divot near the culvert "The Crater."

The Manor was served by the Parkwood Shopping Center, home to the A&P food market, Reen's Delicatessen, Pat's pizzeria, a barber shop, beer distributor, movie theater, drug store, and First Continental Bank. Beginning in the late Eighties, these locally owned and run businesses competed with chain restaurants like Burger King and Dunkin Donuts; some did not survive. The shopping center was and still is easily accessed by car, bike, and foot.

Parkwood Manor was served by Stephen Decatur public elementary school, and St. Anselm's parochial school for kindergarten to eighth grade. The parochial school was also home of the St. Anselm Parish. There were two main recreational areas and clubs, Parkwood and Academy, named after one of the main roads. There were baseball and softball fields, soccer and football fields, outdoor roller hockey centers, basketball courts, tennis courts, playgrounds, and a swimming pool. Like the shopping center, the schools and rec centers were also accessible by car, bike, foot, and sometimes, by roller skates.

I grew up exploring all the ins and outs of this community of roughly 7,000 residents. I played club soccer and occasionally played in a roller hockey league where we would skate to the outdoor rink. I recall several times roller skating to a hockey game carrying all of our equipment, including the nets. We rode our bikes along the creek trails, and to complete errands to the shopping center. Since there were metal cages on the local public school, Stephen Decator Elementary, we spent many hours climbing onto its rooves. We knew our immediate neighbors quite well, sharing walls on both sides and a driveway with one side and front steps with the other. We knew the rest of our neighbors so well that I can still name every family that lived in most of the houses on our street almost thirty years after I last lived there. This familiarity, neighborliness, and community engagement extended to other streets in the Manor, especially because so many of us attended the local schools or played sports for the local clubs or just lived in close proximity. Occasionally, my siblings, friends, or I got in trouble due to a friend or acquaintance of my parents observing our mischievous behavior and reporting it back to them. This specifically happened several times involving snowballs and cars.

My family lived in this community for over twenty years, but when I was in high school, my parents relocated to a split-level, single dwelling in Bensalem Township, approximately five miles away. My grandmother needed personal care and moved in with our family. The sale of her home in Hulmeville Borough in Bucks County combined with our Parkwood house enabled my parents to afford the new house, a much larger dwelling. Although it did afford us more square footage, an inground swimming pool, a basement entertainment center equipped with a pool room and pool table, and a place that was not attached to our immediate neighbors, it took me years to come to grips

with the change in environment. I never embraced our new house, street, or community, and still considered Parkwood Manor my "home." Although we did come to know our immediate neighbors, we could never replicate the closeness in relationships that we had experienced in Parkwood. I did not realize that seeds were being sown related to my interest in history, sociology, and architectural design. I was already wondering why the experience was so different, and although I did not formalize these inquiries until years later, I was journeying down a path that transformed how I viewed these concepts, traveled, and thought about the past.

One of the effects was realized in the communities I chose to live in during my adult life. After getting married and moving to Lynchburg, Virginia, I became acquainted with the historic districts due to my brother's residence in Diamond Hill, a nationally registered historic neighborhood. There was something unique not only about his house, designed and constructed in the late nineteenth century, but the entire neighborhood. I liked visiting his home and his neighborhood, and found myself drawn by the pleasure of the walk. No matter how many times I walked or ran through the neighborhood, it never became boring, redundant, or mundane.

The first house I owned was in this historic district, the John E. Gannaway, Jr. house. Purchased in 1998, I was living just a few blocks away from my brother. Diamond Hill, like Garland, Daniels, and Federal Hills, was a neighborhood that was once the desired location for the movers and shakers in the city and central Virginia. These hills were less than a mile from the riverfront (James River) and the downtown shopping and civic areas. Each of the hills had an eclectic collection of styles: Georgian, Gothic Revival, Palladian, Queen Anne, Victorian, Federal, Second Empire, and like our

home, an American Foursquare. Each of the hills were also graced with some type of historic accoutrements: brick or cobblestone streets, brick or flagstone sidewalks, large front porches, close distances between the front of the home and the street, period-style streetlamps, large shade trees along the streets, and more.

Although they were vastly different environments, our Diamond Hill neighborhood reminded me of my upbringing in Parkwood Manor. As we got to know them, we realized that we had a lot in common with our neighbors. They walked the community, shared interests in historic preservation, attended community parties, shared labor when needed, and could be seen sitting on their stoop and front porches on spring, summer, and autumn evenings. As a result, I became more and more interested in home and community design. While visiting friends in other parts of the city and suburbs, I was increasingly more sensitive to street angles, home ornamentation, and walkability. As a long-distance runner, I also toured many of the neighborhoods in the city and beyond on foot. Having been sensitive to this since being young, I began wondering about the influence and effects of living habitats on our sense of place, our identity, and whether we felt like we belonged to something beyond our insulated selves.

With these intense sensitivities, I returned to Pennsylvania in order to accept a faculty position at Cairn University. We began looking at homes immediately and were concerned that we would be unable to find a place that could replicate the experience we had in Diamond Hill. I did not want to live in a contemporary suburban development. I toured Levittown thinking that it was at least historical, and after becoming disoriented driving through several of the "gates," we decided that it was not for us. After looking at

several dozen houses in a variety of neighborhoods, we eventually found a 1923 Dutch Colonial in Penndel Borough, Lower Bucks County, PA.

For over two decades, I was becoming increasingly intrigued by the built environment. I had lived in several diverse environments in two different states. How the built environment was affecting my interaction with my neighbors and even how I thought about where I lived provoked questions. In turn, I found myself, while visiting other homes and neighborhoods, wondering about the effects of those places, thinking about curvatures of streets, sightlines, views of natural or manmade landscapes, and so much more. I began seeing design in other places too like shopping centers and their parking lots, education centers, community parks and recreational centers, and within the roads that connected them.

**Inspirations for Building Modern Suburbia**

The First Levittown homes in the Forties were quite simple, as they were designed for mass production. Built on slabs of concrete, the specialized workers would move from slab to slab erecting the whole house in a matter of hours. Basements were non-existent, as this would slow production rates.[1] The first "Levittowners" were called Cape Cods and reflected the style of the small bungalows that dotted many areas of the east coast.

There is a ubiquitous advertisement from the turn-of-the-century. It is for a mail-in Sears and Roebuck and Co. home called The Winthrop. The cost was $35 to $50. Although it did not use the name directly, it was a distant relative of the Cape Cods found in the early twentieth century mail-order homes and later found in the Levittown

[1] DC House Smarts: Bannier & Sandalow https://dchousesmarts.com/2012/10/winsome-walkable-winthrop/

communities. This 1928 Sears, Roebuck and Co. advertisement described its Winthrop Cape Cod thus: "The exterior expresses good taste. Its hooded gable front entry, supported by six columns, is at once dignified and inviting. Two dormer windows project from the shingled roof, harmonizing with the hooded gable. Green batten shutters on the first floor windows contrast against the white siding. Interior planning is admittedly practical and modern."[2] Different variations of these mail-order homes can be found in many of the older boroughs, villages, and townships in the counties surrounding Philadelphia. In Lower Bucks County alone there are dozens and dozens of these examples. The 1923 Dutch Colonial we lived in from 2006 to 2018 is a prime representation.

The establishment of some of these smaller communities were responses to the fears growing among social planners, politicians, and even Christian theologians about the ugliness and corruption in the growing urban centers. The extension of the rail lines from the metropolitan core like Philadelphia made it much easier to seek solutions to these perceived threats. In the mid-nineteenth century, the rapid growth of urbanization created tension between the country and the city.

**Romanticism and Suburban Aspirations**

Before the mass industrialization urbanization of the mid to late nineteenth century, there were some thinkers and statesmen who predicted this fear. People like Thomas Jefferson came to distrust urban citizens. He warned, "Our government will remain virtuous for many centuries as long as [the people] are chiefly agricultural. When

[2] The Antique Home http://www.antiquehome.org/House-Plans/1928-Sears/Winthrop.htm

they get piled upon one another in large cities, as in Europe, they will become as corrupt as they are in Europe."[3] Fear of corruption, whether real or imagined, was exacerbated by the waves of German, Scandinavian, and especially Irish immigrants coming into the cities. Places like Philadelphia, New York, and Boston were growing exponentially.

By mid-century, the Transcendentalist movement swept through New England, stoking and creating a demand for countryside living within an easy distance of cities like Boston. Towns such as Roxbury and Brookline just outside of Boston, attempted to balance the rural and the urban. These pastoral suburbs became prototypes for future communities, including several that eventually surrounded the Philadelphia area too. Yet these early suburban communities lacked the amenities of the industrial centers, such as electricity, water, sewer, oil, and gas. The infrastructure did not exist there to support a hybrid style arrangement between urban and rural living that would initiate a massive demographic shift. Suburbs existed but they were limited in scope and realization. The entertainment venues like the symphony, the playhouse, and the museum were frequently more than a days' commute. For the urban working class, this type of move would have been nearly impossible. For the upper classes that could afford it a new question was offered, was it worth it?

The industrialization of society which heightened social fears among some, would provide the very apparatuses to make suburban living possible. Progress in the evolution of suburbia was, as mentioned earlier, the invention of the railroad and the streetcar. Where the rail lines went, the wealthy established their own escapes from the cities, and later, commuting or "bedroom" communities. Outside of Philadelphia, the new "Main

[3] Thomas Jefferson, letter to James Madison, December 20, 1787.

Line" towns of Bryn Mawr, Haverford, Wynnewood, Merion, and Ardmore sprang up along these connectors. Eventually, in 1930, Suburban Station opened to serve as a rail hub for the commuter lines from the far reaches of the surrounding counties replacing Broad Street Station and the Reading Terminal as the main hub for suburban commuters. This station continues this operation today as a for commuters journeying into Center City.

There were a number of different theorists, philosophers, artists, and statesmen who argued in the same vein as these early thinkers that in the countryside lay the salve to the growing human dilemma of the city. John Claudius Loudon, a British horticulturist, claimed in his 1838 book, *The Suburban Gardener and Villa Companion*, "we shall prove, in this work, that a suburban residence with a very small portion of land attached, will contain all that is essential to happiness."[4] Foreshadowing the American Dream of homeownership, Loudon promotes this way of living as a means of accomplishing the same goals as the aristocracy. "No man in this world, however high may be his rank, great his wealth, powerful his genius, or extensive his acquirements, can ever attain more than health, enjoyment, and respect."[5] The suburban advertisements in the coming decades and centuries capitalized on this dream and utilized the sense of equality with the landed elite to draw people into a sense of becoming just like these advertisements. The status anxieties that the social critic of the Fifties and Sixties, Vance Packard, and the contemporary critic and philosopher, Alain de Botton, were eerily similar. Despite being generations apart they both observed similar concerns.

---

[4] John Claudius Loudon, *The Suburban Gardener, and Villa Companion*. Cambridge University Press, 2014.
[5] Loudon, *The Suburban Gardener and Villa Companion.*

They capture the same uneasiness with economic ambitions and social mobility. In order to diminish the social comparisons that de Botton and Packard challenged, Loudon argued for class homogenization in these future suburban communities. He warned against being the wealthiest in a neighborhood of less than wealthy neighbors, or the poorest among those who were higher up the ladder of success. He anticipated the envy and stress that this inequality could cause.

In 1850, American horticulturist Andrew Jackson Downing published *The Architecture of Country Housing*. Like Loudon, Downing's goal was the promotion of country living, however, he added that the type of home mattered. Anticipating the postwar arguments for Americans to "buy more" made by Elizabeth Gordon of *Good Housekeeping* and Vice President Richard Nixon in the famous "kitchen debate" with Nikita Kruschev, the homes Americans construct and reside in are more than a dwelling; they are marks of civilization and progress. He concluded a three-tier apology for this type of living: "[B]ecause there is a moral influence in a country home - when among an educated, truthful, and refined people, it is an echo of their character - which is more powerful than any mere oral teachings of virtue or morality."[6] In the midst of the Fifties housing boom, William Levitt quipped: "No man who owns his own house and lot can be a communist … He has too much to do."[7]

Early British Romantic William Cowper portended the anti-urbanism that strengthened as the Industrial Revolution expanded. In his poem, "The Task," from *Book*

---

[6] Andrew Jackson Downing, *The Architecture of Country Houses; Including Designs for Cottages, Farm Houses, and Villas* (New York: D. Appleton & Co.,1850).

[7] Richard Lacayo, "Suburban Legend William Levitt: His answer to a postwar housing crisis created a new kind of home life and culture: suburbia," *Time*, December 7, 1998. http://content.time.com/time/magazine/article/0,9171,989781-2,00.html

*I, the Sofa*, he lambasts city life and channeling his inner Rousseau, its corrupting nature. After calling out the wonders and beauty of the countryside and the natural environment for over 600 lines, he turned his attention to the city. He writes:

> … The dregs and feculence of every land.
> In cities foul example on most minds
> Begets its likeness. Rank abundance breeds
> In gross and pamper'd cities sloth and lust,
> And wantonness and gluttonous excess.
> In cities vice is hidden with most ease,
> Or seen with least reproach; and virtue, taught
> By frequent lapse, can hope no triumph there
> Beyond th' achievement of successful flight.[8]

The urban environment corrupts, attracts "dregs", causes "feculence", "wantonness", and gluttonous excess", and hides "vice." These are strong and visceral words. Fleeing the city was seen by many as not just an upgrade on your surroundings but a utopian dream and the solution to societal ills. These sentiments were echoed in many of the planned communities conjured up by architects, industrial planners, and government reformers. If sin was an element of the city, then it would behoove moral people or those who sought redemption to leave for greener pastures.[9] This attitude has been part of many different Protestant and some veins of Catholic traditional beliefs. Eden was paradise until Adam and Eve brought sin into the world. After the first murder committed by Cain against his brother Abel, Cain takes refuge in the cities of men.

One of the examples of the early adoptions of this rural or suburban escape was Llewellyn Park, New Jersey, self-proclaimed, "First Planned Community in America." This wealthy oasis was the result of a visionary for suburban development, Llewellyn

---

[8]William Cowpers, excerpt *from Book I, the Sofa* from *The Task: A Poem in Six Books,* 1785.
[9] Gorringe, *A Theology of the Built Environment*: *Justice, Empowerment, Redemption*

Haskell. Haskell hired Alexander Jackson (A.J.) Davis as his architect. Davis partnered with Andrew Jackson Downing as an illustrator for his book, *The Architecture of Country Houses* and his journal, *The Horticulturalist*. Their combined efforts promoted and disseminated what was known as the picturesque.[10] This was a style of architecture that infused natural settings and scenes into the construction and place. The Englishman and aesthetic William Gilpin published guidebooks as early as the seventeenth century to spread its virtues. Llewellyn Haskell's ideas as a nineteenth century escape integrated these notions.

**"Back to Nature" Movement**

The theme of "escaping the city" was carried into the twentieth century. Although a political cartoon with different layers of meaning, it captures a version of this escape. The cartoon was published in 1957 and depicts the prototypical family (white, nuclear, patriarchal) heading to the suburbs in their station wagon. The children, the parents, and even the dog are brimming with excitement and enchantment. The traffic lined up behind them represents a mass exodus from the ominous urban landscape in the background. As Cowpers wrote almost two centuries before Levittown, it was a relief to escape.[11]

John Teaford lists a series of ads for some of the first suburban neighborhoods developed prior to the Great Depression, with obvious Romantic appeals merged into them. From Oakland County, Michigan, "Nestled along the estates of rolling hills, beautiful trees, and natural beauty unmarred by city invasion," from St. Louis County,

---

[10] Metropolitan Museum of Art https://www.metmuseum.org/toah/hd/davs/hd_davs.htm

[11] Suburbia cartoon. [Reprinted from Electrical Merchandising, July 1957] http://statemuseumpa.org/levittown/one/b.html

Missouri, "awake with the song birds, and feel the warmth of a clear sun shining through pure air," from Nassau County, New York, "the people that you want for neighbors are here."[12] Teaford observed, "Suburbia was a haven, a retreat, where one could escape the evils and annoyances of the city and find rest and health nestled among the beauties of nature and the estates of the wealthy … What developers were selling, and urban refugees were buying, was an alternative vision of life that specifically rejected the city and embraced the village."[13] Many of the elements of postwar suburban marketing, appeal, and interest related to demand are explicit and implicit in their appeals. The suburbs were not invented after World War II, but part of their popularity rested on aspirational characteristics established generations earlier. This is the anti-urban narrative that was so prevalent. When it is hitched to theological or biblical sources, as observed from Catherine Beecher's recommendations, and interpreted as the antithesis of the problems of industrialization, pollution, and crime it becomes more than a fact but a calling or a mission.

Thomas Cole's 1847 painting, *Home in the Woods* captures the Romantic imaginations and the escape of urban living. Here he depicts the "man of the house" returning from a hunting and fishing trip with the canoe berthed at the lake's edge. A log cabin situated on the right side faces the lake with his wife and children peering out of the door and windows welcoming him home. Laundry and other activities are assumed to have taken place in his absence as they are hung out to dry. A stretch of wilderness, common to Cole's work, surrounds and isolates the family as there are no neighbors

---

[12] John Teaford, *Post-Suburbia: Government and Politics in the Edge Cities* (Baltimore, Johns Hopkins University Press, 1997), 9.
[13] Teaford, 9.

present or even imagined. These are humans living in a pristine environment uncorrupted by development, urbanization, or the concentration of people.

At the same time another postwar American suburban theme is meted out. The sense of nature's calling to human ingenuity and the individualism accentuated by the lone man with his family carving out a place to live will be carried into the suburban imagination for decades to come. In chapter three, advertising suburbia will be explored. More than just products are being sold. Gender, class, and race norms were also promoted to the public. Therefore, a painting like this can be seen in many different portrayals of white fathers and husbands in advertisements returning to their suburban homes after work and being greeted at the door by their waiting wife and children.

In the 1944 book *The Condition of Man*, Lewis Mumford lays the utopian dream, wrapped up in eventual romantic ideals and applied to visions of suburbia, at his feet.[14] These communities were best imagined connected to the state of nature. "If men now sought power in the factory, the bank, the army, they sought happiness in the sort of life Rousseau here accredited and celebrated: every Sunday in growing numbers they would leave their towns, on boats and carriages, on foot and finally in railroad trains, to taste the simple sweetness of the gypsy life, in twos and twenties they would forget themselves in Arcadia."[15] This Arcadian dream, intensified by nineteenth century Romanticism, would draw thousands and then eventually millions away from the urban centers. "Every year, too, the spontaneous life, free from sordid cares and stiff conventions, close to the countryside, would drive thousands of people to seek a little home in the suburbs, with a

---

[14] Lewis Mumford, *The Condition of Man*, New York, Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, Publishers, 1944.
[15] Mumford, *The Condition of Man*, 298.

green lawn, a few trees, a bed of flowers, or a nearby woodland …"[16] The American dream of owning your own home on your own land has been a facet of the narrative.

Examples show a dark contrast, the country and the city. Often, the countryside is associated with innocence, calm, and safety (see Cole's paintings), while on the other hand, the city is associated with decadence, frenetic activity, and life's shortcomings. It is a rare philosopher, thinker, civic engineer or leader, that would turn this "ugliness" or despair on its head. That is exactly what poet Carl Sandburg does in his nineteenth century poem, "Chicago." After listing the challenges, pollution, and even debauchery, and describing the city as "wicked," "crooked," and "brutal," he acknowledges the reality, and defends his city proudly:

> … so I turn once more to those who sneer at this my city, and I give them back the sneer and say to them: Come and show me another city with lifted head singing so proud to be alive and coarse and strong and cunning. Flinging magnetic curses amid the toil of piling job on job, here is a tall bold slugger set vivid against the little soft cities …[17]

**Industrial Town Suburbs**

Industrialists attempted to find a solution to the urban threats at the turn of the century through combining suburban living with employment and work. In 1915, Harvey Firestone began construction on a planned industrial suburb for the workers employed in the Firestone Tire Company as the company was expanding. The invention of the internal combustion engine in the nineteenth century and the subsequent increase in demand for automobiles, and by default, tires, led to a rapid growth of the business. This growth brought in new workers and their families, which required construction of\new

---

[16] Mumford, *The Condition of Man,* 298.

[17] Carl Sandburg, Excerpt from "Chicago*" The Norton Anthology of American Literature*, edited by Mary Loeffelholz, 7th ed., vol. D, p. 1437-8, New York: W.W.Norton, 2007.

housing. Keeping with the progressive era's hopes and goals of improving society, Harvey Firestone saw an opportunity to imagine a new type of living arrangement to benefit the workers, and in turn, the company. Men like Firestone, Ford, and other industrialists believed that social reformation could bring about a more efficient and more loyal workforce.

In 1919, his company was highlighted in a periodical called, "Homes for workmen; a presentation of leading examples of industrial community development." It included an analysis of industrial towns, parks, and entire neighborhoods from Eclipse Park in Beloit, Wisconsin, Nitro, West Virginia, Erwin, Tennessee, and Flint, Michigan, among others. A forerunner to the New Urban movement in the twenty-first century, the introduction is very specific about ratios and distances in design. It states:

> The size, shape and proportion of blocks are of great importance … Some variety in the shape and size of blocks is desirable, and often economic. It is preferable, however, to keep them fairly near to a rectangular shape, avoiding sharp angles. The depth of the block intended to house industrial workers should seldom be more than 200 feet.[18]

Harvey Firestone's goal was to build a "community," not a collection of individual homes. At the center of the design was an oval-shaped community park, buttressed on both sides by churches, one Methodist and one Lutheran, and anchored on a slightly raised portion of land by a church which he called, "the largest and best equipped school in the State of Ohio."[19] Mixed social class housing was also considered with the construction of a 44 room Young Women's Christian Association building within the community and not on its outskirts. Residents were encouraged to interact with the

---

[18] "Homes for workmen; a presentation of leading examples of industrial community development" https://archive.org/stream/cu31924015465796/cu31924015465796_djvu.txt

[19] "Homes for workmen; a presentation of leading examples of industrial community development" https://archive.org/stream/cu31924015465796/cu31924015465796_djvu.txt

YWCA by the inclusion of a 125-seat restaurant on the ground floor. Interestingly, in the postwar expansion, these suggestions were abandoned as zoning laws did not permit mixed types of housing, business, and civic construction. And in most postwar suburban developments, mixed zoning still is not adopted.

**Design and Dreaming of Utopia**

Lamenting the industrial city and all the ills which included vice, crime, pollution, health problems, overcrowding, civic corruption, and more, Ebenezer Howard wrote a justification for this design in 1902. Imagining the Garden City, he wrote:

> The key to the problem [was] how to restore the people to the land – that beautiful land of ours, with its canopy of sky, the air that blows upon it, the sun that warms it, the rain and dew that moisten it – the very embodiment of Divine love for man – is indeed a Master key, for it is a love of a portal through which, even when scarce ajar, will be seen to pour a flood of light on the problems of intemperance, of excessive toil, of restless anxiety, of grinding poverty – the true limits of Governmental interference, ay, and even the relations of man to the Supreme Power …[20]

The anti-urban themes reflected the previous centuries romantic movement. There is a Christian hint to Howard's description, as well as a channeling of the Transcendental aspirations of thinkers like Henry David Thoreau and Ralph Waldo Emerson. The design illustrated above shows a carefully planned relationship between the countryside and the residential areas to the urban core. This is only one quarter of the planned city. Howard's beliefs also fall in line with the progressive thinking and solutions of the day. He first identifies a problem, and through engineering, technology, and design, develops not only a solution, but one that is dream-like looking at these implementations as means

[20] Ebenezer Howard, *Garden Cities of To-Morrow* (London, Swan Sonnenschein & Co., Ltd., 1902).

of human improvement. Here lie some of the roots of postwar suburbia. The suburban lifestyle, while being influenced by its design, would achieve utopian objectives.

The new living arrangements imagined by Ebenezer Howard were followed by the imaginations of others like Frank Lloyd Wright and Le Corbusier. They and others believed that the built environments and designs were in need of redeeming, resetting, or redefining their value systems. The Industrial Revolution had unleashed a torrent of innovation and invention transforming human interaction and imagination. These new technologies like electricity and the products they powered eventually both complicated the solutions to the urban and housing possibilities and enabled them. Refrigeration, incandescent lighting, advanced heating and cooling systems, kitchen appliances and stoves and stovetops, and more were embraced by builders, engineers, and advertisers.

These innovations were welcomed by most but frowned upon by some who thought that they would alter human experiences in irreversible ways and that they would detach humans from the land and possibly from each other. What made thinkers and planners from Howard to the Levitts so different from the Romantics and Transcendentalists was that they saw the potential of technology as a means of achieving the balance between the built environment and nature. Engineering, architecture, and design were viewed as potential answers to the questions of community, design, values, and identity. Frank Lloyd Wright's concept of Broadacre City was another example of this dilemma in vision, as he imagined a new city based on the newly invented automobile, to serve as a means of salvation for the United States.[21] Like the Levitts a

[21] Revisiting Frank Lloyd Wright's Vision for "Broadacre City" Frank Lloyd Wright Foundation | Sep 8, 2017. http://franklloydwright.org/revisiting-frank-lloyd-wrights-vision-broadacre-city/ (accessed January 25, 2018).

decade later, the automobile could be harnessed as a means of solving the challenges of community and not as a force for exacerbating it.

Not only did these visions of suburban design tap into the progressive ideas of solutions to very human, and at the time, industrial challenges, their advertising was also utopian in design. An example of late nineteenth century advertising appealing to the "dreams" of the working class can be seen in this promotion developed for the subdivision near Chicago, Illinois in 1892 by S.E. Gross. The ad features a workman, who is white, with sleeves rolled up and hat off, resting on a slab, peering upward to see a home in the countryside surrounded by trees and nature (see Figure 5). There is a woman in the dream image of the house pushing a carriage up the front path to the porch. This image is encircled by heavenly light as an angel reveals the vision for this very deserving worker. The angel carries a sword with the word, "Justice" emblazoned across it. The ad states, "The Working Man's reward, Where All was Darkness – Now is Light." In this form of imagery, suburban living is associated with salvation, redemption, reconciliation, and renewal.[22] These are really powerful sentiments as Christian, political, racial, community, and geography are all conflated and integrated to the point of making it more difficult to see where the boundaries of these points begin and end. The sentiments are reminders of the painting *American Progress* by John Gast, completed in 1872.[23]

For the Romantics and the subsequent builders partly inspired by these ideas, most of the solutions to the urban problems of decay, industrialization, pollution, crime,

---

[22] S. E. Gross, Real Estate Promoter Chicagology https://chicagology.com/chicagostreets/segross/ (accessed January 25, 2018).

[23] *American Progress* by John Gast, 1872 – A woman dressed in angelic clothing is at the top of the canvas with a school book in hand, leading white American settlers from the East Coast to the West, bringing technologies like the railroad and telegraph, the taming of land, and therefore "progress." In the darkness, fleeing the lights, are herds of bison and Amerindians..

and the other ills of society lay in bringing people back to nature. The countryside envisioned in the S.E. Gross advertisement reinforces nature as the healing salve. As Edward Bellamy wrote in *Looking Backward: 2000-1887*, a science fiction and utopian novel published in 1888, "At my feet lay a great city. Miles of broad streets, shaded by trees and lined with fine buildings. Public buildings of a colossal size and architectural grandeur unparalleled in my day raised their stately piles on every side. Surely I have never seen this city nor one comparable in size."[24] The character in the novel is transported into the future and the city that is imagined has nineteenth century dreams woven through it. Design matters to the character who is conveying the wonders in which he witnessed.

Not all the advertising was as overt as above in the S.E. Gross promotion. Take an example from a 1916 Aladdin Homes advertisement for a "do-it-yourself" catalog. This Dutch Revival home pulls together these facets of the suburban dream in a more subtle manner. According to the ad, for under $600, one could have their very own home in the countryside, surrounded by trees and greenery. Like the ads from S.E. Gross and eventually the Levitts, many homes were not shown within a neighborhood, but instead as practically standalones with an endless vista in the background. This conjured up image recasts the Thomas Cole painting, *Home in the Woods*, where the homebuyer can imagine "country" living.

Like the late nineteenth century, the view of the city as the great incubator of crime and evil was once again used as an impetus behind massive relocation from the city. This time popular culture integrated any number of urban tropes. Cities were

---

[24] Edward Bellamy, *Looking Backward: 2000-1887.* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2009).

portrayed by Hollywood as dark and filled with corruption. The genre of Thirties crime films and the postwar Film Noir genre emphasized this as a backdrop to their storytelling. During the Fifties for example, there were a number of films produced with the term "jungle" in the title. Their location was not some region of India or Brazil, but instead were American cities. These films, which went by names like *Blackboard Jungle, Asphalt Jungle, and Juvenile Jungle*, were places where the protagonist was up against more than a human antagonist but the urban landscape itself.[25]

**Pre-War Suburbs of Lower Bucks County**

The industrialization of society which heightened social fears among some, would provide the very apparatuses to make suburban living possible. Progress in the evolution of suburbia was, as mentioned earlier, the invention of the railroad and the streetcar. Where the rail lines went, the wealthy established their own escapes from the cities, and later, commuting or "bedroom" communities. Outside of Philadelphia, the new "Main Line" towns of Bryn Mawr, Haverford, Wynnewood, Merion, and Ardmore sprang up along these connectors. Eventually, Suburban Station was built to serve as a rail hub for the commuter lines from the far reaches of the surrounding counties, and continues this operation today as a hub for commuters journeying into Center City.

Lower Bucks County in Pennsylvania used similar advertising as S.E. Gross and other means to bring people into the developing communities that took advantage of the growth of the rail lines. The Langhorne Improvement Company, whose goal it was to lure more residents into the region, placed announcements in local newspapers. One such example comes from the *Newtown Enterprise* in 1890, "This is an age of land purchase,

---

[25] Amy Maria Kenyon, *Dreaming Suburbia: Detroit and the Production of postwar Space and Culture,* Detroit, Wayne State University Press, 2004.

and lots after lots are sold to citizens who intend to build and take advantage of the healthful and beautiful country as a romping place for their children and a safe and increasing investment for their money."[26] Not only does it have an example of the lure of financial benefits and places that are safe, but there is a direct correlation to the romantic inclinations of moving into the countryside.

Throughout the late nineteenth and the first half of the twentieth century, with the assistance of easier travel and increased desires to vacate the city, there were more and more established middle-class towns, boroughs, and villages along rivers and rail lines with access routes to the city. Many of the homes in these early suburban areas were built by the very people who lived in them, due to a new style of homebuilding available to the new market. In 1908, Sears, Roebuck and Co. published a volume titled *Book of Modern Homes and Building Plans*, which promoted the "do-it-yourself" model. After securing a lot, homeowners were able to order a home from a catalog like this and have it delivered in pieces to be assembled by the customer.

For one of these Aladdin "do it yourself" homes, it was less than 1,000 square feet and there were two bedrooms, each with their own closet. An advertisement boasts, "… a diamond paned window to the left of the front door gives plenty of light to the stairway and adds attractiveness to the front of the house and porch. Living room and dining room are divided by a wide arch, making them practically one room. Both rooms are well lighted and of good size."[27] Many of these features would have been the antithesis or just

---

[26] Penndel Borough Centennial, 1899-1999, 21.

[27] The New Eden Aladdin Floor Plan http://www.antiquehome.org/House-Plans/1916-Aladdin/New-Eden.htm (Accessed on January 18, 2019)

structurally impossible for those in an urban living environment in the early twentieth century. The model described here was affectionately called the *New Eden*.

Another example of a catalog or "kit home" advertisement comes from Sears, Roebuck and Co. in 1926. This Van Jean style Dutch Colonial boasts in large font on the top of the page, "Own Your Own Home." Underneath the picture of the home is an enclosed explanation of why purchasing this would change your life. Beginning with a banner, "Long Life and Happiness," and an appeal to Christianity, it claims, "[you need to] get the most out of your home as our Creator intended it should be, A HOME OF YOUR OWN is an absolute necessity." Owning your own home in the countryside is now a biblical mandate, or at least fulfilling God's calling for his creation. Like so many of the other ads, bucolic surroundings punctuate the imagery, and no other homes are nearby with the exception of a roofline in the distance beyond the backyard, thus emphasizing an American trait about the house, "[giving] you independence" and breaking free of a renter's life. These appeals to religious and civic ideals returned in the postwar developments. During the Red Scare in the Fifties, owning your home came to be viewed as a means to keep you from becoming a "godless communist," and could even illustrate how far the United States has progressed when compared to Cold War adversaries like the Soviet Union. Who would want to be drawn into communism if he owned a home? Forced equality and "each according to his needs"[28] philosophy was untenable with home ownership.

[28] Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, *The Communist Manifesto* (Tampa: Millennium Publications, 2017).

**Home Construction and American Ideology**

In the waning months of World War II, the cover of *House Beautiful* featured an image that could summarize the postwar objectives as seen by advertisers.[29] A young woman stands in the doorway of a Cape Cod single detached suburban home, watching a returning soldier in uniform pushing open the front gate, beginning his walk up the front steps. The magazine was preparing the way for the postwar housing boom. Elizabeth Gordon, the magazine's long-time editor, warned middle class Americans in 1953, "Two ways of life stretch before us. One leads to the richness of variety, to comfort and beauty. The other, the one we want fully to expose to you, retreats to poverty and unlivability. Worst of all, it contains the threat of cultural dictatorship."[30] Like her earlier creed on how the home was part of the "bulwark" of democracy in its fight against fascism, now the home had become a weapon against communism in the Cold War. An article appearing in *House Beautiful* was titled, "How American is Your House." The title and the article utilizes a series of rhetorical questions, several making no pretense to how a house can embody American dreams and values. It asks, "Does your house express the serenity and self-assurance of a person living in a democratic society where Everybody is Somebody? Does it show that you are sure of yourself as a person of character and importance, or does it show you are worried because you are not someone else?" At another point it insinuated, "Perhaps the house of your choice is saying that you really don't like being an American at all, that you would rather have been something else."[31] These are strong words in the midst of World War II and the massive propaganda

---

[29] *House Beautiful*, January 1945.
[30] Daisy Alioto, Elizabeth Gordon's International Style, *Curbed Magazine*, https://www.curbed.com/2017/5/10/15592658/elizabeth-gordon-house-beautiful-frank-lloyd-wright
[31] "How American is Your House?" *House Beautiful*, September 1950.

campaigns that were being used to garner greater levels of patriotism. The Cold War became an ideological global conflict and the American family home was being enlisted.

Looking back, this change in housing and therefore living could be classified as the next stage of American development in community. There were increasing populations in urban areas, the decrease in housing construction, and the increase in cost of real estate that was available on the market. With these elements, the reasons and the means sometimes come across as absolute. We might ask: Where else were Americans going to live? How else were returning soldiers and their wives and families going to find housing? Why wouldn't young families want to escape the confines of their extended families, the crowded conditions, high rents, the ugliness of urban blight, and the crumbling infrastructure of the urban setting? How could anyone pass up the opportunity to own not just a house, but a new one? To join the middle class in status, especially when these new homes and communities were in the open countryside? After nearly twenty years and several generations of economic hardship, frugal living, and a calamitous World War, these questions would read rhetorically. Moving into the suburbs made sense to millions of Americans then and now.

The decision to move into the postwar suburbs was also made easier with the 1944 Servicemen's Readjustment Act. The preamble states that this Act was "to provide Federal Government aid for the readjustment in civilian life of returning World War II veterans."[32] Although many associate the G.I. Bill with the increase in enrollment in higher education, one of the other benefits to returning veterans was access to low

[32] How American is Your House? "House Beautiful, September 1950.

interest home mortgages.[33] The later benefits would be felt immediately as suburban demand increases. The later educational benefits not only expanded suburban demands, but also indirectly influenced education goals as well. This was reinforced by the 1944 bill which guaranteed low interest loans such as the Servicemen's Readjustment Act and later with the Housing Act of 1949 which would draw connections between the state of the union and home ownership.

It is from this rhetorical approach that this subtle revolution in how Americans lived was going unnoticed. Needs were being met and, for those early pioneers, cheaply. The revolution, the change in lifestyles and their tangential and integrated results, were so subtle that it did not end with the first settlers and homesteaders, but continued to grow despite the sometimes negative social commentary that followed. Demand for housing on the next edge or fringe of development was increasing at a rate that was unanticipated. Critics argued that the distances between these homes and the urban centers would continue to grow longer as developments broke ground further and further away from the city where land was cheaper to build on the Romantic dream was pushed to. These critics worried about this trend, and challenged that homogenization in social class, race, and age would intensify as a result of the building of newer and newer communities. Despite these and other critiques, who could argue with the market? And if owning a home could contribute to being less prone or vulnerable to Marxism and communism then all the more reason to move to suburbia.

---

[33] Elaine Tyler May, *Fortress America: How We Embraced Fear and Abandoned Democracy* (New York, Hachette Book Group, 2017), 24.

One can see this trend among builders play out in the decades that followed the war. For example, in Bucks County, PA as Levitt and Sons gave way to builders like the Tollhouse Brothers, there were always contractors ready to oblige in providing them. As recently as 2020, many new homes are available in newly minted developments with names like Estates of Milltown, Mill Creek Ridge, Fenton's Corner, Park View, and the Reserve at Northampton.

Per the objectives of the Levitts and fulfilling the aspirations of Elizabeth Gordon, Levittown homes "democratized"[34] ownership. Some of the earliest models were sold for under $10,000 and for under $100 down. For returning soldiers, even the $100 deposit was waived.[35] The demand was unlike anything seen in twentieth century home construction. After nearly twenty years of stagnation in new buildings due to the Depression and World War II, affordable and cheap housing was practically a revolution. Part of the reform was the mass production designs of the Industrial Revolution being applied to houses and communities. The Levitts were so successful and efficient at home construction and their subsequent sales, that at one point, the Levitts had constructed one out of every eight homes in the United States.[36] Never before in American history has one construction company and developer had so much influence on design. Although small by most contemporary suburban standards, the space afforded these new homebuyers seemed luxurious. Despite the new space, buyers were hesitant to overspend and to acquire "stuff" to fill their homes. This was a generation who had memories of the

---

[34] Chad Kimmel. Community in History: Levittown and the Decline of a Postwar American Dream, ASA Footnotes - http://www.asanet.org/sites/default/files/savvy/footnotes/nov03/fn8.html

[35] State Museum of Pennsylvania http://statemuseumpa.org/levittown/one/d.html (Accessed on January 18, 2019)

[36] "Up from the Potato Fields," *Time*, July 3, 1950.

Great Depression and the frugality and conservation of the war years. Chapter Three will address these economic transitions and the effects of design on the philosophical and psychological changes in culture.

*House Beautiful*'s longstanding editor Elizabeth Gordon took a slightly more nuanced view of this phenomenon, addressing the issue of size and storage space in her article series, *The Threat to the Next America* in 1953. She writes, "There is a well-established movement in modern architecture, decorating, and furnishings, which is promoting the mystical idea that less is more."[37] This was a critique of the prewar and war mentalities of frugality. However, as if predicting the future of the direction of suburban design, she continues, "They are all trying to sell the idea that 'less is more,' both as a criterion for design, and as a basis of judgment of the good life. They are promoting unlivability, stripped-down emptiness, lack of storage space, and therefore lack of possession."[38]

Certainly, one could argue that this is just a floor plan, nothing more, and that Alfred Levitt's statement might seem shallow. But there is a hint of historical and philosophical consideration that T.J. Gorringe, Marshall McLuhan, Christopher Alexander, and even the defense of Parliament by Winston Churchill is alluding to. When floor plans are connected with storage space for possessions, then a home or a building becomes more than a roof over your head and shelter from the elements. A few months after Gordon's declaration in the April, 1953 edition of *House Beautiful* and the resultant reaction where much of it was negative from the architectural world, architects

---

[37] Elizabeth Gordon, *House Beautiful*, April, 1953.
[38] Elizabeth Gordon, *House Beautiful*, April, 1953.

like Frank Lloyd Wright and Ralph E. Winslow came to her defense. The latter wrote a letter to her stating, "Often I have wondered why people for the greater part are born, educated, work, live, and die within the framework of architecture, are so unaware of its great power to condition them for better or worse."[39] Elizabeth Gordon was somewhat prophetic about the future of suburban design and principles.

The evolution of post-war geopolitical and ideological tension in the international sphere would become part of the catalyst behind the economic and suburban expansion in the Fifties. In the post-war years, the United States transitioned from a wartime economy to a peacetime one. Despite a short economic lull in the late Forties, the Fifties would witness an unprecedented bull market. Although many Americans wanted to put the war behind them, the position of the United States as a world superpower was seemingly unavoidable. The ideological divide between East and West and the geopolitical effects glaringly obvious as the Potsdam Conference commenced in the summer of 1945. With Germany defeated and occupied, the alliance between the United States, Great Britain, and the Soviet Union was unable to be held together.

Elizabeth Gordon's editorial tact and approach was eventually channeled to combat the Soviets in the Cold War. The United States now had an ideological enemy and, to the writers and editors of periodicals like *House Beautiful*, the home became a primary source and symbol of power and identity. The Presidential State of the Union Address in 1941conveyed many of the ideals of how Americans liked to see themselves. With threats from home in the form of the lingering Depression, and threats abroad from totalitarianism and war, President Franklin Delano Roosevelt synthesized several

---

[39] Monica Penick, *Tastemaker: Elizabeth Gordon, House Beautiful, and the Postwar American Home* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2017), 128.

nuanced and even competing identities into one that crystallized it for the postwar generation. He listed "four essential human freedoms" he believed should be universally protected.[40] Two years later, these concepts were immortalized on the cover of *The Saturday Evening Post* when Norman Rockwell's series appeared for four consecutive weeks in early 1943.[41] The illustrations for "Four Freedoms" became part of an American Identity, showing who we are as a people, and what we value as a nation.[42]

In the first, the "Freedom of Speech," a working man stands and speaks his mind in a community meeting. In "Freedom of Worship," the profiles of people of all ages and creeds are seen praying, under the heading "Each According to the Dictates of His Own Conscience." In "Freedom From Want," a family is gathered at a table, anticipating enjoying the roast turkey Grandma is placing on the table. In "Freedom From Fear," a mother is tucking her children into bed, while their father stands watching over them. In his hand is a newspaper with dire headlines in large letters, with the words "bombings" and "horror" visible. The President's speech was the catalyst for the 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights, and is also memorialized at the Franklin D. Roosevelt Four Freedoms Park on Roosevelt Island, NY.

Twelve years later, Elizabeth Gordon's famous "The Threat to the Next America" essay appeared in *House Beautiful.* It read:

> To reach the fullness of the next America we must sign another declaration of independence, another resolution of individualism. We must erect homes that shelter and enrich human life. We must build the architecture for the new age of

---

[40] Franklin Delano Roosevelt, "State of the Union Address", The White House, 6 January 1941, Washington, D.C.
[41] Norman Rockwell, *Four Freedoms Series*, 1943, oil on canvas, each 45.75 by 35.5 inches (116.2 cm × 90.2 cm), Norman Rockwell Museum, Stockbridge, MA.
[42] Norman Rockwell, *Four Freedoms*, 1943, poster, Cummer Museum http://blog.cummermuseum.org/page/88/

> humanism. We must expose the mechanistic forms, reject the authoritarian dogmas of the cult of stark, sterile modern.[43]

According to Gordon, the fifth freedom could have stated, "the freedom to own a single detached dwelling." The home was being fully marshalled into service to reflect the ideological divide between the United States and the Soviet Union. This is not a stretch in the imagination. Even the General Electric advertisement used and analyzed in chapter one conflated the war to end fascism as fulfilling "a promise" to return home, get married, and buy a house.

**Leaving the City for the Post-War Suburbs**

One of the elements of the human experience is that humans move: searching for better opportunities for food, climate, or employment, or escaping war, natural disasters, or other religious or political persecution.[44] The challenges to massive relocations are immense, and the effects ripple through time, culture, and geography. Paradoxically, while certain needs propel humanity to move, history has taught us that we have a concurrent need to settle, establish roots and traditions, and make connections across generations.[45] The tension between these opposing needs, movement and migration, and the establishment of cultural bonds and community, was stretched and strained during one of the greatest social experiments in the history of living arrangements. In the twentieth century, Americans left the homeland of their urban centers by the millions, in search of greener pastures in the suburbs. Vance Packard noted in 1959, "The restless,

---

[43] Elizabeth Gordon, *House Beautiful*, April 1953.
[44] Jared Diamond, *Guns, Germs, and Steel: The Fates of Human Societies* (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 1999).
[45] Harm de Blij, *Geography of Place: Geography, Destiny, and Globalism's Rough Landscape* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2010).

migratory habits of many Americans, then appeared to be an asset for those aspiring to move upward. According to Louis Kronenberger, the moving van is "a symbol of more than our restlessness; it is the most conclusive evidence of our progress."[46]

During these postwar years, an estimated twenty million Americans relocated to the suburbs in the largest movement since the westward expansion of the 1880's.[47] The lack of extensive geographical planning in the early railroad or streetcar suburbs resulted in a growing desire among some planners, builders, and government officials for more intentional communities.[48] This wide-ranging change in how Americans chose to live transformed far more than just the streets and highways in terms of design. Explored in the next chapter, advertisers recognized a golden opportunity to sell a whole new way of living via magazines, billboards, the radio, and eventually, the television.[49] The newness of suburbia and the increase in size of suburban homes attracted consumers and homebuyers. This combination concerned Lewis Mumford because he believed it enhanced consumerism. He predicted that these changes were the antithesis of community, and would seep into the culture.

The early scenes of the 1957 film, *No Down Payment,* captured a glimpse of the housing and cultural transformation of the Fifties with hints of Mumford's concerns.[50] With the introduction of the opening credits, David and Jean Martin are moving. They are pictured driving to their new home in the suburbs of Southern California with the

---

[46] Daniel Horowitz *American Social Classes in the 1950s: Selections from Van Packard's "The Status Seekers"*

[47] David Kushner, *Levittown: Two Families, One Tycoon, and the Fight for Civil Rights in America's Legendary Suburb.* (New York: Walker & Company, 2009), xiii.

[48] For instance, the late 19th century Garden City and City Beautiful movements in urban planning were introduced in the UK and the US, respectively.

[49] David Ogilvy, *Confessions of an Advertising Man* (New York: Atheneum, 1963).

[50] *No Down Payment*, directed by Martin Ritt (1957; Los Angeles, CA; 20th Century Fox), film.

moving van following. During the lengthy drive, the Martins become increasingly excited as they pass billboard after billboard boldly promising better living and affordability in brand new housing developments. We soon find them in the open streets of Sunrise Hills, where the newness of the neighborhood and the home are fully displayed. When they finally open the front door, they radiate relief and satisfaction, celebrating with a long embrace. The viewer is also able to observe the new neighbors and living quarters from the lens of the picture window. Although the film has a tragic ending, they seem blissfully unaware of the effects this move will have on them and their neighbors, as the rapid growth of suburbia caused major social, demographic, and infrastructure changes in society.[51] After decades of economic depression and world war, the housing needs for young couples and families had spiked, especially with thousands of soldiers returning from the theater of war. Millions of Americans like the Martins embarked for the suburbs, imagining better living and the fulfillment of their dreams.

This move to suburbia in the postwar years has arguably implicitly and explicitly contributed more to redefining American dreams, values, and cultural norms than any other development in the history of modern architecture and design. A shifting population, a massive relocation of people, an extensive building endeavor to accommodate the sudden shift in population densities, along with mass production of homes, all contributed to seismic changes in self-perceptions, values, and how people lived. Additionally, media influence furthered the suburban sprawl and laid a foundation for this re-shaping of values.

---

[51] Theodore Caplow, Louis Hicks, and Ben Wattenburg, *The First Measured Century: An Illustrated Guide to Trends in America, 1900-2000* (LaVergne, TN: American Enterprise Institute Press, 2000).

Kenneth Jackson's *Crabgrass Frontier: The Suburbanization of the United States* was one of the first to recognize this social, political, economic, and cultural tipping point. After World War II, the United States was experiencing radical change. Sweeping socioeconomic and cultural changes of the time included a drastic shift in home construction and neighborhood development. This change in particular altered the American landscape by creating a new environment, and laying a foundation for transforming our sense of community, dreams, and values. By 2017, more people reside in the suburbs than in all the country's cities and rural areas combined. Between 1947 and 1951, the first housing development designed and built by Levitt & Sons was located just outside of New York City. Named Levittown, it contained 17,000 houses for 82,000 people. By 1952, another planned community, also named Levittown, was under construction in Lower Bucks County, Pennsylvania, just north of Philadelphia, and right across the river from Trenton, New Jersey.

As in New York, the Levittown homes were within the financial grasp of the emerging middle classes, including tens of thousands of returning GIs. According to 1947 newspaper accounts, more than one-half of the New York properties were spoken for less than two days after the community was announced.[52] In relation to the Second Levittown, Jon Blackwell of *The Trentonian* wrote, "Pieces of the American Dream were a hot commodity in post-World War II America, and nobody could sell them like Levitt. When he marketed his mass-produced homes in beautiful color brochures, thousands of young families wanted to buy."[53]

---

[52] Peter Bacon Hales, *Levittown: Documents of an Ideal American Suburb*. http://tigger.uic.edu/~pbhales/Levittown.html (accessed March 17, 2016).

[53] Jon Blackwell, "1951: American Dream Houses, All in a Row", *The Trentonian* (n.d.) http://www.capitalcentury.com/1951.html (accessed April 6, 2016).

**Levittown, New York and Levittown, Pennsylvania**

After beginning the transformation of the landscape just outside of Queens, New York, the Levitts had overseen the construction of thousands of new homes. Within a few years, the first Levittown was home to over 80,000 people. It attracted so many prospective buyers that customers were either required to stand in long lines, or were turned away. This success was repeated just outside of Philadelphia in the "second" Levittown. As he did in New York, Levitt went to work on coordinating the purchase of land in Lower Bucks County, a few miles northeast of the city limits. A 1952 *Reader's Digest* article states:

> The Levitts started buying land for their city in April 1952, six months after U.S. Steel had started its plant on the Delaware River. Acreage prices, already rising, soon skyrocketed from $400 to $2000. Farmers who had eked out a moderate living all their lives suddenly found themselves wealthy and retired to Florida. Levitt's highest price was paid when one man held on to two acres in the middle of Levittown, asserting that he had promised the land to his tenant. He sold it for $7,500 to the tenant, who promptly resold it to Levitt for $48,000.[54]

The pattern of land being gobbled up by developers in Lower Bucks County was repeated over and over again. Reminiscent of the headlines in local papers in the Fifties, this headline in June, 2017 announced in the *Bucks County Courier*, "60 homes could be coming to Lower Moreland's last parcel of green space."[55] Although Lower Moreland Township is in neighboring Montgomery County, the description could be applied to many parts of Bucks County as well. For Levitt, the consolidating of land and securing zoning permits was part of the enterprise. This too became one of his legacies and part of the formula for new construction.

---

[54] Reader's Digest, 1952. https://www.davidhanauer.com/buckscounty/sprawl/index.html

[55] Bucks County Courier http://www.buckscountycouriertimes.com/news/local/homes-could-be-coming-to-lower-moreland-s-last-parcel/article_e1e09e8a-512f-11e7-8af0-bb1f6b77c4b9.html

When the homes in the second Levittown were opened to the public, nearly 30,000 customers showed up. This was so unprecedented for the Delaware Valley that there is an historic marker memorializing the event. Located at the intersection of Levittown Parkway and Bristol Pike (Route 13), it was erected in 1992.

> This fully planned, six-home style residential community was conceived by the builder William J. Levitt. The first family moved in, June 23, 1952. When completed in 1957, Levittown contained 17,311 homes on 5,750 acres, designed for a population of 70,000. It expanded on the pattern set by Levittown, N.Y. (built 1947-51) and was a landmark in the development of suburban housing in the United States.[56]

Although there were many similarities between the community on Long Island, NY and the community in Lower Bucks County, PA, there were stark differences.[57] The second Levittown catered to a slightly different demographic than the original. Many of the residents were not commuters to their closest urban centers (in this case, Philadelphia and Trenton) and were not necessarily drawn to the ease of transportation access like the Pennsylvania Turnpike. Instead, many were attracted by local employment opportunities. As mentioned earlier, the United States Steel Factory, known as the Fairless Works, had just opened a new facility on the banks of the Delaware River in 1952. The Levitts saw the factory and the many jobs it provided as a way to take advantage of the needs for housing; demand already existed.

Thus, the massive shift in population just northeast of the city of Philadelphia altered the way residents lived, worked, worshipped, were educated, communed, consumed, were entertained, and how they engaged with the political and social world around them. As mentioned earlier, septic systems may have played a role in speedy and

---

[56] The Historical Marker Database: https://www.hmdb.org/marker.asp?marker=30975

[57] Photo by William Fischer, Jr., October 15, 2009. https://www.hmdb.org/marker.asp?marker=30975

mass produced housing, but it was not alone in allowing for millions of homes to be erected in the postwar years when, just a few years before, the average builder was completing less than twenty.

The postwar suburban home was designed with mass production in mind, and in geographical regions that were typically void of other types of homes, neighborhoods, communities, or developments. This necessitated an entire overhauling or reimagining of the infrastructure system. When the built environment is erected quickly and over a few months or years, there are inevitably theoretical, philosophical, technological, economic, cultural, geographical, and even religious influences that are going on without necessarily planning for them or at least assuming their effects. Nonetheless, when it came to postwar suburbia, there should have been consideration for how developments were planned and erected for hundreds of years. But when the responses are anti-urban in their conception, the solutions were not commonly to offer a reformation or restoration of urban centers. All too frequently, they involved leaving the city completely.[58]

In the United States, over twenty million people relocated between 1945 and 1965 alone. This number dwarfs the amount of people who relocated in any of the waves of Western expansion in the nineteenth century. Yet, outside of academic institutions, government zoning commissions, social and political commentators, and design firms like those associated with the New Urbanism movement, little talk or recognition of this monumental change is heard or seen. In 1999, *Fortune* magazine named William Levitt and James Rouse, who grew their fortunes in the housing and all industries, as candidates for the most influential business people of the century. Recognizing the contradiction

---

[58] Steven Conn, *Americans Against the City: Anti-Urbanism in the Twentieth Century* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2014).

between the critics of suburbia and American demands for it, the article states, "Making fun of the 'burbs may be a national pastime in the U.S., especially in the cities, but the scale of their influence is undeniable."[59]

The quick success of the Levittown communities in New York and Pennsylvania was based on more than just cheap homes with a small down payment. The long lines and high demand were not merely a result of the need for housing due to the Great Depression and World War II, or the draws from employment opportunities in local factories. Part of the success was that the Levitts did more than just build homes. They marketed and *sold* them with an aggressive sales campaign that capitalized on images of a new society. They employed a successful advertising crusade alongside the construction. For example, just before the opening weekend in Pennsylvania, the Levitts took out a two-page advertisement in the *Philadelphia Inquirer*. Four pictures of various designs constructed by the company were displayed. Surrounded by small trees, the homes gave the impression of country living. The title of the ad boasted rhetorically, "When is a dollar more than a dollar? When it is used in Levittown." This was followed by all capitals and italics, "*THE MOST PERFECTLY PLANNED COMMUNITY IN AMERICA!*" This was the construction and sale of more than just a house. The advertisements were designed to promote a community that tapped into the utopian-like dreams of previous architects and their visions. The sales pitches also appealed to the increasing consumerism of the era. Although the frugal living of the last twenty or so years manifested itself in a hesitation to buy new goods like clothing and gadgets, the

[59] Ed Brown and Eileen Gunn, "The Sultans of Sprawl: They Hit the Big Time by Helping to Pave the Planet," *Fortune*, June 21, 1999.

Levittown homes were coupled with modern and attractive General Electric (GE) merchandise that promised more than just a house.

The Levittown concept of building homes and communities on a mass scale was not new; planned societies were imagined by many of the world's most prominent architects in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Some of the most iconic of these imagined solutions, as mentioned earlier, were products of some of the most celebrated architects of the era. They included Ebenezer Howard's Garden City, Le Corbusier's Radiant City, and Frank Lloyd Wright's Broadacre City. Each of these were conceived in order to solve the urban dilemma and as a cure for the social problems caused by what was seen as inhumane engineering, construction, and living arrangements. These architects saw the decay of the city as part of the cause of the deterioration of values reflected in society. They were the precursors to the Levitts in the postwar years. The Levitts sat on the shoulders of these giants. Leaving the city was considered progress.

Many of the ideas from these reformers and visionaries were scrapped in the postwar years, while others were attempted with moderate success in altering the living arrangements. One of the challenges in constructing these thoughtful communities was the timing of the Depression and world conflicts, and with that, the limited resources of labor and materials. During the Thirties and Forties, there was a home construction shortage in general. This was not too problematic in the midst of the challenges at home and abroad, however, as World War II came to an end in 1945, returning soldiers created an unprecedented demand for housing. Picking up some of the themes of the previous visions, Levitt not only supplied the seemingly insatiable demand for homes, but also

advertised in a way that showcased the benefits of space, newness, technology, country-living, and upward mobility. Returning to the introductory *Philadelphia Inquirer* two-page ad, the pitch was more than simply, "Here is a nice affordable home in a planned community." Underneath this headline of sorts was a list of all the up-to-date appliances, state-of-the-art kitchens, refreshing open floor plans, and a host of other announcements declaring the newness of the dwellings and soon-to-come stores, schools, and of course, the lifestyles.

Explored in greater detail in chapter Three, advertisements play a critical role in imagination and what is appealing to people. The ads for Levittown or Levittown related products like General Electric appliances went beyond the practical and utilitarian benefits of Levittown, such as affordable down payments, new appliances, and a piece of the countryside. The dreamlike and utopian qualities found in the 1892 S.E. Gross advertisement were redesigned for a new generation. Referred to earlier, there is a popular G.E. advertisement of a soldier sitting on a bench with his assumed sweetheart while drawing a Levittown home in the sand. Both look on earnestly pining for the home. A leafy branch in the top corner indicates the natural setting and a bold statement on the top, "It's a Promise." The small text promises that the soldier, Jim, is going away and there will be "lonely days" ahead. However, the "home sketched in the sand is a symbol of faith and hope and courage. It's a promise of glorious happy days … when victory is won."[60] A home was not only worth fighting for, but a home in the suburbs was why American servicemen were fighting. These motifs are also found in subsequent causes like the Cold War and arguments against desegregation.

---

[60] The State Museum of Pennsylvania http://statemuseumpa.org/levittown/one/b.html (accessed January 25, 2018).

The success was also a sign of a new way of seeing the American dream. Levittown and the suburban developments that followed became the backdrop for American ideals. By the mid-Fifties, modern suburbia was the frame in which a variety of products from vacuum cleaners to automobiles to soap were sold. As television began to increase its reach and developed programs and situation comedies, suburbia became the iconic setting.

When William Levitt died in 1994, the *New York Times*[61] turned to author and journalist David Halberstam and his newly published book, *The Fifties*.[62] Owning a house came to be the embodiment of the new American dream. As promised by endless Hollywood films, it represented fulfillment, contentment: confident dads, perky moms, and glowing children, attending good schools and, later, college. Levitt revolutionized the process of home building with remarkable planning and brilliant control procedures. These techniques made it possible to provide inexpensive, attractive single-unit housing for ordinary citizens, people who had never thought of themselves as middle class before. As much as anyone, William Levitt made the American dream possible.[63] These contributions to American housing history altered more than just where we live.

By reinventing the suburbs in the late Forties and Fifties, the Levitts altered the ways and means that its owners saw themselves. The working and lower middle classes could now not only imagine themselves in middle and upper middle-class environments, as seen in late-nineteenth century imaginations, they could actually realize them. This actualization had consequences that went beyond these immediate applications. As

---

[61] David Halberstam, "How William Levitt Helped to Fulfill the American Dream," *New York Times*, February 6, 1994.
[62] Des Histoires et des archives, Quebec, Canada https://archives.longueuil.quebec/1939
[63] Halberstam, *New York Times*, February 6, 1994.

Levittown evolved, expanded, was replicated, and moved through the decades, it influenced how residents related to their immediate neighbors and those in the community. It changed how they related to the people they worked with and those outside of the community. It changed who they worshipped with, and for the children, went to school with.

The design of these early postwar suburban neighborhoods challenged older notions of wealth, frivolity, status anxiety, and self-worth. This is not to claim that other factors such as technology, local, state, and federal legislation did not play a role. When combined with the design of homes and neighborhoods, these other factors, however, promoted a socialization unlike anything the middle class, and those who aspired to it, had ever experienced. Furthermore, the new suburbia became the prototype and blueprint for thousands of new developments constructed in the following decades. With the intensification of visual advertising due to the transition from wartime to peacetime, and the advent and spread of television, new developments and their ideals sparked by the new communities and their designs altered what is considered a neighborhood, and even contributed to the alteration of the American Dream.

Since the Pennsylvania Levittown was the second development constructed by the Levitt Brothers, they had learned from the original in New York. From the very beginning, they realized that slight alterations to the housing styles would heighten the demand from the consumer and therefore expand their business. Compared to the original Levittown in New York, the second Levittown provided a number of different modifications, options, and styles of homes a consumer could select from. The Levitts realized that the market for new homes could include a variety of these structures that

allowed for a sense of individualization and even social status within the same neighborhoods. Choices included the *Jubilee*, the *Country Clubber*, the *Rancher*, the *Pennsylvanian*, the *Colonial*, and the *Budgeteer*. The most ubiquitous model, the *Levittowner*, can be found in almost every Levittown community in Pennsylvania. In a 1952 *Better Homes and Gardens* interview, Alfred Levitt described what a *Levittowner* style home "is" and "did" (emphasis mine):

> Your home *is* no better than its floor plan, so regardless of size, it costs you no more to build one with a good floor plan than an obsolete, inefficient cracker box. It may cost you considerably less, since good planning means smart use of materials and labor. On this plan note how the living room, dining room, and kitchen-laundry flow together. Note, too, that rooms don't seem chopped up into tiny cubes, although the house covers only 1,000 square feet, excluding the carport and storage room.[64]

The value is found in the "floor plan" as your home "is" no better than its plan. There are value statements here, that like the free-flowing living, dining, and kitchen/laundry rooms. Yes, they are commercial and for advertising purposes, yet, if this resonated with customers, it would increase sales. It set a standard for developers in the near and distant futures, and was bound to have certain truths behind it even if those truths were about the nature of consumerism.

[64] Levittown, Pennsylvania 60 http://www.levittowners.com/house_levittowner.htm

# CHAPTER 3: Advertising Modern Suburbia and Design

Suburban development accelerated in the late Forties and early Fifties. The success and acclimation of the first two Levittowns spurred on other developers. Although the Levitts would construct other developments in New Jersey, California, and even Puerto Rico, it was how their ideas were copied and applied that found similar happenings beyond New York and Pennsylvania. Suburbia sprawled in Cleveland, Ohio and Chicago, Illinois and in Los Angeles, California and Washington DC. These were not exact copies of what the Levitts did in the first two Levittowns but many of the patterns and design elements as well as the engineering and mass production models were similar.

The United States experienced a growth in the economy concurrently with the growth of suburbia. After a couple of years of economic reconversion, where the wartime economy passed to a peacetime one, the United States began to experience a boom that had not been experienced since the Roaring Twenties. To a generation that was raised in austerity, an increase in purchasing power and desires at first felt unnatural. However, due to a wave of purchasing power and an unparalleled inundation of advertising through new media forms, this hesitation was eroding.

## A Warning from Lewis Mumford

As the war waged in Europe and Asia through the Forties, there were critics who served as prophets decrying the future in which they believed was coming to reality. They cautioned Americans to beware of spending and consuming. They warned Americans about being fooled or manipulated by those who would substitute community with individual hedonism by gathering up material things. Where business owners,

consumers themselves, and even the government saw prosperity as progress, there were some outliers who chided this belief.

Out of these critics, Lewis Mumford was one of the loudest and prolific voices. In his 1940 book, *Faith for Living*, Mumford was already anxious regarding the potential direction of American culture; this was over a year before the United States entered the war. His concern was about the possibility of Americans becoming adrift, as their values were shifting below their feet. Paralleling in some ways the vein of thinking from "How America Lives" from *Ladies' Home Journal*, Mumford wound up at a vastly different conclusion. He wrote, "the fundamental values of a true community [were] in love, poetry, disinterested thought, the free use of the imagination, the pursuit of non-utilitarian activities, the production of non-profitmaking goods, the enjoyment of non-consumable wealth."[1] His view may seem idealistic, since witnessing the establishment of modern suburbia and its expansion, but it shows how what was to come was not widely anticipated. In fact, by people like the Levitts, Mumford's ideals were attacked, mocked, and perceived as reflecting a non or even anti-American outlook.

One could argue that Mumford's idealism was no different from the utopian dreams of the earliest suburban planners like Gross, Beecher, and even Frank Lloyd Wright. But there is a different tone provided by Mumford that the others failed to address. When many of the postwar suburban projects were launched initially by Levitt, the pursuits that were called for by Mumford were countered, called into question as possible anti-capitalistic and even Marxist objectives. Using Lower Bucks County as an

[1] Lewis Mumford, *Faith for Living* (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, Publishers, 1940), 331.

example, they were squashed by the very development that has continued seemingly unabated since.

When the United States entered the war after the attack on Pearl Harbor, Mumford's perspective on the role of the country and the reasons for fighting were unique, with a precise eye on the future. Drumming the beat of criticisms of consumerism, capitalism, and materialism, all of which he thought were inevitably destructive to higher values of community and virtue, he hoped "Americans [would] find national self-justification in nonmaterialistic values." Democracy, self-government, self-regulation, self-control, frugality, knowing one's neighbor, and other ethereal goals are what mattered, not the short-term satisfaction of "things" and "stuff," which Mumford viewed as distractions or even enemies of these higher meanings. According to Horowitz, "as the war proceeded and the victory of the Allies seemed certain, Mumford remained faithful to his vision of a new economic order. A 'life centered' balanced economy would produce whole, self-fulfilling people and provide real satisfactions and goods."

**An Update to Prospective Levittown Buyers**

We return to the young couple from Trenton who visited Levittown and were wowed by the possibilities and their dreams. Shortly after their visit, they eagerly made an offer on a home in Snowball Gate, a Levittowner model with a carport, near the intersection of Route 413 and Trenton Ave. In their view, their lives dramatically improved in their move from the urban apartment and grittier section of the city. Their new home is on a sprawling street with similar style homes. Their neighbors are a lot like themselves: white, working to middle class, young, and some had small children. The

entire neighborhood is made up of other young couples that reflect similar demographic data. Nearby, there is a small playground where school aged children gather occasionally, and frequently without adult supervision. This couple enjoys listening to the playground noise, imagining their own children someday taking advantage of its proximity.

They love their new situation. Each night, the husband leaves work by 5:00, and arrives home typically by 6:00. After dinner, husband and wife settle into their living room and perhaps share a drink. Both of them look forward to this time where they can sit on the couch and unwind in front of their brand-new device. They had wanted a television since they had been over the neighbor's to watch a recent baseball event.

Since acquiring their own television, the furniture layout in their home changed. The chairs in the living area were now turned toward the TV, along with the couch they were snuggling into. Their new routine, which replaced reading the newspapers, magazines, and the occasional book, while listening to some records on the turntable stereo, was to watch the evening news and then follow that with some sitcoms.

Whether they were sitcoms or the news, their evening viewing was interspersed with dozens of commercials. They might have been annoying at times, but there were many that were practically unforgettable. The clever jingles could reverberate in their heads hours later. The news and sitcoms were frequently sponsored by companies and their products. Yet, the avalanche of advertising that was coming through the television on a nightly basis was selling more than these products. They were selling a lifestyle, gender expectations, and race homogeneity. People of color appearing in advertisements was rare especially situated in a suburban setting.

Selling a house in the suburban United States is more than selling a building. As any realtor knows, the buyer is purchasing a school district, a location, and a status. Living in one neighborhood can project accordingly how much a person cares about their children's future and how much that person is willing to go into debt or sacrifice for it. Conversations with family and friends have revealed the true reason for moving less than a quarter mile away: public school districts. These sales techniques and aspirations might be limited to this as a realtor in these categories. However, to the homebuyers, what they are purchasing will become a place where they live, make memories, and might, after time and possibly another relocating, be the location where they pine for those nostalgic memories and experiences. To those who saw these events through the lens of Cold War ideological constructs, the home projected American ideals and were used to ward off the threats from within, called the "Red Scare." The famed anti-communist crusader, Joseph McCarthy, saw Levittown as a means of keeping Americans fiercely capitalistic.[2]

**A Housing Creed for Suburban America**

According to *House Beautiful's* famed midcentury Editor-in-chief, Elizabeth Gordon, the home was even more than these reflections. She contended that the home and subsequently the homeowner, were celebrated as a cornerstone in maintaining democracy. This was very clearly outlined in her 1943 article "Creed for Americans." In the throes of World War II, with the nation on a wartime economy with millions of servicemen dispatched to the Pacific, North Africa, and Europe, she set out to prepare "patriotic" American consumers for the postwar housing market. Written with practically

[2] Levittown: The Imperfect Rise of the American Suburbs by Crystal Galyean, US History Scene, https://ushistoryscene.com/article/levittown/ (Accessed on April 5, 2020)

a religious fervor, it directly tied to the war effort. Echoing the tone and structure of the creeds of the early Christian church, such as the Apostles', Nicene, and Athanasian Creeds, the piece is constructed with successive statements of belief. One could imagine standing and reciting it. The second declaration of an eight part "we believe" statement reads: "WE BELIEVE in our homes, the first bulwark of democracy, and we accept the responsibility vested in us to keep them the source of our power and glory." The third statement reads, "WE BELIEVE that good homes are essential to a good life, and that we must bring them within the reach of all if our nation is to know prosperity and progress"[3] Whether Americans maintained or only aspired to these ideals, the fact that they existed influenced future generations.

This mentality was further encouraged by the nascent aura of postwar suburbia. Like the happy couple living the dream in Snowball Gate, so many aspects of suburban life revolved around the NEW: new marriages, new babies, new homes, new appliances, new recipes, new neighbors, new habits, new politics, new churches, new pastors, priests, and rabbis, new schools, new curriculum, new aspirations, new pools, new jobs, new shopping centers, new roads and highways, new media, new technology, and new fears. The newness was grafted onto the identity of so many who moved into these new neighborhoods. The "newness" eventually became a point of national pride. This may seem like a strange response on the surface, but it reflects the transformation that was happening in the United States. The newness was recognized, channeled, and exploited in the advertising campaigns aimed at suburban communities and the nation at large.

---

[3] Elizabeth Gordon, House Beautiful's Creed for Americans, *House Beautiful,* January 1943.

The newness extended from neighborhood to neighborhood. If they could afford it, some would pack up and move to the latest development as older developments became passe. Amy Maria Kenyon writes, "for the transient middle class, moving from one subdivision to another might now mean choosing from a limited range of designs and buying a newly built house with no ghosts, no memories, and no traces of previous occupation … this amounts to a planned obsolescence not unlike the annual model change institutionalized by the car manufacturers."[4] In the Fifties, the social critic Vance Packard was already warning society about the status symbols moving from automobiles to homes. The construction of what seemed like an endless extension of the suburbs injected an acceleration of the housing market. Newer and newer construction were planned and construction stretched sprawl even further from the urban centers that postwar suburbia was birthed from. This cycle demanded more new shopping centers, roads, schools, recreational centers like baseball diamonds, cinemas, and other infrastructure projects.

**The Kitchen Debate and a Defense for Suburban Living**

As the Fifties unfolded, these anxieties penetrated the bucolic ambiance of suburbia. When Levittown, PA was under construction, the United States found itself in an international standoff with the Soviet Union and in another conflict on the Korean Peninsula trying to stem the "red menace" and keep it from reaching home. The Cold War resulted in restless uncertainties that infected all walks of American life, from education to religion, from popular culture to the news media, and from politics to home building. The 1956 launching of Sputnik proved to the world that the Soviet Union had

---

[4] Amy Maria Kenyon, *Dreaming Suburbia: Detroit and the Production of Postwar Space and Culture* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 2004), 33.

won the first round of the space race, internationally embarrassing Americans. The Sputnik launch combined with the 1960 U2 Spy Plane scandal kept the United States on a defensive footing. An existential crisis was sweeping the United States. With the escalation of powerful weapons, nuclear war and possible annihilation was perceived as possible by some and inevitable by others.

The Cold War was more than just a geopolitical chess match, with proxy conflicts igniting around the globe, heightened and expansive espionage, and a race for space. It was an ideological contest in which two superpowers grappled to showcase the superior system of government and the economy and to prove this to other nations that were struggling to determine their own path forward. The world was watching. It was in this context that Vice President Richard Nixon visited Moscow in 1959 on a diplomatic mission to the Soviet Union. While touring an expo of sorts, Nixon had an impromptu exchange with the Soviet premier Nikita Khrushchev. Caught on film, Khrushchev and Nixon verbally sparred over cultural and technological superiority.

This exchange became known as the "Kitchen Debate." It suggested that American superiority was not due to the idea of democracy, freedom of thought, the citizen republic, or the Bill of Rights, but instead, the idea of American consumption and the inherent value of replaceable goods. In the exchange, after conceding to Khrushchev the advancement of Soviet rocket technology, Nixon trumpeted the constant need for new gadgets and new materials, boasting, "American houses last for more than 20 years, but, even so, after twenty years, many Americans want a new house or a new kitchen. Their kitchen is obsolete by that time ... The American system is designed to take advantage of

new inventions and new techniques."[5] Nixon's defense used increased consumerism, planned obsolescence, and status improvement, not as a threat to democracy and American ideals, but instead as an ally in the clash of East and West. He characterized these values as symbols of what is right about the United States, and more importantly, a symbol of American superiority. Daniel Horowitz believed this articulation of American abundance was partly what drove critics like Vance Packard. He writes, "hardly blind to the Soviet Union's faults, Packard nevertheless disapproved of the way the mass media, politicians, and members of the business community used competition with the USSR to justify more rapid economic growth, a focus he felt distracted the United States from grappling with issues more central to the quality of life."[6]

Elizabeth Gordon may have proclaimed America's strength is found in the concept of home ownership, but sixteen years later, Vice President Nixon added consumerism to this ideal. This stands in contrast to the conservation statement in that 1943 *House Beautiful* creed. Following the home as a citadel for democracy and progress, it read, "WE BELIEVE at home conservation begins, conservation of a nation's resources – food, fuel, power, products – that our first victory must be won at home."[7] What had happened?

**Levittown and Middle Class Possibilities**

Those who came of age in the Depression and the austerity of World War II and who had felt confined by what was perceived as a working-class status were given the opportunity to be "liberated" into the status of the growing middle class. Once believed

---

[5] President Richard Nixon, The Kitchen Debate. C-SPAN (Accessed April 18, 2017).
[6] Daniel Horowitz, *Anxieties of Affluence: Critiques of American Consumer Culture*.
[7] Elizabeth Gordon, "*House Beautiful*'s Creed for Americans," *House Beautiful* January 1943.

to be out of the reach of most Americans, a suburban home was now a possibility. Owning your own home had a panache that was formerly reserved for the slightly to moderately more affluent. Like the robber barons of previous generations, customers could now own a home with a yard or greenspace of their own. This drew millions as "[they] moved from central cities to newly created suburbs," as "the new subdivisions were where the young people wanted to go."[8] Inevitably, the need for new schools, churches, and retail stores followed this migration.

After World War II, a generation that grew up in the midst of the Depression's increasing problem of a housing shortage was now able to have what seemed like an impossibility. Once part of the elusive American dream, private home ownership was now attainable. As with so many new developments and their first occupiers, time altered perspectives and outlooks. "Over time, Levittown houses changed character, as their occupants rose in status and in economic wealth, and as families expanded and community standards of innovation and growth trickled from the home-improvement seminars at the Community Center and later the High School, out into the Saturday projects and summer vacation plans of Levittown residents."[9] This explains one of the reasons why on a contemporary tour through Levittown, Pennsylvania, a person would have to drive quite far to find a home untouched without additions, enclosed carports, and expanded floors. It is also hard to find a home that is under $200,000 especially within the Neshaminy or Pennsbury School Districts.

---

[8] Ray Suarez, *The Old Neighborhood: What We Lost in the Great Suburban Migration: 1966-1999* (New York: The Free Press), 4.
[9]Hales, *Levittown: Documents of an Ideal American Suburb*.

The population shift and the growth of suburbia caused major demographic and infrastructure changes in American society, influencing the dreams and values, education systems, communities, buying habits, self-image, and many other aspects of American lives. As the majority of people in our nation came to live in subdivisions and suburbia,[10] tastes, value systems, political decisions, and subcultures that were cultivated naturally became normalized. This "normalization" is found in political strategies during election campaigns. Even in the most recent election, former President Trump made appeals to suburban values and constituents. Although suburbanites are far from monolithic in their views, there is a reason that political strategists play to these advantages.

In the opening scenes of the film *The End of Suburbia,* the narrator states: "Since World War II, North Americans have invested much of their newfound wealth in suburbia. It has promised a sense of space, affordability, family life, and upward mobility. As the population of suburban sprawl has exploded in the past 50 years, so too has the suburban way of life become embedded in the American consciousness. Suburbia, and all it promises, has become the American Dream."[11] If the suburban "way of life" is expanding, so too are its values. In turn the culture and values of suburbia were advertised through the television and magazines that were consumed by more than just suburbanites. People living in urban and rural America were influenced too.[12] In these examples, design influenced taste and taste influenced values.

---

[10] Theodore Caplow, Louis Hicks, and Ben Wattenburg, *The First Measured Century: An Illustrated Guide to Trends in America, 1900-2000 (*La Vergne, TN: American Enterprise Institute Press, 2000), 37.
[11] *The End of Suburbia: Oil Depletion and the Collapse of the American Dream*, directed by Gregory Greene, The Electric Wallpaper Company, 2004.
[12] Jim Cullen, *The American Dream: A Short History of an Idea That Shaped a Nation* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2003).

This is part of the thesis of two extensive books on suburban history. In *Bourgeois Utopias: The Rise and Fall of Suburbia,* Robert Fishman explained, "Suburbia is more than a collection of residential buildings; it expresses values so deeply embedded within the culture."[13] Dolores Hayden's argument in *Building Suburbia: Green Fields and Urban Growth, 1820-2000*, concurred with Fishman. "Suburbia is the site of promises, dreams, and fantasies. It is a landscape of the imagination where Americans situate ambitions for upward mobility and economic security, ideals about freedom and private property, and longings for social harmony and spiritual uplift."[14] The impact was so pervasive and as Fishman noted, so deeply embedded, that this way of life became normal, synonymous with success, and the objective of millions, whether or not they lived in suburbia. Suburbia was in the process of becoming a symbol of opportunity, a place that embodied this new American Dream, a place that advertisers capitalized on across the country. This is partly what Kenneth Jackson observed when researching his book.[15]

Initially, as Americans moved into suburbs filled with "similar homes, [and] similar people who held similar ideas,"[16] few people contemplated how their buildings and this new way of life was affecting them. The good times, the new homes, the trim front lawns, the American Dream, were all too enticing to cause widespread concern. Many of those living in these new suburban environs coupled with the introduction and

---

[13] Robert Fishman, *Bourgeois Utopias: The Rise and Fall of Suburbia* (New York: Basic Books, Inc., 1987), 22.
[14] Dolores Hayden, *Building Suburbia: Green Fields and Urban Growth, 1820-2000* (New York, Vintage Books USA, 2004), 1.
[15] Kenneth Jackson, *Crabgrass Frontier: The Suburbanization of the United States* (New York: Oxford University Press USA, 1985).
[16] Terry Anderson, *The Sixties*, 3rd ed. (New York: Pearson Longman, 2007), 7.

spread of television illustrated that "the fairytale...of a model town that sprouted up from the potato fields" met the expectations of its designers and beyond.

In addition to the distances created by the new suburban designs between homes, businesses, schools, and employment, there was an increased demand for more infrastructure to support these massive demographic shifts. Of course, other ripples and unplanned results emerged. By the end of the Fifties, C. Wright Mills wrote in *The Sociological Imagination*, "Within the broad limits of the glandular and nervous apparatus the emotions of fear and hatred and love and love and rage, in all their varieties, must be understood in close and continual reference to the social biography and the social context in which they are experienced and expressed."[17] Essentially, Mills was observing what Christopher Alexander called "pattern language."

With this in mind, one has to look beyond the surface, past the streets and into the implications of this revolutionary and new form of living. Austerity was eroding while a new "frontier" reshaped their surroundings. Many of the generations that followed these first "homesteaders" were socialized to accept this way of living as normal. The effects of this normalization are only beginning to be realized.

**Suburban Purchasing Power**

The *Ladies' Home Journal*, which had been in circulation for decades, began surveying Americans in 1939 to show how average Americans were handling the financial stresses of the economic hardships a decade into the Depression. This turned into a monthly series in 1940 that would run for decades more. *How America Lives* highlighted these average Americans, with a wide variety of samples; "all sections of

[17] C. Wright Mills, *The Sociological Imagination*. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1959), 161.

these sea-to-sea United States will be there, all income groups, from the $1000-a-year farmer to the $25,000-a-year city big shot."[18]

Here is an example from the April, 1941 edition. With war in Europe especially on the minds of so many in the states, the *Journal* chose to focus on recent immigrants who were working in the defense department in Norfolk, Virginia:

> In this family scene everybody is fifty times as American as the Pilgrim fathers were on landing. Yet two generations back, the sturdy stocks that produced them had no part in America. Rose was born in Naples, and came with her family to Brooklyn at the age of three, because her lawyer father had taken a great fancy to the United States on a business trip. Anne's Slovak parents came from the old country in their teens to look for better times, and found not only better times but each other. Joe and Armand St. Andre are brothers, sons of French Canadians, emigrated across the border to work in New England mill towns. Rose still speaks some Italian, Anne can follow conversation in Slovak and Armand says that, given plenty of time, 'I can fight my way out of having to talk French.' But the language of all their hearts is as native as Anne's unmistakably Yankee broad a. Anybody who thought of this household as an example of the melting pot would be missing the point. There was never anything to melt.

Part celebration of what it means to be an American with the expectations of assimilation, part celebration of hard work, contributing to the American cause of defense, and part American dream in realizing that the United States stood as a symbol of hope in a better life when contrasted with the events overseas, the story weaves these together for the reader to see virtue in the American cause. Much of the *Ladies' Home Journal'*s focus was organized around this type of writing and exposure to the "typical" American(s). This theme was emphasized in the years to come, during the remainder of World War II and into the postwar era with the Cold War. Major themes of patriotism and the "American way" were overt.

---

[18] *Ladies' Home Journal*, February 1940.

In the beginning of the *How America Lives* series, and possibly due to its publication at the tail end of the Great Depression, detailed budgeting sections were included. The first fifteen families that were researched were condensed into a book published in 1941. The *New York Times* reported the release of the book in a March article. One of the explicit goals of the effort, quoting one of the surveyors, "[was] to find out how Americans made their money and how they spend it."[19] Attempting to illustrate representatives of different tiers in social class, they spent time with representatives who spent over $7,000 a year to others spending below $1,700. As the "civilized" world seemed to be spiraling out of control as the forces of totalitarianism were gaining ground, Americans needed to read about the virtues and values that might be needed to stave off such threats and, if it came to it, rescue the world from themselves. This was partly what Mumford is making commentary on when he warned Americans about the erosion of community prior to the war.

The themes found in the *Ladies Home Journal* stretch far beyond this time and this particular threat. If Americans were hopeful with their lot in life with possibilities of upward mobility, it was going to be based on sheer grit and self-determination. It was the self-made person who made their lot in life. Digging a little more deeply, the article did not separate these individual characteristics from those living in communities where, according to Furnas, people not only knew their neighbors, but through the *Ladies' Home Journal* and the publications of the book version, could come to "know" the rest of the country. This portrayed what Americans were supposedly proud of. According to the

---

[19] Fifteen American Families, *New York Times*, March 1941. https://timesmachine.nytimes.com/timesmachine/1941/03/30/85471438.pdf (Accessed on January 21, 2019)

*Ladies Home Journal*, it was what made us American and considered a weapon in our arsenal. When the United States eventually entered the war in 1941, the Office of War Information exported translated copies of these articles to friendly and allied nations as a means of persuasion to an American outlook in life.

The portion that focused on budgets may have brought the various layers of American pre-war society to light, but at the same time it may have had unintended consequences. As Daniel Horowitz writes in *Anxieties of Affluence: Critiques of American Consumer Culture, 1939-1979*, "*How America Lives* revealed a consumer society in transition."[20] Readers of *Ladies' Home Journal* and the book respectively were shown how Americans were spending their money. This data illustrates more than just frugality, good stewardship, or even frivolity. Horowitz continues, "If the United States was no longer a nation where respectability depended on ethnically based traits and aspirations, it was clearly on its way to becoming a country where possession of a standard package of consumer goods was the key to community membership." This observation in the Forties was a focal point of the critiques by writers like Lewis Mumford beginning in the Forties and Vance Packard in the Fifties.

The consumer demands that followed such prosperity, and in many ways grew out of, the move to suburbia, led to increased levels of anxiety about the ability to maintain the lifestyle. In some major part, this was due to the size of suburban homes, which was continually increasing. By the Sixties, an expansion business grew from people's desire to build additions onto their homes. The fact that a typical Levittown home in New York or Pennsylvania seems relatively quaint by our present standards shows how much has

---

[20] Daniel Horowitz, *Anxieties of Affluence: Critiques of American Consumer Culture*, 1939-1979, 32.

changed in our market expectations. The average Levittown home built in the 1950s was less than 1,000 square feet.[21] Although spacious for the first generation of modern suburbanites, it has been dwarfed many times over by succeeding generations of homes: the average suburban house built in 2010 was just over 2,500 square feet, an increase of 143%.[22] In order to build larger homes with the need for larger plots, families and homeowners were drawn ever further from the urban centers and their places of employment, consequently lengthening commutes into increasingly expensive forays.

Many of these early marketers concluded that the new suburban Americans needed to be convinced to fill these homes with more and more stuff. In suburbia and especially in places like Levittown, PA, many of the original homes looked exactly alike. Some scholars like Lewis Mumford harshly criticized this conformity, concluding that this was partly responsible for the increase in consumerism. In Susan Douglas' *Listening In*, she writes, "Along with our parents, the mass media raised us, socialized us, entertained us, comforted us, deceived us, disciplined us, told us what we could do and told us what we couldn't."[23] In *The Fifties,* David Halberstam asked, to a generation that survived the Great Depression and the war, did they need to be taught how to spend again?

**Design, Consumerism, and the Mall**

One can see in this aerial photo (circa 1955) of the juxtaposition of the Levittown neighborhoods to the newly built shopping centers. The streets are wider and homes are

---

[21] Hales, *Levittown: Documents of an Ideal American Suburb*.

[22] National Association of Home Builders (2007) *Housing Facts, Figures and Trends* and *Single-Family Square Footage By Location*, U.S. Census Bureau, 2005. http://css.snre.umich.edu/css_doc/CSS01-08.pdf (Accessed on March 17, 2016).

[23] Susan Douglas, *Listening In: Radio and the American Imagination* (New York: Times Books, 1999), 13.

spaced farther apart. Older neighborhoods, seen at the bottom of the photo, are more clustered and grid patterns partially employed. In Levittown, streets end in a manner that is not instinctual with older systems and there are more cul-de-sacs utilized. The entrances into neighborhoods, sometimes called "gates," are wider. The construction of Levittown, Pennsylvania especially included infrastructure. So along with the new neighborhoods were new shopping centers, malls, and the massive parking lots to serve them. Compared to urban centers, land was initially cheap. The developers, including the Levitts, took advantage of these opportunities. They followed a simple formula: "Identify a location adjacent to the highway interchange; provide plenty of free parking, and use a department store to anchor the center and attract smaller tenants. The formula worked. By 1960, the United States had four thousand shopping centers."[24] Unlike the urban galleries such as Philadelphia's downtown Market Street district, Chinatown, or Italian Market, these new suburban commercial places required shoppers to drive to the stores, while allowing them to avoid the difficult-to- navigate city streets. These strip malls were followed by the building boom of malls in the Seventies and big-box stores such as Walmart and K-mart in the subsequent decades. Compared to these "supersized" shopping areas, the original Levittown shopping centers seem quaint.

"Suburbia: Straight Ahead," reads a famous 1957 political cartoon. It projects, at the very beginning, that postwar suburbs in the United States were predicated on the use of the automobile. There is a nuclear family in the lead car with a long line of traffic following behind, along with moving vans. They are traveling on windy, rural roads. This conveys the message that families and couples excitedly packed their cars and their

[24] Witold Rybcynski, *Makeshift Metropolis: Ideas about Cities* (New York: Scribner, 2010), 98.

moving vans, and were already experiencing the traffic that materialized by moving out to these communities. In a 2008 article from *The Economist* called, "America's Suburbs: An age of transformation," it was noted that American suburbs "are coming to resemble its city centres, That is both good news and bad," the author evaluates the results of design on Valencia, California.[25] The article connects the influence and aspirations of Valencia with one of the architectural and developing giants in modern American history, Victor Gruen.

In many ways, Gruen received the baton from the Levitts, carrying the visions of postwar suburbia into the next decades. His influence was especially felt in the area of design of shopping centers. One can attest to this by the rapid construction of indoor shopping malls in suburban locations across the country, beginning in the Sixties and reaching its zenith in the Nineties. The indoor mall was Gruen's concept. Like Levitt's, Gruen's fingerprints are all over Lower Bucks County. This region saw an expansion of indoor malls in the Sixties, Seventies, and Eighties: the Neshaminy Mall in 1968 (Bensalem Township), the Oxford Valley Mall in 1972 (Middletown Township), the Woodhaven Mall also in 1972 (Bensalem Township), and the Franklin Mills Mall (now called Philadelphia Mills) just over the border between Bucks County and Far Northeast Philadelphia in 1989. These four large shopping malls were all within a 15 minute driving radius from one another; extending this radius to 30 minutes includes several more regional malls: the King of Prussia Mall in 1963, the Plymouth Meeting Mall in 1966, the Deptford Mall in 1975, and the Willow Grove Mall in 1982. The amount of square footage of mall space in this region is in the hundreds and hundreds of thousands.

---

[25] "America's Suburbs: An Age of Transformation" *The Economist*, May 31, 2008.

It was the use of the automobile and the design of the postwar suburbs that motivated Victor Gruen to seek to replicate the European city or town square with his indoor mall design. He believed that it would serve the increased population and sprawling communities as a means of drawing them together. Concerned about the reliance on vehicles, he thought the indoor mall could integrate the community with post-offices, and schools, among other community draws. He also added fountains and even an aviary to contribute to people "being" (see Figure 6). The first ever enclosed indoor mall was the Southdale Center built in Edina, Minnesota in 1956.[26] Those early concepts blossomed into more and more elaborate ways to attract people. By the Nineties, the Mall of America in Minneapolis, Minnesota boasted an ice rink, water park, and roller coaster.

However, returning to Gruen's original plan in California, the *Economist* article goes on to state:

> Valencia was designed by Victor Gruen, an architect who did as much to shape American suburbia in the 1960s as William Levitt had done in the 1950s … For Valencia he devised a dense urban core and a series of neighbourhoods connected to each other and downtown via walkways known as paseos. The settlement was supposed to be orderly and self-contained, unlike the chaotic San Fernando valley just to the south. As one of the town's early planners explained, it would be "an island of reason in the path of metropolitan sprawl.[27]

The Congress of New Urbanism concluded that Gruen and Levitt imagined that they could act against the tide of human need.

Unfortunately, Valencia, California did not turn out as Gruen expected. "Valencia contains no building taller than six storeys and few taller than three storeys.

---

[26] Victor Gruen, Architect of an American Icon By Hannes Richter https://www.austria.org/victor-gruen
[27] "America's Suburbs," *The Economist*, May 31, 2008.

These days the paseos are used mostly for walking dogs, and by children. Everybody else drives. Nor did Valencia prove to be economically self-contained. Each morning about half of its residents leave for jobs in Los Angeles. Roughly the same number make the reverse trip over the Santa Monica mountains to toil in Valencia's offices, sound stages and warehouses."[28] Design matters as Gruen and his architects were concerned about what they saw happening in postwar sprawl, and believed they had solved the riddle and the design elements in suburbs like those by Levitt. However, the model was flawed, and designers have struggled for decades to reform or retrofit developments, as well as malls. Gruen eventually regretted the invention of the mall too. What he intended for communal interaction instead turned into a commercialization unlike anything he imagined. Consumerism was too great a draw and the auto dependency was hard to reverse.

**Advertising Design and Status**

The faith of Mumford in the American sense of community and his idealistic wishes for the war to lift Americans above materialism was not rewarded or realized. The postwar years proved to be a boon for economic and commercial interests, and the ideals Mumford sought for society became in some corners of the country conflated with what he saw as threats. For a generation tired of war and of a strain on their individual budgets and inconsistencies of wages as experienced in the Great Depression, the demands of the culture at large were too great for calls of thrift. Daniel Horowitz concludes:

> As one might expect, reality hardly matched his expectations. In many ways the wartime experience did not provide the model for a postwar America whose

[28] "America's Suburbs."

> polity and economy would be democratic. The nation did not adopt an economy of sacrifice that turned against commercialism and brought about fundamental social reconstruction. Like Americans of earlier generations, who were disappointed when a national crisis did not turn their fellow citizens away from materialistic pursuits, Mumford felt saddened when he realized that the nation was about to defeat Nazism without curbing Mammon.[29]

If Mumford was disappointed by the end of the war; he was positively cynical about the results of the postwar suburban lifestyles that proliferated in the decades to come.

Contemporary philosopher Alain de Botton takes this a step further, linking Mumford to one of the shoulders he stands on, Jean-Jacques Rousseau. In his book *Status Anxiety*, he channels the ideas and wishes of Mumford and Rousseau, stating that "being truly wealthy does not require having many things; rather, it requires having what one longs for. Wealth is not an absolute. It is relative to desire. Every time we yearn for something we cannot afford, we grow poorer, whatever our resources."[30] This conclusion is rooted in design. It is in postwar suburbia where these longings and yearnings mentioned here by de Botton were exacerbated. Capitalism and consumerism that worried Mumford are eventually celebrated as examples of American free-market success.

Due in part to an increased population, massive demographic shifts and increased media saturation, critics argued that the creeping conformity of the suburbs bred a psychological culture that made Americans more susceptible to advertising. This in turn led to an increasingly indebted consumer society. "For kids born after World War II, the media's influence was unprecedented. The living rooms, dens, and bedrooms of America

---

[29] Daniel Horowitz, *The Anxieties of Affluence: Critiques of American Consumer Culture: 1939-1979*, 41.
[30] Alain de Botton, *Status Anxiety*, 42-43.

became places where people's primary activity was consuming the mass media in some form or other, and much of this media was geared to the fastest-growing market segment, baby boomers."[31] Although the process of persuasion from advertising, like suburbia, can be traced back to the nineteenth century, it was the postwar years, the Fifties and Sixties, that began to make consumption not just an opportunity but an expectation. "We are inclined to think like the Joneses, dress like the Joneses, build houses like the Joneses. We have become status conscious and have built for ourselves sets of status symbols."[32] The advertising agencies took advantage of the new technologies and media systems to market this culture so successfully that it infiltrated nearly every aspect of American life, turning its citizens into consumers.

Ripe for the plucking, the U.S. population was "enjoying levels of prosperity unimaginable in the depression of the 1930's."[33] This transformation happened as perceptions of material goods shifted their focus from the metaphysical and idealistic objectives that citizenship offered to the physical and temporal pleasures that consumer goods would exploit. This is what concerned Lewis Mumford during the war. Americans were being persuaded that they could achieve fulfillment, albeit temporary, through the purchase of goods. "Fridges, cars, televisions, and washing machines were sold in their millions to a new generation of "consumers."[34] Ironically it was the Fifties

---

[31] Susan Douglas, *Where the Girls Are: Growing Up Female With the Mass Media*, 13.
[32] Billy Graham, "The National Purpose: Moral and Spiritual Cancer Found in Stress on Personal Comfort." In *The 1960s: A Documentary Reader*, edited by Brian Ward, 148-149. New York: Wiley-Blackwell, 2010.
[33] John Teeple, *Timelines of World History* (New York: DK Publishing, 2002), 423.
[34] Teeple, 424.

when Americans describing themselves as "very happy" reached its peak.[35] "We felt richer then than we do now. Most Americans today don't really think of themselves as affluent even though in terms of GNP we have twice as much as we did then."[36]

Ernest Dichter, darling of Madison Avenue, and poster child for the increased influence of the advertising agencies, believed that, like Nixon, this is not something we should decry. Instead, like Nixon, Dichter believed this is what made the United States so different and better from the rest of the world. Frustrated with naysayers like Lewis Mumford, John Galbraith, and Vance Packard, he viewed consumerism not as something that should be scolded, warned against, or chided. Instead, it should be encouraged as a means of overcoming the threats from the Soviet Union, communism, and lethargy. In *Strategy of Desire*, his 1960 retort to the critics, he defended the art of persuasion, "We need to crack the whip of constructive discontent by using all methods of modern communication and persuasion. This is one of the answers – if not the most important answer – to the present conflict between our present level of economic prosperity and the future goals of American living."[37] Dichter's encouragement for what he saw as the good life and its connection to purchasing and consuming was running parallel to the development of suburban living. Leaving the city never seemed more attractive. Urban flight and relocation was aiding Americans in learning to be patriotically proud of their spending and for accumulating more and more things. "Thus in Dichter's eyes, the fight between free enterprise and communism was one in which Americans had to prove that

---

[35] John de Graaf, David Wann, Thomas Naylor, and David Horsey (*Affluenza: The All-Consuming Epidemic* (San Francisco: Berrett-Koehler Publishers, 2005), 24. This transformation and transition in thoughts about affluence is analyzed and compared to contemporary America.

[36] de Graaf et. al., 24.

[37] Ernest Dichter, *Strategy of Desire* (New Brunswick: Doubleday and Company, 1960), 21.

they controlled their own destiny by consuming. Making a purchase was evidence, 'that we are not living in a world of dialectical materialism' but one 'built on individual initiative."[38] This could easily be combined with Elizabeth Gordon's *House Beautiful* ideals in the American home.

Echoing the sentiments of Lewis Mumford in the decades prior to the Fifties, and the contemporary ideas of Alain de Botton, Vance Packard's *The Status Seeker*s illustrates the sociological effect this was having on the desire for social mobility and how this impacted the home. "The home during the Fifties began showing signs of supplanting the automobile as the status symbol most favored by Americans for staking their status claims."[39] In some ways, a diaspora was just beginning. Finding second generation Levittown residents who inherited the family home is difficult.

Packard also compares the new homes with the older more established neighborhoods. You can almost feel the comparison between Levittown and the boroughs like Langhorne and Hulmeville, which are within a mile or two of one another. He writes, "a person who has lived twenty years in the same house, as many pre-1950 Americans did, usually will not bother to tear up his roots and move simply because the house no longer accurately reflects his status in the community. He has learned to love the place." Concluding, he writes, "And they strive in their home hopping, to upgrade themselves with each hop as far as they dare."[40]

---

[38] Daniel Horowitz*, Anxieties of Affluence: Critiques of American Consumer Culture*, 60.
[39] "American Social Classes in the 1950s: Selections from Vance Packard's *The Status Seekers,"* 57.
[40] Vance Packard, *American Social Classes in the 1950s*, 65.

As Packard analyzes and Joshua Ruff articulates in his article *Levittown: The Archetype of Suburban Development,* the pioneers were pushing out from the city, enabling the next generation to seek greener pastures.

> Writer Michael Pollan remembered that 'by 1960, when my parents went house hunting…Levittown was passé, and the next new place—the un-Levittown—promised to be the Gates of Woodbury, where lots were generally a sprawling acre.' Like minor league ballplayers hitting the big time, some Levittown residents were jumping to the next level by the late 1950s, finding bigger homes in swankier new developments. Plainview, Huntington, and other places along the new Long Island Expressway grew exponentially.[41]

You can see in this anecdotal account that status was fluid and could never be arrived at; it was always an arm's length away. Alain de Botton concludes that this is the "price we have paid"[42] for the increase in consumer goods, life expectancy, improved opportunities, and the possibility for more. Perpetual anxiety is the fate of the middle class in the United States.

Americans were changing and being changed in these postwar years as we became *The Affluent Society,* just as the title of Galbraith's book proclaimed.[43] "Yet the normality to which they were trying to adhere was something entirely new – a way of life in which standards were not set by families and neighbors but by new kinds of authorities whose messages came by televisions, magazine, and the backs of boxes."[44] The level of

---

[41] Joshua Ruff, "Levittown: The Archetype of Suburban Development", Originally published by *American History* magazine. Published Online: October 04, 2007 on historynet.com. http://www.historynet.com/levittown-the-archetype-for-suburban-development.htm (accessed March 2, 2016).

[42] Alain de Botton, *Status Anxiety*, p. 44.

[43] John Kenneth Galbraith, *The Affluent Society* (New York: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1958).

[44] Thomas Hine, *Populuxe: The Look and Life in the 50's and 60's, From Tailfins and TV Dinners to Barbie Dolls and Fallout Shelters* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, Inc., 1986), 9.

disconnect between families, the distance from rooted communities, and the lack of inter-generational guidance was taking its toll.

> For this was not simply pre-war capitalism, this was something new – capitalism that was driven by a ferocious consumerism, where the impulse was not so much about what people needed in their lives but what they needed to consume in order to keep up with their neighbors and, of course, to drive the GNP endlessly upward. "Capitalism is dead – consumerism is king," said the president of the national sales executives defining the difference between pre-war America and the new America orchestrated by Madison Avenue.[45]

This is what Galbraith was so critical about. The advertising industry was bombarding the public with highly persuasive propaganda aimed at the middle class. Ads became increasingly sophisticated as the Fifties evolved and the science of marketing was honed. Advertising will be fleshed out in greater detail in later pages, but mentioning the effects is appropriate here. Part of the insidiousness or subtleties of the link to "keeping up with the Joneses" is the consideration of Michel Foucault's *Discipline and Punish*. We now had wants we did not realize we wanted, and in many cases, these wants were becoming needs. The designs of our new neighborhoods propelled this into future decades.

Take a ubiquitous ad from the soft drink company, 7-Up. There is the obvious marketing of the beverage. However, there is so much more. Not recognizing these other "ads" is what Foucault is warning us about. Besides the beverage, what else is going on? We have the nuclear family with socially expected dress and doing socially expected actions for the Fifties. This is a normalization process with built in assumptions and expectations. How people are to dress, comport themselves, relate to one another and more are projected. The family is middle class and white.

---

[45] David Halberstam, *The Fifties* (New York: The Amateurs Limited, 1993), 506.

The effects of this affluence or perceived affluence were felt in obvious ways like the economy, business, politics, societal aims, industrialization, and infrastructure needs. However, the extent of the influence was felt psychologically, theologically, philosophically, educationally, and ecologically. This is why the changes to the ecological landscape were monumental, both literally and metaphorically. According to Galbraith, "Americans were bowing down before the gods of consumer pleasures while finding public spending 'an incubus.' The result was dirty air and dirty streets, overcrowding urban schools, juvenile delinquency, a fragile infrastructure for housing, underpaid police officers, inadequate public transportation, and insufficient recreational facilities."[46] This quote could have easily been written describing the twenty-first century American city instead of the late Fifties. But when taking Galbraith together with Mumford, Packard, and Mills, it was the design of the suburban development that was playing a role.

In another advertisement for coffee, there are many explicit and implicit messages like that of the previous 7-Up one. You are not just buying a brand of coffee, you are buying coffee that is "good to the last drop." An ad campaign by Maxwell House was so successfully launched that it remained as part of their advertisements for decades, and even became ubiquitous enough that it was quotable without even knowing what Maxwell House was. Yet, there is a lot more going on here. There are middle class, suburban, racial and gender assumptions playing a role (see Figure 7). The couple in the background are completing socially accepted and announced roles, with the woman cleaning rugs and the man replacing a shutter. The less overt messages, and this happens

[46] Daniel Horowitz, *The Anxieties of Affluence: Critiques of American Consumer Culture*, 105.

often in advertisements, is the wealth and suburban expectations that are normalized in addition to not including people of color.

**Advertising Suburban Gender Roles**

Suburban design beginning in the middle of the nineteenth century contributed to the reemphasis of the domestic assumptions of both men and women. One of the catalysts for the cycle of domesticity for over a hundred years was shaped by a culture that created new expectations for men and women. This cycle dominated the Fifties and Sixties, and which still exists today. Further, it is possible to trace the development of many of our ideas about masculinity and femininity to postwar suburbia. Although the study of gender is not new, over time, our approach to these issues changes. Historians, sociologists, anthropologists, social psychologists, political scientists, and media ecologists, among many other fields and disciplines, are peeling back the surface of this topic and providing fresh insight and coming to new conclusions.

There have been many books and articles written analyzing the effects of the advent of the postwar suburban landscape and its social dynamics. One need not look far to uncover the plethora of supporters and critics of suburbia. Many, like Lewis Mumford and C. Wright Mills, were critiquing this new mode of living within a decade of their construction, and by the time they were twenty years old, many more were evaluating their effects and criticizing their social implications. The two Levittowns, constructed outside of New York City and between Philadelphia, PA and Trenton, NJ, are model representations of all that suburbia had become and was becoming. Although these Levittowns were not the only postwar suburbs that relied on cheap land on the fringe of cities and beyond, longer automobile commutes, and mass-produced housing, they came

to represent the social changes that were happening. There were other suburban migrations, but this one was on a massive scale. One of these effects was on gendered expectations. The design of these developments enforced long held notions and beliefs about the differences between men and women.

The detachment from the home was emphasized by the advertisements geared toward suburbanites. Many ads illustrated expected roles that often depicted the subservient attitude a woman was expected to have, and the dominant position that men held over women. Like the 7-Up and Maxwell House ad, women and men have specific roles that are culturally assumed within the suburban environment. The General Electric ad and promotional by the Levitt's themselves, features William Levitt overseeing his creations; the beneficiaries of his partnership with General Electric are the lucky women who get to cook, clean, wash dishes, do laundry, and restock the refrigerator. The ad claimed: "Today, the American housewife demands a coordinated, well-planned kitchen. She wants appliances, storage space, utilities all integrated."[47]

To deepen these expectations, the Levitts advertised their kitchens, appliances, and front lawns with gender related domains (see Figure 8). The theme was plain and simple: women will work in the kitchen and enjoy it as well. Men are absent from the kitchen and other domestic work advertisements in general, but are often depicted washing an automobile in the driveway, relaxing in the living room with a beer, or playing catch with their son. The gender messages in these ads were clear. Another ad from the Levitt's claimed that women would appreciate all the new appliances in the

[47] General Electric Advertisement http://statemuseumpa.org/levittown/three/kitchen.html (Accessed on September 8, 2017)

Levittown home because it would save them so much work and they would have "more time to kill."

Advertisements abound from the Fifties reinforcing the design assumptions of the homes, the neighborhoods, and the expectations that came along with them. An article in *McCall's Magazine* published in 1949 illustrates this. One of the testimonies from "Helen" reads, "Housekeeping while you're expecting a baby is the best lesson I know in saving time, money, and strength … two-thirds of housekeeping is knowing where things belong and seeing that they stay there."[48] The design of the kitchen is explained as a feminine domestic sense of place. "In this convenient kitchen, Laundry, dining room combination everything has its proper place."[49] The first page of this article has in the top left corner an image of a baby in a crib smiling from ear to ear with the pregnant mother in a dress and apron bent beneath the standing child gently grasping her hand. The father is at the door in the distance, carrying in a bassinet for the second child. The juxtaposition of roles is evident in the photo. Men play a secondary role and one of moving furniture around while the woman is responsible for the act of rearing a child.

The Levitts advertised this themselves. "… an electric kitchen laundry is the one big item that gives the homeowner all the advantages and conveniences that make his home truly livable [and] will sell faster."[50] This marketing strategy was directed at men and not women. It actually begins, "A dream house is a house the buyer and his family will want to live in a long time …"[51] Consequently, there were many women who

---

[48] Elizabeth Sweeney Herbert, "This is How I keep House," *McCall's Magazine,* April 1949.
[49] Elizabeth Sweeney Herbert, "This is How I keep House," *McCall's Magazine,* April 1949.
[50] Barbara Kelly, *Expanding the American Dream: Building and Rebuilding Suburbia* (Albany: SUNY Press, 1993) 96.
[51] Barbara Kelly, *Expanding the American Dream*, 96.

balked at this design, thinking that the space was inappropriate. The Congress on Housing concluded that "cooking and laundering are incompatible uses of space."[52]

Meanwhile the front page of the article is littered with three more images. A picture of a cape cod Levittown home claiming that it is "heaven to Helen." The other two further emphasize the connection and synthesis between female expectations, the kitchen design as mentioned above, and domesticity. Under one of the pictures of the kitchen it reads, "Helen sticks all her cleaning supplies …"[53] The cleaning supplies belong to Helen, the kitchen is implied to belong to Helen; it is her domain. The article reports her stating after moving in, "The first thing I did was to arrange my kitchen so that it would save the most time and energy possible."[54] Harkening back to the aspirations thought of by Catherine Beecher, the article states, "Helen does the washing every other day in two loads, one at seven o'clock just as Bob leaves to commute to his job as a sales accountant in New York, and the other about ten." The male prerogative is to commute to work and geographically distance himself and his responsibilities from those on the domestic front. Even in preparing for the next child, Helen is spending the weekends "deep" cleaning the house since there will not be time to do such cleaning after the birth.

Although much that has been written or at least discussed among suburban design and gender are associated with assumed feminization, there were many elements of suburban design that were making certain assumptions and expectations among men. In an episode of *Leave it to Beaver,* Ward Cleaver is cooking, but it was on a grill on the

---

[52] Barbara Kelly, *Expanding the American Dream*, 96..
[53] Elizabeth Sweeney Herbert, "This is How I keep House," *McCall's Magazine,* April 1949.
[54] Elizabeth Sweeney Herbert, "This is How I keep House," *McCall's Magazine,* April 1949.

patio. His older son, Wally, inquires about his father's cooking, asking about gender roles. Ward assures Wally that it is fine to be a man cooking when it is outside, because it involves fire.[55]

In an episode of *Father Knows Best* titled, "Betty, Girl Engineer," the entire story arc revolves around the daughter Betty's desire to seek an opportunity to use her experience outside the classroom to survey and build roads. Even when she requests that assignment, the guidance counselor proclaims, "but you are a girl."[56] This mantra and trope is used several times throughout the program. Although there are hints to a woman's opportunity to succeed in this field, these hints are overshadowed by Betty donning a dress at the end to impress the young man she had been working with at her placement.

These scenes, and many more like them, seem like they could have been cast right out of Harriet Beecher Stowe's article from the *Saturday Evening Post* in October of 1869. "A woman in the country," she writes, "may sometimes be able to save a life by knowing how to harness or drive a horse. It is, of course, not a proper feminine employment."[57] She goes on to explain in several paragraphs the role of the handyman, as men are supposed to be a "jack-of-all-trades," understanding the way things work and applying that general knowledge to all sorts of projects, from fixing a leaky roof to installing and repairing windowpanes.

In an 1896 H. J. Taylor illustration for a home furnace, the artist captures the gender expectations that revolved around major systems for the home. Four men are

---

[55] *Leave to Beaver*, season 1, episode 38, "Beaver's Guest," directed by Norman Tokar, aired July 2, 1958.
[56] *Father Knows Best,* season 2, episode 30, "Betty, Girl Engineer," directed by William D. Russell, aired April 11, 1956.
[57] Harriet Beecher Stowe, "The Handy Man," *Saturday Evening Post,* October 30, 1869.

standing beside a massive home heating and plumbing apparatus. One figure has his hands shoved into his pockets, one with them on his hips, and yet another folded. The one presumed to be the owner is central, and the only figure in a black suit. He ponders their suggestions with his hand on his chin. You can almost hear the conversation they are having, and the different kinds of advice offered to the owner. The new technologies are aligning themselves with assumptions of masculinity.

However, in this previously mentioned 1869 article by Stowe, she was assuming that men could also do "women's" work. "He can cook nicely, he can bake bread, and bake it so as thereafter to be enabled to instruct the cook in many points … He can set a table and cut bread with a deft nicety that has been supposed peculiar to female hands alone."[58] Beecher wasn't alone in the call for men to carry on work inside the home. Margaret Marsh writes in a 1988 article in the *American Quarterly* titled, "Suburban Men and Masculine Domesticity," that "masculine domesticity required three conditions for its emergence: an ideal marriage that emphasized companionship … an economic system that provided sufficient job security for middle class men … and physical location in which the new attitudes toward family could find their appropriate special expression."[59] Marsh may have observed that middle class men could possibly become more domesticated and take on more household routines. She may have assumed that this would create a greater egalitarian relationship and expectations of women. Furthermore, the distance of the typical male's commute worked against men contributing more to the

[58] Harriet Beecher Stowe, "The Handy Man." *Saturday Evening Post*, October 30, 1869.
[59] Margaret Marsh, "Suburban Men and Masculine Domesticity," *American Quarterly*, June 1988.

domestic labor. The geography and designs in some ways contributed to greater expectations of the dichotomy between men's work and women's work.

**Madison Avenue and the Advertising Business**

Advertisers were ahead of the curve in capitalizing on the "newness." In 1957, *Redbook* sponsored a sales documentary to illustrate the connections between the new suburbs, the importance of automobiles, and how these concepts were tethered to the new shopping centers: "When they buy a house and have a baby, hardly realizing it, they cut into their purchasing stage … It is a happy go spending world, reflected in the windows in the suburban shopping centers where they go to buy. The shopping centers see these young adults as having homes that are always in need of expansion …These young adults are shopping with the same determination that led them to the suburbs in the first place."[60] The sense of design by magazines and periodicals like Redbook as contributing to the engines of consumption.

In his anthology *The Fifties*, David Halberstam refers to previously mentioned Ernest Dichter as one of the first and most influential of the motivational research experts, adept at educating businesses about "the complicated subterranean psychological reasons on which people based their choices."[61] Dichter argued that the buyer had to be convinced that what he was buying should not make him feel guilty and therefore the advertiser had to "offer absolution" for wanting and acquiring it.[62] The psychology of motivational research was tapping into the Freudian analysis developed by Edward Bernays, who once worked for George Creel and the Committee on Public Information in

---

[60] *In the Suburbs*, directed by *Redbook*, On Producer, 1957.
[61] David Halberstam. *The Fifties* (New York: The Amateurs Limited, 1993), 507.
[62] Halberstam, 507.

World War I. In his 1928 book, *Propaganda*, Bernays predicted that advertising competition would not simply be between "individual products or between big associations, but…in addition be a competition of propaganda."[63]

What does this focus on material possessions do to people, culture, and society? How does it affect their attitude toward the metaphysical, the divine, even the view of common brotherhood? What does this do to their view of this life and its purpose? How does this attitude shape educational goals and even the view of citizenship? Returning to Eisenberg's *Shoptimism*, "In the Fifties, Americans underwent a bloodless coup that transformed us from engaged citizens into self-indulgent consumers. We became, in the words of historian Lizabeth Cohen, a 'Consumer's Republic.' Indeed, to acquire more and more [stuff] was tantamount to a patriotic imperative, so it's not surprising that merchants and Madison Avenue came to regard the postwar period as America's Great Leap Forward. Consumption ruled."[64]

The marketing force of Madison Avenue drove the consumer boom, and created new societal expectations. Combined with the design of the new suburbs, and their ever expanding living spaces, the advertising world altered the American Dream. To some critics, the dream was becoming a nightmare. In 1960, John Steinbeck wrote: "If I wanted to destroy a nation, I would give it too much and have it on its knees, miserable, greedy, and sick … On all levels, American society is rigged."[65]

The surge of affluence in the Fifties, partly represented by the growth of suburbia, was criticized by representatives from many different theaters of society. Although this

---

[63] Edward Bernays, *Propaganda* (New York: H. Liveright, 1928).
[64] Lee Eisenberg, *Shoptimism: Why the American Consumer Will Keep on Buying No Matter What*. New York: Free Press, 2009), 43.
[65] John Steinbeck, "Have we gone soft?", *The New Republic*, February 15, 1960.

topic is explored in greater detail in a later chapter, it is worth mentioning here that a few critics who witnessed this transformation were already sharing concerns. In a 1960 article for *Life* magazine, the prominent evangelist Billy Graham warned, "As a nation we seem bereft of a sense of purpose…we have the mood and stance of a people who have arrived and have nowhere else to go."[66] His judgment brought to light concerns about the suburban rise in affluence that Galbraith observed.

David Potter wrote in 1954 in *People of Plenty: Economic Abundance and the American Character*, "We have, per capita, more automobiles, more telephones, more radios, more vacuum cleaners, more electric lights, more bathtubs, more supermarkets and movie palaces and hospitals, than any other nation."[67] Material goods were quickly becoming a determining factor for people's sense of worth. Sixteen years after the *Life* Magazine article, philosopher Erich Fromm wrote a book called *To Have or To Be?* In it, he reflected, "In a culture in which the supreme goal is to have – and to have more and more – and which one can speak of someone as 'being worth a million dollars,' how can there be an alternative to having and being? On the contrary, it would seem that the very essence of being is having; that if one has nothing, one is nothing."

**Television, Design, and Suburbia**

The first pioneers in the postwar suburban diaspora were young, mostly newly married, couples. Many of them had infants, toddlers, or babies on the way. This was part of the "new" experience. One example was Hal Lefcourt, an Army veteran who left

---

[66] Billy Graham, "The National Purpose: Moral and Spiritual Cancer Found in Stress on Personal Comfort." In *The 1960s: A Documentary Reader*, edited by Brian Ward, 148-149. New York: Wiley-Blackwell, 2010.

[67] David Potter, *People of Plenty: Economic Abundance and the American Character* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1954), 84.

Hamilton Township, New Jersey to move into his Levitt house. He excitedly recalled, "We were young, all of us who moved to Levittown, and we thought Bill Levitt was the greatest man in the world. Imagine it - $10 deposit, $90 at settlement, and you had a house of your own!"[68] Here was a brand-new community, and what some would refer to as a city, being built for a homogenous demographic when it came to age, race, and often in social class. In contrast to the urban regions, this first wave was leaving their old neighborhoods which supported extended families, multiple generations, ethnic similarities, and communities that had developed identity. The newness was "[like] first generation college students acclimating themselves to freshmen dormitory life, Levittown residents were experiencing a new way of life that was, for many, unfamiliar. They were a community of strangers who had to build a semblance of community from scratch."[69]

The older and more established neighborhoods and communities had places of cultural importance like historical centers, memorials, squares, civic buildings, and places of worship. Since the new neighborhoods like Levittown were lacking these historical or traditional centers of culture, other mechanisms, places, and platforms served as a substitution for these experiences. One of these replacements that became a conduit for the massive advertising mediums was television. While television became increasingly ubiquitous, it resulted in being increasingly accepted as a carrier of cultural engagement. For the new suburbia, television was synthesized into the community, and commercials and programs were viewed by millions. "What formerly was considered low class – movies, television, and radio – now became the arbiters of taste and style … Residents

---

[68] Jon Blackwell, "1951: American Dream Houses, All In A Row", *The Trentonian,* n.d. http://www.capitalcentury.com/1951.html (Accessed April 6, 2016).
[69] Dianne Harris, ed., *Second Suburb: Levittown, Pennsylvania* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2010), 19.

tuned in for advice on how to live in communities in which they had never lived before…where the impact of TV is so concentrated that it literally affects everyone's life."[70] This homogeneity and cultural consumerism is what Kenneth Jackson refers to in *The Crabgrass Frontier*.

While home construction and road development altered lifestyles, the relative "sameness" went beyond the homes and the neighborhoods. As Americans transitioned demographically to new neighborhoods with new social mores and adapted to these new expectations, marketers were not far from their heels, armed with "insight into the habits and mentality of the American consumer" provided by "Dr. Gallup at Princeton."[71] Along with these demographic shifts were the means and the ideas that were reflected back at us in terms of our values. Advertisements found in magazines, newspapers, and billboards reinforced and amplified these messages. However, like in the opening story, television was a medium that made this amplification in stereo.

Modern goals and ambitions were accelerated by the new medium of television and by an assault from the marketing and advertising industries. "In both its content and the way it was watched, television soon became the quintessential mass medium of suburbia."[72] The suburban home and its design represented the American Dream, and offered all the possibilities portrayed on the radio, in films, and on television. The dream lifestyle is portrayed in programs like *Father Knows Best*, *Leave It to Beaver, The Dick Van Dyke Show, The Donna Reed Show,* and *The Adventures of Ozzie and Harriet.*[73]

---

[70] Baxandall and Ewen, *Picture Windows: How the Suburbs Happened*, 146.
[71] David Ogilvy, *Confessions of an Advertising Man* (New York: Atheneum, 1963), 70.
[72] Jim Cullen, *The American Dream: A Short History of an Idea That Shaped a Nation* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2003), 154.
[73] These television shows were consistently popular in the United States throughout the Fifties and Sixties.

In 1954, a print advertisement for television announced: "Fifteen years ago, on April 30, 1939, RCA publicly introduced all-electronic BLACK-AND-WHITE TELEVISION at the opening of the World's Fair in New York. It was almost an unbelievable step forward in electronic communication - *sight* was added to sound."[74] The excitement leaped off the page and the date is given as an anniversary worthy to remember. In reality, it took over ten years for the potential of the television to be realized and subsequently become a staple in the home. Like the telephone and radio, its conception led to many predictions about how this information system could introduce millions to a new learning environment and produce even more informed, refined, and well-rounded citizens. In an article from a 1935 edition of *Short Wave Craft* , the television is heralded as a magical machine that brings together text, sound, and images. The story includes an image of a professor delivering a lecture on geometry and angles being sent to a home via a transmitter. It states, "[It is] impractical to attempt giving lectures on geometry or other subjects, which really require diagrams or pictures to make them clear to the uninitiated."[75] Television could accomplish what the radio could not, and the article concludes with a vision for the future of the TV. "Not only will various subjects be taught or lectured upon and brought into our homes, but the latest styles in men's and women's clothes, furniture, etc., will be flashed on our home television screen, and dozens of other advertised products, travel tours, etc., as well."[76]

---

[74] Advertisement for RCA http://www.tvhistory.tv/1954%20CT-100%20Ad-TEXT.JPG (Accessed on May 4, 2016).

[75] Matt Novak, "Predictions for Educational TV in the 1930s*:* Before it became known as the "idiot box," television was seen as the best hope for bringing enlightenment to the American people *" Smithsonian.com*, May 29, 2012. http://www.smithsonianmag.com/history/predictions-for-educational-tv-in-the-1930s-107574983/#ZeqdB4L4WgyACTC7.99 (Accessed on May 2, 2016).

[76] Novack.

By 1952, the Federal Communications Commission attempted to restrict commercially funded television broadcasting by limiting the amount of channels that could be used.[77] Some marketers believed this held the television back from its true power. For the FCC, this was a losing battle, as the federal and local governments could not afford the amount of programming that people demanded. In order to pay for the expansion of broadcasts, there was an increase in the commercialization of television. Advertisers were happy to invest, as the electronic images were more successful than anticipated.

The increased demand for more television channels naturally led to a boost in sales of TVs. The number of televisions sold during the Fifties more than doubled each year, so that by 1960, there were 85 million sets in the United States.[78] The home was now open to a torrent of advertising images as Americans were "surrounded as never before by a blinding and deafening array of images from television, magazines and newspapers."[79] The advent of television paralleling the spread of modern suburbia cannot be overlooked.

Unwilling to rest on the popularity of television, manufacturers began producing and marketing color sets, to accelerate the appeal of the medium. Returning to the 1954 ad from RCA, "color was added to sight!" This lengthy print advertisement explained several of the technical details that allowed the new color sets to transition easily between the black and white and color broadcasts. The ad concludes: "Be the first to see it…own

---

[77] Novack.

[78] Bernard Grun, *The Timetables of History: A Horizontal Linkage of People & Events*, 3rd ed. (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1991), 547.

[79] Susan Douglas, *Listening In: Radio and the American Imagination* (New York: Times Books, 1999), 24.

it!" The ad slips in the status seeking ambitions of the new suburbanite elucidated from which *No Money Down* drew part of its anxiety.

**Suburban Capitalism to Suburban Consumerism**

The marketing firms of the era found novel methods to convince people that they deserved more and therefore they should have more. The new medium of television was utilized to broadcast ads that coupled images with songs, moods, and attractive actors that would make their products irresistible. Although crude by today's standards, these first generation ads proved to be far more successful than anticipated, and their catchy jingles became iconic. The clapping in the Winston cigarettes ad was appealing, especially for children. It began with a simple whistling tune, then, "Winston tastes good like a (clap, clap) cigarette should!" inducing the listener to whistle and clap along. Halo shampoo ads featured a saucy mermaid, attracting boatloads of admiring sailors as she sang:

> Halo means natural beauty
> the first time that you use it,
> you need no special rinsing
> after you use it,
> So Halo everybody, Halo![80]

A Mr. Clean jingle was so popular it ran for more than a decade, assuring housewives he could clean anything.[81] In another classic television ad, harp music played as a perky blond in a billowing ball gown crossed the stage and began to sing:

> See the USA in your Chevrolet! America's asking you to call.
> Drive your Chevrolet through the USA; America's the greatest land of all!
> On a highway or a road along a levy, performance is sweeter,
> Nothing can beat 'er, life is completer, in a Chevy!

---

[80] Classic commercial jingles: http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mLRhsxJ8_GE (Accessed on August 1, 2018)

[81] Classic commercial jingles: http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mLRhsxJ8_GE (Accessed on August 1, 2018)

So make a date today, to see the USA! And see it in your Chevrolet![82]

She even blows a kiss to the audience at the end! This was not a random use of seduction, but part of a growing scientific understanding of human motivation and psychological desires. Second and third generations of television commercials became increasingly sophisticated in the ways in which they lured the public into buying more and more. These examples did more than sell products; they illustrated the power of influence that the television had on consumers.

A documentary version of Halberstam's *The Fifties* was produced, and unlike the text, it is interfaced with interviews of contemporary critics, old commercials, and early television jingles and shows. In a part of the documentary titled "The Dream Machine," the following exchange reveals a sense of the power of the television:

> *Narrator:* TV brought new worlds into the home. It changed family life and eating habits … the coming of television created an obsession of watching things that ushered in a new generation of appliances.
>
> *Karal Ann Marling:* Just as the television set gives you this window image, so too does the picture window in your Levittown home … Made people avid to live a different kind of life.
>
> *Narrator:* Its boosters sold TV as a glorious dream machine … Advertisers sensed that TV was a direct pipeline from seller to consumer.
>
> *Narrator:* The ads seem to be working as American consumers fueled an economic boom and felt better about wanting more and more … The allure of ads worried critics who feared that we were being seduced into buying products by people who knew how to manipulate our basic desires.[83]

The new media forms and the use of imagery were now employed in ways that were unprecedented. Americans were being persuaded that they could achieve fulfillment,

---

[82] Classic commercial jingles: http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mLRhsxJ8_GE (Accessed on August 1, 2018)

[83] *David Halberstam's The Fifties*, directed by Alex Gibney, A&E Home Video, 1997.

albeit temporary, through the purchase of goods. Religion in America was either altered to fit or justify new modes of living, or was removed altogether from the public discourse and relegated to a compartmentalized area of a person's life.

The marketing of the era found new ways to propagate the Graphic Revolution into a selling machine and convince people that they deserved more and therefore they should have more. Observe this tactic through an early Cadillac commercial.

> Here is the man who has earned the right to sit behind the wheel. Let's say it was thirty-one years ago on a beautiful morning in June. A boy stood by a rack of papers on a busy street and heard a friendly horn of a Cadillac. 'Keep the change.' The driver smiled as he took the paper and rolled into the traffic. 'There,' thought the boy as he clutched the coin, 'is the car for me!' And since this is America, where dreams make sense in the heart of a boy, he is now an industrialist. He has fought – without interruption for the place in the world he wants his family to occupy. Few would deny him some taste of the fruits of his labor. No compromise this time![84]

Another sample of this type of television advertising was highlighted in the documentary *Sprawling From Grace*. As the Chevrolet commercial opens there is a boy named Jimmy Jones sitting on the railing of his porch looking up at the sky.

> Jimmy Jones: I wish. I wish. I wish.
> Narrator: Of course you do. What does a small boy wish for?
> Flash to a scene from the Wild West
> New voices: Isn't that Jimmy Jones? They say he is the richest man in Texas … richest man in the world. Look at that! He has a new Chevy! When Jones wants something, he gets it. … Powerful man with a powerful car.
> Jimmy Jones: I wish. I wish.
> Flashback to boy on the porch: I wish I was older so I can drive.[85]

The appeal to the Horatio Alger themes of the self-made man and the rags to riches story was a manipulative way to teach Americans that, as a later McDonald's ad would urge,

---

[84] Halberstam, 507.

[85] *Sprawling from Grace: The Consequences of Suburbanization,* directed by David Edwards, Cinema Libre, 2010.

"You deserve a break today!" In his book *The Secular Age*, Charles Taylor observed, "One of the obvious manifestations of the individuation in question here has been the consumer revolution."[86]

As communication technologies were increasingly available due to mass production and reduction of cost, it was expected that their consumption would also expand. The normalization of radio, record players, and television, and the increase in purchases of these devices gradually began to alter the design of floor plans in the new construction. Living arrangements and how the floorplans were arranged began to adapt to the demands and lure of television. The Levitts were one of the first developers that designed accordingly and adapted construction. They embraced new technology, particularly television, which kept them busy with alterations to the layouts of their homes.

The homes in Levittown and other suburban developments seemed ideal for the television's entrance into the family. In *Make Room for TV,* Lynn Spigel explains how the television set began to replace the piano as the focal point in many family rooms. While the piano was relegated to some corner of the house or even the basement, "the new 'entertainment centers' boasting of a radio, television, and phonograph" took precedence, as blueprints for new construction soon "included a space for television in the home's structural layout."[87] Anticipating the future influence and importance of the television, the Levitts ignored advice to plan for the television to be in an auxiliary room or an out of the way corner. The television, in their mind, was going to alter the living

---

[86] Charles Taylor, *A Secular Age* (Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press, 2007).
[87] Lynn Spigel, *Make Room for TV: Television and the Family Ideal in Postwar America* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992), 38-39.

space altogether. Therefore, they went ahead and purchased 4,000 televisions, and had them installed as center pieces in the living rooms of the ready-made homes.[88] In order to broadcast how state-of-the-art their homes were, they turned the mass installment into an advertisement for the modern conveniences of their homes. These were juxtaposed against the older townships, boroughs, and hamlets as a contrast in the design elements of the streetcar suburbs and modern living. Although Levittown homes easily adopted these alterations, the space in the older homes was difficult to reconstitute for the large entertainment contraptions. The Levitts were ahead of the times. Considering newly constructed homes in the twenty-first century, entertainment centers and even in-home theaters are demanded by homebuyers.

**Consumer Culture and the Suburban Dream**

The migration of hundreds of thousands of people not only changed the ones who were part of the vanguard, but the nation as a whole. Mary Grace Flesch was one of the original owners of a Levittown home in Lower Bucks County. In a recent interview, she conveyed a conversation she recalled when she and her husband moved from Trenton, NJ into Levittown, PA. Someone asked her, in relation to people leaving the older neighborhoods and streets, "Oh, why do we have to do this? We did not do that before." Her reply, "Well, if it doesn't work, we'll go back to the old way."[89] When Diasporas and migrations happen, many involved may want to keep this as an option. However, like in many other massive demographic shifts, the suburban model has not declined, with the exception of a few urban contractions. The older villages in Lower Bucks

---

[88] Rosalyn Baxandall and Elizabeth Ewen, *Picture Windows: How the Suburbs Happened* (New York: Basic Books, 2000), 134.
[89] Diane Harris, ed., *Second Suburb: Levittown, Pennsylvania* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2010), 40.

County have been overshadowed by newer places. This has social and political consequences.

How this happened, and how it altered our society and its perceptions of wealth is explained by Roman Espejo: "Living in a consumerist culture means being marketed to, paraded with brands, encouraged to buy and buy again, and educated to think that people are defined by the products they purchase."[90] Materialism and its connection with affluence became entrenched in the fabric of our systems of culture, education, and society. In his documentary series *Big Ideas That Changed the World,* Jonathon Porritt introduces this topic by stating, "Its compulsive attraction robs its followers of reason and good sense. It has created unsustainable inequalities … More powerful than any cause or religion it has reached into every corner of the globe. It is consumerism."[91] This major change matters in how we make lifestyle choices, such as what we value, where we live, and why and how we educate. .

In the introduction to Vance Packard's *The Status Seekers,* social critic Daniel Horowitz writes that growing prosperity and the nation's ascendant international position provided optimism about America's present and future. "For the first time in the nation's history, more employees wore white collars than blue ones. Moreover, many blue-collar workers tasted a middle-class way of life." [92] Frequently represented in the catalogs from generations before, the longed after middle-class lifestyle was not only sought by more people, it now seemed possible. Pursuing this American dream was the target for millions as they fled the cities for greener pastures in suburbia. Coupled with the postwar

---

[90] Roman Espejo, *Consumerism: Opposing Viewpoints* (Farmington Hill, MI: Greenhaven Press, 2010), 191.
[91] Jonathon Porritt, *Big Ideas That Changed the World: Consumerism* (television documentary), 2007.
[92] Vance Packard, *The Status Seekers* (New York: Pocket Books, Inc., 1962), 2.

changes in living arrangements, home construction, and road development, there was a transformation in perceptions of affluence and thoughts about the American dream. As Americans transitioned demographically to new homes in new neighborhoods with new social mores and adapted to these new expectations, marketers were not far from their heels.

Undoubtedly, radio and television became some of the most influential innovations of the modern era. A *Life* magazine article detailed the increased sales of portable radios in an article that "pictured the family…out on picnics or at the beach, listening in. With each year in the late Fifties and early Sixties, out-of-home radio listening increased."[93] Records show that in 1965 alone, Americans purchased twenty-one million transistor radios. [94] The number of television sets sold more than doubled each year so that by 1960, there were eighty-five million television sets in the United States.[95] Residents were now "surrounded as never before by a blinding and deafening array of images from television, magazines and newspaper."[96] These information communication machines were employed as selling mediums just as much as they provided entertainment.

Alongside the change in housing and the introduction of new technology delivery systems, the postwar period has been referred to as a reconversion, as the country was transitioning from a wartime economy to a peacetime economy. Generations that had

---

[93] Susan Douglas, *Listening In: Radio and the American Imagination* (New York: Times Books, 1999), 226.
[94] Gerard DeGroot, The *Sixties Unplugged: A Kaliedoscopic History of a Disorderly Decade* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2010), 21.
[95] Bernard Grun, *The Timetables of History: A Horizontal Linkage of People & Events*, 3rd ed. (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1991), 547.
[96] Douglas, 24.

survived the Great Depression in the Thirties and World War II in the Forties were hesitant to begin spending again in their wake. Businesses, industries, and sellers looked to advertisers to help convince them to unlearn the thrifty lessons of the long times of saving and looking for the best deals. The generation had to be convinced that they no longer needed to be prepared for the dips in the economy. They had to learn how to spend in ways never seen before in history. Paul Mazer of Lehman Brothers said, "We must shift America from a needs- to a desires-culture. People must be trained to desire, to want new things, even before the old have been entirely consumed. We must shape a new mentality in America, man's desires must overshadow his needs."[97]

The confluence of the designs of Levittown and other post-suburban developments that mirrored it, the drafting of the house as a means of combating foreign and domestic threats, the advent of television, the newness of these environs, and the barrage of advertising coupled with the increase in consumerism provided momentum for a continual surge of construction of new homes and developments as the next generation of homebuyers dreamed of their opportunity. Ironically it was the Fifties when Americans describing themselves as "very happy" reached its peak. In the book *Affluenza: All Consuming Epidemic* this transformation is analyzed and compared to contemporary America. "We felt richer then than we do now. Most Americans today don't really think of themselves as affluent even though in terms of GNP we have twice as much as we did then."[98]

---

[97] *The Century of Self*, directed by Adam Curtis, BBC Four, 2002.
[98] de Graaf, *Affluenza: All Consuming Epidemic*, 24.

The book *Affluenza* captured one of the traditions of postwar suburbia, the social critic. There was something about the design and the advertising of that design and the subsequent lifestyles that stirred the ire of many sociologists, philosophers, and urbanites. The litany of books, articles, films, and even cultural and pop songs that derided the new suburbia and its aspirations would become a decades long tradition.

Lewis Mumford wrote in *The City in History: Its Origins, Its Transformations, and Its Prospects*:

> In the suburb one might live and die without marring the image of an innocent world, except when some shadow of evil fell over a column in the newspaper. Thus the suburb served as an asylum for the preservation of illusion. Here domesticity could prosper, oblivious of the pervasive regimentation beyond. This was not merely a child-centered environment; it was based on a childish view of the world, in which reality was sacrificed to the pleasure principle.[99]

The early postwar suburbs were advertised through magazines and television broadcasts as a mirror to their nineteenth century predecessors, as seen in the S.E. Gross advertisement of the soldier on a bench with his sweetheart. This was to be an escape from the ills and evils of society. Life in the suburbs, in the promoted "greatest planned communities in America," was originally portrayed and promised as safe and bucolic. Like the GE advertisement, this was what the United States was fighting for.

In 1982, *The New York Times* published an article called "Fear Drives to the Suburbs: Residents are Prey to Urban Criminals." The story begins with a group of young men stealing a car in the city, journeying out to the suburbs, along "Old Country Road." The perpetrators chose a home that, from their vantage point, looked as if there was an extensive get-together. They barged in, guns drawn, and proceeded to threaten,

---

[99] Lewis Mumford, *The City in History: Its Origins, Its Transformations, and Its Prospects*, 494.

humiliate, rob, and even physically assault one of the guests. After describing the crime, the next paragraph transitioned with the following line, "The sanctity of suburban neighborhoods has long since been violated by crime." Shortly after that, an interview with a neighbor yielded a brief testimonial that sums up the objectives of so many who fled the city, "you move out here, and you think you have seen the last of that."[100] This is a long way from the black and white banalities of the Fifties era sitcom.

The threats to places like Levittown appeared to be from abroad and existential like Mutual Assured Destruction and domestically like in the case of a non-white family moving into the neighborhood. Although very real to people who lived in Lower Bucks County, it did not mar the image of a safe and secure environment. However, by the Sixties, the question of whether one was safe in suburbia was under scrutiny. The television, which brought into the home an imaginative world, also became a vehicle for exposing the negative sides of society, especially through the news. Subsequently, magazines like *Ladies' Home Journal* and *House Beautiful* ran not just ads for home security, but full articles and spreads illustrating the fortification of the suburban home.[101] Granted, the Sixties was a turbulent decade with protests, violence, and even the Vietnam War coming into the home via the television. This combined with the high profile assassinations of President John F. Kennedy, Malcolm X, Martin Luther King Jr., and Senator Robert Kennedy exacerbated the anxieties in many American communities. Part of the result was the continued urban flight, and portrayal of the inner city through the

---

[100] "Fear Drives to Suburbs," *New York Times*, June 8, 1982. https://www.nytimes.com/1982/06/08/nyregion/fear-drives-to-suburbs.html (Accessed on April 15, 2019)
[101] "Burglars Go Home," *House Beautiful,* July 1964.

news only reinforced the dichotomy between middle class suburban safety and the working and lower class urban risk.

Several times during this decade, the inner city was featured in the news as race riots were sparked in many of the largest cities in the United States. Newark, Detroit, Chicago, New York, Los Angeles, Washington, DC, and other urban centers were viewed as battlegrounds. Images of national guardsmen patrolling the streets in hollowed out neighborhoods (from the burning of buildings) gave the impression to many in suburbia that their decision to flee and escape was the right decision. It also caused an increased fear of the "other," the stranger who does not belong. Since so many of the suburban developments that were constructed in the postwar years and were quite homogenous with regards to race and class, the other usually meant non-white, urban, and poor. Suburban design reflected these urban and suburban lines. In Lower Bucks County, Middletown is dotted with communities where home construction and design of neighborhoods in the post-Levittown era intensified the homogeneity of class.

According to the authors of *Fortress America: Gated Communities in the United States*, "The setting of boundaries is always a political act. Boundaries determine membership: someone must be inside and someone outside. Boundaries also create and delineate space to facilitate the activities and purposes of political, economic, and social life."[102] The ideas expressed in the opening lines of their text describe the influence of seeing the outsider as "other." Echoing the ideals expressed by Aristotle in his Nicomachean Ethics, the authors declare that "using physical space to create social place

---

[102] Edward Blakely and Mary Gail Snyder, *Fortress America: Gated Communities in America,* Brookings Institution Press, 1997.

is a long and deep American tradition."[103] Once again design goes beyond the surface and manufactures an "us" v. "them" mentality while latching onto the whisper of Romanticism.

Setha Low's 2003 research article "Behind The Gates: Life, Security, and the Pursuit of Happiness in Fortress America" argues that this theme is still part of the suburban imagination and lifestyle objectives. Setha interviews a number of residents in a gated community in San Antonio, Texas. One of the residents, Karen, is asked about the reasons she feels safer and more comfortable in such a development. Karen responds, "[The kids] getting hit by a car [while] playing in the road. That's one of my biggest fears." Besides car accidents in a cul-de-sac nevertheless, the fear of a stranger entering the community with a weapon is another that Karen worries about. Throughout the article, there is a sense that it is the woman and mother that is worried about these happenings and threats. When the suburbs were sold to the middle classes over a century ago, nature was a social salve. Now, for some, gates became part of the solution for security and the good life. "Of course gates cannot deliver all that is promised, but they are one attempt to resurrect aspects of the American dream that many people feel they have lost."[104] "Karen" never feared the effects of living in a cul-de-sac and possible influences this would have on family, friends, and happiness. Consumerism, status anxiety, and community withdrawal are normalized.

These gated communities have a tinge of design that influences racial homogeneity. In a 2013 article from *Le Journal International* titled "Gated communities:

---

[103] Blakely and Snyder, *Fortress America: Gated Communities in America.*

[104] Setha Low, *Behind The Gates: Life, Security, and the Pursuit of Happiness in Fortress America* (New York: Routledge, 2004).

the American dream behind walls", Laura Wojcik writes, "In 2001, in New York, the Gramercy Park case, highlighted how much racism we can find in these private districts. Local black children were not very welcome to come and play in the private park. When the residents were asked why some children could not, they answered without embarrassment: 'The park is not meant for those children'. Gated Community may have a new approach of 'White Only' with real walls to protect themselves from the African-American threat."[105] Here you have design intersecting with politics, race, and geography that influences intergenerational wealth and subsequent wealth gaps as real estate values are tied so strongly to school district values.

Thomas Hine, cultural critic and writer for *The New Atlantic* and *The Philadelphia Inquirer*, coined the term, "Populuxe" to describe the cultural shift taking place in the Fifties and Sixties. Although adman Ogilvy claimed it was "the professional duty of the advertising agent to conceal his artifice,"[106] the goal remained to convince people that they needed to buy, buy, buy. Ads in magazines and perky television and radio commercials were employed to encourage buyers to add to their households full of things by just altering the color, the style, or the packaging. As Hine describes "a kind of golden age, but it was one that left few monuments because [of] the pleasures of its newfound prosperity."[107] This nostalgic utopia can also be viewed through photographs: "Haul out the family album and you'll see [this consumerism] preserved in now faded Kodacolor: the postwar family at play in a new nation, conceived in affluence and

---

[105] Gated communities: the American dream behind walls by Laura Wojcik, *Le Journal International* https://www.lejournalinternational.fr/Gated-communities-the-American-dream-behind-walls_a1344.html

[106] David Ogilvy, *Confessions of an Advertising Man* (New York: Atheneum, 1963), 90.

[107] Thomas Hine, *Populuxe: The Look and Life in the 50's and 60's, from Tailfins and TV Dinners to Barbie Dolls and Fallout Shelters* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, Inc., 1986), 3.

dedicated to the proposition that there was nowhere to go but higher and higher still."[108] American lives were being defined by possessions; memories were tied into material goods, the status symbols of the age. This echoed what Fromm observed in *To Have is to Be*.

The power of nostalgia is strong, whether subtle or overt. While the Fifties is perceived and remembered quite often with this in mind, this is partly the point in Hine's book. What is it about the Fifties that makes us yearn for a return to it? Why do the Fifties evoke nostalgic memories of a life that seemed slower, more communal, and more wholesome, a time when America began to come of age and take its place in the world? Michael Dwyer, who penned the book, *Back to the Fifties: Nostalgia, Hollywood Film, and Popular Music of the Seventies and Eighties*, explores the success of the 1984 film, *Back to the Future*. "Beyond being set in a pre-Sixties America, *Back to the Future* simply does not allow for the possibility that the Sixties might ever occur. As a result, the film has repeatedly been understood as essentially Reaganist in its treatment of history. It is clear that *Back to the Future'*s vision of the Fifties is highly selective. The film excludes the social tensions and social movements that existed in the historical 1950s in favor of a vision more in line with the Fifties America depicted in television reruns."[109] In the 1984 Presidential election, Ronald Reagan's campaign ran a commercial that became legendary in the history of modern political contests. "It is morning again in America," was a 60 second advertisement that promoted a genteel culture, where most people are white, patriotic (as they are depicted raising the flag in the

---

[108]Lee Eisenberg, *Shoptimism: Why the American Consumer Will Keep on Buying No Matter What* (New York: Free Press, 2009), 43.

[109] Michael Dwyer, *Fixing the Fifties: Reaganism, Nostalgia, and Back to the Future* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2015).

morning with large grins), and at peace, while the newspaper boys rides his bike down the sidewalk, throwing the newspaper over the picket fences and onto the front porch. "The scenes in "Morning" would have fit almost seamlessly into the 1950s idyllic suburban sitcoms such as 'Father Knows Best' or 'Leave It to Beaver." [110]

There is a preponderance of evidence that points to this rendering or reimagining of the Fifties, whether it includes Ronald Reagan's campaigns in the Eighties, the nostalgic sitcoms in the Seventies such as "Happy Days" and "Laverne and Shirley," or even the popular film from earlier in that decade, *American Graffiti*. Airbrushed out of these images are the Civil Rights Movement, Cold War anxieties, and other social fissures that were beginning to form. As Michael Dwyer argues, is that what Americans had been longing for in the post-Sixties, a removal of the decade altogether? The social upheaval that characterized the decade and the social changes that were being felt within its wake were too frightening. The genie was out of the bottle; many Americans wanted to put it back in. "Morning in America" played on "the subtext is that after 20 years of social tumult, assassinations, riots, scandal, an unpopular war and gas lines, Mr. Reagan returned the United States to the tranquility of the 1950s."[111]

Showing how powerful this sentiment can be, this line of thinking was rekindled in the national elections in 2016 and 2020. Donald Trump's "Make America Great Again" campaign drew from this same desire. Articles with names like the *Bloomberg*

---

[110] Michael Beschloss, The Ad That Helped Reagan Sell Good Times to an Uncertain Nation, https://www.nytimes.com/2016/05/08/business/the-ad-that-helped-reagan-sell-good-times-to-an-uncertain-nation.html

[111] Michael Beschloss, "The Ad That Helped Reagan Sell Good Times to an Uncertain Nation," https://www.nytimes.com/2016/05/08/business/the-ad-that-helped-reagan-sell-good-times-to-an-uncertain-nation.html

*Report'*s, "Trump Still Dreams of a 1950s-Era Economy,"[112] the *Huffington Post*'s, "Trump Wants To Bring Back The Fifties,"[113] or "Donald Trump, a 1950's Man,"[114]are a dime a dozen.

The Fifties were also an age in which mass production and consumerism were able to finally reach into the very ethos and being of society, rendering the "Kitchen Debate" comments by Nixon obvious. David Halberstam wrote, "Eager to be part of the burgeoning middle class, young men and women opted for material well-being, particularly if it came with some form of guaranteed employment."[115] The middle class lifestyle eagerly sought after by this generation was packaged and sold as the nation, tired of war and economic stagnation, transitioned into its Golden Age.

---

[112] Noah Smith, "Trump Still Dreams of a 1950s-Era Economy," *Bloomberg Report,* January 30, 2018.
[113] Bob Burnett, "Trump Wants To Bring Back The Fifties," *Huffington Post,* July 28, 2017.
[114] Jim VandeHei, "Donald Trump, a 1950s man," *Axios*, February 26, 2018.
[115] David Halberstam, *The Fifties* (New York: The Amateurs Limited, 1993), X.

# CHAPTER 4: Design and the Critics

As seen with Lewis Mumford's concerns as early as the Forties, before the first bulldozers appeared on the outskirts of New York City or Philadelphia and before the first slabs of concrete were poured for the foundations of either Levittown, critiques of American choices in design, engineering, and living arrangements were already being publish.

## Checking in on the Levittown Residents

Our Levittown couple has lived in Snowball Gate for four years now. They have slowly transformed the unfinished attic of their Levittowner into an additional bedroom as they are expecting again. The eldest child attends the local elementary school, Albert Schweitzer, and has to ride the bus since crossing Trenton Avenue on foot is unsafe, especially at that age.

The couple seems happy and content with their decision to move from Trenton, New Jersey less than a decade ago. Their cramped apartment and gritty neighborhood seems a lifetime away, a far cry from this state-of-the-art community. Despite a few problems with the infamous floor heating system, the longer commute to work, the distance between their home and that of their parents and extended families, and the challenges of getting to know the neighbors, these were small concessions in exchange for more floor space, fresh open air, a front lawn, and a growing school district. Due to having children, they missed the evenings where they were able to sit around the living room watching the news and then some situational comedies. Despite this, they were pleased. They felt content, and even proud of having "made it," earning the right to be homeowners. They felt middle class and very American.

The bucolic environment was everything they could have wished for and more. In the Forties, right after the war, imagining a place like this was impossible. When stories of the tract housing projects outside of New York appeared in the local papers, they sometimes wondered what it would be like to have that option, especially with the low interest loans from the GI Bill after the war and the FHA changes from years earlier. When the rumors circulated about the Levitts surveying lands just across the river in Lower Bucks County were substantiated, they were excited and hopeful about lining up for one of these homes that they could call their own. The cramped environment in Trenton was taxing. They wanted a home of their own and now that they did it was a dream come true. For these reasons, when critiques of Levittown, New York appeared in the same newspapers as announcements of the show homes opening in Levittown, Pennsylvania, they were confused. What was there to critique? Years after settling into Snowball Gate, they perceived these critics as ignorant and arrogant cosmopolitans. And, if Elizabeth Gordon was right, they were probably socialists at best, or possibly even communist sympathizers. Therefore, did it matter if the houses looked similar and the curvilinear streets limited interaction in the community? This provided privacy where you did not involve yourself in other people's affairs. It was one of the benefits of living in suburbia.

These were common patterns in thinking in the postwar suburban developments and were supported, endorsed, and reinforced by advertisements. Consider the ad mentioned in Chapter Three, with the soldier and his sweetheart, longing for a rendition of a suburban or Levittown home. This was going to be their home, one of their own. Levitt claimed that he was building the perfect community, but it was designed and sold

as a means for individual success and advancement. The homes personified individualism synthesized with living arrangements and design. "In Paris, Rome, Naples, and other large cities I found the prevalent tendency to be that of crowding the population into large structures near the centers of the cities rather than extending it to the circumference in more diversified and healthful homes …" wrote the famous nineteenth century home builder.[1] These ideals were woven into the very nature of the architecture and design.

**Herbert Gans and his Defense of Levittown**

Despite these design elements, there were and still those that support or defend the American postwar suburban model. Herbert J. Gans' 1967 dissenting study of Levittown, *The Levittowners*[2] is probably the most referred to analysis in favor of the American suburban model. His work is cited by many who followed him to prove the "myth" conjured up by the suburban critics. According to Gans, the design function and elements of Levittown did not shape or influence those who moved to and resided there. Some of his conclusions were that people are people and that the influence or impact of design is minimal at best. His research found that many of the people who lived in Levittown almost twenty years after moving in were happy with their decision. Even the second generation of owners rated the neighborhoods and the developments fairly high as a place to settle down and raise a family.

Hebert Gans committed to this study by moving into Levittown, New Jersey, now called Willingboro. When he concluded his massive ethnographic study, Gans judged

---

[1] Becky Nicolaides and Andrew Wiese, ed. *The Suburban Reader*, (New York: Routledge, 2006), 197.
[2] Herbert Gans, *The Levittowners: Ways of Life and Politics in a New Suburban Community* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2017).

that the most important factor in the outcomes of people in Levittown were the people themselves. He pronounced that the mixture of ethnic backgrounds, class origins, and religious affiliations dictated the direction and satisfaction of those who live there. He was adamant that the "myth" of conformity, homogeneity, and other critical evaluations of suburbia was exactly that, and challenged the notion that these postwar suburban developments were dangerous. However, as stated in Chapter One, like so many other defenders of the modern suburbs, he disregarded the importance and influence of design on the people who interact with it.

Despite Gans and others supporting this form of living, and the tens of thousands of men, women, and children who lived there or wanted to move in, the critics came by the dozens. What this couple and Gans saw as a new and fresh start with a fresh future, many critics saw as a loss of identity, commercialism, and design dictates that would not enhance the republic as people like Elizabeth Gordon presumed, but would threaten it. They saw Levittown and its offspring through the eyes of the couple who drove around Levittown that Sunday afternoon and wondered what was being replaced. Although it wasn't their neighborhood, they knew it was close enough to affect them.

Many of their neighbors and friends thought some of the collateral effects were more beneficial than detrimental. New stores, strip malls, roads, and an enlarged school district with more courses to select from, more co-curricular activities, and with the recent National Defense Education Act, new labs and concentrations on mathematics and sciences were seen as progress. Despite this "progress" they were leery. Where others

saw benefits, they remained skeptical, as they foresaw a challenge to their once tranquil and community oriented lives.[3]

When design is implemented by developers and architects, two separate designs can be assumed; the drawings themselves, and the fulfilled reality. There are designs that the developers and architects envisage, as their imagination moves from the place of their creativity and onto the drawing board. Many developers may even plan how their designs will be utilized, picturing the people that will reside there, and how they will interact with what becomes reality. Residents will inevitably have unanticipated habits, rituals, and patterns. The Levitts, like many other developers, believed that they were not only in the business of making profit in the homebuilding industry but also protecting the United States from the internal and ideological threats of communism. Despite developers attempting to dictate through shape and form certain behaviors with certain assumptions, there are frequently unintended consequences, especially if they do not follow patterns laid out in Christopher Alexander's thesis and observations. According to the planners associated with the Congress of New Urbanism, when people resist or alter this, they are acting out what is natural for humans operating on more natural laws.

There are stories of universities that purposely did not complete walking paths on their campuses after new construction until they have had time to observe travel patterns.[4] This can be applied especially to walking communities, which many college campuses aim to be. However, automobile and road designs are far different. Designers and engineers cannot wait until they see where people drive, but instead, dictate where

---

[3] Gans, 2017.

[4] Desire paths: the unofficial footpaths that frustrate, captivate campus planners https://news.wisc.edu/desire-paths-the-unofficial-footpaths-that-frustrate-captivate-campus-planners/ (Accessed on July 15, 2021)

people drive. To a certain degree, they can also control how drivers respond to the roads, the speed of their travel, and even the volume of cars. Induced demand is a concept used among economists that has been applied by some road engineers.[5]

**Drawbacks of Post-War Suburban Design, Individualism, and Identity**

While Gans was residing in and studying the people of Willingboro, philosophers and even science fiction writers took modern suburbia to task, especially for its design and how it would influence other aspects of life. French philosopher Jean Baudrillard observed what he called "simulacra and simulation." His analysis of post-modernity calls into question how much of reality do we really experience, or are our experiences a simulation of that reality? Many of the critics of the postwar suburbs, implicitly or explicitly reflecting on the observations of Baudrillard's conclusions in the Twentieth century. In channeling their inner Baudrillard, they chastised their designs, the space between the homes, the increase in square footage, the reliance on the automobile, and other elements. The suburbs were viewed as a simulation of reality, and not reality in and of itself. Even Victor Gruen's attempt to resolve the tension of community in the extended sprawl was a simulation of reality. The failure of replicating a community square in suburban America within an indoor shopping mall only shows the simulation is easily corrupted from its design purpose.

Bridging these questions raised by Baudrillard and suburbia are two books from the postwar period by science-fiction writer, Philip K. Dick. *Time Out of Joint* and *We Can Build You* both play off of Baudrillard's philosophy. In the first of these novels, the

---

[5] What's Up With That: Building Bigger Roads Actually Makes Traffic Worse, *Wired* https://www.wired.com/2014/06/wuwt-traffic-induced-demand/ (Accessed on July 16, 2021)

lead characters are situated in a detached suburban landscape and imaginings of community were simulated until they became realities.[6] In the second novel mentioned here, Dick is more overt about the simulacra, as the setting for this suburban landscape is the moon. In order to convince people to settle there, buyers have to be fooled and manipulated by a simulation of "everyday" suburban America with simulations of their imagined neighbors, "Can you produce simulacra that are friendly-like? I could use a number of them designed to look exactly like the family next door." Even the names of their simulated neighbors are homogenous, "The Edwards family and the Jones family."[7] Of course, all of this is just a ruse. As more and more Americans are drawn to the moon, fewer and fewer simulacra would have to be used because despite being dark, cold, and desolate, it would begin to feel like home.[8]

Simulation and Simulacra were exacerbated by the tradition of individualism in the United States. The critiques of individualism were recorded a century before excavators broke ground in Lower Buck County. Although he was impressed with what the United States offered, the French aristocrat, observer, and author Alexis de Tocqueville detected that Americans were much more willing to uproot their lives and relocate for any number of reasons. Economic betterment, land acquisition, and social advancement were very often at the top of the lists. Coming from a European and French culture that did not either seek these relocations or was not conducive to do so, he wondered about the effects of this transient attitude. He speculated on the influence this

---

[6] Philip K. Dick, *Time Out of Joint* (New York: First Mariner Books,1959).
[7] Philip K. Dick, *We Can Build You* (New York: First Mariner Books,1972).
[8] Kenyon, Amy Maria. *Dreaming Suburbia: Detroit and the Production of Postwar Space and Culture* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 2004).

had on traditions, intergenerational relationships, and in many ways, the concept of identity:

> In the midst of the continual movement which agitates a democratic community, the tie which unites one generation to another is relaxed or broken; every man readily loses the trace of the ideas of his forefathers or takes no care about them. Nor can men living in this state of society derive their belief from the opinions of the class to which they belong; for, so to speak, there are no longer any classes, or those which still exist are composed of such mobile elements, that their body can never exercise a real control over its members.[9]

When tied intricately into the ideals of the Revolution, one can tease out the individualism that is found here that eventually became part of the traditions of American culture and the development of the myth of the self-made man. Competing in a postwar ideological fight with the Soviet Union can easily take these ideals and blow out-of-proportion. When this happens the ideals become part of the narrative. Owning a single detached home on a plot of land distant from your neighbors becomes a more recognized and assumed goal of millions of Americans.

Part of the effects of this tradition was that the individual became the arbiter and determiner of truth instead of yielding to the nature of the community. Even if Herbert Gans' research was hands-on and engaged in the community, he did not remain within the community to witness the coming and going of generation upon generation of homeowners. Alexis de Tocqueville's observations were exacerbated by the design of postwar suburbia. The desire to move, as Vance Packard observed, to the latest development or for better paying jobs or for a more impressive school district for your children are a quality of suburban living.

---

[9] Alexis de Toqueville, *Democracy in America*, Volume II (1840). https://faculty.frostburg.edu/phil/forum/Tocqueville.htm (Accessed April 23, 2017).

Additionally, the testimonies of the "happiness" levels of the people who lived there have been challenged by other sources. Some of these critiques analyzed the consumer driven notion of postwar suburbia (see Redbook's research on selling and advertising in Chapter Three). As Vance Packard wrote over fifty years ago, your house, your belongings, your neighborhood, your job, or a combination of all of the above becomes your moniker or your status.

> Our sense of an appropriate limit to anything – for example, to wealth and esteem – is never decided independently. It is decided by comparing our condition with that of a reference group, with that of people we consider to be our equals…It is the feeling that we might be something other than what we are – a feeling transmitted by the superior achievements of those we take to be our equals – that generates anxiety and resentment."[10]

As mentioned earlier, the U.S. population in the Fifties was "enjoying levels of prosperity unimaginable in the depression of the 1930's." This transformation happened as perceptions of material goods shifted their focus from the metaphysical and idealistic objectives that citizenship offered to the physical and temporal pleasures that consumer goods would exploit. Americans were being persuaded that they could achieve fulfillment, albeit temporary, through the purchase of goods; "fridges, cars, televisions, and washing machines were sold in their millions to a new generation of "consumers." Ironically, it was the Fifties when Americans describing themselves as "very happy" reached its peak. "We felt richer then than we do now. Most Americans today don't really think of themselves as affluent even though in terms of GNP we have twice as much as we did then."

---

[10] Alain de Botton, *Status Anxiety* (New York: Pantheon Books, 2004), 25-26. The idea of "keeping up with the Joneses" is analyzed historically in the book.

Advertisers magnified the national gestalt, insisting we were a new and different generation, blessed as no other had been, riding a seemingly never-ending crest of prosperity and progress. People are better educated, healthier, more affluent, and certainly more sophisticated than any generation before them, especially if they bought the right products. However, the consumption message permeated more than just the obvious marketing mediums whose purpose is to convince people to consume. The message became implicit in the homes they bought, the communities they built, the educational goals they pursued, and even in the candidates they elected to serve in office.

When communities are abbreviated single-generational social constructs instead of intergenerational ties that stretch far into the past, value systems and cultural expectations are influenced. This concept had a far-reaching sway on the aspirations of American dreams and values. The ease in the willingness to move, when compared to so many other cultures, aided de Tocqueville's conclusion: "[that Americans] are constantly brought back to their own reason as the most obvious and proximate source of truth."[11] If the communities in which people reside are designed in a way that fails to enhance connections to neighbors and between generations, then uprooting oneself and moving is all that easier.

Nonetheless, the Levitts did not sever all ties to the past in their design plans. Summoning up a sort of Simulation, they designed homes to reflect the past. There was still a nostalgic draw to the suburban dream and it manifested itself in the postwar years. The models utilized by the Levitts played on this, as the construction style of the homes were reminiscent of the colonial style Cape Cod. Although this style was also available

---

[11] Alexis de Toqueville *Democracy in America*, Volume II (1840). https://faculty.frostburg.edu/phil/forum/Tocqueville.htm

with the mail order homes at the turn of the century, it was mass produced in Lower Bucks County. These homes took the concepts of the prewar suburban dwelling and boiled it down into the parts that were necessary, and at the same time, attempted to retain an American charm. Despite being mass produced on an unprecedented scale, the idea of "small town" America was being promoted.[12] Levittown was not "main street USA" nor was it an older neighborhood. Homes in suburbia continue to mix together older styles and faux facades. Unfortunately, the result is all too often a combination of styles found in one home. It is Frankenstein architecture.

Additionally, the nostalgia of suburbia has played a role in recent presidential politics and culture wars. The nonpartisan and nonprofit Brookings Institute published an article a month before the 2020 election called, "Why is Trump Obsessed with Suburbia." The writer, Willow Lung-Amam, concluded, "Trump tries to assuage white guilt, particularly that of suburban women which he calls 'housewives', justifying their defense of their 'suburban lifestyle dreams', even if from the specter of the racialized 'other'."[13] You can sift out the overt and underlying references to his attempts to justify suburban and consumer living. Lung-Amam continues, "Some have shirked his openly racist, misogynistic comments. The latest statement softens Trump's typical hard-edged racism, acknowledging that most people of color also live in suburbs. This is not an appeal to Black and Brown voters. I t is an assurance to white suburbanites that the 'shameful days of redlining are gone' and their desire for homes 'in safe, pleasant neighborhoods' are

---

[12] Barbara Kelly, *Expanding the American Dream: Building and Rebuilding Levittown* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1993).

[13] Willow Lung-Amam, "Why is Trump obsessed with suburbia?" *Brookings.edu*, October 5, 2020. https://www.brookings.edu/blog/how-we-rise/2020/10/05/why-is-trump-obsessed-with-suburbia/ (Accessed on May 20, 2020)

what all Americans want."[14] Much of this rhetoric is code for attempts at debunking the myths of systemic racism found in the development and design of suburbia, still predominantly white, and perceived as safe.

The heightened individualism is captured in a late twentieth century sculpture called, *The Self Made Man* by Bobbie Carlyle.[15] One can almost see the "Self Made Man" carving out a homestead on the frontier after freeing himself from the stone. This is the man returning home from the hunt on the frontier as seen in Thomas Cole's painting in the nineteenth century and a hundred years later the man returning from the city to the suburbs in Sloan Wilson's novel. These are the myths of individualism that should save the United States from communism.

This myth of individualism, "pulling himself up by his own bootstraps" has insulated people from considering their complicity in systems whether educational, racial, gender, or class, among others. The isolating features of suburban design with each family in their own house on their own plot of ground played into the national objectives to ward off communism and socialism. And when you were able to financially afford it, you uprooted yourself by your own means and because you earned and deserved it, and you upgraded to a new neighborhood with a larger home and piece of land to call your own. Investing in and being part of a community long term or inter generationally was challenged by the very design. When mixed with the social and political culture, there

---

[14] Willow Lung-Amam, "Why is Trump obsessed with suburbia?" *Brookings.edu*, October 5, 2020. https://www.brookings.edu/blog/how-we-rise/2020/10/05/why-is-trump-obsessed-with-suburbia/ (Accessed on May 20, 2020)

[15] Bobbie Carlyle, *Self-Made Man*, 1993, UNC Charlotte, Charlotte, NC, *Student Affairs UNCC*, bronze sculpture, https://studentaffairs.uncc.edu/traditions/did-you-know (Accessed August 10, 2021).

was a greater challenge to overcoming that. It is one of the reasons that the Vallingby, Sweden approach was viewed as unattainable here in the United States.

Due to the contractual rules for the first generations of Levittown, systems do exist and influence or inject their influence on society trends, perspectives, and outlooks. It is appropriate to look briefly at how this might manifest itself. The postwar Levittowns and other suburban communities were almost entirely populated by white people. People of color were not included, both by legal contract and by culture and custom. Despite the 1948 Supreme Court decision in *Shelley v. Kraemer*,[16] declaring the practice of buying and selling covenants exclusively for white people in all white communities unenforceable, the Levitts decided to write it into the buyers' covenants anyway. The Levittown covenants stated, "The tenant agrees not to permit the premises to be used or occupied by any person other than members of the Caucasian race. But the employment and maintenance of other than Caucasian domestic servants shall be permitted."[17] The reasons Levitt gave for these covenant decisions were, "… I have come to know that if we sell one house to a Negro family, then 90 or 95 percent of our white customers will not buy into the community. This is their attitude, not ours. As a company, our position is simply this: We can solve a housing problem, or we can try to solve a racial problem, but we cannot combine the two."[18]

---

[16] Oyez: *Shelley v. Kraemer* *https://www.oyez.org/cases/1940-1955/334us1*

[17] Legacy of exclusion is tough to shed, Newsday by Rachelle Blidner https://projects.newsday.com/long-island/levittown-demographics-real-estate/

[18] Legacy of exclusion is tough to shed, Newsday by Rachelle Blidner https://projects.newsday.com/long-island/levittown-demographics-real-estate/

This socialization and normalization was broadcast back to the culture through advertising and the television industry. White people saw themselves reflected in their ads and their comfortable middle class lives, like that of the Maxwell House picture in the previous chapter, or the couple in the General Electric sales pitch in the chapter before that. One of the results of the racial policies of home selling and buying and the whiteness of suburbia is the failure to recognize the subtle nature of systems. Suburbia in and of itself was based on sustained intergenerational structural racial policies. Robin DiAngelo addresses this in the introduction to her 2018 book, *White Fragility: Why It's So Hard for White People to Talk About Racism:*

> We consider a challenge to our racial worldviews as a challenge to our very identities as good, moral people. Thus, we perceive any attempt to connect us to the system of racism as an unsettling and unfair moral offense. The smallest amount of racial stress is intolerable – the mere suggestion that being white has meaning often triggers a range of defensive responses. These include emotions such as anger, fear, guilt and behaviors such as argumentation, silence, and withdrawal from the stress inducing situation. These responses work to reinstate white equilibrium as they repel the challenge, return our racial comfort, and maintain our dominance with the racial hierarchy. I conceptualize this process as *white fragility*.[19]

DiAngelo addresses over and over again the desire for white people to ignore systems in favor of highlighting the individual. I propose that the "suburban dream" of homeownership plays a role in the over sensitivity of some white people to recognize how the systems involved in suburban design have given advantages to some groups of white people over people of color.

The postwar suburbs were not only emphasizing the desires and needs of individuals where every man can own his own castle earned by the sweat of his brow or

---

[19] Robin DiAngelo, *White Fragility*: *Why It's So Hard for White People to Talk About Racism* (Boston: Beacon Press, 2018), 2.

the power of his intellect. They provided an escape from the ugliness of the city, the ethnic and racial tensions that were increasing with each new surge of immigrants and demographic shifts among black populations, and the class heterogeneity that was prevalent in some urban sections and neighborhoods.

These outcomes played themselves out in the school systems too. This will be addressed in a later section of the chapter, but before a satellite rocked the world of education, a landmark court decision stirred the waters. Although efforts had been made to argue against segregated schools as early as *Roberts v. The City of Boston* in 1850, schools for white students and students of color were vastly different. Schools were legally segregated into "separate but equal" facilities by the 1896 Supreme Court ruling in *Plessy v. Ferguson*. Critics noted that the decision "encouraged states to promote segregation" and "gave [states] the right to insist on segregated education in public and private schools."[20] After *Plessy v. Ferguson,* many schools for children of color remained woefully inadequate, and clearly inferior to schools for white students. In the Thirties, the NAACP began a legal campaign against segregation that lasted nearly two decades before a court case was decided in their favor.[21] In 1950 and 1951, lawyers for the NAACP filed five lawsuits challenging segregation; in 1952, these cases went to the Supreme Court as *Brown v. Board of Education*. In May of 1954, the "separate but equal" *Plessy v. Ferguson* decision was reversed by a 9-0 ruling, and segregated schools were declared unconstitutional.[22]

---

[20] Kaavonia Hinton, *Desegregating America's Schools* (Hockessin, DE: Mitchell Lane Publishers, 2010), 8.

[21] Toni Morrison, *Remember: The Journey to School Integration* (New York: Houghton Mifflin, 2004), 73.

[22] Morrison, 73.

However, desegregation of the public schools was neither immediate nor without complication or violence. In Clarendon County, South Carolina, a black minister and teacher who supported desegregation was fired from his job at a black school. His wife, sisters, and a niece were fired from their jobs; his church was stoned, then later burned to the ground. He received death threats, and shotguns were fired into his house.[23] In Hockessin, Delaware, the district refused to provide bus service for black students, while in Farmville, Virginia, black students were sent to class in a tar paper shack.[24] By the autumn of 1957, the application of the Brown case finally reached Central High School in Little Rock, Arkansas. Images of the beleaguered students who became known as the "Little Rock Nine" trying to attend the school were beamed by television throughout the country and the world. Angry mobs shouted insults, obscenities, and racial epithets at the new students, threatening physical harm, and spitting in their faces.[25] The presence of the Arkansas National Guard, ordered there by Governor Orval Faubus, was not to protect the black students, but instead to block their entrance to the school and prevent integration.[26]

Denied entry to the school, the students tried to head home, but were followed by enraged bands of white people carrying knives, ropes, sticks, and bricks, who chased and harassed them, sometimes tearing their clothing, or breaking windows of their vehicles.[27] The Little Rock Nine stayed out of school for the next three weeks while the state and

---

[23] Jim Haskins, *Separate But Not Equal: The Dream and the Struggle* (New York: Scholastic Press, 1998), 96-98.

[24] Kaavonia Hinton, *Desegregating America's Schools* (Hockessin, DE: Mitchell Lane, 2010), 15.

[25] Paul Robert Walker, *Remember Little Rock: the Time, the People, the Stories* (Washington, D.C.: National Geographic, 2009), 13.

[26] Walker, *Remember Little Rock,* 14, 27.

[27] Walker, 17.

federal governments clashed over the implementation of the law. Finally, President Eisenhower sent in the 101st Airborne to accompany the students to their classes daily. Although the troops were present in the schools, students were still threatened and tormented in the hallways: pushed, tripped, stepped on, slapped, prevented from using the restrooms, and even attacked with acid.[28] Sticks of dynamite were thrown, and menacing phone calls were made as "the terror continued unabated throughout the year."[29] Court battles continued to rage, and by the fall of 1958, Governor Faubus closed all of Little Rock's public high schools, refusing to integrate.[30] Likewise, the Board of Supervisors in Prince Edward County, Virginia, closed all of their schools for five years.[31] Unfortunately, these incidents were not isolated, and took place throughout the country during the period of desegregation.[32]

**Drawbacks of Romanticism's Influence on Suburban Design**

By the mid-nineteenth century, the Transcendentalist movement had swept through New England, creating a demand for country-living within an easy distance of cities like Boston. Towns such as Roxbury and Brookline in Massachusetts attempted to balance the rural and the urban. These romantic and pastoral suburbs became prototypes for future communities, including several that eventually surrounded the Philadelphia area, such as Chestnut Hill, Media, and others along what became known as the Main Line. These pastoral and bucolic living arrangements may have connected one more

---

[28] Melba Pattillo Beals, *Warriors Don't Cry* (New York: Simon Pulse, 1994), 121.

[29] Jim Haskins, *Separate But Not Equal: The Dream and the Struggle* (New York: Scholastic Press, 1998), 149.

[30] Beals, 218.

[31] Kristen Green, *Something Must be Done About Prince Edward County* (New York: HarperCollins, 2015), 83.

[32] Kristen Green, *Something Must be Done About Prince Edward County* (New York: HarperCollins, 2015), 73.

directly with nature, but early communities lacked the amenities of the industrial centers, such as water, sewer, and gas, and, as illustrated in *The Blithedale Romance*, entertainment opportunities as well. Hawthorne's main protagonist, Miles Coverdale, begins to long for the city after a summer in the countryside.[33] By the late Nineteenth and early Twentieth centuries, Coverdale's concerns would be solved.

"Nowhere in the history of the universe do families have the freedom of selecting and acquiring their own homes as they do in this country. The best part of housing under the American system is good quality construction, craftsmanship, and design, containing an abundance of modern features of livability that older countries have never dared undertake."[34] So declared the President of the Los Angeles Home Builders Institute in 1951. Milton Brock may have been exaggerating, but the words echoed the goals and virtues of the American creed of individualism, newness, progress, and innovation. American ingenuity proposed a solution to Coverdale's concerns. Americans can have both the city and the country, situating themselves in both worlds. With the spirit of individualism grafted onto the romantic notion of anti-urban living in addition to consumerism, self-worth, and the existential and ideological conflict between East and West, the new suburban environments reflected the past and projected the future. As housing was expanded from the Fifties and through the subsequent decades, no wonder so many of them took on larger properties, with more square footage inside and acreage outside.

---

[33] Michael Rawson, *Eden on the Charles: The Making of Boston (*Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2010), 129. Here Rawson refers to Nathaniel Hawthorne's 1852 novel set in the utopian community of Blithedale.

[34] James Jacobs, *Detached America: Building Houses in Postwar America.* Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2015.

Philosopher George P. Adams wrote, "it is now strange that this self-discovery and self-consciousness of the individual should have steadily mounted higher as the environment of individuals more and more takes on the form of an impersonal, causal, and mechanical structure. For the mobility and the freedom of the individual can be won only as he becomes detached from this world …" What does this mean and how is this connected to the influence of the subtle changes that were happening to architecture and living environments? Robert Nisbet echoes Adams' analysis of individualism when he writes, "We have learned that man is not self-sufficing in social isolation," and that, "we know that no conception of individuality is adequate that does not take into consideration the myriad ties which normally bind the individual to others from birth to death."[35] By ties, Nisbet is referring to the socialization process and influence that connections between people have on the acculturation of an individual. He is building this upon Adams' conclusion that the trumping of individualism has to be understood within the constructed environs of where these individuals live. Nisbet even warns that with the dislocation of individuals due to the philosophical notion of individualism combined with our physical settings would potentially make, "normative nihilism easy."[36] That is quite the damning prognostication that one could feel through the esoteric conclusions of the stories by Philip K. Dick.

This is also part of the strongly held critiques of authors like James Howard Kunstler. He concludes that what the United States has produced in the postwar years was one of the greatest follies and mismanagement of funds in the history of the world.

---

[35] Robert Nisbet, *The Quest for Community: A Study in the Ethics of Order and Freedom* (Wilmington: Intercollegiate Study Institute,1953).
[36] Nisbet, *The Quest for Community*, 1953.

According to Kunstler, unlike other Allies, the United States stood unscathed by conflict after World War II. Its industry might have flexed its muscles. After a long time of great austerity measures, whether by self-deception, cultural arrogance and ignorance, and international fears, Americans invested their capital into a way and means of living that promised those who bought into it a new American Dream. Instead, Kunstler concludes, it bumbled everything from the start. The landscape and the architectural and engineering designs turned into a nightmarish arrangement that was copied and invested in all across the country. He concluded that localities cannot be distinguished from one another and that is why you can drive across the state or country and take any exit and feel like you haven't left. Everything is the same. The same food opportunities, stores to shop in, and design principles. You have technically gone "nowhere."[37] There are few communities because they were not built. Unfortunately, those that existed before suburban growth have been crowded out and made quaint and kitsch.

Theologians and philosophers have been analyzing the question of community and neighborliness for centuries. Theologians and academics, John Swinton and Esther Mcintosh, began their publication on persons with disabilities with a traditional defense of community. "The proposition that human beings are by nature relational is a theme that runs like a golden thread through the Bible and Christian tradition … what we are as human beings and what we become as human persons is intricately connected with the nature and quality of relationships we experience both personally and communally."[38]

---

[37] James Howard Kunstler, *Geography to Nowhere*, 1993.

[38] John Swinton and Esther McIntosh "Persons in Relation: The Care of Persons with Learning Disabilities," *Theology Today*, July 1, 2000. vol 57, issue 2, p. 175-84.https://doi.org/10.1177%2F004057360005700203 (Accessed August 4, 2021).

There are schools of researchers and philosophers that would push back against this. However, when one considers the arguments in sociologist Robert Putnam's seminal work, *Bowling Alone: The Collapse and Revival of American Community,*[39] or the work of sociologists in the Sixties attempting to understand what became known as the "Roseto Mystery."[40] In the latter case, despite higher than average smoking habits, higher than average weight, and higher than average cholesterol intake, life expectancy for the average person living in Roseto was higher. What sociologists found was that the key to their health was the society they constructed in the mining hills of Eastern Pennsylvania. Community and social networks are utterly essential for healthy living and that includes design.[41]

Sadly, Steven Millhauser concluded: "Others saw in the trend still another instance of a disturbing tendency in the American suburb: the longing for withdrawal, for self-enclosure, for expensive isolation."[42] Accordingly, the "perfect community" that Levitt and Gruen sought was exacerbating consumerism, and was actually anti-community. Consumerism when it becomes part of the culture and part of the structures socializes people to where life becomes more transactional. A house is no longer just a home. It is an investment that can be sold, resold, and even flipped. These transactions are not community investments, but financial ones.

---

[39] Robert Putnam, *Bowling Alone: The Collapse and Revival of American Community*, 2000.
[40] Malcolm Gladwell, *Outliers: The Story of Success* (New York: Back Bay Books, 2011 ), 3-11.
[41] Gladwell, *Outliers.*
[42] Steven Millhauser, *Dangerous Laughter: Thirteen Stories* (New York: Vintage Books, 2009).

**Design, Consumerism, Homogeneity, Conformity, and Affluence**

As alluded to in the previous chapter, while the First Levittown was still under construction, there were already critics lining up to weigh in on the new forms of living spaces. At the core of many of these critical analyses were questions and fears. Some of these qualms were articulated by prominent intellectuals like Lewis Mumford before a single shovel cut into the earth as the ground was broken to commence construction. In the midst of World War II, Mumford looked into the future and wondered what Americans wanted. What were they after? What would they value?

Subsequent critics witnessed not only the expanse of the new neighborhoods and their infrastructure, but also the public's spiked appetite for these environs. They began asking other pertinent questions that continue to be debated, evaluated, analyzed, scoffed at, and challenged. Was there an ever increasing conformity in the Fifties? If so, did the Levittown projects and other similar neighborhoods contribute to this? If they did, what were the connections between design, theory and increased conformity? Some critics went as far to assume that this was an intentional objective of developers like the Levitts. Critics like Betty Friedan even wondered whether or not the residents living in these neighborhoods were actually worse off than the urban or rural working and poorer classes.[43] Her 1963 book *The Feminine Mystique* and its criticisms will be addressed later in this chapter, but some of her connected critiques were aimed at the life that consumerism and affluence were infecting. Like Galbraith had alluded to in *The Age of Affluence*, Friedan believed consumerism could become a prison.[44]

---

[43] Daniel Horowitz, *Anxieties of Affluence.*

[44] Betty Friedan, *The Feminine Mystique* (New York: W.W. Norton, 1963).

Although suburban growth and ideals were found in Firestone's industrial neighborhood, Wright's Broadacre City, or Howard's Garden City, why was there such a strong backlash toward the postwar suburbs? Why did writers like John Updike, Sloan Wilson, and Richard Yates turn their attention to modern suburban design and suburban development? Even the folk singer Malvina Reynolds and the songwriter Carol King denounced what they perceived as not only the shortcomings of these living arrangements, but existential and philosophical threats. These writers and artists often echoed Lewis Mumford's 1961 critical sentiments in *The City in History*, "In the mass movement into suburban areas a new kind of community was produced ... a multitude of uniform, unidentifiable houses, lined up inflexibly, at uniform distances, on uniform roads, in a treeless communal waste, inhabited by people of the same class, the same income, the same age group, witnessing the same television performances, eating the same tasteless prefabricated foods, from the same freezers, conforming in every outward and inward respect to the common mold."[45]

This homogeneity was criticized widely by many social critics as mentioned throughout this chapter. Amy Maria Kenyon wrote: "the homogeneity of suburbia was part of the attraction and that cultural anxieties about uniformity and sameness diminished following the initial waves of postwar critiques."[46] Were the designs of these "little houses" actually what the people who moved into them wanted? If that is true, what is it about them that draws people? Why are developers continuing to build? "Following the success of the early Levittowns, large builders in every large metropolitan

---

[45] Lewis Mumford, *The City in History*, 486.
[46] Amy Maria Kenyon, *Dreaming Suburbia*, 32.

area produced local versions of the Levitt system … subdividers were confident there existed a mass market for their houses …"[47] In Lower Bucks County, Pennsylvania, like so many other suburban areas in the United States, there are so many subsequent developments constructed that were advertised as the next best place to live.

Mumford criticized the design elements as pedantic, lacking an aesthetic quality, and designed to accentuate the individual over the community. Like Friedan and Galbraith, he concluded that this new suburbia was not a place of paradise, but a road to perdition; that the desire to create a "suburban escape" ironically produced "a low-grade uniform environment from which escape is impossible. What has happened to the suburban exodus in the United States now threatens... to take place, at an equally accelerating rate, everywhere else—unless the most vigorous countermeasures are taken."[48]

Joel Kotkin noted this 2010 statement from the Secretary of Housing and Urban Development, Shaun Donovan: "We've reached the limits of suburban development. People are beginning to vote with their feet and come back to the central cities."[49] Ed Glaeser's *Triumph of the City* and Alan Ehrenhalt's *The Great Inversion*—widely praised and accepted by the highest echelons of academia, press, business, and government—have advanced much the same claim.[50] Very recently, a report on jobs during the COVID19 economic downturn garnered headlines like "City Centers in U.S. Gain Share of Jobs as Suburbs Lose." HUD Secretary Donovan continued: "There's just one

---

[47] Amy Maria Kenyon, *Dreaming Suburbia,* 32.
[48] Lewis Mumford, *The City in History,* 486.
[49] Joel Kotkin, "The Triumph of Suburbia," *New Geography*, April 29, 2013.
[50] Alan Ehrenhalt, *The Great Inversion and the Future of the American City* (New York: Knopf Books, 2012).

problem with this narrative: none of it is true. A funny thing happened on the way to the long-trumpeted triumph of the city: the suburbs not only survived but have begun to regain their allure as Americans have continued aspiring to single-family homes." With each financial crisis and the seemingly unsustainable growth of the suburbs, these types of warnings and declarations are made. Yet, in Lower Bucks County alone, there are currently several new neighborhoods being constructed, with a number pledging what the Levitts promised so many decades ago: planned living, neighborliness, and community, among a host of other draws.

William Levitt meant Levittown to be "the most perfectly planned community in America."[51] As a developer, he envisioned a place where Americans could enjoy the postwar years in a safe environment. At the same time, they could combat the growing threats of communism and the Soviet Union in the Cold War by emphasizing the individualism of the homeowner. Owning your home was an expression of the individualism personified in architecture, a part of the American dream. Unlike older or foreign construction projects like those in Vallingby, Sweden, Levittown did not focus on the communal square or mixed housing. Levittown, Pennsylvania, and the neighborhoods that followed in places like Middletown, were constructed with strict zoning laws which did not allow for apartments or other lower income forms of living. Especially when spanning out from Lower Bucks County, the newer the neighborhood, the stricter the zoning was to be. Consequently, the stricter the zoning, the more distant places like work, leisure, worship, and shopping were located. The greater distances between these places required an increased use of the automobile. Public transportation

---

[51] David Kushner, *Levittown: Two Families, One Tycoon, and the Fight for Civil Rights in America's Legendary Suburb.* (New York: Walker & Company, 2009), xiv.

and walkability were not top priorities, and some developers, political commentators, and social critics eschewed these elements, considering them as ingredients for socialism. The United States was a capitalist nation of individuals; our built environments reflected and reinforced it.

The irony of the postwar suburb and this drive for individualism was how many critics questioned whether these built environments were synthesizing capitalism and consumerism with that of conformity. Social critic C. Wright Mills warned Americans of this trajectory while witnessing the first stages of postwar suburbia. In *Our Country, Our Culture*, he wrote, "I will impute that the leveling and frenzy effects of mass culture in this country not to 'democracy' but to capitalist commercialism which manipulates people into standardized tastes and then exploits these tastes and personal touches as marketable brands."[52] According to Mills, Americans may have been chasing the democratic and capitalist dream, but the reality was more dystopian than recognized. Through advertising, entertainment, and even the built environments, Americans were being standardized, "changing ideas, habits, technology, demographic trends, and many other facets of culture, few of which are controlled even by the most powerful marketers, who concentrate their efforts on perceiving and taking advantage of those changes."[53] Susan Strasser's analysis was a part of her research of the emerging markets at the turn-of-the-century. The advent of television and the bombardment of marketing toward the consumer made Mills' warning even more dire.

---

[52] C. Wright Mills, *Our Country, Our Culture*, 574.
[53] Susan Strasser, *Satisfaction Guaranteed: The Making of the American Mass Market*, 17.

Yet Richard Yates' 1961 novel *Revolutionary Road* [54] presented modern suburbia as a wasteland; soulless, and culturally empty. Exploring the lives of Frank and April Wheeler, one could feel the despair of living in the quiet countryside closing in. The Wheelers pined for a revival of their urban lives, trying in vain to fill the void with material possessions, faux friendships, and a well-trimmed lawn. They dreamed of Paris, and claimed that this lifestyle could not be the purpose of life. A book review noted how the novel addressed the issues emerging from the "utopian" 1950s. "April and Frank Wheeler are a young, ostensibly thriving couple living with their two children in a prosperous Connecticut suburb in the mid-1950s. However, the self-assured exterior masks a creeping frustration at their inability to feel fulfilled in their relationships or careers."[55] Kurt Vonnegut, one of Yates' literary contemporaries, called it "*The Great Gatsby* of my time… one of the best books by a member of my generation."[56] Did the Wheelers feel ensnared and unable to leave? Had suburbia, with its trappings and promises, cast a cultural cage over so many people that escape seemed impossible? The book's renewed popularity and its 2008 film adaptation [57] suggest that this American Dream was less than satisfying. A host of authors, musicians, poets, artists, scholars, and

---

[54] Richard Yates, *Revolutionary Road* (New York: Vintage Books, 1961).
[55] Jane Morris, Amazon.co.uk, editorial book review for *Revolutionary Road* on Amazon.com, http://www.amazon.com/Revolutionary-Movie-Edition-Vintage-Contemporaries/dp/0307454789/ref=sr_1_1?s=books&ie=UTF8&qid=1335892879&sr=1-1 (Accessed on August 9, 2021)
[56] Kurt Vonnegut, review for *Revolutionary Road* on Amazon.com http://www.amazon.com/Revolutionary-Movie-Edition-Vintage Contemporaries/dp/0307454789/ref=sr_1_1?s=books&ie=UTF8&qid=1335892879&sr=1-1 (accessed April 5,2016).
[57] *Revolutionary Road*, directed by Sam Mendes, Dreamworks, 2008.

theorists have continued to study and critique suburbia and how it affects those who live there as well as the rest of the population.

In the spirit of *Revolutionary Road*, author Peter Bacon Hales observed that these new communities were divorced from a sense of place, and were instead pieced together:

> Over time, as well, the fabric of a community came into being, assembled and sewn together by individuals who remembered the urban neighborhoods of New York City, or the rural towns of Long Island, New Jersey, and elsewhere, from which they themselves had come. But this was an instant neighborhood without the heritage and residues of generations in the same place. So the institutions, formal and informal, had to be made, then modified with use.[58]

In his poem *"*Superman*,"*[59] John Updike captured the nascent skepticism among some concerning the proliferation of suburban neighborhoods and their growing culture.

> I drive my car to supermarket,
> The way I take is superhigh,
> A superlot is where I park it,
> And Super Suds are what I buy.
>
> Supersalesman sell me tonic—
> Super Tone-O, for Relief,
> The planes I ride are supersonic,
> In trains, I like the Super Chief.
>
> Supercilious men and women
> Call me superficial -- me!
> Who so superbly learned to swim in
> Supercolossality.
>
> Superphosphate-fed foods feed me;
> Superservice keeps me new.
> Who would dare to supersede me,
> Super-super-superwho?

---

[58] Peter Hales, *Levittown: Documents of an Ideal American Suburb*. http://tigger.uic.edu/~pbhales/Levittown.html (accessed March 17, 2016).
[59] John Updike, "Superman," (*The New Yorker*, November 12, 1955), 56.

Updike's critique is reminiscent of his colleague Philip K. Dick and the philosopher Jean Baudrilliard. The design and the subsequent lifestyles of those living in these designs are not only superficial; the people who live in them are painfully unaware.

John Updike, Richard Yates, Cyril Connolly, Lewis Mumford, John Galbraith, all the way through to Green Day were not alone in these observations. In 1962, a group of college students from the Students for a Democratic Society (SD) produced the *Port Huron Statement*. The statements posed a valuable question. "Some would have us believe that Americans feel contentment amidst prosperity- but might it not better be called a glaze above deeply held anxieties about their role in the new world?"[60] Like in the analysis of "Affluenza," Americans were unhappy, but were so distracted that they did not know.

This is at least one of the interpretations of the science fiction classic *Invasion of the Body Snatchers*. Movie critic Ron Rosenbaum wrote, "The film was about … the horror of being in the burbs, about neighbors whose lives had lost their individual distinctiveness. They could be taken over by alien vegetable pods and no one would know the difference, or be able to escape!" A popular poster for the movie ominously warns that the danger is "Incredible! Invisible! Insatiable!" not unlike the blitz of advertising that had been unleashed on the public. The homogenization of American culture established by suburban living was not the only danger present.

The previous chapter focused on advertising the suburbs and advertising to suburbia. One of the ways this influenced society was for advertisers to emphasize the new in place of the old, whether buying hairbrushes or houses. In his groundbreaking

---

[60] "The Port Huron Statement of the Students for a Democratic Society", 1962. In *The 1960s: A Documentary Reader*, edited by Brian Ward, 92. Wiley-Blackwell, 2010.

work, Vance Packard illustrated the sociological effect this had on the desire for social mobility, and how this impacted the home. In *Status Seekers,* Packard notes that during the Fifties, the home took the place of the car "as the status symbol most favored by Americans for staking their status claims."[61] This objective was perpetuated by the advertising industry, as a home costs far more than a car. He claimed the developers and realtors used the same techniques as car salesmen, to promote the new homes "with status meanings."[62] The effects of this upwardly mobile status seeking can be found in Joshua Ruff's article *Levittown: The Archetype of Suburban Development*.

> Writer Michael Pollan remembered that 'by 1960, when my parents went house hunting…Levittown was passé, and the next new place—the un-Levittown—promised to be the Gates of Woodbury, where lots were generally a sprawling acre.' Like minor league ballplayers hitting the big time, some Levittown residents were jumping to the next level by the late 1950s, finding bigger homes in swankier new developments. Plainview, Huntington and other places along the new Long Island Expressway grew exponentially. Some moved east to other Levitt developments in Suffolk County, the Strathmores of Stony Brook and Coram, by the mid-1960s."[63]

Middletown in Lower Bucks County, Pennsylvania followed a similar trend.

The striving for upward mobility was not limited to the working or middle classes either. Quoting from period magazines, Kevin Phillips in *Wealth and Democracy: A Political History of the American Rich* writes, "In 1955, *Fortune* concluded that 'rich Americans have begun to build big houses again,' and in 1958 *Business Week* quoted a fashionable designer saying, 'The rich have been hiding for twenty years. They are

---

[61] "American Social Classes in the 1950s: Selections from Vance Packard's *The Status Seekers"*, 57.
[62] "American Social Classes in the 1950s: Selections from Vance Packard's *The Status Seekers"*, 57.
[63] Joshua Ruff, "Levittown: The Archetype of Suburban Development", Originally published by *American History* magazine. Published Online: October 04, 2007 on historynet.com. http://www.historynet.com/levittown-the-archetype-for-suburban-development.htm

coming out of their holes. They are having a ball."[64] Showcasing one's wealth, which was frowned upon during times of austerity like those in the Great Depression and World War II, was coming back in vogue. It would go from tolerated, to encouraged, and then expected in the postwar decades.

**Suburban Design, the Automobile, and Social Investment**

In his essay "Driving While Suburban," author Pisarski writes, "The variation in modes of transportation employed by commuters nationwide has been relatively stable over long periods. Between 1990 and 2010, the overall share of private vehicle use registered at above 86 percent over two decades, but while driving alone adding twenty million users."[65] Although Pisarski cited multiple studies to illustrate the layers of complexities found within commuting statistics, whether it gathers statistics from suburb to suburb, suburb to city, or intra-suburb commuting, the analysis is clear. Overwhelming numbers of Americans drive to work, to the store, to their schools, and to places of leisure.

In his comparative study of Levittown, PA and Vallingby, Sweden twenty years after their construction, the author wrote of the "visual blight in the typical Levittown neighborhood," caused by cars, " … the presence of the automobile in some neighborhoods becomes overwhelming."[66] The bucolic Levittown as imagined by the Levitts and the tens of thousands of customers who moved was being choked with automobiles. One of the solutions in design that was applied to subsequent

---

[64] Kevin Phillips, *Wealth and Democracy: A Political History of the American Rich* (New York: Random House, 2002), 78.
[65] Alan Berger, Celina Balderas Guzman, Joel Kotkin, ed. *Infinite Suburbia* Alan Pisarski, "*Driving While Suburban"* (Princeton: Princeton Architectural Press, 2017), 255.
[66] Berger, Guzman, Kotkin, ed. *Infinite Suburbia*, 115-116.

neighborhoods in Lower Bucks County was to widen the streets in order to allow more efficient car flow.

This might seem like the logical next step; however, the consequences are detrimental and even fatal. The wider streets not only distanced neighbors from one another, increasing the ratio way beyond the ideal house to street ratio, but they also increased the speeds at which vehicles traveled. Jeff Speck and his colleagues at the Congress of New Urbanism have shown repeatedly that wider streets cause drivers to instinctually increase their speeds. Pedestrian fatalities, per capita in volume of traffic, are greater in these neighborhoods than in larger urban centers.

Wider streets, combined with new practices of setting the home further back from the curb intensified the insulating effects on the homeowner due to increased distances. By requiring greater land use in acreage due to lot sizes, more square footage of asphalt used per home, and constructing neighborhoods even further from urban centers due to the need for space, unexpected consequences occurred. Because of the increased lengths of commutes, more paved areas, and heavy reliance on automobiles, untold ecological damage has occurred. This includes toxic rain runoff from asphalt funneled to local streams, which in turn pollutes larger bodies of water, and increased air pollution from automobile exhaust fumes.

"Compared with the citizens of most other countries, Americans have always lived a nomadic existence."[67] So begins a chapter on mobility by the famed sociologist, Robert Putnam in his book, *Bowling Alone.* "As a result, compared with other peoples, Americans have become accustomed to pitching camp quickly and making friends easily.

[67] Robert Putnam, *Bowling Alone*

From our frontier and immigrant past we have learned to plunge into new community institutions when we move."[68] On the surface, this might seem like a complement to our culture. According to Putnam, Americans move in and out of communities with ease, and are not afraid of taking risks. They develop mobility expectations and acceptance of that mobility that allows them to move beyond the past and to dream of better opportunities and pastures.

"Nevertheless, for people as for plants, frequent repotting disrupts root systems. It takes time for a mobile individual to put down new roots."[69] Part of this mobility might be drawn from our history, our ethnic make-up and diversity, our desire to achieve monetary success, and the heightened individualism. It also reflected the investments of the Federal Housing Administration (FHA). "In 1940, an average of 80% of new, FHA-insured, single-family houses included a garage or carport, over half of which were physically independent of the house."[70] Garages were viewed as a necessity instead of a luxury. These neighborhoods practically demanded that at least one car, often two, were owned. The design of these neighborhoods made transportation out of them by any other method almost impossible. The infrastructure included almost no public transportation. In Levittown, PA, there were regional rail lines that connected the neighborhood with Philadelphia's industrial and merchant center, but most commuters needed to drive to the train stations that were located on the periphery.

The needs of the automobile increased not only dependency on it, but increased the value that people placed on them. Like the advertisements mentioned in the previous

---

[68] Putnam, *Bowling Alone*
[69] Putnam, *Bowling Alone*
[70] James Jacobs, *Detached America*, 205.

chapter, if buyers are going to be drawn into making such a large and luxurious purchase, then protecting the investment becomes essential. "The idea that a house might include a room – and a large one at that – whose primary purpose was to store an automobile speaks directly to the theme of modernity and consumerism in the postwar house."[71]

**Design and Implicit Gender Oppression**

Despite its fictional status, Sloan Wilson's *The Man in the Grey Flannel Suit*[72] unmasked the social pressures and the unfulfilled tensions of coming home from the war and winding up in mass produced suburban housing, at the mercy of consumerism. The novel's best-seller status in the Fifties illustrated that it touched a chord. This is also one of the reasons Richard Yates' *Revolutionary Road*[73] resonated with so many people in the Sixties. In each novel, the main characters commuted long hours into the city and the wife and mother remained at home tending to the children. In *Revolutionary Road* specifically, the Wheelers were a couple that fell in love due to their shared love of culture, aspirations of travel, and cosmopolitan living. After getting married and having a child, like so many others in their generation, they headed for the suburbs. Tragically, the suburbs trapped them, held onto them, and kept them from heading to Paris or taking a risk with relocation. The antagonist in the story is the suburbs themselves.

The popular and critically acclaimed AMC series, *Mad Men*, has similar characters as those found in *The Man in the Grey Flannel Suit* and *Revolutionary Road*. Don Draper and his wife Betty live comfortably in their suburban home with their two and eventually three children. Don is a marketing executive who works and plays for

---

[71] James Jacobs, *Detached America*, 206.
[72] Sloan Wilson, *The Man in the Gray Flannel Suit* (New York: Four Walls Eight Windows, 1955).
[73] Richard Yates, *Revolutionary Road* (New York: Vintage Books, 1961).

long hours in the city. Betty is a stay-at-home mother who is unfulfilled as a children's chauffeur, neighborhood organizer, and sometimes socialite. The occasional gossip about and competition with other neighborhood and school connected mothers does not satisfy the "mainline" Philadelphia raised and college educated woman. However, for women such as Betty, "detachment from the city was total."[5] Suburban wives and mothers, like *Mad Men* portrays, hardly ever venture into the city. As in Victorian times and the continuation of Victorian ideology, the city was viewed as the domain of men. This does not mean that there were no working women in the city; they were simply considered a different type of woman. The famous family sitcoms in the Fifties hardly mention the cities, let alone showing the mother ever journeying into them.

A 1955 *New York Times* article titled, "A Day in the Life of a Suburban Carpool Mother" lays out the daily itinerary of the geography of the suburban housewife and mom. Keep in mind that part of the challenge of this was caused by the consolidated school districts demanded by the exponential growth of suburbia. The larger schools and districts drew students from places farther away. Riding your bicycle, taking public transportation, or just walking to school was becoming increasingly rare.

The article describes one day in the life of a family, but more specifically, the wife. The couple, Mr. and Mrs. Donaldson, have two children and "live in a pleasant home of Colonial design on an acre of lawns, fruit trees, tulip beds, and split-rail fences … they are miles from railroad stations and schools."[74] The day can be summarized as a whirlwind of driving, navigating, and planning. The "merry-go-round" as it is referred to begins at 6:30 am. Mrs. Donaldson bears the greater responsibility and Mr.

---

[74] "A Day in the Life of a Suburban Carpool Mother," *New York Times,* May 2, 1955.

Donaldson, who starts the day with his wife, disappears in the story at 9:33 am and doesn't return until after 11:00 pm when he "takes a taxi" home because, as the article finishes, "[Mrs. Donaldson has] got to get some sleep sometime."[75] And she needs sleep as her day consists of picking up children, dropping children off at different locations, dropping her husband off at the train station, and picking up children again at different locations. In between dropping people off and picking them up, she did errands and squeezed in a quick cup of coffee. This was an era before children were involved in afterschool programs, extra math or science lessons, and being involved with athletics and other physical activities like ballet.

The amount of time spent separated from the house like the testimony of Mr. Donaldson's experience illustrates that by day suburbia was the purview of women. Suburbia was technically a feminine space by day. During the Fifties and into the Sixties, only 9% of suburban women were working outside of the home. Whyte's *The Organization Man* captures the essence of the suburban day living experience even if it was just aspirational, "a sorority house with kids," and "you don't find as many frustrated women in a place like this … we gals have each other," and "the man who enters suburbia by day can make the female group feel that here comes trouble."[76] Although this is what Friedan would vilify.

Betty Friedan's groundbreaking 1963 book *The Feminine Mystique*[77] exposed the growing angst experienced among white, middle class, suburban housewives. The combined force of radio, television, magazines, and other advertisements, among other

---

[75] "A Day in the Life of a Suburban Carpool Mother," *New York Times,* May 2, 1955.
[76] William Whyte, *The Organization Man* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1956), 280.
[77] Betty Friedan, *The Feminine Mystique* (New York: W.W. Norton and Company, 1963).

sources of social pressures combined with mass conformity left many women desperate for change, unfulfilled, and unable to live up to the ideal image for a woman. Although Friedan concentrated on these issues for women, a case for masculine expectations could also be drawn out of the book.

The history of the modern home at times was also woven into religious applications. A Sears, Roebuck and Co. advertisement from 1926 capitalized on these images and otherworldly connections. The Dutch Colonial home stands largely under the banner headline, "Own Your Own Home." Under the home it states, "Long Life and Happiness" followed by the following, "To get the full share of Good Health. Long Life and Happiness for yourself and your kiddies, to get the most out of your life as your Creator intended it should be, A HOME OF YOUR OWN is an absolute necessity." Running down the right side of the advertisement are a series of drawings rending what life in this house would be like.

The history of suburbia and its design as imagined in the nineteenth century and its reimagined manifestations in the Twenties and postwar years emphasized and reinforced these lines of social expectations among men and women. The fact that after nearly five years of war with millions of women serving in the defense industry and finding access to once previously shutoff occupations, the United States resorted back to a new wave of domesticity. As Gwendolyn Wright writes when describing the nineteenth century suburban call, "What did the ideal expect of the middle-class home and the women who saw over it? First, home would be unlike the world of business and industry as possible. The spheres of men and women, city and suburbs, were cast as fiercely antagonistic to one another in every way."[8] From its inception, the suburban

home divided and still divides social expectations between gender. From the expectations of the women's design and furnishing of the parlor in the nineteenth century to the "man cave" basement or reconstituted garage in the twentieth and twenty-first. The designs of suburbia and its geographical challenges reinforced by the media campaigns from early print advertisements in magazines to television continues to establish gender norms that are so pervasive, one would assume they are either true or have always been.

Assuming certain elements of designs have gendered assumptions is in and of itself ideological. It was in the construction objectives; even if there were couples or families that broke out of those assumptions, they would be the anomaly. Some suburban homes in the early twentieth century were constructed with open floor plans and less compartmentalization of living space. Famed architect Frank Lloyd Wright emphasized this. The four-square Prairie style he helped launch in the Chicago suburbs in the early twentieth century were copied and mimicked all over the country. The goal of the design of these homes was family interaction, which would further the domestication of the men. This new ideal was even promoted by a United States senator, Albert Beveridge In his book, *The New Home,* he encourages his readers that, "apartments cannot be … converted into a home … better a separate dwelling with a dry goods box on the table …" The detached home was a form of domesticity. This is part of the theme found in Richard Yates' novel.

Catherine Beecher was one of many advocates for suburban relocation for women, children, and families as a means of living out a healthier lifestyle and environment. "During the last decades of the nineteenth century, the cult of home and

motherhood, which had emerged in the 1830s, reached its pinnacle." This "cult" was tied intricately into social and physical health for women, their children, and the concept of the family which was so important to the Victorian Age. Gwendolyn Wright affirms this in *Building a Dream: A Social History of Housing in America*. "Victorian ideology perceived women and children as especially close to nature, much more so than men, who could withstand the harsh demands of the supposedly unnatural city life – provided they had their retreats in the suburbs." Women and children were to remain in suburbia, reside in suburbia, and be shaped by suburbia. Men on the other hand were still commuting into the city, experiencing a world of men separate from their family interaction, and assuming that their wives were holding on to and taking care of the home.

Amy Maria Kenyon confirms this in her work, Dreaming Suburbia: Detroit and the Production of Postwar Space and Culture. "The orchestration of interior space was such that a negotiation of togetherness and detachment helped to delineate the various working parts that constituted the well-oiled family machine. Fixed and stable gender relations … found its spatial projection in suburban house design.

**Popular Music and Critiques of Suburbia**

Deserved or not, the models designed, pioneered, marketed, and expanded on by developers like the Levitt brothers and Gruen and associates were at the receiving end of some of the most virulent critiques of modern architecture. These assessments came from a spectrum of society's segments. Politicians to sociologists to architectural critics to artists to literary giants, filmmakers, and musicians produced commentary on these developments. These critiques were not exclusively in the Fifties and Sixties as they

were being constructed, but expanded into the Twenty-first century. In 2004, punk rock group Green Day released an album in the style of an "old school rock opera."[78] According to *Rolling Stone* magazine, this rock opera's "plot has characters with names such a St. Jimmy and Whatsername, young rebels who end up on the 'Boulevard of Broken Dreams.'" [79] *American Idiot* was a scathing rebuke of American culture, the fake facades, the social angsts, and the existential crises so many were claiming they found themselves in. The track "Jesus of Suburbia" fits into the overall theme of the album, that the United States is one messed up nation. Part of this critique and conclusion was the anxiety induced from being raised and residing in the suburbs. In the spirit of so many of the early critics of Levittown, Billie Joe Armstrong belts the lyrics:

> This is how I'm supposed to be
> In a land of make believe
> That don't believe in me
> At the center of the earth
> In the parking lot
>
> Of the 7-11 where I was taught
> The motto was just a lie
>
> It says home is where your heart is
> But what a shame[80]

The desperation oozing out of the first half of the song is quite damning, as the lyrics decry the conformity, sprawl, empty affluence, and their effects and influences on the generations growing up there. They are the damned. Simulation and simulacra and even the results of the mall are considered fake and destructive to human authenticity.

---

[78] Green Day, "*American Idiot*," released September 21, 2004, track # 1, Reprise Records, 2004, compact disc.
[79] *American Idiot*, Green Day by Rob Sheffield, *Rolling Stone*
[80] Green Day, *American Idiot,* Reprise Records, 2004.

Green Day was channeling and even updating the message of one of the catchiest folk songs of the Sixties. In 1962, songwriter and social activist Malvina Reynolds wrote and performed the piece called "Little Boxes,"[81] later re-popularized as the theme song of the television show *Weeds*[82] with different performers covering it each week. The lyrics speak not only to the mass production of homes, but also link this to the mass production of people. Part of what Green Day is warning people about is when there is mass production of people, the result is either desperate apathy or out and out rebellion.

> Little boxes on the hillside,
> Little boxes made of ticky-tacky,
> Little boxes, little boxes,
> Little boxes, all the same.
> There's a green one and a pink one
> And a blue one and a yellow one
> And they're all made out of ticky-tacky
> And they all look just the same.
> And the people in the houses
> All go to the university,
> And they all get put in boxes,
> Little boxes, all the same.

The introduction to *Weeds* shows identically dressed adults driving out of their suburban mansions, sometimes known derisively as "mcmansions," in their identical Range Rovers with their children identically dressed attending school.

Malvina Reynold's "Little Boxes" and Green Day's "Jesus of Suburbia" clash with the intentions of the Levitts, Gruen, and their contemporary developers. According to them, modern suburbia was an answer to a problem, not a problem in and of itself. Suburban design appeared to many in the postwar years as the atypical American ideal.

---

[81] Malvina Reynolds, "Little Boxes", RCA Victor, 1962.

[82] *Weeds*, a dark comedy television series produced by Lionsgate Television, created, written, and produced by Jenji Kohan, aired 2005-2012.

This was seen in the advertising, the goals of Elizabeth Gordon, the ideals projected through the television, and the declaration of the strength of democracy. In the spirit of the ideas of Catherine Beecher in the nineteenth century, homeowners who are in physical distance from one another, with families able to be raised outside of the threats of urban blight can flourish as they breathe in fresh air, and enjoy the trappings of the countryside, with a little piece of America to claim as their own. These were just some of the messages that promoted this type of living.

Another musical critique was recorded by The Monkees in 1967.[83] The song "Pleasant Valley Sunday," captures the influence that this stage of suburban living was having on the generation that relocated to these new neighborhoods, as well as the generation that was being raised there. It is like Vance Packard's criticisms of status, Jean Baudrillard's *Simulation and Simulacra*, and Lewis Mumford's warnings are all boiled down to a few stanzas.

> The local rock group down the street
> Is trying hard to learn their song
> Serenade the weekend squire,
> Who just came out to mow his lawn
>
> Another Pleasant Valley Sunday
> Charcoal burning everywhere
> Rows of houses that are all the same
> And no one seems to care
>
> See Mrs. Gray she's proud today
> Because her roses are in bloom.
> Mr. Green he's so serene,
> He's got a TV in every room
>
> Another Pleasant Valley Sunday
> Here in status symbol land
> Mothers complain about how hard life is

[83] Gerry Goffin and Carole King, "Pleasant Valley Sunday", RCA Victor, 1967.

And the kids just don't understand

Creature comfort goals
They only numb my soul and make it hard for me to see
My thoughts all seem to stray, to places far away
I need a change of scenery

The song remains one of the Monkees' most iconic hits. Its popularity in 1967 illustrates that its critique struck a nerve.

**Education, Suburbia, and Design**

The need for the automobile extended to the development of suburban schools. For Lower Bucks County, borough and local schools soon gave way to larger and larger schools after the construction of Levittown. School districts were consolidated. Langhorne Borough Schools and Penndel Borough Schools were now combined with other smaller organizations into the Neshaminy School District. The Neshaminy School District, which incorporates portions of southern Levittown, currently has a high school population of nearly 4,000 students. This is one example of what was happening in Lower Bucks County as demands of Levittown and the spread of similar developments in the adjacent township of Middletown challenged the more local school. Not long after people began moving into the first Levittown "gates" or neighborhoods, ground was broken for the new Pennsbury High School. The sprawling complex was the antithesis of community schools like those in the small village of Fallsington. Like the current Neshaminy District, Pennsbury High School also boasts nearly 4,000 students. This consolidation was copied throughout the region.

There is another element that influenced the development of suburban schools. The influence of design principles on the evolution of the modern suburban school and its outcomes and goals need to be viewed in the context of the analysis of the Cold War. At

the end of World War II, the home became increasingly viewed as a bulwark for democracy. As previously mentioned Elizabeth Gordon declared this in so many words in the throes of World War II in *House Beautiful* and Richard Nixon made the argument about the temporary nature and technological progress of the American home when he debated Nikita Kruschev in Moscow. Other events in the fifties would do the same for the role of education. Education and the schools, like the home, became front and center as a means of combating an ideological war against the communists. This was not an educational argument for teaching students about the values of democracy, the Constitution, Civil Rights, the role of the Supreme Court, or a doubling down on an education that was rooted in student autonomy, inquiry, and the sense of wonder. Instead, there was a call for education to become a means to emphasize victory against the Soviets, in mathematics and science. However, the designs of suburbia and their subsequent effects on the designs of suburban schools would wind up accentuating and reflecting the consumerism advertised about suburbia and which struck the ire of suburban critics. Schools, education, learning, attendance, assessment, and curiosity were first funneled into the pragmatism of the Cold War. When combined with suburban ideals, that goal would eventually shift to economic utility.

These critiques can be viewed to some degree through the lens of educational history. In 1983, the Commission on Excellence in Education released a report that became a landmark in the history of American education.[84] The opening lines warned, "Our Nation is at risk….the educational foundations of our society are…being eroded by

[84] The National Commission on Excellence in Education, *A Nation at Risk: Imperative for Education Reform*, United States Department of Education, April 1983.

a rising tide of mediocrity that threatens our very future as a Nation and a people."[85] In the wake of the disquieting document, many wondered how our education system, once the envy of the world, had come to such a perilous state of affairs. It had only been twenty five years since the National Defense Education Act (NDEA), another milestone in the history of education.[86]

**Suburbia, the Schools, and the Cold War**

In the United States, each new generation asks questions regarding the purpose of school, the curriculum, and how these ideas will be applied. These concerns had been addressed in one form or another, and at times, they were debated vehemently. For example, the Puritans provided a public education in order to thwart the Devil, as evidenced in the Old Deluder Satan Act of 1647 in Massachusetts Bay Colony.[87] In the years after the Constitutional Convention, the point of public school became more and more infused with Jeffersonian ideals of citizenship, the advent of Jacksonian democracy, and the widening of male suffrage.

Each new era in American history continued to raise questions about the role of education. This seemed to correlate with new living arrangements. Within this legacy of schooling entered Horace Mann, known as the father or the patron saint of public education.[88] Mann promoted state sponsored common schools and advocated universal

---

[85] The National Commission on Excellence in Education, A Nation at Risk: Imperative for Education Reform, United States Department of Education, April 1983.
[86] The National Defense Education Act was enacted by the 85th Congress and signed into law by President Dwight D. Eisenhower on September 2, 1958.
[87] The Old Deluder Satan Act of 1647 required towns of more than 50 families to hire a teacher and provide public education to teach students to read. They were meant to read the Holy Bible, so that they were not led astray by "the Old Deluder".
[88] Sarah Mondale and Sarah Patton, *School: The Story of American Public Education* (Boston, Beacon Press, 2001), 31.

education, as seen in his Twelfth Report of 1848.[89] He suggested that the common school was "the most effective and benignant of all the forces of nature … all the rising generation may be brought within the circle of its reformatory and elevating influences."[90] Several decades into the twentieth century, his vision was becoming a reality.

However, to some, twentieth century application of Jeffersonian ideals combined with Horace Mann's vision of education "for all" meant that the universal schooling sought led to a widespread watering down of curriculum. These issues were addressed by the influential work of reformer John Dewey. His ideas and those of his followers produced a more pragmatic and progressive education goal. One such result was the infusion of curriculum with courses like Life Adjustment. This course included units in life skills, consumer issues, and even dance. By the Thirties, there was an increase in attendance for secondary education as the Great Depression left many teens out of work. Despite shrinking tax bases due to unemployment, the closing of schools, and the shortening of in-class sessions, high school enrollment increased by about 50 percent during the Depression. "There was no point in dropping out at fourteen or fifteen or even sixteen to take a job if there were no jobs to be had." [91]

The influx of new students created a dilemma for the teachers, administrations, and even the students. Many of these students came from working class families, and at

---

[89] Horace Mann, Report No. 12 of the Massachusetts School Board (1848), submitted to the Massachusetts Commission to Improve Education.
[90] Horace Mann, "The Education of Free Men" (from the Tenth Annual Report 1846, and the Twelfth Annual Report 1848) in James Noll editor, *Taking Sides: Clashing Views on Controversial Educational Issues* (Guilford, CT: Dushkin-McGraw Hill, 1999), 69.
[91] Thomas Hine, *The Rise & Fall of the American Teenager* (New York: Avon Books, 1999), 215.

times were treated with disdain by the schools because they were seen as lacking the potential for the more rigorous courses like advanced science and mathematics. In the Thirties, the well-known John Jones Letter spread around the country.[92] As it appeared in many speeches and editorials, it came to represent the attitude of these disenfranchised students. "One version of the letter complained of time spent on dead languages and kings and queens and asked, 'Why not have a course in personality in high school? This should be a course in which boys and girls are taught to dance, talk interestingly, dress with good taste, and get along with one another?"[93] Even the contemporary high school tradition of the prom can be traced back to its increased popularity connected with the "life courses" in high school. A budding teen culture "pushed proms younger and younger", so that by the Forties, the dance we recognize now had "almost entirely taken hold."[94]

Many of the school issues about curriculum and pedagogy remained stagnant during World War II. Although employment demands increased during the war years, jobs and military service were plentiful for adolescents and young adults. Despite this, there was a growing concern among educationists that teenage unemployment would spike again when the troops returned home after the war. This challenge prompted the United States Office of Education to organize a conference on vocational training for high schools in 1945, featuring a speaker named Charles Prosser. Prosser proposed what was soon known as an "historic resolution, and later as "the Prosser resolution." Concerned that schools were committed solely to an academic curriculum, Prosser

---

[92]Diane Ravitch, *Left Back*: *A Century of Failed School Reforms* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2000), 278.
[93] Ravitch, *Left Back*, 217.
[94] Claire Suddath, "Brief History: The Prom" *Time*," May 17, 2010.

suggested instead that schools should organize their students in such a way that 20 percent should be prepared for college, while another 20 percent would be trained for skilled occupations. The remaining 60 percent should "receive the life adjustment education they need and to which they are entitled as American citizens."[95] Prosser fully convinced his audience that together, administrators and vocational educational leaders should structure a new program for this majority group; the idea was unanimously approved by the conference.[96] The curriculum would include, "home and family living education, vocational education, and guidance, and de-emphasized learning from books and academic subjects."[97] The result of these educational ideals was that in many high school curriculums, mathematics requirements were limited to courses in consumer and applied arithmetic studies, while courses in algebra, geometry, and other higher mathematics should be strictly elective.[98]

**Critics and the Purpose of Education**

Some of the results of the adoption of the Life Adjustment changes can be seen in the anticipated apprehension confronting American teens in the postwar years. Teachers compiled checklists of adolescent concerns, and found that high school students "worried about getting along with their brothers and sisters, making arrangements to drive the family car, being underweight or overweight, poor posture, poor complexion, ill-fitting shoes, not getting enough sleep, how to behave on a date, what to do about acne, and

---

[95] Diane Ravitch, *Left Back: A Century of Failed School Reforms* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2000), 328.
[96] Ravitch, *Left Back*, 328.
[97] Ravitch, *Left Back*, 329.
[98] Ravitch, *Left Back*, 329.

what kind of socks to wear in the winter."[99] The traditional academic curriculum simply did not speak to those needs.

Nonetheless, by the Fifties, there was a growing reaction against the universal or Life Adjustment education ideals. Admiral Hyman Rickover argued that the elementary schools should be "a front line in the Cold War."[100] The solution, reformers claimed, was in one way or another related to the idea of "BACK--back to fundamentals, back to basics, back to drill and memorization, and back to facts." [101] In some reformation circles, it became trendy to critique the schools. Concerns about the quality of education in the public schools were relentless. Detractors claimed "the expert's desire to make the schools more like real life had lowered standards, diminished student's effort, and reduced achievement."[102] The publication of books such as Arthur Bestor's *Educational Wasteland* (1954) and Rudolph Flesch's *Why Johnny Can't Read* (1955) appealed to the American idea of an ideal education. Drawn in by the critics' premise of peril and suggestions that students were not receiving the education they deserved, the public was ready to accept their recommendations, and advance "a 'restoration of learning'."[103] The latest ideas and recommendations "were aligned with the educational experiences the public had when they were in school and represented activities parents knew and could do with their children." [104] Despite the attacks on progressive education and the Life

---

[99]Ravitch, *Left Back,* 333-334.
[100] Hine*, The Rise & Fall of the American Teenager*, 252.
[101] Roger Bybee, "The Sputnik Era: Why is This Educational Reform Different From All Other Reforms?" http://www.nas.edu/sputnik/bybee2.htm (Accessed March 28, 2016).
[102] Sarah Mondale and Sarah Patton, ed. *School: The Story of American Public Education* (Boston: Beacon Press, 2001), 69.
[103] Bybee, The Sputnik Era
[104] Bybee, The Sputnik Era

Adjustment changes in the curriculum, the trajectory of schooling and its curriculum seemed to be weathering the storm.

That was until October 4, 1957, the day the Soviet Union launched Sputnik, a watershed moment in the Cold War but also in the history of American education.

> Hurtling unseen, hundreds of miles from the earth, a polished metal sphere the size of a beach ball passed over the world's continents and oceans one day last week. As it circled the globe for the first time, traveling at 18,000 mph, the U.S. was blissfully unaware that a new era in history had begun, opening a bright new chapter in mankind's conquest of the natural environment and a grim new chapter in the cold war.[105]

In the documentary film *Sputnik Mania*, religious overtones are created with Gregorian chant playing in the background as Chris Anderson recalls waiting for it to pass overhead: "It was cold and clear. We could see the Milky Way shimmering across the sky. I stood in my front yard with my entire family with me. The entire neighborhood, the entire city, the entire nation it seemed, was standing outside watching what the Russians had done."[106] Other quotes used in the early minutes of this documentary illustrate how revolutionary this event was. *The New Republic* likened the launch to the discovery of America by Christopher Columbus, while science fiction writer Arthur C. Clarke called it one of the greatest scientific moments in human history. NBC's anchorman Chet Huntley noted it was "the one time [the Soviet Union] has beaten the West."[107]

To a nation that emerged from World War II with the new status of superpower, it was important to be first. Senator Lyndon B. Johnson said, "In the eyes of the world,

---

[105] "The Nation: Red Moon Over the U.S.", *Time*, October 14, 1957.
[106] *Sputnik Mania*, directed by David Hoffman, A&E Home Entertainment, 2008.
[107] *Sputnik Mania*.

first in space means first, period. Second in space is second in everything."[108] Although the USSR announced its intention of launching its first artificial satellite in September of 1957, this news was dismissed by many as an example of Soviet propaganda.[109] Yet the following month, on a Friday evening, America was shocked by that small spherical object launched from the heart of Soviet territory. The U.S. was officially outdone in the Space Race, and it was a frightening realization.

"Commercial radio stations … picked up Sputnik's signals. "Listen now," said an NBC announcer, in a voice his listeners would not soon forget, "for the sound which forever more separates the old from the new." And over thousands of earthbound radios sounded the eerie beep . . . beep . . . beep from somewhere out in space." [110] In the documentary *The Sputnik Moment*, Homer Hickam, author of *October Sky* recalled: "Right at the appointed hour, Sputnik flew over. If God himself in a chariot had flown over, I would not have been more impressed."[111] Paul Dickson wrote, "For years to come, Americans would recall where they were on Sputnik night…It is a rare writer who…does not admit to being overwhelmed by its historic importance."[112] "The enormous resonance of the Sputnik launch was also thanks to the multifaceted nature of this single event and its ability to simultaneously break so many assumptions, long-standing theories and even entire political strategies."[113]

---

[108] *The Sputnik Moment*, directed by David Hoffman, Varied Directions, 2008.
[109] Mauricio Borrero, *Russia: A Reference Guide From the Renaissance to the Present* (New York: Facts on File, Inc., 2004), 327.
[110] "The Nation: Red Moon Over the U.S.", *Time,* October 14, 1957.
[111] *The Sputnik Moment*, directed by David Hoffman, Varied Directions, 2008.
[112] Paul Dickson, *Sputnik: The Shock of the Century* (New York: Walker & Company, 2001), 17, 21.
[113] Anatoly Zak, *Technology: Simplest Satellite*, http://www.russianspaceweb.com/sputnik.html (Accessed March 28, 2016).

The sound of Sputnik, the consistent beep, is an audible memory tied to a turning point in twentieth century history. What became known as the Sputnik Moment "captured the imagination of the world and started the Space Age,"[114] altering the Cold War, international relations, economics, technological research, astronomy, and even popular culture. Meanwhile, within a fortnight, attacks on the public schools appeared in the media, but this time with heightened criticism. Without understanding the full story of the American space program, the competition between the Army and the Navy for investment from the federal government, the development of the Cold War, the espionage controversies in the postwar years, and the shortcomings of our rocket testing, schools were blamed for the failure to beat Russia into space.[115] No doubt, the launch of Sputnik II just a month later intensified the fears of Americans, still in shock from the first launch.[116] A *Time* article entitled "Education: What Price Life Adjustment?*"* stated: "It seemed for a while that all the critics of U.S. public education, so vociferous since the war, had just about shot their bolt. Then came Sputnik."[117]

Within weeks of the launch, the assessment of the schools had reached all the way into the White House. The failure of the U.S. to win the race for the first orbiting satellite brought heavy criticism on the Eisenhower administration. The President did not help the situation when days after the launch, he did not outwardly mirror the distress being felt by many others in the public. Michigan Governor G. Mennen Williams did not spare the

---

[114] Borrero, 327.
[115] Mondale and Patton, ed. *School*, 69.
[116] Sputnik II was launched November 3, 1957.
[117] "Education: What Price Life Adjustment?", *Time*, December 2, 1957.

President in a mocking analysis of both his administration, and the lackadaisical attitude that seemed to echo the President in the school systems.

> Oh Little Sputnik, flying high
> With made-in-Moscow beep,
> You tell the world it's a Commie sky
> And Uncle Sam's asleep
> You say on fairway and on rough
> The Kremlin knows it all
> We hope our golfer knows enough
> To get us on the ball![118]

The lack of knowledge of the US defense department in order to compete with the Soviets appeared to be increasing in proportion. However, laced within it is a chastising of the American system of public education. On the October 6, 1957 CBS broadcast of the evening news, anchorman Douglas Edwards observed, "Probably no one here in the nation's capital would disagree with one thing…'We better get on our toes." The challenges to improve, alter, and reform education were intensifying. The purpose of education, as articulated by the federal government, was becoming clearer.

In the wake of the fear caused by the Sputnik launch, the press led the charge to blame the schools as the nation reacted to the perceived education gap between the East and West. "Harry Schwartz, a reporter who covered Russia for the *New York Times*, led off on October 14 with an article stating that educational drive and the prestige accorded science students underlay the Soviet triumph."[119] In an article titled "Reds Better Schooled in Math and Science" in the November 16, 1957 *Science News Letter*, the story cautioned that the failures of the American system of education was a "direct result of

---

[118] G. Mennen Williams, quoted by Roger Launius in *Sputnik and the Origins of the Space Age*, http://history.nasa.gov/sputnik/sputorig.html (Accessed March 25, 2016)
[119] Paul Dickson, *Sputnik: The Shock of the Century* (New York: Walker & Company, 2001), 225.

Soviet Russia's stressing the tough, hard subjects of mathematics and sciences."[120] The November 18 edition of *Newsweek* featured the cover headline "World War of Science…How We're Mobilizing to Win It".[121] Inside, in an article entitled: *"*Sputnik II: The Surge of Soviet Science*,"* the author warned: "Russia will be ahead of the West in almost all fields in a few years. Unless the West steps up its scientific development, it will become technologically inferior to Russia within ten years."[122] *Time* magazine alone published dozens of articles dedicated or related to Sputnik in the weeks and months following its launch. One story titled "Defense: Knowledge is Power*"* was published on November 18, 1957, and quotes "Father of the hydrogen bomb" Edward Teller, who styled the launch a "technological Pearl Harbor." "[The Soviets] will advance so fast in science and leave us so far behind that their way of doing things will be the way, and there will be nothing we can do about it … If the Russians go ahead faster than we do in this direction, then we will be just helpless. If we are not able to use our freedom in the direction of accelerated progress, and if the Russians use their tyranny in this direction, they will win.[123] The speed at which the nation blamed education for national failures was surprising, and by the end of the year, most Americans agreed that our high school students should work harder to compete with the Russians.[124] The purpose of education, for many in the federal government and for many arguing for "tougher standards" was crystalizing.

---

[120] Kathleen Steeves, Philip Bernhardt, James Burns, and Michele Lombard. "Transforming American Education Identity after Sputnik", (American Educational History Journal, Vol. 36, No. 1, 2009), 81.
[121] *Newsweek*, November 18, 1957.
[122] "Sputnik II: The Surge of Soviet Science", *Newsweek*, November 18, 1957.
[123] "Defense: Knowledge is Power", *Time*, November 18, 1957.
[124] Dickson, *Sputnik: The Shock of the Century*, 225-226.

In a speech delivered in Oklahoma City on November 13, 1957, he claimed that the U.S. would prevail, comparing the times with those the U.S. and its Allies faced in World War II. After describing the defense plans, missile developments, and increases in the armed forces budgets, he turned toward education, with specific curriculum changes and the demands for the schools to combat the threat from overseas and even from beyond *terra nova*. The federal government called for a curriculum overhaul which, in light of *A Nation at Risk*, would seem eerily similar. President Eisenhower suggested a national system of testing for high school students, with incentives for "high aptitude students to pursue scientific or professional studies", as well as an agenda to "stimulate good-quality teaching of mathematics and science", as well as funds to support more laboratory facilities and to "increase the output of qualified teachers."[125] "As you do this, my friends, remember that when a Russian graduates from high school he has had five years of physics, four years of chemistry, one year of astronomy, five years of biology, ten years of mathematics through trigonometry, and five years of a foreign language.[126]

Although within the speech he included that Washingtons and Emersons were needed just as Einsteins and Steinmetzs, this speech was openly critical of the current progressive era trends in education. The slight insinuation of needs in the areas of humanities and the arts is completely overshadowed by the national security needs of science and mathematics. "The emergent and popular theory that developed as a result of

---

[125] Dwight Eisenhower, Radio and Television Address to the American People on "Our Future Security." November 13, 1957. http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/index.php?pid=10950#axzz1uF1DOVfI (Accessed March 28, 2016).

[126] Dwight Eisenhower, Radio and Television Address to the American People on "Our Future Security." November 13, 1957. http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/index.php?pid=10950#axzz1uF1DOVfI (Accessed March 28, 2016).

Sputnik was that the Russians beat the United States into space as a result of better schools."[127]

The education reformation was on, and Sputnik was just what was necessary for critics and reformers to lobby that it was in our national interest to revamp the system.[128] The Sputnik panic provided an ideal opportunity to urge bills that would overhaul curriculums to focus on science and mathematics, resolving the debate for those who endorsed greater stress on higher academic standards in these subjects. [129] The public mandate for a federal response was extraordinary, and in 1958, Congress passed the National Defense Education Act.[130] Through the NDEA, many of these changes came from the federal level and eventually made their way into the local school districts.

Elementary and high school curricula were revised to emphasize science, math, and foreign languages in order to rival the Soviet system.[131] Colleges began to offer substantial scholarship programs to alleviate the alleged educational disparity between the Americans and the Soviets. Although the public had previously opposed federal aid to schools, fearing that it would lead to federal control, many Americans were now ready to accept this change.[132] As a result, there were numerous proposals that the government should consider awarding loans to ambitious students.[133] Many college-bound students

---

[127] Steeves, Bernhardt, Burns, and Lombard, "Transforming American Educational Identity After Sputnik", 74.
[128] Roger Bybee. *The Sputnik Era: Why is this Educational Reform Different from All Other Reforms*? Roger W. Bybee, Center for Science, Mathematics, and Engineering Education, National Research Council, http://www.nas.edu/sputnik/bybee1.htm (Accessed May 2, 2012).
[129] Bybee. *The Sputnik Era:*
[130] Bybee.
[131] Matthew Brzezinski, *Red Moon Rising: Sputnik and the Hidden Rivalries that Ignited the Space Age (*New York: Times Books, Henry Holt &Co., 2007), 274.
[132] Bybee.
[133]Matthew Brzezinski, *Red Moon Rising: Sputnik and the Hidden Rivalries that Ignited the Space Age (*New York: Times Books, Henry Holt &Co., 2007), 222.

were influenced by these incentives, and today, millions of students still benefit from the college loan programs that originated from this time period.

In March 1958, *Life* published a shattering critique as their cover story that seemed to blame the Life Adjustment curriculum and progressive education for the failure of the U.S., and the international embarrassment that accompanied it. The article titled "Crisis in Education" compares the American and Soviet systems of education, and examines how free time is spent by the two students who are the focal point of the comparison, directly connecting it to their education.[134] The opening paragraph was a vindication for educational critics like Rickover, Bestor, and Flesch. "For years most critics of US education have suffered the curse of Cassandra – always to tell the truth, seldom to be listened to or believed. But now the curse has been lifted. What they were saying is beginning to be believed. The schools are in terrible shape. What has long been an ignored national problem, Sputnik has made a national crisis.[135]

The article's title was a gauntlet thrown down for change. The article cleverly uses photography to emphasize the chasm that seemed to develop between these two countries. On the cover, the Soviet Alexey is shown with a serious expression, eyes narrowed, and shoulders forward. The American Stephen smiles wide, with his head and shoulders tilted back. One can get an appreciation for the difference illustrated from a Soviet perspective as well, and can almost sense the contempt Soviets felt toward American adolescents.

> America was shocked by the results of the research. Alexey and Stephen were peers, both aged 16, but Alexey was considerably more educated than Stephen. On the pictures the readers of the article could see how Alexey made experiments

[134] "Crisis in Education", *Life*, March 24, 1958.
[135] "Crisis in Education", *Life*, March 24, 1958, 25.

> at physics and chemistry lessons, played volleyball or chess, read Shakespeare, went sightseeing, was taught music. Nearly all his time he was spending for studies, he thought of entering the institute being convinced that his fate depended on it.[136]

Compare the analysis of Alexey's free time with that of his American counterpart.

> Stephen, in his turn, didn't care much about studying though he was going to enter a college. The list of the subjects he was taught was rather shorter but even at them his progress left a lot to be desired. Lapekas' parents even had to pay for supportive lessons. But he doesn't care much about it – he spends his time with his girlfriend, dancing rock-and-roll at never-ending parties.[137]

Social critic Susan Douglas commented: "This cosmic humiliation occurred because the Soviets were systematically and rigorously educating their students in science and technology and training them to become relentlessly competitive engineers."[138] At a 2007 Harvard panel discussion on the impact of Sputnik on education, John Randolph said, "In 1957 Sputnik's launch further embarrassed the nation, shocking it into action. We were getting outworked by conscientious, dedicated Russian students. The launch revealed missile technology that could deliver a bomb to the U.S. … Sputnik raised the stakes."[139] In *The Sputnik Moment,* the narrator concluded, "We have been wasting the brainpower on useless frivolities like designing bigger tailfins and plush carpeting that was whiter and brighter."[140] In *The Soviet Tragedy,* Martin Malia wrote about the astonishment the world experienced with the launch of Sputnik, an

---

[136] Russian website, (http://englishrussia.com/2010/05/17/life-magazine-1958/ (author "CJ", posted May 17, 2010)
[137] Ibid.
[138] Susan Douglas, *Where the Girls Are: Growing Up Female with the Mass Media* (New York: Three Rivers Press, 1995), 21.
[139] "How Sputnik Changed U.S. Education" John Randolph, panelist at Harvard University. http://news.harvard.edu/gazette/story/2007/10/how-sputnik-changed-u-s-education/ (Accessed March 28, 2016).
[140] *The Sputnik Moment*, directed by David Hoffman, Varied Directions, 2008.

accomplishment that promoted the progress of Soviet technology, and established her expertise in ballistic missiles. Russia continued to pioneer space exploration, landing an unmanned craft on the moon in 1959, and in 1961, putting the first man into space, Iurii Gagarin. "Khrushchev's belief in the intrinsic superiority of the Soviet system was only reinforced by these achievements, and that superiority even began to appear as a real possibility to many in the West."[141]

Deepening the concern in the U.S. was the Russians' dominance in every aspect of scientific and technical education. "Their kids weren't making Pilgrim hats out of construction paper; they were learning calculus, chemistry, and quantum mechanics."[142] By the spring of 1958, the growing contempt for the Life Adjustment objectives coupled with the fears of Soviet progress and American regress only snowballed.

The effects of these quickly proposed and adopted bills in Congress were pervasive and long lasting. In Nicolas Lemann's critical analysis of standardized testing, *The Big Test: The Secret History of the American Meritocracy*, he takes the reader on a journey through the history of postwar testing and the founding of the Educational Testing Service (ETS) in 1947 by Henry Chauncey.[143] After setting the background to Chaucey and developing his purpose behind the Census of Abilities (the forerunner to the ETS), Lemann explains the importance of his relationship with the President of Harvard, James Bryant Conant. This duo saw their ideas blossom in the wake of that fateful October sky, as President Eisenhower's plans were put into place by a congressional act.

---

[141] Martin Malia, *The Soviet Tragedy: A History of Socialism in Russia, 1917-1991* (New York: The Free Press, 1994), 331.
[142] Douglas, *Where the Girls Are*, 21.
[143] The Educational Testing Service administers tests such as the GRE, PRAXIS, and TOEFL, and through the College Board, the SAT, the CLEP, and AP tests.

After Sputnik, the educational system endured impatient scrutiny with a sense of "almost wartime urgency".[144] The National Defense Education Act approved regular federal funding of universities in order to prepare more skilled scientists and engineers. These newly appropriated tax dollars now promised future growth for higher education on a scale unimagined or planned for. Colleges and universities soon began "bearing the heaviest possible load of the American people's aspirations and frustrations.[145]

If promoted years earlier, the 1958 National Defense Education Act (NDEA) would have likely been rejected due to lack of concern for the need to emphasize science and mathematics, or as a resistance to federal involvement in education and curriculum. Eisenhower's reasoning links it back to his declaration in Oklahoma City a year earlier, and the sentiments of the reformers in education. He declared that the NDEA would "strengthen our American system of education so that it can meet the broad and increasing demands imposed upon it by considerations of basic national security."[146] This rationale was the impetus for NDEA. President Eisenhower continued, "Much remains to be done to bring American education to levels consistent with the needs of our society. The federal government having done its share, the people of the country, working through their local and State governments and through private agencies, must now redouble their efforts toward this end."[147]

---

[144] Nicholas Lemann, *The Big Test: The Secret History of the American Meritocracy* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1999), 85.
[145] Nicholas Lemann, 85.
[146] Dwight D. Eisenhower: "Statement by the President Upon Signing the National Defense Education Act," September 2, 1958. Online by Gerhard Peters and John T. Woolley, *The American Presidency Project*
[147] Dwight D. Eisenhower: "Statement by the President Upon Signing the National Defense Education Act.," September 2, 1958. Online by Gerhard Peters and John T. Woolley, *The American Presidency Project*

Literary works, advice, and admonitions of men such as Admiral Rickover, who once claimed that education was necessary to win the Cold War, were renewed in popularity. "A book called *Why Johnny Can't Read – and What You Can Do About It*, which had appeared two years earlier with little attention or fanfare, suddenly became a smash best seller."[148] Admiral Hyman Rickover drew considerable attention with the charge that America was "hobbled by its competition with the Russians for technological supremacy by a school system that failed to prepare young people with a rigorous education".[149] In 1959, in his book *Education and Freedom*, he claimed "that 'life in a modern industrial state demands a great deal more 'book learning'."[150]

The nation was primed for government action in education. The early Fifties had been full of polemics against progressive education and massive changes in how populations perceived them. In addition to this, major demographic shifts to newly constructed suburban regions created a demand for newly built schools. The NDEA attempted to solve multiple challenges to the nation's schools. Whether in the realm of civil rights or the Cold War, these struggles provided a new paradigm for how Americans react to crises of a social or political nature: by redirecting our focus, and transferring both human and fiscal capital toward education.[151] "The guiding idea became, if you want to fix a social or political problem, look to schools."[152] In referring to the new ideas

---

[148] Halberstam, 626.
[149] Ravitch, 362.
[150] Ravitch, 362.
[151] Steeves, Bernhardt, Burns, and Lombard, "Transforming American Educational Identity After Sputnik," 72.
[152] Steeves, Bernhardt, Burns, and Lombard, "Transforming American Educational Identity After Sputnik," 72.

for school and students, Homer Hickam said: "They [the government] were launching us."[153]

These attitudes forged in the wake of Sputnik continue to shape modern education. "Consequently, this curative language, a direct result of post-Sputnik thinking, dominates education discourse in the United States."[154] The result of increased spending in education was also long-lasting. Federal funding for schools doubled, increasing spending on math and science, as well as "the study of the communist and developing world – laying the foundations for American pre-eminence in higher education and advanced research."[155] By the mid-sixties there was a steep spike in graduate degrees conferred.[156]

By the fall of 1958, students in many areas of the country were returning to an altered school with a different kind of education. Students were expected to become more studious, for the sake of the country. In classrooms across the nation, teachers encouraged a renewed concentration on science, engineering, and math. "A whole series of national scholarships were announced and money was flowing into universities for the purpose of getting kids into that arena [science and mathematics]."[157] With these changes, questions were emerging, which along with their answers would have costs, some unintended, for decades to come. Like the launch of the satellite, the alterations wrought by the NDEA on the education system became a before and after experience.

---

[153] *The Sputnik Moment*, directed by David Hoffman, 2008.
[154] Steeves, Bernhardt, Burns, and Lombard, "Transforming American Educational Identity After Sputnik," 74.
[155] David Priestland, *The Red Flag: A History of Communism* (New York: Grove Press, 2009), 345.
[156] Theodore Caplow, The First Measured Century: An Illustrated Guide to Trends in America, 1900-2000 (Washington D.C.: The AEI Press, 2001), 64-65.
[157] *The Sputnik Moment*, directed by David Hoffman, 2008.

Another of the immediate changes was the increased demand for more quality teachers and the proliferation in debates regarding the impact of lower salaries. These were proposed solutions to the education gap between the Soviets and Americans. "The advent of Sputnik further emphasized the necessity of world-class education, especially the necessity of attracting the best and brightest into teaching. This caused Americans to focus their priorities on schools; coupled with the baby boom shortage of trained classroom personnel, this caused teacher salaries in real dollars to increase rapidly."[158]

While the curriculum of math and science programs were transformed, another immediate change was the increase in popularity of these courses and the amount of hours spent each week on the sciences and mathematics. Labs were added to classroom space and students no longer just read about biology and chemistry, but performed biological and chemical experiments. New honors courses in chemistry and other sciences were formed, and math courses were offered at an earlier age.[159] Students were also encouraged to go to the sources of scientific ideas to examine "alternative theories to venture closer to the dangerous far edge of conventional thinking."[160] These "dangerous edges" brought primary resources back into contact with students, as they were encouraged to go beyond "the distilled version and right to the original, whether it be Marx, Freud, or the Federalist Papers."[161] The seeds for reactionary forces were being planted and the dividing wedge sank deeper between the generations of that period. Before Sputnik, students in Life Adjustment courses were not encouraged to question the

---

[158] Larry Frase and William Streshly, *Top 10 Myths in Education: Fantasies Americans Love to Believe* (Lanham, MD: Scarecrow Press, Inc., 2000), 31.
[159] Dickson, *Sputnik: The Shock of the Century*, 230.
[160] Dickson, 231.
[161] Dickson, 231.

society in which they lived. They grew up in "a well-ordered universe that embraced Latin, Dick and Jane primers, classical literature, and rote learning."[162] Pandora's Box would be unintentionally opened by leaders in the education debate. The creative thinking that was intended as education for national defense and the American way of life became the foundation that "spurred rebellion and activism."[163]

Another unintended consequence was the breach that was created between the humanities and the sciences. With such a stress on science due to the enactment of the NDEA, funding was out of balance for the arts, literature, history, and other curriculums. As an apologetic for science education, in 1959 the British author C.P. Snow had warned an audience in Cambridge about the expanding walls that had been erected between the two camps. "The [lecture] title was 'The Two Cultures and the Scientific Revolution'; his theme was the dangerously wide gap that had opened up between scientists and 'literary intellectuals'.[164] He argued that the humanities had often snubbed their counterparts in science as being lesser intellectuals. "He spoke of scientists who could scarcely struggle through a novel by Dickens, but more importantly of humanities professors who were ignorant of the Second Law of Thermodynamics, who sneered at science as an inferior branch of learning that no really cultured person needed to trouble with. 'If the scientists have the future in their bones,' he claimed, 'then the traditional culture responds by wishing the future did not exist."[165]

---

[162] Dickson, 232.
[163] Dickson, 232.
[164] Robert Whelan, *The Telegraph*, May 5, 2009. http://www.telegraph.co.uk/technology/5273453/Fifty-years-on-CP-Snows-Two-Cultures-are-united-in-desperation.html (Accessed March 28, 2016).
[165] Robert Whelan, *The Telegraph*, May 5, 2009. http://www.telegraph.co.uk/technology/5273453/Fifty-years-on-CP-Snows-Two-Cultures-are-united-in-desperation.html (Accessed March 28, 2016).

Part of the culture of school that was the legacy of the Sputnik Moment was the ability to generate our culture's anxiety related to education. The *Life* article featuring Stephen and Alexey "was supposed to explain why the United States was headed for certain economic disaster. As simplistic as it was, it turned out to be amazingly successful in creating anxiety."[166] Since our culture now not only financed the schools with increased tax burdens, they were turning to them for solutions.

In the throes of the Sputnik Moment, Senator Henry Jackson said, "I believe the American people have to meet this threat with the same urgency that we would if this nation were in an all-out war. Unless we approach it from that standpoint we may well go down the drain as other great civilizations have in the past."[167] Similar language can be found in the first pages of *A Nation at Risk* report, "If an unfriendly power had attempted to impose on America the mediocre educational performance that exists today, we might well have viewed it as an act of war."[168] As the *New York Times* article concludes, "In the final analysis, the only thing that has significantly changed in the gloomy scenario is the actors. In 1958, the villain was Russia. In 1990, it was Japan. In 2008, it is India and China."[169]

**A Nation at Risk Report**

So similar to the "Sputnik Moment," *A Nation at Risk* Report cast blame on the American education system for an internal and external shortcoming. Recent changes in education, reforms, and challenges such as desegregation, crumbling urban centers,

---

[166] Walt Gardner, "The 'Crisis' of U.S.Education", *New York Times,* January 14, 2008. http://www.nytimes.com/2008/01/14/opinion/14iht-edgardner.1.9196672.html (Accessed March 28, 2016).
[167] *The Sputnik Moment*, David Hoffman, 2008.
[168] Gardner, "The 'Crisis' of U.S. Education", *New York Times,* January 14, 2008.
[169] Gardner, "The 'Crisis' of U.S. Education", *New York Times*, January 14, 2008.

decline in student numbers, the open classroom concepts, English Second Language (ESL) students, and the Handicapped Children Act of 1975 would bear some of the attacks by critics.

When you consider the design of suburbia and the subsequent ideals that morph into economic utility, the drive to be part of the middle class, and the extensive advertising that permeated the country as the United States became a "suburban nation," education was being transformed. So many reformers and educationists had desired to see learning as a means of a well-rounded education, as a defense of democracy with autonomous learning, and as a way to aspire to engage students in life-long learning. Yet, the Sputnik Moment in education altered that. Combine the transition to suburban ideals with evolution of economic purpose for learning you have an out and out challenge earlier ideals.

The Sputnik Moment in American history is a crossroads that became a crisis. The successful Soviet launch "triggered a period of intense scientific competition with the United States."[170] President Barack Obama cited this moment when focusing on education in a State of the Union address in 2011.[171] This was no mere use of metaphor but a direct link to another educational crisis fifty years prior. He used the account of Sputnik to redefine the purpose of American education and to find inspiration from a time when it appeared the United States was on a decline and its education system was seemingly in a state of peril. "Half a century ago, when the Soviets beat us into space with the launch of a satellite called Sputnik, we had no idea how we would beat them to

---

[170] Borrero, 327.

[171] Barack Obama, State of the Union Address January 20, 2011. http://www.whitehouse.gov/state-of-the-union-2011. (Accessed March 28, 2016).

the moon. The science wasn't even there yet. NASA didn't exist. But after investing in better research and education, we didn't just surpass the Soviets; we unleashed a wave of innovation that created new industries and millions of new jobs." He continues, "This is our generation's Sputnik Moment. Two years ago, I said that we needed to reach a level of research and development we haven't seen since the height of the Space Race.[172]

President Obama's speech reflected the importance of questions that have confronted Americans and their education system for over 50 years. Although Sputnik touched off a reformation in education, it was only the beginning in the changes that would be wrought. The Cold War was only part of the story of the postwar years. While Sputnik may have galvanized many Americans into refocusing on the purpose of education, another major catalyst was beginning to take shape. This spark would too often go unnoticed as a major influencer in policy decisions from trade to communications to taxes and regulations to especially education. This catalyst was modern suburbia and its promised access to the American dream.

The national conversation on the aims of education transitioned through a focus on engaged citizenship, to assimilation, to life skills, to winning the Cold War, to economic utility. The narrative of economic utility usurped the goals of the Cold War and became the driving force for policy decisions for the decades since 1983. The stimulus behind this usurping of education goals was the growing suburbanization that occurred in the post–war years.

---

[172] Barack Obama, State of the Union Address, January 20, 2011.

# CONCLUSION

## The Postwar Suburbs and What Could Have Been

Postwar suburbs in the United States did not have to be designed on the principles and theories that were eventually applied. There were intentions and objectives that were influenced by: racial homogeneity, gender expectations, Cold War ideological fears, immediate economic needs, long traditions of American individualism, and technological development, among many other factors.

The postwar United States development for housing missed a chance to radically reimagine living, transportation, and community. The money that was invested, the low interest loans, the application of the GI Bill, the increase in demand due to the return of the troops, and the end of the Depression and the war provided an opportunity. A trip to Stockholm, Sweden in 2018 gave me a glimpse of what could have been, when I had a chance to analyze the critically acclaimed, world-renowned suburban development, Vallingby. Divided between several suburban areas that include the towns of Racksa, Hagelsby, and Vallingby, the whole experiment and vision for the community that broke ground in 1951, has been called ABC, but is best known by the collective umbrella of Vallingby. The origins of this concept of living comes from the Swedish architectural philosophy called *acceptera*. The ideas of *acceptera* can be summarized by the founders Uno Åhrén, Gunnar Asplund, Wolter Gahn, Sven Markelius, Gregor Paulsson, Eskil Sundahl, in this poem,

> The individual and the mass …
> The personal or the universal?
> Quality or quantity?
> -Insoluble questions, for the collective is a fact
> we cannot disregard any more than we can disregard
> the needs of individuals for lives of their own.

> The problem in our times can be stated as:
> Quantity and quality, the mass and the individual.[1]

I left for Vallingby from Stockholm Central Station on the metro line. This underground rail service becomes an above ground transport before it crosses the Soderstrom River. Approximately ten stops and 35 minutes later, the train pulled into Vallingby station. Walking out of the station is an altogether different experience than pulling into a Levittown "gate." The commuter is met with several blocks of multilevel stores, businesses, restaurants, cafes, and banks or civic services. The ground is decorated with circular patterns of different circumferences. The patterns draw the eye to the slightly raised sitting areas and fountains (dormant due to the winter conditions). They, combined with the height and distance of the buildings, make the visitor feel safe, like he has arrived somewhere that people go for leisure. Walking around the first block, I looked up to find a roof overhead along the main corridor. It was elevated from the adjacent block roofs and enhanced the enclosed feeling. I observed many customers coming in and out of the businesses throughout the complex despite the frigid conditions (albeit this was Sweden). Despite my questioning the commercial aspects of the center of the square, what I found reassuring was that it included other community draws such as a playhouse, movie theater, and was anchored on both sides by churches. Additionally, the automobile parking was either tucked under the main supermarket or on the periphery. Customers are required to walk through the promenades to access anything.

---

[1] Lucy Creagh, Helena Kåberg and Barbara Miller Lane, eds. *Modern Swedish Design: Three Founding Texts* (New York: Museum of Modern Art, 2008.

The main commercial squares are surrounded by apartment complexes at least fifteen stories in height. There were a half-dozen of them that ringed the square creating a determined and definable space. According to the architectural developers, it was Lewis Mumford's ideas for a rebirth of the medieval walled city as an ideal for modern construction that inspired them. Although I did not have the same feeling or sense of place as I have had walking the cobblestone streets and winding alleys with their towering homes and business as in Gamla Stan in Stockholm, in Regensburg and Nuremberg in Germany, or Amsterdam, the formation of space did work, giving me the sense of unity.

As I walked off the main center, I crossed the street to visit one of the churches, attached to the ground floor of one of the tall apartment complexes. The church was once described by the architect, Le Corbusier, as one of the three inspiring churches in the world. He once quipped, "if you have only three churches that you can visit. And the third one should be in Vallingby." The church shares the same floor with a community center.

Walking out of the church to the southwest of the center square, I descended past a cluster of four level apartment complexes that cover several acres. There were bike and walking paths throughout that connected these with other clusters and with the center square. After a fifteen minute jaunt along a road that bisected these clusters, I turned down a pathway that was the border between the apartment complexes and the row homes. The bike and foot paths continued throughout, linking these diverse living areas.

Coming to the end of this quarter-mile path and to the next intersection, I was surprised to find a hill to the right (west of the central square). Ascending the hill was yet

another walking and bike path. On the bluff of the hill was the community of single-dwelling homes. Although the homes appeared to be similar in size as the typical American split-level, their design was slightly different. However, what I was mostly drawn to in terms of differences when compared to Levittown, was how close in proximity the homes were, to not just their immediate neighbors on either side, but also the neighbors across the street. The narrow roads created a more 3:1 ratio, in contrast to Levittown's much greater distance.

**Beyond Suburbia**

This design of American postwar suburbia has become synonymous with the United States itself. This design includes the detached single-family home, which has been replicated across the stereotypical American suburban landscape. The people who live there, the suburbanites, have become the archetype American. The design affects everything from tax revenue, school district values, perceptions of class, identity, and values. This design included everything from the size of a house, its distance to the curb, and to the neighbors on either side and across the street. The design included the layout of the house, how the stairs were situated, whether there was a television in the room and where it was located, and the location of the kitchen and dining room, and the flow between the adjacent rooms.

Suburban development in the postwar years was influenced by many thinkers and contributors that had come before it, such as Catherine Beecher Stowe, Harvey Firestone, S.E. Gross, the Romantic movement, and Ebenezer Howard, among others. This change in living arrangements and the design of modern suburbia left a lasting impression on American lives.

After World War II, millions of American servicemen returned home, anxious to put the war behind them, settle down, and begin a family. This resulted in an unprecedented spike in demand for housing, intensified by the low-interest loans granted by the G.I. Bill, and the shortcomings of home construction due to the Great Depression. Combined with an aggressive advertising campaign, the Home Owners Loan Corporation (HOLC) and the Federal Housing Authority (FHA), longer term mortgages, and attractive and novel building plans, suburban development grew exponentially.

These developments, among others, were evaluated while intersecting with design theory, community concepts, national identity, Cold War ideology, advertising, race and gender, and the criticisms aimed at them. The postwar suburbs built between 1945-1960 contributed to a design trend that was reproduced on an extensive scale in subsequent decades, even to the present day. I reside in Lower Bucks County, Pennsylvania, only a few miles from the "Second Levittown," and there are still new developments going up nearby that reflect and adopt the postwar trends from over sixty years ago.

The design trends in these developments included elements such as: curvilinear streets, homes placed at a certain distance from others and the street and at certain angles, and predicated on the use of the automobile. They are also primarily residential in their zoning.

Levittown, New York and Levittown, Pennsylvania were an immediate success, which quickly transformed the surrounding areas. For example, by 1953, 70,000 people lived in Levittown, NY. The immense success of Levittown led to many builders copying this design, paving the way for the US to become a suburban nation. In 1950, *Time* magazine estimated that Levitt and Sons built one out of every 8 houses in the

United States. Between 1950 and 1960, 20 million people moved to the outskirts of America's cities. In terms of sheer numbers, the move to the suburbs outstripped the fabled Westward migration of the 1800s many times over.[2]

Levittown was designed on an immense scale. Levitt and Sons claimed this was "the most perfectly planned community in America." Their method called for the plotting and the location of virtually every sapling, screw, and shingle. The design of suburbia, promoted by the Levitts, the Toll Brothers, and other developers, had a massive effect on the postwar American psyche. However, noticing the subtleties can be a challenge. In 1998, *Time* again recognized Levitt's significance, calling it "as much an achievement of [their] cultural moment as Venice or Jerusalem."[3]

The research was intentionally interdisciplinary, as I considered how scholars, philosophers, design theorists, artists, architects, novelists, media ecologists, poets, and theologians have thought about the importance of design, from the late 1800s to the present, highlighting Levittown as a pivotal point in the history of suburbia in the 20th century. Part of the reason for this integrated approach was due to the historiography of suburbia. The influence of design and the built environment is frequently either entirely overlooked or under appreciated. Race, class, and gender, which are all significant veins for research, have become the hub for scholarly analysis of the suburbs . On the other hand, design is used tangentially, if it is addressed at all. This thesis put design at the center and allowed the other issues like gender along with race and class to stem from that. Many times, I have heard people claim: "It's just a building," making the

---

[2] "Levittown, PA: Building the Suburban Dream," The State Museum of Pennsylvania, Accessed August 28, 2021, http://statemuseumpa.org/levittown/

[3] "Levittown, PA: Building the Suburban Dream, http://statemuseumpa.org/levittown/

assumption that the built environment is limited or less important in its power or influence on socialization. Weaving together these disparate disciplines with the thread of history dispels this notion.

Historians like Kenneth Jackson, John Teaford, and Dolores Hayden have flirted with the influence of design, but there is little substantial work on the influence of suburban design on American culture. No one has gone deep and focused on the history of design. For example, a walk or drive through a suburban development cannot be separated from the political or economic realities of home buying, school district choices, and their subsequent connections to issues of race, class, and gender. The historiography of design theory and suburban development must draw, like this thesis, on various disciplines and ideas. That is why source material came from the poetry of John Updike and Malvina Reynolds, the theories of architecture by Christopher Alexander, the literature of Richard Yates and Sloan Wilson, the philosophy of Jean Baudrillard, the planned communities of architects like Le Corbusier and Frank Lloyd Wright, and industrialists like Harvey Firestone, the media ecology critiques of Marshall McLuhan, and personal walkability studies in various communities in Pennsylvania and around the world. This interdisciplinary approach allows for a breadth of subject matters to be studied through a historical lens. The innovative component of this study comes from my interdisciplinary approach, allowing me to continue historical study in the vein of historians such as Simon Schama, Owen Chadwick, and Lewis Mumford.

This dissertation matters. We are all influenced by place, whether we are conscious of that influence or not. It imprints itself on us, and stamps us, becoming part of our identity. Suburbia influences both those who live in it and those who do not. As

this thesis addresses, we are products of the built environment. By that I mean that buildings have a greater influence on human activity and paradigms than we notice. They can influence what we value, our goals and dreams, questions about beauty and pragmatism, even how much we walk and exercise on a daily or weekly basis. We are only beginning to understand what that means. This work functions as a beginning to further studies of suburbia and its influence on life in America. For example: Elementary schools were to be nestled inside each master block so that, in Levitt's words, "no child will have to walk more than one half mile to school or cross any major road." This did not come true as Levittown school districts grew in size and scope, closing down many of the local ones. Further studies will be able to build on this one in more specific areas of historical study (marketing, theory of design, education), but this interdisciplinary approach functions to help lay the groundwork of historical inquiry into these more specific spheres.

# APPENDIX

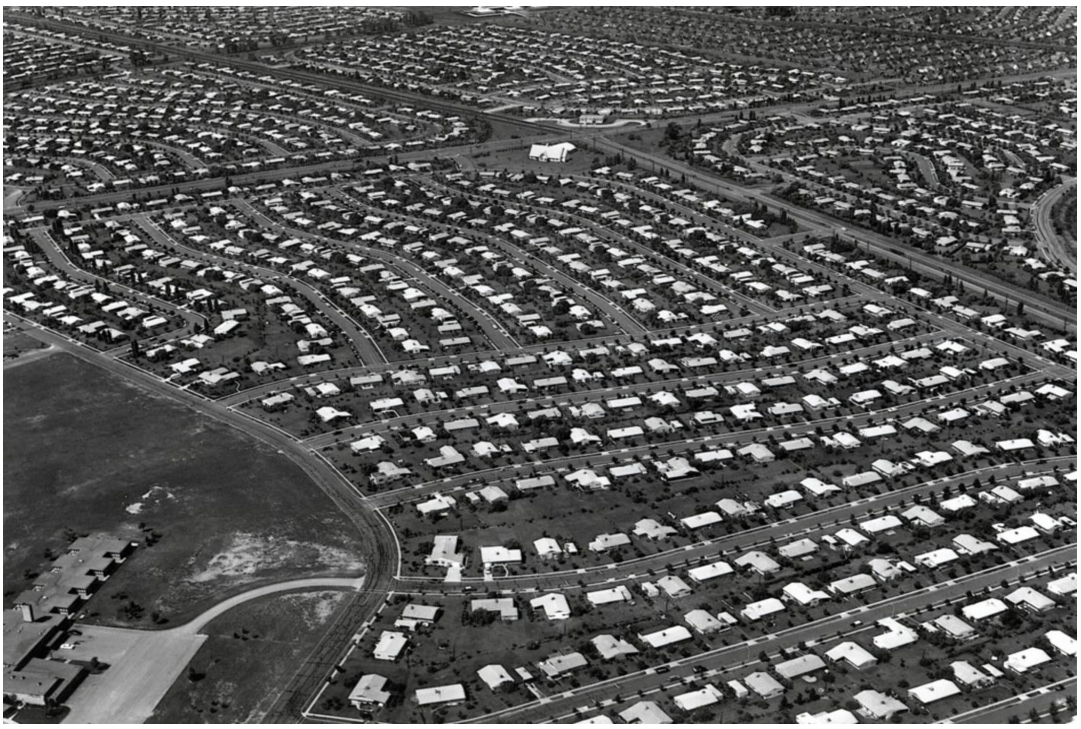

Figure 1. Aerial view of Levittown, PA, showing the layout and uniformity of the neighborhood. Jake Blumgart, "What Will Become of Levittown, Pennsylvania?" *Bloomberg CityLab*, March 1, 2016. Accessed October 12, 2021, https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2016-03-01/what-will-become-of-levittown-pennsylvania


Figure 2. General Electric appliance advertisement. Various modern kitchen appliances, featuring a GI and his sweetheart. A single detached home with modern appliances was becoming part of the American Dream. General Electric advertisement "It's a promise," *Life*, May 10, 1943, p. 19. Accessed October 12, 2021. https://www.researchgate.net/figure/This-early-1940s-ad-focuses-on-what-the-advertiser-General-Electric-thinks-is-really_fig10_236890238

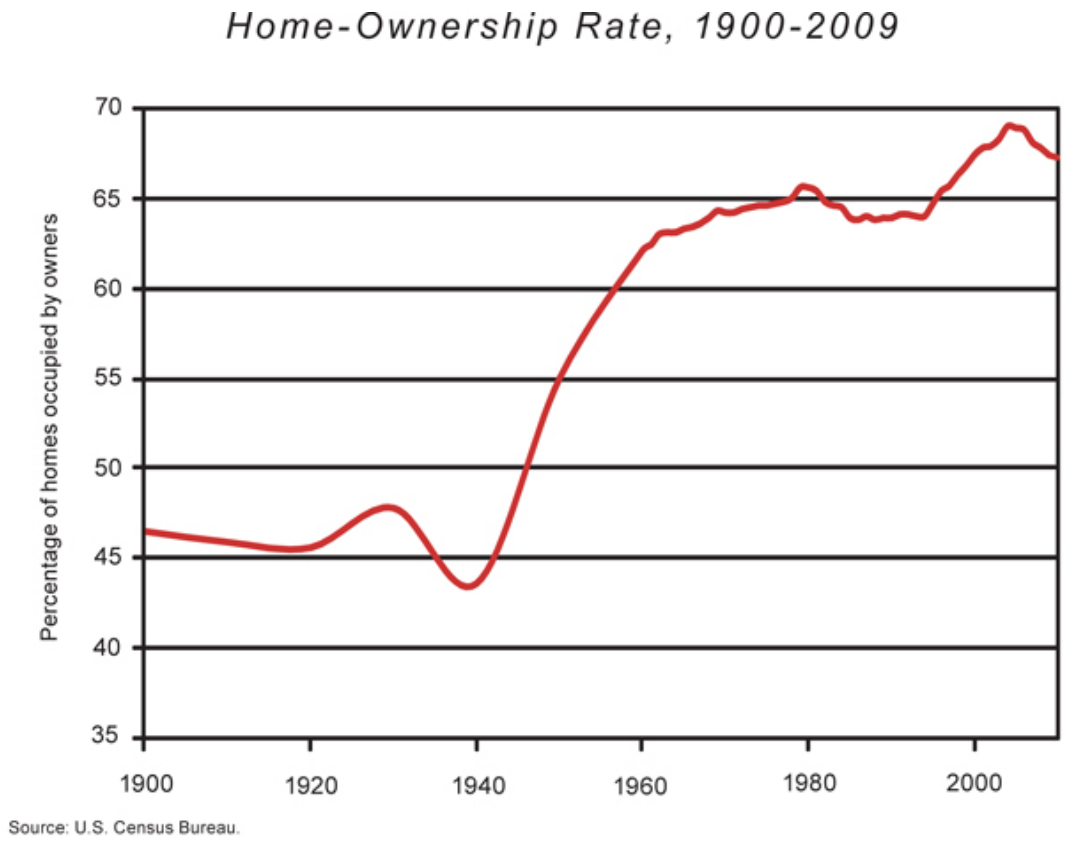


Figure 3. Graph of American Homeownership, showing sharp increase in the postwar years. Vincent Cannato, "A Home of One's Own." *National Affairs*, Spring 2010. Accessed October 10, 2021. https://www.nationalaffairs.com/publications/detail/a-home-of-ones-own

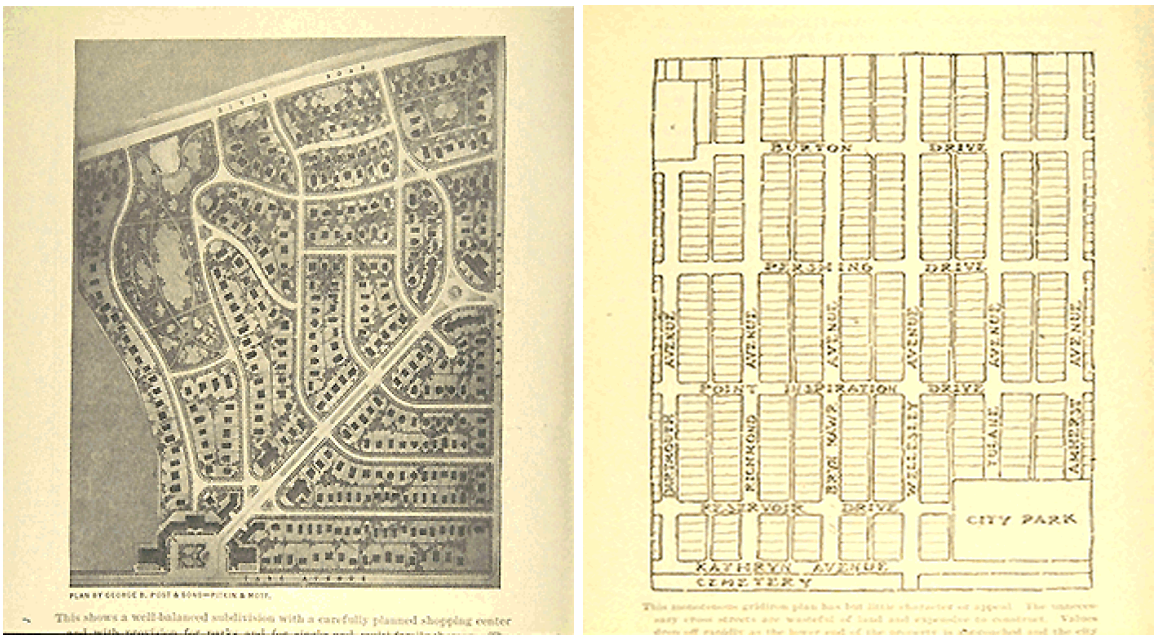


Figure 4. Contrasting Neighborhood Designs, illustrating the stark difference in the neighborhood layout of potential suburban design on the left, and an older planned community on the right. Notice the curvilinear streets and some cul de sacs, versus the grid pattern on the right. "Technical Bulletin No. 5, Planning Neighborhoods for Small Houses," Federal Housing Administration, Washington, D.C., July 1, 1936. Accessed October 10, 2021.
https://babel.hathitrust.org/cgi/pt?id=umn.31951d03595283n&view=1up&seq=3


Figure 5. S.E. Gross advertisement. Chicago developer's 1891 advertisement emphasized the single detached home as a reward for hard work, and escape from urban decay. S.E. Gross & Co. advertisement, "The Working Man's Reward." Accessed October 10, 2021, https://chicagology.com/grossdale/


Figure 6. Victor Gruen's Southdale Mall. The first enclosed shopping center, built in 1954 in Edina, MN. Peg Meier, "The Shopping Center That Spawned a Community." *Minneapolis/Saint Paul Magazine*, August 1981. Minnesota Historical Society Library, Accessed October 10, 2021, https://libguides.mnhs.org/southdale/secondary


Figure 7. Maxwell House Coffee advertisement, depicting suburban living. There are built in assumptions about who lives in the suburbs and gender expectations when it comes to roles. Maxwell House Coffee advertisement, *Life*, April 17, 1950, p. 38. Accessed October 8, 2021. https://www.madmenart.com/vintage-advertisement/maxwell-house-coffee-housewife-1950/

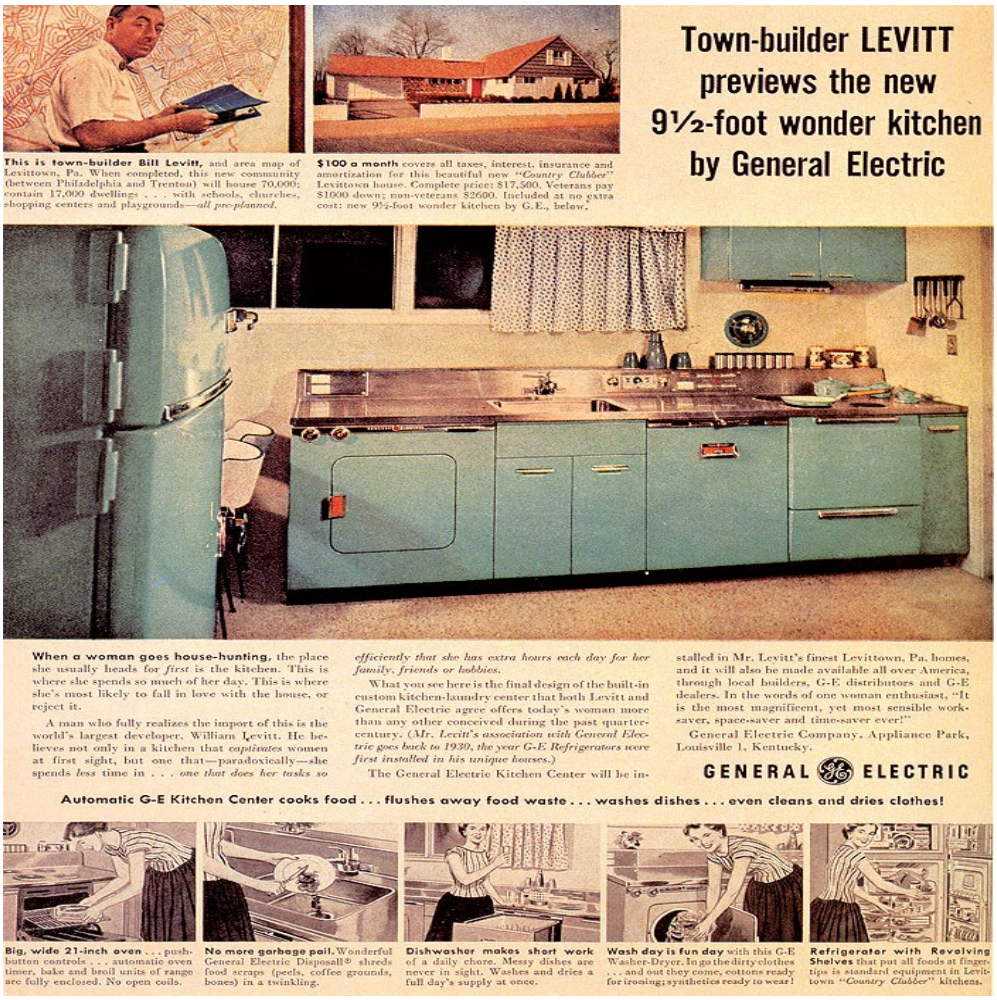


Figure 8. Levitt's wonder kitchen advertisement, courtesy of GE.
General Electric Advertisement from "Levittown, PA: Building the Suburban Dream," The State Museum of Pennsylvania, Accessed August 28, 2021, http://statemuseumpa.org/levittown/three/kitchen.html

# REFERENCES

## Archives

*Better Homes and Gardens*, Hosted by the Hathi Trust Digital Library https://onlinebooks.library.upenn.edu/webbin/serial?id=betterhomesgardens

Bucks County Government Archives

Bucks County Historical Society Visual Image Collection, Hosted at the Mercer Museum Library

*House Beautiful*, Hosted by the Hathi Trust Digital Library https://catalog.hathitrust.org/Record/000640136

*House Beautiful* Archives, Hosted at The Library of Congress

Levittown Community Collection, Hosted at the Mercer Museum Library

Library of the Mercer Museum and Bucks County Historical Society

Library of Congress Prints and Photographs Division

The State Museum of Pennsylvania http://statemuseumpa.org/levittown/one/b.html

Trade Cards and Commercial Ephemera Collection at the Mercer Museum Library

## Primary Sources

"A Day in the Life of a Suburban Carpool Mother." *New York Times*. May 2, 1955.

Advertisement for RCA http://www.tvhistory.tv/1954%20CT-100%20Ad-TEXT.JPG (Accessed on May 4, 2016).

The Antique Home http://www.antiquehome.org/House-Plans/1928-Sears/Winthrop.htm

Bakunin, Mikhail. "1869 Report on the Question of Inheritance" to the Basel Congress of the International Working-Men's Association.

Beals, Melba Pattillo. *Warriors Don't Cry: The Searing Memoir of the Battle to Integrate Little Rock's Central High.* New York: Simon Pulse, 1994.

Beecher, Catherine. "How to Redeem Woman's Profession from Dishonor," *Harper's Weekly*, November, 1865.

Beecher, Catherine and Harriet Beecher Stowe. *The American Woman's Home: Or Principles of Domestic Science; Being a Guide to the Formation And Maintenance of Economical, Healthful, Beautiful and Christian Homes*. New York: J.B. Ford and Company, 1869.

Bellamy, Edward. *Looking Backward 2000-1887.* New York: Oxford University Press, 2009.

Bernays, Edward. *Propaganda*. New York: Liveright, 1928.

Blackwell, Jon. "1951: American dream houses, all in a row." n.d. Retrieved from http://www.capitalcentury.com/1951.html (accessed March 28, 2016)

Bucks County Planning Commission. *The Villages of Bucks County: A Guidebook.* n.p.: Bucks County Planning Commission, 1987.

"Burglars Go Home, "House Beautiful, July 1964.

Commission on the Humanities and Social Sciences, *The Heart of the Matter: The Humanities and Social Sciences,* American Academy of Arts & Sciences, Cambridge, MA, 2013.

Conant, James. *The American High School Today: A First Report to Interested Citizens*. New York: McGraw Hill, 1959.

Dichter, Ernest. *The Strategy of Desire.* New Brunswick: Doubleday and Company, 1960.

Philip K. Dick. *Time Out of Joint*. New York: First Mariner Books, 1959.

Philip K. Dick. *We Can Build You*. New York: First Mariner Books, 1972.

de Toqueville, Alexis. *Democracy in America, Volume II* (1840). https://faculty.frostburg.edu/phil/forum/Tocqueville.htm (Accessed April 23, 2017).

Dimnet, Ernest. *What We Live By*. Spokane: Musson Book Company, 1932.

Downing, Andrew Jackson. *The Architecture of Country Houses; Including Designs for Cottages, Farm Houses, and Villas*. New York: D. Appleton & Co.,1850.

Eisenhower, Dwight. "Statement by the President Upon Signing the National Defense Education Act.," September 2, 1958. Online by Gerhard Peters and John T. Woolley, The American Presidency Project (Accessed March 28, 2016).

*Father Knows Best*, season 2, episode 30, "Betty, Girl Engineer," directed by William D. Russell, aired April 11, 1956.

Federal Housing Administration, "Planning Neighborhoods for Small Houses," 1936.

Flesch, Rudolph. *Why Johnny Can't Read (And What You Can Do About It)*. New York: Harper & Brothers, 1955.

Friedan, Betty. *The Feminine Mystique*. New York: W.W. Norton, 1963.

Galbraith, John Kenneth. *The Affluent Society*. New York: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1958.

Gans, Herbert. *The Levittowners: Ways of Life and Politics in a New Suburban Community*. New York: Columbia University Press, 2017.

General Electric Advertisement http://statemuseumpa.org/levittown/three/kitchen.html (Accessed on September 8, 2017)

Hales, Peter. *Levittown: Documents in an Ideal American Suburb*. Retrieved from http://tigger.uic.edu/~pbhales/Levittown/ (accessed March 28, 2016).

Herbert, Elizabeth Sweeney. "This is How I keep House," *McCall's Magazine*, April 1949.

"Homes for workmen; a presentation of leading examples of industrial community development" https://archive.org/stream/cu31924015465796/cu31924015465796_djvu.txt (Accessed on July 8, 2019)

Howard, Ebenezer. *Garden Cities of To-morrow*. London: Swan Sonnenschein & Co., Ltd., 1902.

*In the Suburbs*, directed by Redbook, On Producer, 1957.

Jefferson, Thomas. Letter from Thomas Jefferson to William Thornton, 1817.

Kandinsky, Wassily. *Concerning the Spiritual in Art.* New York: Dover Publications, Inc., 1977.

*Leave to Beaver*, season 1, episode 38, "Beaver's Guest," directed by Norman Tokar, aired July 2, 1958.

Leight, Richard. *The Schools of Richland Township Bucks County Pennsylvania 1850-1957.* Bedminster, PA: Adams Apple Press, 2004.

Lewis, Pierce. "Axioms of the Landscape: Some Guides to the American Scene" *Journal of Architectural Education,* Vol. 30, No. 1, Teaching the Landscape (Sep., 1976). 6-9.

Abraham Lincoln, Excerpt from "Memory", *The Best Loved Poems of the American People*, edited by Hazel Felleman (New York: Doubleday, 1936), 541.

"Crisis in Education," *Life*, March 24, 1958.

Mann, Horace. "The Education of Free Men" (from the Tenth Annual Report, 1846 and the Twelfth Annual Report, 1848). In *Taking Sides: Clashing Views on Controversial Educational Issues*, edited by James Noll, 68-71. Guilford, CT: Dushkin-McGraw Hill, 1999.

Marable, Simeon-David. *Levittown, Pennsylvania: 1952-2002 A Garden Community*. n.p.: 2002.

Marsh, Margaret and Samuel Kaplan. "The Lure of the Suburbs." in *Suburbia: The American Dilemma*, edited by Philip Dolce, 115. New York: Anchor Press, Doubleday, 1976.

The New Eden Aladdin Floor Plan
http://www.antiquehome.org/House-Plans/1916-Aladdin/New-Eden.htm
(Accessed on January 18, 2019)

Mumford, Lewis. *The Story of Utopias*. New York: Viking Press, 1922.

Mumford, Lewis. *Faith for Living*. New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, Publishers, 1940.

Mumford, Lewis. *The Condition of Man*. New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, Publishers, 1944.

Mumford, Lewis. "A Long-Term View of the War." *Progressive Education*, XIX (November 1942), 358-60.

Mumford, Lewis. "Consolation in War." *New Yorker*, XX (November 25, 1944), 27.

Mumford, Lewis. "American Introduction to Sir Ebenezer Howard's Garden Cities of Tomorrow." *Pencil Points*, XXVI (March 1945), 73-78.

Mumford, Lewis. "Garden Cities and the Metropolis: A Reply." *Journal of Land and Public Utility Economics*, XXII (February 1946), 66-69.

The National Commission on Excellence in Education, *A Nation at Risk: Imperative for Education Reform*. United States Department of Education, April 1983.

Nisbet, Robert. *The Quest for Community: A Study in the Ethics of Order and Freedom*. Wilmington: Intercollegiate Study Institute, 1953.

Ogilvy, David. *Confessions of an Advertising Man.* New York: Atheneum, 1963.

Packard, Vance. *The Status Seekers*. New York: David McKay Co., Inc., 1959.

Packard, Vance. *The Hidden Persuaders*. New York: David McKay Co., Inc., 1957.

Packard, Vance. *The Waste Makers*. New York: David McKay Co., Inc., 1960.

Packard, Vance. *The People Shapers*. Boston: Little, Brown, and Company, 1977.

Goffin, Gerry and Carole King. "Pleasant Valley Sunday." RCA Victor, 1967.

The Port Huron Statement of the Students for a Democratic Society", 1962. In The 1960s: A Documentary Reader, edited by Brian Ward, 92. Wiley-Blackwell, 2010.

Potter, David. *People of Plenty: Economic Abundance and the American Character*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1954.

Procopius, "On the Great Church," *The Buildings*.

Reader's Digest, 1952. https://www.davidhanauer.com/buckscounty/sprawl/index.html (Accessed on March 8, 2019)

Reynolds, Malvina. "Little Boxes" from *Little Boxes and Other Handmade Songs*. New York: Oak Publications, 1962.

S. E. Gross, Real Estate Promoter
Chicagology https://chicagology.com/chicagostreets/segross/ (accessed January 25, 2018).

Shelley, Percy Bysshe. " Ozymandias"
https://www.poetryfoundation.org/poems/46565/ozymandias

"Sputnik II: The Surge of Soviet Science." Newsweek, November 18, 1957.

Steinbeck, John. "Have we gone soft?", The New Republic, February 15, 1960.

Stowe, Harriet Beecher. "The Handy Man." *Saturday Evening Post*, October 30, 1869.

Suburbia cartoon. [Reprinted from Electrical Merchandising, July 1957]
http://statemuseumpa.org/levittown/one/b.html

Louis Sullivan, "The tall office building artistically considered", *Lippincott Monthly Magazine*, March 1896. https://ocw.mit.edu/courses/architecture/4-205-analysis-of-contemporary-architecture-fall-2009/readings/MIT4_205F09_Sullivan.pdf

"The Nation: Red Moon Over the U.S." *Time*, October 14, 1957.

"Defense: Knowledge is Power" *Time*, November 18, 1957.

"Education: What Price Life Adjustment?" *Time*, December 2, 1957.

Updike, John. Poem, "Superman," *New Yorker*, November 12, 1955, p. 56.

Walker, Mary. *The Ladies' Home Journal, 'How America Lives' and the Limits of Cultural Diversity.* Media History, Vol. 6, No. 2, 2000

Ward, Brian, ed. *The 1960's: A Documentary Reader*. New York: Wiley-Blackwell, 2009.

Whyte, William. *The Organization Man*. New York: Simon & Schuster, 1956.

Wilson, Sloan. *The Man in the Gray Flannel Suit*. New York: Four Walls Eight Windows, 1955.

Wood, Robert C. *Suburbia: Its People and Their Politics*. Boston, Houghton Mifflin, 1959.

Yates, Richard. *Revolutionary Road*. New York: Vintage Books USA, 1961.

**Periodicals**

Alioto, Daisy. "Elizabeth Gordon's International Style," *Curbed Magazine,* https://www.curbed.com/2017/5/10/15592658/elizabeth-gordon-house-beautiful-frank-lloyd-wright (Accessed

"America's Suburbs: An Age of Transformation" *The Economist*, May 31, 2008.

Berman, Avis, "Hopper: The Supreme American Realist of the 20th-Century." *Smithsonian Magazine,* July 2007.

Beschloss, Michael. The Ad That Helped Reagan Sell Good Times to an Uncertain Nation, https://www.nytimes.com/2016/05/08/business/the-ad-that-helped-reagan-sell-good-times-to-an-uncertain-nation.html

"Best Places to Live (#41: Levittown, PA)." Money, September 17, 2016.

Binstock, Benjamin. *Interiors and interiority in Vermeer: empiricism, subjectivity, modernism* July 2017. https://www.nature.com/articles/palcomms201768

Blumgart, Jake. "What Will Become of Levittown, Pennsylvania? The archetypal postwar suburb has less socioeconomic diversity—and hardly more racial diversity—than it did in the 1950s." *Bloomberg.com*, March 1, 2016.

Brown, Ed and Eileen Gunn. "The Sultans of Sprawl: They Hit the Big Time by Helping to Pave the Planet." *Fortune*, June 21, 1999.

Burnett, Bob. "Trump Wants To Bring Back The Fifties," Huffington Post, July 28, 2017.

Campbell, Kim and Kent Davis-Packard. "How Ads Get Kids to Say I Want It." *Christian Science Monitor*, September 18, 2000.

Cannato, Vincent. "A Home of One's Own." *National Affairs*, Spring 2010.

Cook, Dan. "Lunchbox Hegemony? Kids & the Marketplace, Then & Now." *LiP magazine*, August 20, 2001.

Elmasry, Faiza. "Humanities Fight to Survive in High-Tech World: Liberal Arts Colleges Face Declining Enrollment." *Voice of America*, January 9, 2012.

Ferrara, Peter. "What is an American?: A Primer." *National Review*, 25 September 2001.

Fifteen American Families, *New York Times*, March 1941. https://timesmachine.nytimes.com/timesmachine/1941/03/30/85471438.pdf (Accessed on January 21, 2019)

Forsyth, Ann. "Defining Suburbs.*"Journal of Planning Literature*, 27, no. 3: 270–28, 2012.

Gardner, Jr. Ralph. "Social Planner," *New York*, May 13, 2002.

Galyean, Crystal. "Levittown: The Imperfect Rise of the American Suburbs." US History Scene, https://ushistoryscene.com/article/levittown/ (Accessed on April 5, 2020)

Graham, Billy. "The National Purpose: Moral and Spiritual Cancer Found in Stress on Personal Comfort." In *The 1960s: A Documentary Reader*, edited by Brian Ward, 148-149. New York: Wiley-Blackwell, 2010.

Ghosh, Palash. **"**Bucks County, Pennsylvania: A Microcosm of America's Post-War Suburban Sprawl." *International Business Times*, September 4, 2013.

Halberstam, David. "How William Levitt Helped to Fulfill the American Dream." *New York Times*, February 6, 1994.

"How Money Finds the Best Places to Live in America." Money, September 19, 2016.

Jones, Jonathan. "Make America decay again – Thomas Cole and Ed Ruscha Review" *The Guardian*. June 8, 2018.

Kimmelman, Michael. "Restore A Gateway to Dignity," *New York Times*, February 8, 2012.

Kimmelman, Michael. "Penn Station Reborn," *New York Times*, September 30, 2016.

Lacayo, Richard. "Suburban Legend William Levitt: His Answer to a Postwar Housing Crisis Created a New Kind of Home Life and Culture: Suburbia," *Time*, December 7, 1998. http://content.time.com/time/magazine/article/0,9171,989781-2,00.html

Ladies' Home Journal, February 1940.

Leonard, Devin. "The Most Awful Transit Center in America Could Get Unimaginably Worse," *Bloomberg Businessweek*, January 10, 2018.

Lung-Amam, William . "Why is Trump obsessed with suburbia?" Brookings.edu, October 5, 2020. https://www.brookings.edu/blog/how-we-rise/2020/10/05/why-is-trump-obsessed-with-suburbia/ (Accessed on May 20, 2020).

Marsh, Margaret. "Suburban Men and Masculine Domesticity," *American Quarterly*, June 1988.

Mitchener, Brandon. "Sweden Pushes Its Ban on Children's Ads: Broad Campaign is Waged in EU on TV Commercials." *Wall Street Journal*, May 29, 2001.

National Association of Home Builders (2007) Housing Facts, Figures and Trends and Single-Family Square Footage By Location, U.S. Census Bureau, 2005. http://css.snre.umich.edu/css_doc/CSS01-08.pdf (Accessed March 17, 2016).

Novak,Matt. "Predictions for Educational TV in the 1930s: Before it became known as the "idiot box," television was seen as the best hope for bringing enlightenment to the American people " Smithsonian.com, May 29, 2012. http://www.smithsonianmag.com/history/predictions-for-educational-tv-in-the-1930s-107574983/#ZeqdB4L4WgyACTC7.99 (Accessed May 2, 2016).

Muzzio, Douglas and Thomas Halper. 2002. "Pleasantville? The Suburb and Its Representation in American Movies." *Urban Affairs Review*, Vol. 37, No. 4, 543-574.

Pfeiffer, Bruce. *Frank Lloyd Wright.* New York: Taschen, 2003.

"A Planet of Suburbs: Places Apart," *The Economist*, December 6, 2014.

Postman, Neil and Camille Paglia. "Two Cultures-Television Versus Print" in *Communication in History: Technology, Culture, Society,* 6th ed., ed. David Crowley and Paul Heyer. New York: Allyn & Bacon, 2011.

Richter, Hannes . "Victor Gruen, Architect of an American Icon." https://www.austria.org/victor-gruen

Schnur, Jon . "Can We Teach Kids to Be Good Citizens?" *Time*, December 6, 2011.

Sheffield, Rob, "American Idiot, Green Day," Rolling Stone, September 4, 2000.
Smith, Noah. "Trump Still Dreams of a 1950s-Era Economy," Bloomberg Report, January 30, 2018.

Steeves, Kathleen, Philip Bernhardt, James Burns, and Michele Lombard . "Transforming American Education Identity After Sputnik." *American Educational History Journal*, Vol. 36, No. 1, 2009.

Swinton, John and Esther McIntosh. "Persons in Relation: The Care of Persons with Learning Disabilities," Theology Today, July 1, 2000. vol 57, issue 2, p. 175-84.https://doi.org/10.1177%2F004057360005700203 (Accessed August 4, 2021).

Suddath, Claire. "Brief History: The Prom." *Time*, May 17, 2010.

VandeHei, Jim . "Donald Trump, a 1950s man," Axios, February 26, 2018.

What's Up With That: Building Bigger Roads Actually Makes Traffic Worse, Wired https://www.wired.com/2014/06/wuwt-traffic-induced-demand/ (Accessed on July 16, 2021).

Whelan, Robert. "Fifty Years on, CP Snow's Two Cultures are United in Desperation." *The Telegraph*, May 5, 2009.

Witchel, Alex . "Mad Men Has Its Moment." *New York Times*, June 22, 2008.

**Websites**

Bybee, Roger. "The Sputnik Era: Why is This Educational Reform Different From All Other Reforms?" http://www.nas.edu/sputnik/bybee2.htm (Accessed March 28, 2016).

Calvert, Sandra. "Children as Consumers: Advertising and Marketing." www.futureofchildren.org. (Accessed October 26, 2016).

Canadian Museum of History
https://www.historymuseum.ca/cmc/exhibitions/civil/greece/gr1130e.shtml (Accessed on December 30, 2018).

Bobbie Carlyle, Self-Made Man, 1993, UNC Charlotte, Charlotte, NC, Student Affairs UNCC, bronze sculpture, https://studentaffairs.uncc.edu/traditions/did-you-know (Accessed August 10, 2021).

Cragoe, Carol Davidson. The Reformation: The People's View. BBC Home. http://www.bbc.co.uk/history/trail/church_state/modern/reformation_people_view01.shtml (Accessed on August 16, 2021).

Desire paths: the unofficial footpaths that frustrate, captivate campus planners https://news.wisc.edu/desire-paths-the-unofficial-footpaths-that-frustrate-captivate-campus-planners/ (Accessed on July 15, 2021).

Photo by William Fischer, Jr., October 15, 2009. https://www.hmdb.org/marker.asp?marker=30975 (Accessed on January 20, 2019).

The Historical Marker Database: https://www.hmdb.org/marker.asp?marker=30975 (Accessed on January 20, 2019).

HOUSE OF COMMONS REBUILDING HC Deb 28 October 1943 vol 393 cc403-73 https://api.parliament.uk/historic-hansard/commons/1943/oct/28/house-of-commons-rebuilding (Accessed on February 8, 2021)

Kimmel, Chad. Community in History: Levittown and the Decline of a Postwar American Dream, ASA Footnotes – http://www.asanet.org/sites/default/files/savvy/footnotes/nov03/fn8.html (Accessed on January 20, 2019).

Kurt Vonnegut, review for Revolutionary Road on Amazon.com http://www.amazon.com/Revolutionary-Movie-Edition-Vintage Contemporaries/dp/0307454789/ref=sr_1_1?s=books&ie=UTF8&qid=1335892879&sr=1-1 (Accessed on April 5,2016).

Living Heritage: Architecture of the Palace, Bomb Damage. https://www.parliament.uk/about/living-heritage/building/palace/architecture/palacestructure/bomb-damage/ (Accessed on February 8, 2019).

Moody, Ellen. "Frank Lloyd Wright's "Living City" Lives On: Conserving the Broadacre City Model" MOMA https://www.moma.org/explore/inside_out/2014/02/03/frank-lloyd-wrights-living-city-lives-on-conserving-the-broadacre-city-model/ (Accessed November 2, 2020).

Morris, Jane. Amazon.co.uk, editorial book review for Revolutionary Road on Amazon.com, http://www.amazon.com/Revolutionary-Movie-Edition-Vintage-Contemporaries/dp/0307454789/ref=sr_1_1?s=books&ie=UTF8&qid=1335892879&sr=1-1 (Accessed on August 9, 2021).

National Gallery of Art, https://www.nga.gov/collection/art-object-page.61252.html (Accessed on February 22, 2019).

Norman Rockwell, Four Freedoms, 1943, poster, Cummer Museum http://blog.cummermuseum.org/page/88/ (Accessed on February 15, 2019).

Obama, Barak. State of the Union Address. January 20, 2011. http://www.whitehouse.gov/state-of-the-union-2011. (Accessed March 28, 2016).

Pocket Neighborhoods: Creating Small Scale Community in a Large Scale World, last updated August 14, 2021. https://www.pocket-neighborhoods.net/ (Accessed February 2, 2015).

Solzhenitsyn, Alexander. *Nobel Lecture 1970.* *https://www.nobelprize.org/nobel_prizes/literature/laureates/1970/solzhenitsyn-lecture.html* (Accessed on February 15, 2019).

Williams, G. Mennen. Quoted by Roger Launius in *Sputnik and the Origins of the Space Age*, http://history.nasa.gov/sputnik/sputorig.html (Accessed March 28, 2016).

Zak, Anatoly. *Technology: Simplest Satellite*, http://www.russianspaceweb.com/sputnik.html (Accessed March 28, 2016).

United States Census Bureau, "About Geographic Areas: Urban and Rural," https://www.census.gov/programs-surveys/geography/guidance/geo-areas/urban-rural.html (Accessed April 14, 2017).

**Media Sources**

Classic Commercial Jingles: http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mLRhsxJ8_GE (Accessed on August 1, 2018)

*The Century of Self*, directed by Adam Curtis, BBC Four, 2002.

*David Halberstam's The Fifties*, directed by Alex Gibney, A&E Home Video, 1997.

Green Day, "American Idiot," released September 21, 2004, track # 1, Reprise Records, 2004, compact disc.

Eisenhower, Dwight. Radio and Television Address to the American People on "Our Future Security." November 13, 1957. http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/index.php?pid=10950#axzz1uF1DOVfI (Accessed March 28, 2016).

*The End of Suburbia: Oil Depletion and the Collapse of the American Dream*, directed by Gregory Greene, The Electric Wallpaper Company, 2004.

"Fear Drives to Suburbs," New York Times, June 8, 1982. https://www.nytimes.com/1982/06/08/nyregion/fear-drives-to-suburbs.html (Accessed on April 15, 2019)

Porritt, Jonathon. *Big Ideas that Changed the World* (TV series, documentary), 2005.

President Richard Nixon, The Kitchen Debate. C-SPAN (Accessed April 18, 2017).

*Revolutionary Road*, directed by Sam Mendes, Dreamworks, 2008.

*Sprawling from Grace: The Consequences of Suburbanization,* directed by David Edwards, Cinema Libre, 2010.

*The Sputnik Moment*, directed by David Hoffman, Varied Directions, 2008.

*Sputnik Mania*, directed by David Hoffman, A&E Home Entertainment, 2008.

*Weeds*, directed by Jenji Kohan, Lionsgate Television, 2005-2012.

*West Side Story*, directed by Leonard Bernstein, 1957.

**Secondary Sources**

Anderson, Terry. *The Sixties*. 3rd ed. New York: Pearson Longman, 2007.

Alexander, Christopher. *The Production of Houses,* New York: Oxford University Press, 1985.

Alexander, Christopher. *A Pattern Language: Towns, Buildings, Construction*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1977.

Alexander, Christopher. *The Timeless Way of Building*. Berkeley: Center for Environmental Structure, 1979.

Alexander, Christopher. *The Oregon Experiment*. Berkeley: Center for Environmental Structure, 1975.

Alexander, Christopher. *A New Theory of Urban Design*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1985.

Alexander, Christopher. *The Battle for the Life and Beauty of the Earth: A Struggle Between Two World-Systems*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2012.

Bakan, Joel. *Childhood Under Siege: How Big Business Targets Children*. New York: Free Press, 2011.

Baker, Ronald. *Mind Over Matter: Why Intellectual Capital is the Chief Source of Wealth.* Hoboken, NJ: John Wiley & Sons, 2008.

*Consuming Kids: The Commercialization of Childhood*, directed by Adriano Barbaro and Jeremy Earp, Media Education Foundation, 2008.

Barber, Benjamin. *Consumed: How Markets Corrupt Children, Infantilize Adults, and Swallow Citizens Whole*. New York: W.W. Norton & Co., Inc., 2007.

Baxandall, Rosalyn, and Elizabeth Ewen. *Picture Windows: How the Suburbs Happened*. New York: Basic Books Inc., 2000.

Berger, Alan, Joel Kotkin, and Celina Balderas Guzman, ed. *Infinite Suburbia.* Princeton: Princeton Architectural Press, 2017.

Berger, Arthur. *Ads, Fads, and Consumer Culture: Advertising's Impact on American Character and Society*. New York: Rowman &Littlefield Publishers, Inc., 2000.

Berger, Arthur. *Media and Society: A Critical Perspective*. New York: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc., 2006.

Berger, Bennett. *Working-Class Suburb: A Study of Auto Workers in Suburbia* . Berkeley: University of California Press, 2021.

Berry, Wendell. *The Unsettling of America: Culture and Agriculture*. San Francisco: Sierra Club Books, 1977.

Berry, Wendell. *What are People For?: Essays*. Berkeley, CA: Counterpoint, 2010.

Berry, Wendell. *The Way of Ignorance and Other Essays*. New York: Avalon Publishing Group, 2005.

Bess, Philip. "Metaphysical Realism, Modernity, and Traditional Cultures of Building." In *Why Place Matters: Geography, Identity, and Civic Life in Modern America,* edited by Wilfred McClay and Ted McAllister, 130-48. New York: New Atlantis Books, 2018.

Bestor, Arthur. *Educational Wastelands*. Urbana, IL: University of Illinois Press, 1954.

Biagi, Shirley, ed. *Media Impact: An Introduction to Mass Media,* 3rd ed. Belmont, CA: Wadsworth, 1998.

Blauvelt, Andrew, ed. *Worlds Away: New Suburban Landscapes*. Minneapolis: Walker Art Center, 2008.

Boddy, William. *Fifties Television: The Industry and Its Critics.* Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1990.

Bombeck, Erma. *The Grass is Always Greener Over the Septic Tank*. New York: McGraw Hill, 1976.

Boorstin, Daniel. *The Image: A Guide to Pseudo-events in America*. New York: Vintage Books, 1992.

Borrero, Mauricio. *Russia: A Reference Guide From the Renaissance to the Present*. New York: Facts on File, Inc., 2004.

Braithwaite, Max. "Advertising with the Mass Media." in *Coping with the Mass Media*, ed. Joseph Littell. Evanston, IL: McDougall Littell & Company, 1976.

Brown, Clarence, ed. *The Portable Twentieth-Century Russian Reader*. New York: Penguin Books, 1993.

Bruegmann, Robert. *Sprawl: A Compact History*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2006.

Bruner, Jerome. *The Process of Education*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1996.

Bryson, Bill. *At Home: A Short History of Private Life.* New York: Anchor, 2010.

Brzezinski, Matthew. *Red Moon Rising: Sputnik and the Hidden Rivalries that Ignited the Space Age.* New York: Times Books, Henry Holt & Co., 2007.

Burns, Eric. *Invasion of the Mindsnatchers: Television's Conquest of America in the Fifties.* Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2010.

Caplow, Theodore, Louis Hicks and Ben Wattenburg. *The First Measured Century: An Illustrated Guide to Trends in America, 1900-2000*. La Vergne, TN: American Enterprise Institute Press, 2000.

Cassin, Barbara. *Nostalgia: When Are We Ever At Home?* New York: Fordham University Press, 2016.

Castleman, Harry, and Walter M. Podrazik. *Watching TV: Four Decades of American Television.* New York: McGraw Hill Book Company, 1982.

Chartock, Roselle K., ed. *Educational Foundations: An Anthology*. 2nd ed. Upper Saddle River, NJ: Pearson Education, Inc., 2004.

Christiansen, Erik. *Channeling the Past: Politicizing History in Postwar America*. Madison, WI: University of Wisconsin Press, 2013.

Cobb, Clyde, ed. *Travel Through Feasterville, Trevose- Siles, Neshaminy Falls Park, Lower Southampton Township.* Feasterville, PA: Historical Society of Southampton Township, 2001.

Cohen, Lizabeth. *A Consumer's Republic: The Politics of Mass Consumption in Postwar America*. New York: Vintage Books, 2003.

Conn, Steven. *Americans Against the City: Anti-Urbanism in the Twentieth Century*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2014.

Corey, Stephen and Lisa Boehm, ed. *The American Urban Reader: History and Theory*. New York: Routledge, 2011.

Cowpers, William. Excerpt *from Book I, the Sofa* from *The Task: A Poem in Six Books,* 1785.

Coyle, Kathryn and Susan Koelble, ed. *Southampton, 1685-1985: a Tricentennial History.* n.p.: Jostens, 1985.

Creagh, Lucy, Helena Kåberg and Barbara Miller Lane, eds. *Modern Swedish Design: Three Founding Texts*. New York: Museum of Modern Art, 2008.

Crowley, David, and Paul Heyer, ed. *Communication in History: Technology, Culture, Society,* 6th ed. New York: Allyn & Bacon, 2011.

Cullen, Jim. *The American Dream: A Short History of an Idea That Shaped a Nation*. New York, Oxford University Press, 2003.

de Blij, Harm. T*he Power of Place: Geography, Destiny, and Globalization's Rough Landscape* . New York: Oxford University Press, 2010.

de Botton, Alain. *Status Anxiety.* New York: Pantheon Books, 2004.

de Graaf, John, David Wann, Thomas Naylor, and David Horsey. *Affluenza: The All-Consuming Epidemic.* San Francisco: Berrett- Koehler Publishers, 2005.

DeGroot, Gerard. *The Sixties Unplugged: A Kaleidoscopic History of a Disorderly Decade.* Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2010.

Delblanco, Andrew. *College: What it Was, Is, and Should Be*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2012.

Diamond, Jared. *Guns, Germs, and Steel: The Fates of Human Societies*. New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1999.

DiAngelo, Robin. *White Fragility:Why It's So Hard for White People to Talk About Racism.* Boston: Beacon Press, 2018.

Djilas, Milovan. *Conversations with Stalin.* Translated by Michael Petrovich. New York: Harcourt, Brace & World, Inc., 1962.

Dodman, Thomas. *What Nostalgia Was: War, Empire, and the Time of Deadly Emotion*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2018.

Doorly, Moyra. No Place for God: *The Denial of the Transcendent in Modern Church Architecture*. San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2007.

Dostoevsky, Feodor. *The Idiot.* New York: Bantam Classics, 1983.

Douglas, Susan. *Listening In: Radio and the American Imagination.* New York: Times Books, 1999.

Douglas, Susan. *Where the Girls Are: Growing Up Female with the Mass Media*. New York: Three Rivers Press, 1995.

Duany, Andres, Elizabeth Playter-Zyberk, and Jeff Speck. *Suburban Nation: The Rise of Sprawl and the Decline of the American Dream*. New York: North Point Press, 2000.

Dwyer, Michael. *Back to the Fifties: Nostalgia, Hollywood Film, and Popular Music of the Seventies and Eighties*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015.

Ehrenhalt, Alan. *The Great Inversion: And the Future of the American City.* New York: Knopf Books, 2012.

Eisenberg, Lee. *Shoptimism: Why the American Consumer Will Keep on Buying no Matter What*. New York: Free Press, 2009.

Espejo, Roman. *Consumerism: Opposing Viewpoints* . Farmington Hill, MI: Greenhaven Press, 2010.

Ewen, Stuart. *Captains of Consciousness: Advertising and the Social Roots of the Consumer Culture*. New York: Basic Books, 2001.

Fishman, Robert. *Bourgeois Utopias: The Rise and Fall of Suburbia.* New York: Basic Books, Inc., 1987.

Fiske, Susan. *Envy Up, Scorn Down: How Status Divides Us*. New York: Russell Sage Foundation, 2011.

Foer, Franklin. *How Soccer Explains the World: An Unlikely Theory of Globalization*. NY: HarperCollins, 2004.

Fogelson, Robert. *Downtown: Its Rise and Fall, 1880-1950*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2001.

Foucault, Michel. *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*. New York: Random House, 1977.

Frantz, Douglas and Catherine Collins. *Celebration U.S.A: Living in Disney's Brave New World*. New York: Henry Holt Publishing, 1999.

Frase, Larry and William Streshly. *Top 10 Myths in Education: Fantasies Americans Love to Believe.* Lanham, MD: Scarecrow Press, Inc., 2000.

Fromm, Erich. *To Have or To Be? World Perspectives*. New York: Harper and Row, 1976.

Gardner, Walt. "The 'Crisis' of U.S. Education." *New York Times*, January 14, 2008.

Garreau, Joel. *Edge City: Life on the New Frontier.* New York: Doubleday Dell Publishing Group, Inc., 1991.

Gatto, John Taylor. *Weapons of Mass Instruction: A Schoolteacher's Journey Through the Dark World of Compulsory Schooling*. Gabriola Island, BC, Canada: New Society Publishers, 2010.

Gesser, Keith and Stephen Squibb, eds. *City by City: Dispatches from the American Metropolis*. New York: Furthermore, 2015.

Gladwell, Malcolm. *Outliers: The Story of Success*. New York: Back Bay Books, 2011.

Gleick, James. *The Information: A History, A Theory, A Flood*. New York: Vintage Books, 2011.

Goldstein, Dana. *The Teacher Wars: A History of America's Most Embattled Profession*. New York: Doubleday, 2014.

Goodrum, Charles, and Helen Dalrymple. *Advertising in America: The First 200 Years.* New York: Harry N. Abrams, Inc., 1990.

Gorringe, T.J. *The Common Good and the Global Emergency: God and the Built Environment*. New York: Cambridge University Press, 2011.

Gorringe, T.J. *A Theology of the Built Environment: Justice, Empowerment, Redemption.* New York: Cambridge University Press, 2002.

Grabow, Stephen. *Christopher Alexander: The Search for a New Paradigm in Architecture*. New York: Routledge Kegan & Paul, 1983.

Green, Hardy. *The Company Town: The Industrial Edens and Satanic Mills That Shaped the American Economy*. New York: Basic Books, 2010.

Green, Kristen. *Something Must be Done About Prince Edward County: A Family, a Virginia Town, a Civil Rights Battle*. New York: HarperCollins, 2015.

Greer, Scott. *The Emerging City: Myth and Reality*. New Brunswick: Transaction Publishers, 1999.

Gregory, John Milton. *The Seven Laws of Teaching*. 1886. Reprint, Lancaster, PA: Veritas Press, 2004.

Hacker, Andrew, and Claudia Dreifus. *Higher Education?: How Colleges Are Wasting Our Money and Failing Our Kids- And What We Can Do About It.* New York: Henry Holt and Company, LLC, 2010.

Hajdu, David. *The Ten Cent Plague: The Great Comic Book Scare and How it Changed America*. New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2008.

Halberstam, David. *The Fifties*. New York: The Amateurs Limited, 1993.

Hardesty, Von and Gene Eisman. *Epic Rivalry: The Inside Story of the Soviet and American Space Race*. Washington, D.C.: National Geographic, 2007.

Harris, Diane, ed. *Second Suburb: Levittown, Pennsylvania*. Pittsburgh, PA: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2010.

Hartman, Andrew. *Education and the Cold War: The Battle for the American School.* New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008.

Haskins, Jim. *Separate But Not Equal: The Dream and the Struggle*. New York: Scholastic Press, 1998.

Hayden, Dolores. *Building Suburbia: Green Fields and Urban Growth, 1820-2000*. New York: Vintage Books USA, 2004.

Heath, Joseph and Andrew Potter. *Nation of Rebels: Why Counterculture Became Consumer Culture*. New York: Harper Collins, 2004.

Henriksen, Margot A. *Dr. Strangelove's America: Society and Culture in the Atomic Age.* Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997.

Hine, Thomas. *The Rise & Fall of the American Teenager*. New York: Avon Books, 1999.

Hine, Thomas. *Populuxe: The Look and Life in the '50s and '60s, from Tailfins and TV Dinners to Barbie Dolls and Fallout Shelters*. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, Inc., 1986.

Hinton, Kaavonia. *Desegregating America's Schools*. Hokessin, DE: Mitchell Lane, 2010.

Holt, John. *How Children Learn*. New York: Dell Publishing Co. Inc., 1967.

Holt, John. *Instead of Education: Ways to Help People Do Things Better.* Boulder, CO: Sentient Publications, 2004.

Homer. Excerpt from "The Odyssey, Book V." *The Norton Anthology of World Literature*, edited by Martin Puchner, Shorter 4th ed., vol. 1, New York: W.W.Norton, 2019.

Horowitz, Daniel. *Anxieties of Affluence: Critiques of American Consumer Culture, 1939-1979.* Boston: University of Massachusetts Press, 2004.

Huxtable, Ada Louise. On Architecture: Collected Reflections on a Century of Change. New York: Walker & Co., 2008.

Jackson, Kenneth. *Crabgrass Frontier: The Suburbanization of the United States*. New York: Oxford University Press USA, 1985.

Jacobs, Allan B. *Great Streets*. The MIT Press, 1993.

Jacobs, Allan B., Elizabeth MacDonald, and Yodan, Rofe. *The Boulevard Book: History, Evolution, Design of Multiway Boulevards*. Cambridge: The MIT Press, 2003.

Jacobs, James. *Detached America: Building Houses in Postwar America.* Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2015.

Jacobs, Jane. *The Death and Life of Great American Cities*. New York: Modern Library, 1993.

Jacobson, Max, Murray Silverstein. *Patterns of Home: The Ten Essentials of Enduring Design*. Newtown, CT: Taunton Press, 2002.

Jurca, Catherine. *White Diaspora: The Suburb and the Twentieth-Century American Novel*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2001.

Keegan, John. *The Second World War*. New York: Penguin Publishing, 1989.

Kelly, Barbara M. *Expanding the American Dream: Building and Rebuilding Levittown.* Albany: State University of New York Press, 1993.

Kenyon, Amy Maria. *Dreaming Suburbia: Detroit and the Production of Postwar Space and Culture*. Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 2004.

Kirp, David L. *Shakespeare, Einstein, and the Bottom Line: The Marketing of Higher Education*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2003.

Kotkin, Joel. *The City: A Global History*. New York: Random House, 2005.

Kozol, Jonathan. S*avage Inequalities: Children in America's Schools.* New York: Harper Perennial, 1991.

Kunstler, James. *The Geography of Nowhere: The Rise and Decline of America's Man-made Landscape.* New York: Free Press, 1994.

Kushner, David. *Levittown: Two Families, One Tycoon, and the Fight for Civil Rights in America's Legendary Suburb*. New York: Walker & Company, 2009.

Larson, Charles, ed. *Persuasion and Responsibility,* 9th ed. Belmont, CA: Wadsworth, 2001.

Launius, Roger. *Sputnik and the Origins of the Space Age*, http://history.nasa.gov/sputnik/sputorig.html (Accessed March 28, 2016).

Leach, William. *Land of Desire, Merchants, Power, and the Rise of a New American Culture*. New York: Vintage Books, 1994.

Lears, T, J. Jackson. *Fables of Abundance: A Cultural History of Advertising in America*. New York: Basic Books, 1995.

Lemann, Nicholas. *The Big Test: The Secret History of the American Meritocracy*. New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1999.

Linn, Susan. *Consuming Kids: The Hostile Takeover of Childhood*. New York: The New Press, 2004.

Littell, Joseph, ed. *Coping With the Mass Media*. Evanston, IL: McDougall Littell & Company, 1976.

Leonard, Annie. *The Story of Stuff: How Our Obsession with Stuff is Trashing the Planet, Our Communities, and Our Health - and a Vision for Change.* New York: Free Press, 2010.

Locke, John and Peter Laslett. Two Treatises on Government. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988.

Loeper, John. *Going to School in 1876*. New York: Atheneum, 1984.

Looker, Benjamin. *A Nation of Neighborhoods: Imagining Cities, Communities, and Democracy in Postwar America*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2015.

Loudon, John Claudius. *The Suburban Gardener, and Villa Companion*. Cambridge University Press, 2014.

Lovenheim, Peter. *In the Neighborhood: The Search for Community on an American Street, One Sleepover at a Time*. New York: Perigee Books, 2010.

Lucas, Christopher. *American Higher Education: A History*. New York: St. Martin's Griffin, 1994.

Lynch, Anne Borders, ed. *Two Years in Russia: 1925-1927: A Joint Venture in a Soviet Village.* Raleigh, NC: Pentland Press, Inc., 1999.

Mackin, Anne. *Americans and Their Land: The House Built on Abundance*. Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan Press, 2006.

Madrick, Jeff. *Age of Greed: The Triumph of Finance and the Decline of America, 1970 to the Present.* New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2011.

Malia, Martin. *The Soviet Tragedy: A History of Socialism in Russia, 1917-1991.* New York: The Free Press, 1994.

Malpas, Jeffrey. *Place and Experience: A Philosophical Topography.* New York: Cambridge University Press, 1999.

Marks, Stephen. *How Russia Shaped the Modern World: From Art to Anti-Semitism, Ballet to Bolshevism*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2003.

Marsden, George. *The Soul of the American University: From Protestant Establishment to Established Nonbelief*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1994.

Martinson, Tom. *American Dreamscape: The Pursuit of Happiness in Postwar Suburbia*. New York: Carroll and Graf Publishers, 2000.

Marx, Karl and Friedrich Engels. *The Communist Manifesto*. Tampa: Millennium Publications, 2017.

Mastrich, James. *Lambertville and New Hope*. Dover, NH: Arcadia Publishing, 1996.

May, Elaine Tyler. *Fortress America: How We Embraced Fear and Abandoned Democracy.* New York: Hachette Book Group, 2017.

McClay, Wilfred and Ted McAllister, ed. *Why Place Matters: Geography, Identity and Civic Life in Modern America.* New York: Encounter Books, 2014.

McEwen, William. *Married to the Brand: Why Consumers Bond with Some Brands for Life.* New York: Gallup Press, 2005.

McLuhan, Marshall. *Understanding Media: The Extensions of Man.* Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 1994.

Menand, Louis. *The Marketplace of Ideas: Reform and Resistance in the American University*. New York: W.W. Norton & Company, Inc., 2010.

Miller, Debra, ed. *Current Controversies: Urban Sprawl*. New York: Greenhaven Press, 2008.

Miller, Douglas T., and Marion Nowak. *The Fifties: The Way We Really Were.* New York: Doubleday & Company, Inc., 1977.

Miller, Mark Crispin. *Boxed In: The Culture of TV*. Evanston, Illinois: Northwestern University Press, 1988.

Millhauser, Steven. *Dangerous Laughter: Thirteen Stories*. New York: Vintage Books, 2009.

Mills, C. Wright. *The Sociological Imagination*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1959.

Mills, C. Wright. *White Collar. The American Middle Classes.* New York: Oxford University Press, 1951.

Milosz, Czeslaw. "One More Day," *New and Collected Poems, 1931-2001.* New York: Ecco, 2003.

Minow, Newton, and Craig Lamay. *Abandoned in the Wasteland: Children Television and the First Amendment.* New York: Hill and Wang, 1995.

Mintz, Steven. *Huck's Raft: A History of American Childhood.* Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press, 2004.

Mitchell, Stacy. *Big-Box Swindle: The True Cost of Mega-retailers and the Fight for America's Independent Businesses*. Boston: Beacon Press, 2007.

Mitchener, Harold and Carol Mitchener. *Bristol.* Charleston, SC: Arcadia Publishing, 2000.

Mondale, Sarah, and Sarah Patton, ed. *School: The Story of American Public Education*. Boston: Beacon Press, 2001.

Morrison, Toni. *Remember: The Journey to School Integration*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 2004.

Myers, Daisy. *Sticks n' Stones: The Myers Family in Levittown*. York, PA: York County Heritage Trust, 2005.

NAVA Flag Design Pamphlet

Nicholas, Lynn. *The Rape of Europa: The Fate of Europe's Treasures in the Third Reich and the Second World War*. New York: Alfred Knopf, Inc. 1994

Nicolaides, Becky and Andrew Wiese, ed. *The Suburb Reader.* New York: Routledge, 2006.

O'Brien, Ray. *The Story of Bucks County*. Aberystwyth-Hilltown Press, 2015.

Orvell, Miles. *The Death and Life of Main Street: Small Towns in American Memory, Space, and Community*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2012.

Othmer, James. *Adland: Searching for the Meaning of Life on a Branded Planet*. New York: Doubleday, 2009.

Packard, Ron. *Education Transformation* . Hillsboro, OR: Beyond Words, 2013.

Paul II, John. *Letter to Artists.* Rome: The Vatican, April 4, 1999.

Paul, Ron. *The School Revolution: A New Answer for Our Broken Education System*. New York: Grand Central Publishing, 2013.

Penndel Borough Centennial, 1899-1999.

Penick, Monica. *Tastemaker: Elizabeth Gordon, House Beautiful, and the Postwar American Home*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 2017.

Petigny, Alan. *The Permissive Society: America 1941 – 1965*. New York: Cambridge University Press, 2009.

Phillips, Kevin. *Wealth and Democracy: A Political History of the American Rich.* New York: Random House, 2002.

Plath, Sylvia. *The Bell Jar.* New York: Harper & Row, 1971.

Pomerance, Murray. "Introduction" in *American Cinema of the 1950s: Themes and Variations*, edited by Murray Pomerance, page 3. New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 2005.

Pontikis, Kyriakos, and Yodan Rofe, ed. *In Pursuit of Living Architecture: Continuing Christopher Alexander's Quest for a Humane and Sustainable Building Culture.* Chicago: Common Ground Publishing, 2016.

Popenoe, David. *The Suburban Environment: Sweden and the United States (Studies of Urban Society)*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1977.

Postman: Neil. *Amusing Ourselves to Death: Public Discourse in the Age of Show Business*, 20th ann. ed. New York: Penguin, 2005.

Postman, Neil, and Charles Weingartner. *The School Book: For People Who Want to Know What all the Hollering Is About*. New York: Delacorte Press, 1973.

Postman, Neil. *Building a Bridge to the 18th Century: How the Past Can Improve Our Future*. New York: Vintage Books, 1999.

Postman, Neil. *Conscientious Objections: Stirring Up Trouble About Language, Technology, and Education*. New York: Vintage Books, 1992.

Postman, Neil. *The Disappearance of Childhood*. New York: Dell Publishing Company, Inc.,1982.

Postman, Neil. *The End of Education: Redefining the Value of School.* New York: Vintage Books, 1996.

Postman, Neil and Charles Weingartner. *Teaching as a Subversive Activity*. New York: Dell Publishing Co., Inc., 1969.

Postman, Neil. *Teaching as a Conserving Activity*. New York: Delacorte Press, 1979.

Priestland, David. *The Red Flag: A History of Communism.* New York: Grove Press, 2009.

Putnam, Robert. *Bowling Alone: The Collapse and Revival of American Community*. New York: Simon & Schuster, 2000.

Ravitch, Diane, and Chester Finn, Jr. *What Do Our 17-Year Olds Know?: A Report on the First National Assessment of History and Literature*. New York: Harper & Row Publishers, 1987.

Ravitch, Diane. *Left Back: A Century of Failed School Reforms.* New York: Simon & Schuster, 2000.

Ravitch, Diane. *The Death and Life of the Great American School System: How Testing and Choice are Undermining Education*. New York: Basic Books, 2010.

Ravitch, Diane. *Reign of Error: The Hoax of the Privatization Movement and the Danger to America's Public Schools*. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2013.

Rawson, Michael. *Eden on the Charles: The Making of Boston*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2010.

Reeves, Richard V. *Dream Hoarders: How the American Upper Middle Class is Leaving Everyone Else in the Dust, Why That is a Problem, and What to Do About It*. Washington DC: Brookings Institute, 2017

Robbins, Richard. *Global Problems and the Culture of Capitalism,* 5th ed. Upper Saddle River, NJ: Pearson, 2010.

Roberts, Sam. *Grand Central: How a Train Station Transformed America.* New York: Grand Central Publishing, 2017.

Robinson, Ken, and Lou Aronica. *Creative Schools: The Grassroots Revolution That's Transforming Education.* New York: Viking, 2015.

Rockwell, Norman. Four Freedoms Series, 1943, oil on canvas, each 45.75 by 35.5 inches (116.2 cm × 90.2 cm), Norman Rockwell Museum, Stockbridge, MA.

Rome, Adam. *The Bulldozer in the Countryside: Suburban Sprawl and the Rise of American Environmentalism (Studies in Environment and History).* Cambridge, MA: Cambridge University Press, 2001.

Rose, Michael. *Ugly as Sin: Why They Changed Our Churches from Sacred Spaces to Meeting Places and How We Can Change Them back Again*. Manchester, NH: Sophia Institute Press, 2001.

Rousseau, Jean-Jacques. *Emile or On Education*. New York: Basic Books, 1979.

Rudberg, Eva. *The Stockholm Exhibition 1930: Modernism's Breakthrough in Swedish Architecture*. Stockholm: Swedish Museum of Architecture, 1992.

Ruff, Joshua. "Levittown: The Archetype of Suburban Development." *American History*, October 4, 2007.

Rybczynski, Witold. *Home: A Short History of an Idea.* New York: Penguin Books, 1987.

Rybczynski,Witold. *Last Harvest: How a Cornfield Became New Daleville: Real Estate Development in America from George Washington to the Builders in the Twenty-first Century, and Why We Live in Houses Anyway*. New York: Scribner, 2007.

Rybczynski, Witold. *The Look of Architecture*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2001.

Rybczynski, Witold. *Makeshift Metropolis: Ideas About Cities*. New York: Scribner, 2010.

Sandburg, Carl. Excerpt from "Chicago" *The Norton Anthology of American Literature*, edited by Mary Loeffelholz, 7th ed., vol. D, p. 1437-8, New York: W.W.Norton, 2007.

Schall, James V. *Another Sort of Learning*. San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1988.

Schama, Simon. *The Embarrassment of Riches: An Interpretation of Dutch Culture in the Golden Age.* New York: Vintage, 1997.

Schor, Juliet. *Born To Buy: The Commercialization of Childhood and the New Consumer Culture.* New York: Scribner, 2004.

Schudson, Michael. *Advertising, The Uneasy Persuasion: Its Dubious Impact on American Society*. New York: Basic Books, 1984.

Sen, Amartya. *Identity and Violence: The Illusion of Destiny (Issues of Our Time)*. New York: W.W. Norton & Company, Inc., 2006.

Shimkin, David, Harold Stolerman, and Helene O'Connor. *State of the Art: Issues in Contemporary Mass Communication*. New York: St. Martin's Press, 1992.

Sizer, Theodore. *The New American High School*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2013.

Sommer, Robin. *Frank Lloyd Wright: A Gatefold Portfolio.* New York: Barnes & Noble Books, 1997.

Sommerville, C. John. *The Decline of the Secular University*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2006.

Speck, Jeff. *Walkable Cities: How Downtown can Save America, One Step at a Time*. New York: MacMillan, 2012.

Spigel, Lynn. *Make Room for TV: Television and the Family Ideal in Postwar America.* Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992.

Stansell, Christine. *City of Women: Sex and Class in New York, 1789-1960*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1987.

Starr, Frederick. *Red and Hot: The Fate of Jazz in the Soviet Union*. New York: Limelight Editions, 1994.

Starr, Paul. *The Creation of the Media: Political Origins of Modern Communications.* New York: Basic Books, 2004.

Stein, Gertrude. *Everybody's Autobiography*. New York: Knopf Doubleday, 1973.

Steinberg, Ted. *American Green: The Obsessive Quest for the Perfect Lawn*. New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 2006.

Stern, Robert A.M., David Fishman and Jacob Tilove. *Paradise Planned: The Garden Suburb and the Modern City.* New York: The Monacelli Press, 2013.

Stevenson, Katherine and H. Ward Jandl. *Houses by Mail: A Guide to Houses from Sears, Roebuck and Company.* New York: Preservation Press, 1986.

Strasser, Susan. *Satisfaction Guaranteed: The Making of the American Mass Market*. New York: Smithsonian Books, 2004.

Straus, Emily. *The Death of a Suburban Dream: Race and Schools in Compton, California*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2014.

Suarez, Ray. *The Old Neighborhood: What We Lost in the Great Suburban Migration (1966-1999)*. New York: Free Press, 1999.

Smith, Hedrick. *Who Stole the American Dream?* New York: Random House, 2012.

Taylor, Charles. *A Secular Age*. Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press, 2007.

Taylor, Mark C. *Crisis On Campus: A Bold Plan for Reforming Our Colleges and Universities.* New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2010.

Taylor, Verta, Nancy Whittier, and Leila Rupp, ed. Feminist Frontiers, 7th ed. New York: McGraw Hill, 2007.

Teaford, John. *Post-Suburbia: Government and Politics in the Edge Cities*. Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1997.

Teasdale, Sara, *There Will Come Soft Rains*, https://poets.org/poem/there-will-come-soft-rains (Accessed on July 12, 2018)

Teeple, John. *Timelines of World History*. New York: DK Publishing, 2002.

Thomas, Susan Gregory. *Buy, Buy Baby: How Consumer Culture Manipulates Parents and Harms Young Minds*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 2007.

Tolkien, J.R.R. *The Hobbit*. New York: Ballantine Books, 1937.

Tolkien, J.R.R. *The Lord of the Rings*. New York: Ballantine Books, 1978.

Treanor, Nick, ed. *Desegregation.* New York: Greenhaven Press, 2003.

Tushnet, Mark. *Brown v. Board of Education: The Battle for Integration*. New York: Franklin Watts, 1995.

Vasquez, Richard. *Chicano: A Novel*. New York: Harper Collins, 2005.

Wagner, Tony. *Creating Innovators: The Making of Young People Who Will Change the World.* New York: Scribner, 2012.

Wagner, Richard and Amy Wagner. *Levittown*. Charleston, SC: Arcadia Publishers, 2010.

Waldie, D. J. *Holy Land: A Suburban Memoir*. New York: W. W. Norton & Co., Inc., 2005.

Walker, Paul. *Remember Little Rock: The Time, the People, the Stories.* Washington, D.C.: National Geographic, 2009.

Watchel, Paul L. *The Poverty of Affluence: A Psychological Portrait of the American Way of Life.* Philadelphia: New Society Publishers, 1989.

Weber, Karl L. ed. *Waiting for "Superman": How We Can Save America's Failing Public Schools.* New York: PublicAffairs, 2010.

Wechsler, Lewis. *The First Stone: A Memoir of the Racial Integration of Levittown, Pennsylvania*. Chicago: Grounds for Growth Press, 2004.

Weigley, Russell F. ed. *Philadelphia: A 300-Year History.* New York: W.W. Norton & Co., 1982.

Wiebe, Robert. *The Search for Order: 1877-1920.* New York: Hill and Wang, 1968.

Wilde, Oscar. *The Picture of Dorian Gray.* New York: Dover Publications, 1993.

Winn, Marie. *The Plug-in Drug: Television, Computers, and Family Life,* 25th anniversary ed. New York: Penguin Books, 2002.

Winn, Marie. *Unplugging the Plug-in Drug*. New York: Penguin Books, 1987.

Wolfe, Gregory. *Beauty Will Save the World: Recovering the Human in an Ideological Age*. Wilmington: ISI Books, 2011.

Wordsworth, William. Excerpt from "The World is Too Much With Us." *The Norton Anthology of World Literature*, edited by Martin Puchner, Shorter 4th ed., vol. 2, p. 554, W.W.Norton, 2019.

Wright, Gwendolyn. Building a Dream: A Social History of Housing in America (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1983).

Zajda, Joseph. *Schooling the New Russians*. South Melbourne, Victoria, Australia: James Nicholas Publishers, 2007.

Zamyatin, Yevgeny. *We*. Translated by Natasha Randall. New York: The Modern Library, 2006.

Zimring, Carl A. *Clean and White: A History of Environmental Racism in the United States.* New York: New York University Press, 201

Vita

| | |
|---|---|
| Name | *Christopher J. Palladino* |
| Baccalaureate Degrees | *Bachelor of Science, Cairn University, Langhorne*<br>*Major: Secondary Ed, Social Studies*<br><br>*Bachelor of Science, Cairn University, Langhorne*<br>*Major: Biblical Studies* |
| Date Graduated | *May, 1994* |
| Other Degrees and Certificates | *Master of Education, University of Virginia, Charlottesville*<br>*Major: Curriculum and Instruction* |
| Date Graduated | *May, 2002* |