

## **INFORMATION TO USERS**

The most advanced technology has been used to photograph and reproduce this manuscript from the microfilm master. UMI films the text directly from the original or copy submitted. Thus, some thesis and dissertation copies are in typewriter face, while others may be from any type of computer printer.

**The quality of this reproduction is dependent upon the quality of the copy submitted.** Broken or indistinct print, colored or poor quality illustrations and photographs, print bleedthrough, substandard margins, and improper alignment can adversely affect reproduction.

In the unlikely event that the author did not send UMI a complete manuscript and there are missing pages, these will be noted. Also, if unauthorized copyright material had to be removed, a note will indicate the deletion.

Oversize materials (e.g., maps, drawings, charts) are reproduced by sectioning the original, beginning at the upper left-hand corner and continuing from left to right in equal sections with small overlaps. Each original is also photographed in one exposure and is included in reduced form at the back of the book.

Photographs included in the original manuscript have been reproduced xerographically in this copy. Higher quality 6" x 9" black and white photographic prints are available for any photographs or illustrations appearing in this copy for an additional charge. Contact UMI directly to order.

# **U·M·I**

University Microfilms International  
A Bell & Howell Information Company  
300 North Zeeb Road, Ann Arbor, MI 48106-1346 USA  
313 761-4700 800 521-0600



**Order Number 9020778**

**Entrepreneurial vernacular: Developers' subdivisions in the  
1920s**

**Loeb, Carolyn Susan, Ph.D.**

**City University of New York, 1990**

**Copyright ©1990 by Loeb, Carolyn Susan. All rights reserved.**

**U·M·I**

**300 N. Zeeb Rd.  
Ann Arbor, MI 48106**

---





A

**ENTREPRENEURIAL VERNACULAR:  
DEVELOPERS' SUBDIVISIONS IN THE 1920S**

by

**CAROLYN S. LOEB**

**A dissertation submitted to the  
Graduate Faculty in Art History  
in partial fulfillment of the requirements  
for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy,  
The City University of New York.**

1990

1990

CAROLYN S. LOEB

© All Rights Reserved

This manuscript has been read and accepted for the Graduate Faculty in Art History in satisfaction of the dissertation requirement for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy.

12-6-1989  
Date

*Eugen A. Santoro*  
Chair of Examining Committee

1-18-1990  
Date

*Reed L. Lacey*  
Executive Officer

Dr. Elizabeth Blackmar  
Dr. H. Barbara Weinberg  
Dr. Marlene Park

Supervisory Committee

The City University of New York

For Dick  
and in memory of my parents  
Leon A. Loeb and Sarah M. Loeb  
and of my mentor  
Dr. Hanna Deinhard

## CONTENTS

|                                                     |     |
|-----------------------------------------------------|-----|
| LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS . . . . .                     | vii |
| CHAPTER 1. INTRODUCTION: UNPLANNED PLANNING . . .   | 1   |
| The Subdivisions . . . . .                          | 9   |
| Agency, Form and Meaning . . . . .                  | 14  |
| Methodology and Resources . . . . .                 | 18  |
| PART 1. THE SUBDIVISIONS                            |     |
| CHAPTER 2. TWO SUBDIVISIONS IN METROPOLITAN DETROIT | 22  |
| Introduction . . . . .                              | 22  |
| The Ford Homes, Dearborn . . . . .                  | 27  |
| Overview and Historical Background                  | 27  |
| The Construction of the                             |     |
| Subdivision . . . . .                               | 37  |
| The Design of the Houses . . . . .                  | 40  |
| Conclusion . . . . .                                | 47  |
| Brightmoor . . . . .                                | 49  |
| Introduction . . . . .                              | 49  |
| B. E. Taylor, The Developer . . . . .               | 55  |
| The Development of Brightmoor . . . . .             | 57  |
| Conclusion: Situating Brightmoor . . . . .          | 61  |
| Conclusion . . . . .                                | 67  |
| CHAPTER 3. WESTWOOD HIGHLANDS, SAN FRANCISCO . . .  | 68  |
| Introduction . . . . .                              | 68  |
| The Historical Background . . . . .                 | 72  |
| The Role of Style . . . . .                         | 87  |
| The Principles of Organization . . . . .            | 89  |
| Conclusion . . . . .                                | 101 |

## PART 2. AGENCY, FORM AND MEANING

|                                 |                                                                                   |     |
|---------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----|
| CHAPTER 4.                      | THE AGENTS OF BUILT FORM . . . . .                                                | 104 |
|                                 | The Architect . . . . .                                                           | 105 |
|                                 | The Builder . . . . .                                                             | 120 |
|                                 | Introduction . . . . .                                                            | 120 |
|                                 | The Development of Industrialized<br>Building . . . . .                           | 122 |
|                                 | Relations of Production . . . . .                                                 | 127 |
|                                 | The Realtor . . . . .                                                             | 135 |
|                                 | Introduction . . . . .                                                            | 135 |
|                                 | The Professional Project . . . . .                                                | 136 |
|                                 | Realtors as Community Builders . . . . .                                          | 145 |
|                                 | Conclusion: The Rationalization of<br>Development . . . . .                       | 154 |
| CHAPTER 5.                      | DEFINING COMMUNITY . . . . .                                                      | 164 |
|                                 | The Prevalence of the Single-Family<br>Detached Suburban House . . . . .          | 166 |
|                                 | The Home Ownership Network . . . . .                                              | 171 |
|                                 | The Neighborhood Unit Plan . . . . .                                              | 190 |
|                                 | Conclusion: Communities on the Ground . . . . .                                   | 206 |
| CHAPTER 6.                      | ARCHITECTURAL STYLE: THE CHARM OF<br>CONTINUITY . . . . .                         | 213 |
|                                 | The Ford Homes . . . . .                                                          | 219 |
|                                 | Brightmoor . . . . .                                                              | 225 |
|                                 | Westwood Highlands . . . . .                                                      | 227 |
|                                 | Conclusion: The Charm of Continuity . . . . .                                     | 231 |
| CHAPTER 7.                      | CONCLUSION: ARCHITECTURE AS SOCIAL<br>PROCESS: CULTIVATING PLANLESSNESS . . . . . | 241 |
| ILLUSTRATIONS . . . . .         |                                                                                   | 250 |
| SELECTED BIBLIOGRAPHY . . . . . |                                                                                   | 316 |

## LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

## Figure

|     |                                                           |     |
|-----|-----------------------------------------------------------|-----|
| 1.  | View of Early Stage of Construction, Ford Homes . . . . . | 251 |
| 2.  | Model A, Ford Homes . . . . .                             | 252 |
| 3.  | Model A, Ford Homes . . . . .                             | 253 |
| 4.  | Model B, Ford Homes . . . . .                             | 254 |
| 5.  | Model C, Ford Homes . . . . .                             | 255 |
| 6.  | Model E, Ford Homes . . . . .                             | 256 |
| 7.  | Model F, Ford Homes . . . . .                             | 257 |
| 8.  | Model D, Ford Homes . . . . .                             | 258 |
| 9.  | Typical Bathroom, Ford Homes . . . . .                    | 259 |
| 10. | Typical Living Room, Ford Homes . . . . .                 | 260 |
| 11. | Typical Kitchen, Ford Homes . . . . .                     | 261 |
| 12. | Brightmoor Streets . . . . .                              | 262 |
| 13. | Living Room, Brightmoor . . . . .                         | 263 |
| 14. | Bedroom, Brightmoor . . . . .                             | 264 |
| 15. | Sitting Room, Brightmoor . . . . .                        | 265 |
| 16. | Kitchen, Brightmoor . . . . .                             | 266 |
| 17. | Kitchen, Brightmoor . . . . .                             | 267 |
| 18. | Model 614, Brightmoor . . . . .                           | 268 |
| 19. | Model 514, Brightmoor . . . . .                           | 269 |
| 20. | Plan of Model 714, Brightmoor . . . . .                   | 270 |
| 21. | Hollybush House . . . . .                                 | 271 |
| 22. | Elevation and Plan of Hollybush House . . . . .           | 272 |
| 23. | Woodcrest Features . . . . .                              | 276 |
| 24. | Westwood Park Entrance . . . . .                          | 277 |
| 25. | Westwood Highlands Sign . . . . .                         | 278 |
| 26. | Nelson Bros. Advertisement . . . . .                      | 279 |
| 27. | 185 Westwood, Westwood Park . . . . .                     | 280 |
| 28. | 591 Wildwood, Westwood Park . . . . .                     | 281 |
| 29. | 25 Northwood, Westwood Park . . . . .                     | 282 |
| 30. | 1550 and 1566 Plymouth, Westwood Park . . . . .           | 283 |
| 31. | Two-module Type, Westwood Highlands . . . . .             | 284 |
| 32. | Two-module Type, Westwood Highlands . . . . .             | 285 |
| 33. | Two-and-a-half-module Type, Westwood Highlands . . . . .  | 286 |
| 34. | Three-module Type, Westwood Highlands . . . . .           | 287 |
| 35. | Three-module Type, Westwood Highlands . . . . .           | 288 |
| 36. | Three-module Type, Westwood Highlands . . . . .           | 289 |
| 37. | Three-module Type, Westwood Highlands . . . . .           | 290 |
| 38. | Three-module Type, Westwood Highlands . . . . .           | 291 |

|         |                                                                                        |     |
|---------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----|
| 39.     | Three-and-a-half-module Type, Westwood Highlands . . . . .                             | 292 |
| 40.     | Three-module Type, Westwood Highlands . . . . .                                        | 293 |
| 41.     | Three-module Type, Westwood Highlands . . . . .                                        | 294 |
| 42.     | Three-module Type, Westwood Highlands . . . . .                                        | 295 |
| 43.     | Four-module Type, Westwood Highlands . . . . .                                         | 296 |
| 44.     | Four-module Type, Westwood Highlands . . . . .                                         | 297 |
| 45.     | Four-module Type, Westwood Highlands . . . . .                                         | 298 |
| 46.     | 944 Monterey, Westwood Highlands . . . . .                                             | 299 |
| 47.     | 950 Monterey, Westwood Highlands . . . . .                                             | 300 |
| 48.     | Corner House, Westwood Highlands . . . . .                                             | 301 |
| 49.     | Corner House, Westwood Highlands . . . . .                                             | 302 |
| 50.     | Corner House, Westwood Highlands . . . . .                                             | 303 |
| 51.     | Two-bedroom Plan, Westwood Highlands . . . . .                                         | 304 |
| 52.     | Three-bedroom Plans, Westwood Highlands . . . . .                                      | 305 |
| 53.     | Interior, Westwood Highlands . . . . .                                                 | 306 |
| 54.     | 225 Valdez, Westwood Highlands . . . . .                                               | 307 |
| 55.     | Interior, Westwood Highlands . . . . .                                                 | 308 |
| 56.     | Community Scheme by Albert Wood . . . . .                                              | 309 |
| 57.     | Details of Balloon Frame Construction . . . . .                                        | 310 |
| 58.     | Advertisement for Subdivision Layout . . . . .                                         | 311 |
| 59.     | Distribution of Roles Among Architects, Builders, and Realtors/Developers . . . . .    | 312 |
| 60.     | Graphic Analysis of the Construction Curve in the 1920s . . . . .                      | 313 |
| 61.     | "Own Your Home" Advertisement . . . . .                                                | 314 |
| 62.     | Clarence A. Perry's Neighborhood Unit Plan . . . . .                                   | 315 |
| <br>Map |                                                                                        |     |
| 1.      | Detroit and the Brightmoor Area, Including the Ford Homes, Dearborn . . . . .          | 250 |
| 2.      | San Francisco Districts . . . . .                                                      | 273 |
| 3.      | Woodcrest . . . . .                                                                    | 274 |
| 4.      | Topography and Street Plan of the West of Twin Peaks District, San Francisco . . . . . | 275 |



## CHAPTER 1

### INTRODUCTION: UNPLANNED PLANNING

This study of suburban subdivision housing and design in the 1920s is an attempt to understand how a prevalent residential pattern developed in the United States and why it took the general form that it did. It examines both the histories of three speculative subdivisions, two from the Detroit, Michigan, area and one in San Francisco, California, and trends in the histories of housing professionals and of the formulation of housing issues. By moving between these two levels of investigation, the local and particular, and the national, institutional and theoretical, we gain a clearer picture of the essential features of this housing solution as well as insight into the ways in which patterns of built form have been established. In this study, I look at representative suburban subdivisions that have not previously been studied, and I analyze them by casting a wide contextual net. This exploration of built form provides a groundwork for my attempt to understand larger social and historical developments that helped shape this particular housing solution and that are articu-

lated through the characteristic patterns of suburban subdivision design.

During the twenties, there was a housing construction surge, stimulated by increased demand for new housing as a result of the dislocations of the First World War. Increased production in war industries meant both that peacetime production needs were postponed, and that industrialized urban areas saw a great influx of newcomers to work in the plants. Once the national economy recovered from post-war depression, the residential construction industry began to respond to the housing shortage. Housing production peaked in 1925 and by the end of the decade, when a new economic crisis forced the cessation of construction, an average of 703,000 new dwellings per year had been built.

There was a great deal of diversity in housing types to meet the demands of the housing shortage in this period, including apartment buildings and smaller multi-family dwellings.<sup>1</sup> But the majority of units were detached single-family houses, constructed in the expanding rings of suburbs growing at the urban fringes.

In the face of such housing needs and what they regarded as an inefficient response to it, a small but articulate group of critics proposed alternative solutions through their writings and a handful of model developments.

---

1

On the relative mix of these housing forms, see Robert G. Barrows, "Beyond the Tenement: Patterns of American Urban Housing, 1870-1930," Journal of Urban History 9 (August 1983): 395-420.

Critical of the wasteful redundancy of single-family housing and patterns of suburban subdivision, writers such as Edith Elmer Wood, Catherine Bauer and Lewis Mumford urged coherent planning strategies and unified designs that would yield affordable, stable, and integrated environments adapted to modern needs.<sup>2</sup> They analyzed residential construction in the United States and the achievements and pitfalls of large-scale developments such as company towns and wartime housing, and they drew on ambitious European undertakings, especially in Holland, England and Germany,

---

2

Edith Elmer Wood, The Housing of the Unskilled Wage Earner (New York: Macmillan, 1919); Housing Progress in Western Europe (New York: Dutton, 1923); Recent Trends in American Housing (New York: Macmillan, 1931). See also John J. Murphy, Edith Elmer Wood and Frederick L. Ackerman, The Housing Famine: How to End It (New York: Dutton, 1920), Catherine Bauer Modern Housing (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1934), and the introduction to Wood's and Bauer's careers in Eugenie Ladner Birch, "Woman-Made America: The Case of Early Public Housing Policy," in Donald A. Krueckeberg, ed. The American Planner: Biographies and Recollections (New York and London: Methuen, 1983), pp. 149-75. Lewis Mumford, Sticks and Stones: Architecture and Civilization (New York: Boni and Liveright, 1924; reprint ed., New York: Dover, 1955); Park Dixon Goist, "Seeing Things Whole: A Consideration of Lewis Mumford," in Krueckeberg, pp. 250-75; Elmer Newman, Lewis Mumford: A Bibliography, 1914-1970 (New York: Harcourt, Brace, Jovanovich, 1971). For examples of model developments, see Henry Wright, Rehousing Urban America (New York: Columbia University Press, 1935) and Clarence Stein, Toward New Towns for America (New York: Town Planning Review, 1957), which includes an introduction by Mumford. Overviews of the contributions and viewpoints of these figures can be found in Roy Lubove, Community Planning in the 1920s: The Contribution of the Regional Planning Association of America (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1963) and Francesco Dal Co, "From Parks to the Region: Progressive Ideology and the Reform of the American City," in Giorgio Ciucci, et al. The American City: From the Civil War to the New Deal (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1979), pp. 143-291.

as precedents for non-speculative approaches to the building of new communities.

The attitude of these critics toward existing patterns of speculative residential development in the United States and toward the real estate developers who built these projects can be summarized in the words of planner Henry Wright, co-designer of Radburn, New Jersey, one of the progressive models that embodied these critics' ideals. Writing in 1933, he stated that "Housing progress in this country is impossible because of the inadequacy, amateurishness, and incapacity of those groups to whom it has been entrusted as a side-line to land merchandising and the mortgage business."<sup>3</sup>

Deserving of such criticism as real estate developers may have been, however, it is their work that the student of built form encounters as she looks at the mass of subdivision design in the twenties. Contemporary critiques of existing practices did not illuminate how or why these practices succeeded, aside from the financial gain individual developers achieved through their deployment. Furthermore, they did not address the recognizable patterns of development created by twenties developers. Searching and sophisticated, these critiques countered existing practices with an ideal of planning that was inherently radical and a

---

3

Henry Wright, "The Sad Story of American Housing," Architecture 67 (March 1933), reprinted in Lewis Mumford, ed. Roots of Contemporary American Architecture (New York: Dover, 1972), p. 330; this collection was originally published in 1952.

challenge to free market conceptions of urban development. Measured by the standards of this ideal, contemporary procedures were incoherent and undisciplined as well as wasteful in both social and material terms. And yet, apparent similarities in design and organization among twenties subdivisions seem to belie the absence of planning.

In other words, the prevalence of a pattern of detached, single-family suburban subdivision development in the twenties suggests a level of coherence and rationality within the housing industry of the period. This rationality was at odds with the critics' planning ideal, but it succeeded in shaping an important dimension of the built environment. It is this underlying rationality, the mobilization of a form of planning that had the appearance of being unplanned, that I hope to explicate in this study. It is a measure of the achievement and endurance of this rationality that the critics' proposals remain ideals. To the extent that one may still wish to see these ideals realized, it is worth exploring the regions of the seemingly inchoate to locate the agents, mechanisms and structures that succeeded in determining the pattern of subdivision development.

A number of scholars have written in the past decade on issues that I am concerned with here, especially on the evolution of vernacular housing design and technology and

---

on the history of suburbanization in the United States.<sup>4</sup> My study shares with these an interest in how and why particular patterns of built form become commonplace, and a method of approach that considers the ways in which architectural design can be affected by cultural, social, historical and economic developments as well as by aesthetic decisions. The present study extends these discussions of suburban housing in several ways. First of all, by examining some examples of speculative subdivisions and recovering the histories of their design and development, I demonstrate the widespread penetration of particular housing solutions. While discussions of exemplary schemes, ranging from pioneering suburbs such as Riverside (1868) to the Von Sweringen brothers' Shaker Heights from the 1920s, recur in the literature, there has been little consideration of the

---

4

The major works are David P. Handlin, The American Home: Architecture and Society, 1815-1915 (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1979); Gwendolyn Wright, Moralism and the Model Home: Domestic Architecture and Cultural Conflict in Chicago, 1873-1913 (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1980); Gwendolyn Wright, Building the Dream: A Social History of Housing in America (New York: Pantheon, 1981); Kenneth T. Jackson, Crabgrass Frontier: The Suburbanization of the United States (New York: Oxford University Press, 1985); Clifford Edward Clark, Jr., The American Family Home (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1986); and Alan Gowans, The Comfortable House: North American Suburban Architecture, 1890-1930 (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1986). Numerous other scholars have contributed to aspects of these issues, and I will cite their works at the many points where they have helped my project. In addition, several studies have appeared since this text was written, notably Robert Fishman, Bourgeois Utopias: The Rise and Fall of Suburbia (New York: Basic Books, 1987) and John R. Stilgoe, Borderland: Origins of the American Suburb, 1820-1939 (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1988).

5  
typical tract. Although we find the achievements of the exemplary schemes somewhat muted in the typical tract, it is nevertheless through the latter's proliferation that the characteristic form of suburban subdivisions became hegemonic as a housing pattern in the United States. Thus, this examination of representative tracts allows us to determine which features of suburban subdivision design and planning define that pattern.

In addition to examining a range of residential developments that have received little attention, I explore the mechanisms through which the planning and design ideas that they embody were disseminated. This is a multi-faceted question, and one to which the previous studies noted above have contributed a wealth of information, especially concerning nineteenth-century developments. They have firmly established, for example, the cultural underpinnings of single-family homeownership in the avowals of the "cult of domesticity" as it evolved from the 1840s onward.<sup>6</sup> My contribution here is to focus on the roles of architects, builders and realtors in relation to changes in construc-

---

5

Such studies are emerging as a result of the recent rise in interest in local history and preservation. Often these treat of late nineteenth- or early twentieth-century suburbs. One of the richest examples of this genre is Catherine W. Bishir and Lawrence S. Earley, eds. Early Twentieth-Century Suburbs in North Carolina: Essays on History, Architecture and Planning (Raleigh: Archaeology and Historic Preservation Section, Division of Archives and History, North Carolina Department of Cultural Resources, 1985).

6

See, for example, Clark, chapter 2, and Jackson, chapter 3.

tion practices and technology, and thus to emphasize the way that structural shifts in the nature of work and the rise of professionals placed realtors in a position to champion a type of housing that they were ideally suited to effect.

Finally, my aim in this study is to look at the consolidation, in two related ways, of a housing form. On the one hand, suburban subdivisions of the 1920s consolidated a number of trends that had appeared over the course of previous decades. Among these are design ideas derived from nineteenth-century romantic and early twentieth-century garden suburbs, changes in building technology, the prevalence of detached single-family housing in the United States, and ideas about neighborhood, all of which we will discuss in the body of this work. But in addition to synthesizing elements that appeared slowly over time, twenties subdivisions also consolidated disparate social and historical developments, as this list itself suggests. It is in this sense that the design solution represented by suburban tract housing embodies, for example, particular patterns of work and notions of community in its very form. Residential subdivisions articulate a nexus of decisions concerning social life and social values that otherwise were formulated piecemeal and in dispersed arenas; their unified expression in the 1920s takes the form of suburban housing schemes.

Thus, in this study I am concerned with the historical



investigation of the design and construction of specific residential subdivisions, and with the application of a contextual method of investigation that will enable us to see these subdivisions as representative of a pattern of subdivision development embodying social and historical meanings. To give the topic a concrete grounding, I have selected a small number of specific examples of such subdivision developments. In the next section, I will provide an overview of these communities. Then I will discuss the shape of the analysis that will be presented in the second part of this study, in which I try to determine the sources of the housing ideas used in these developments and how they were disseminated.

### The Subdivisions

The three subdivisions that I discuss in Chapters 2 and 3 are examples of relatively large-scale residential development in which the entire process of subdivision, design and construction was undertaken by the developer. Although a type of development often associated with the suburban construction surge following the Second World War, its prerequisites, as we will see, were in place by the twenties. The practice of selling unimproved lots and lots with only infrastructural improvements within subdivisions was widespread in this period, of course, but the trend toward large-scale, speculative residential building offers the clearest path toward understanding how patterns of development were established. By analyzing a few of these,

---

I sought to locate the characteristic elements that shaped them.

The criterion for selecting these subdivisions was that each was a large-scale speculative development. I located two of them, Brightmoor in Detroit and Westwood Highlands in San Francisco, through articles in Building Age, a builder's journal of the period that ran a sporadic series of pieces on such projects during the twenties. These accounts indicated that the kind of development I was interested in was significant within the housing industry, although there was no systematic account of such projects. I located the third subdivision, the Ford Homes in Dearborn, through research on housing development in the Detroit area. The regional diversity contributed by the San Francisco subdivision corresponds to the national scope of the residential patterns that I wanted to study.

In Chapters 2 and 3, I present an historical narrative of each subdivision that recovers and describes as fully as possible the salient features concerning the impetus for development, the organization of the design and construction process, the roles of the developers, architects, and builders involved in each scheme, and the design of the community as built. Each of the narratives responds to the particular historical features of each subdivision and to the kinds of historical materials I was able to find concerning them. Although I was fortunate to be able to locate a relative of one of the principals in each case, records and accounts of all three were sketchy at best. I

---

drew on as many additional sources of information as possible to fill out these accounts, including local government records and newspaper accounts as well as recent historical studies of issues related to specific aspects of each development. I also visited each site a number of times.

Each of the subdivisions took a different form, both physically and in terms of the specific housing needs it was created to meet. The Ford Homes project was developed by the Dearborn Realty and Construction Company, an organization staffed by associates of Henry Ford and established for the task of building about 250 houses near Ford factories. It was not conceived as a company town, however, but rather as an attempt to stimulate private sector real estate development by creating a model of efficient construction procedures based on the principles of standardization and assembly-line production pioneered in Ford's plants. Although the architect who was commissioned to design the houses had innovative ideas about community design, as we will see, few of these were realized in this project. Instead, the Ford Homes scheme was intended as a model for conventional subdivision design. To the extent that the developer wanted to break new ground, it was in achieving efficient results through rationalized production. But this emphasis will also allow us to look at the features of subdivision design that were considered desirable, if not innovative, including the balance of unity and

variety and the identity of the subdivision as a community.

The Ford Homes were affordable to skilled workers and middle-class professionals, whereas the houses at Brightmoor were designed for unskilled workers from rural areas in the upland South who were attracted to jobs in Detroit's industries. Built by real estate developer B. E. Taylor, the thousands of houses of the district did not meet minimal standards and had few amenities. Nevertheless, Taylor drew commercial and social services to the area to provide for community needs and development, and succeeded in forging a lasting neighborhood identity. Although the housing he constructed may place him at the margins of the realty profession, Taylor seems to have enjoyed a certain respect among his peers and, after the period I am concerned with, he went on to develop more substantial subdivisions.

While both the Ford Homes and Brightmoor may seem to be special, and even limiting, cases, they are not isolated examples. There was a good deal of attention focused within the construction industry in this period on production processes and ways to maximize rationalized building practices to reduce housing costs. The Ford Homes project has its unique history, but it is also representative of this concern within the larger community of the housing industry. I will note related subdivisions and this theme will be elaborated upon in the second part of this study. Similarly, Brightmoor is representative of the vast majority of housing built for the working poor, which was

---

typically substandard, as we will see. Yet through our analysis of the context within which Taylor built Brightmoor, we will see that this project also advanced significant trends in suburban residential development, including the establishment of community identity, the construction of an image of historical continuity, and the regularization of the provision of housing for groups of people who traditionally met their needs independently through community and owner-builder patterns of construction.

Westwood Highlands, in San Francisco, is perhaps the most conventional subdivision of the three in terms of its development and the market for which it was created. It was developed by the prominent realty firm, Baldwin and Howell, in a district in which the earliest suburban development had been for the affluent. Once public transportation linked the area to downtown, middle-class subdivisions followed, including an earlier tract by this firm, called Westwood Park. At Westwood Park, lots were sold and the purchasers individually commissioned architects and builders to design and construct their houses. Westwood Highlands represents the consolidation of Baldwin and Howell's sense of the market for housing in the district gained from their Westwood Park experience. In the later tract, they worked with one of the builders and one of the architects from Westwood Park, and built speculative housing.

---

Westwood Highlands is also the most ambitious of the three subdivisions in terms of its design. It incorporates curvilinear streets that suit its hilly topography, and the sizes of its houses vary, balancing the factors of distance from the streetcar line with the desirable views from the top of the hill. The architect seems to have used a modular system to generate diversity from a limited number of elements and plans, possibly relying on local traditional practices of community development, as we will see.

From this brief overview, it is clear that the range of subdivisions constructed in the twenties is quite broad, and that the attempt to reconstruct the development of each one within its particular context can usefully draw on the resources of local historical and social studies. Yet, as different as each of these three subdivisions is, there is also a common notion and goal of community planning that undergirds their design. This includes balancing design unity with variety, providing an image of historical continuity, and establishing a sense of neighborhood. Investigating the articulation and dissemination of this notion is the subject of the second part of this study.

### Agency, Form and Meaning

By analyzing three examples of twenties subdivisions, we gain a sense of the parameters within which built form developed. What remains unclear, however, is how a body of shaping ideas was transmitted and absorbed. In Part 2, I analyze the broader historical trends within the residen-

tial construction industry and among those interested in housing issues in an attempt to understand the process by which such ideas were disseminated.

Chapter 4 is concerned with the roles played by builders, architects and real estate developers in the shaping of residential subdivisions. The historical trajectory of each group is traced in order to study how and to what extent it contributed to the development of these housing patterns. As we will see, the dominant and determinant group was the realtors. Arising as a profession at a point when organizational skills became more valuable than crafts-based skills, realtors staked their claim to professional status in large part as community builders. Following models established by pioneering suburban developers of the nineteenth century, the profession absorbed ideas from designers working in romantic and garden suburb traditions, but saw them as part of an arsenal of sound development practices aimed at controlling property values. Realtors increasingly became the patrons of builders, whose deskilling we trace in this chapter, as well as architects. The latter, as a profession, had historically maintained their distance from problems of small house design, although individual architects sought to contribute to its solution. This internal conflict, however, limited the role of architects in determining the shape of subdivision development.

Realtors began their development as a profession during the Progressive Era, at a time when leadership by

experts was extolled as the way in which democratic society would advance. The notion of realms of expertise linked through a network of voluntary associations was extended as an ideal, and in practice, through the twenties, by Herbert Hoover, in his roles as Secretary of Commerce and then as President of the United States. In Chapter 5, we will look at the way in which realtors joined with other housing professionals in a network of associational progressives that shaped patterns of suburban development. Enjoying the sponsorship of the federal government, this network promoted single-family homeownership through a variety of private sector programs, including Own Your Home and Better Homes in America campaigns, and culminating in the 1931 President's Conference on Home Building and Home Ownership. These linked the activities of realtors, planners, architects, builders, engineers, housing reformers, and other groups interested in residential construction, at both the national and local levels. Through this network, too, the emphasis on community that had developed among urban reformers received wide attention in the form of Clarence A. Perry's garden-suburb-inspired Neighborhood Unit Plan. Thus, we will see in this chapter that the proposals embraced by this network, which included standardization, suburbanization, and especially the development of a sense of neighborhood, correspond to the patterns of built form analyzed in the three subdivisions in Part 1.

Thus, we find that subdivision design emerged from a

---



confluence of many historical trends: the rationalization of construction practices that facilitated standardization and transformed the relations of housing production; the rise of realtors as entrepreneurial professionals whose claim to competency was tied to the management of investment risk through community development; the evolution of housing design toward small, efficient and replicable units; the distillation of a concept of neighborhood from nineteenth-century design precedents and urban reform movements that minimally addressed the problems of urban growth and social dislocation; and the mobilization of a decentralized network of experts who guided the activities of the private sector as an alternative to government planning and funding.

In the course of these chapters, I will discuss the earlier models of suburban design that were absorbed by the practices of subdivision developers, and how they were disseminated. I will also refer to the evolution of small house design. Chapter 6 will explore the role of architectural style in the subdivisions analyzed in Part 1 and within the broader context of the needs of community development in the twenties. Here we will see that in addition to creating a balance between unity and diversity and contributing to the articulation of neighborhood identity, architectural design served as a visual anchor for the subdivision's claim to continuity, positing roots in the past and reaching toward a controllable future. In the face of dynamic social changes, of which housing shortages

and subdivision solutions were a part, architectural style helped reassure homeowners and investors that familiar patterns of residential community would persist.

In the concluding chapter, I sketch some implications of this project for the study of vernacular architectural history and as a contribution to the understanding of built form in the suburbanization process in the United States.

### Methodology and Resources

This study employs two approaches in its attempt to trace the ways in which subdivision patterns were formulated and transmitted. One focuses on local history, attempting to recover the processes and decisions according to which specific individual tracts were developed, and analyzing their design. The second looks at broader national, institutional and theoretical developments. They are linked by the way in which each informs the other: the patterns of built form that we find in the three subdivisions that I discuss are those that emerge as the dominant concerns of the national housing network, while the decentralized process of disseminating these ideas under the auspices of realtors working in loose association with other professionals can be seen concretely in each of the examples. Furthermore, our thesis concerning the unity of expression achieved by subdivision design as it articulates building practices, notions of community, and the ideal of continuity, itself embodies the need for a wide-ranging method of approach.

---

The three subdivisions chosen for scrutiny are intended to be representative, but one of the early lessons of this project was the particularity of each development. The careers of the developers, the historical and social niches into which each subdivision fits within its urban area, and the configuration of design elements vary in each case, suggesting a wealth of diversity in the hundreds of twenties subdivisions yet to be explored. But comparing these three, and drawing on studies of related subdivisions when possible, also allows us to see underlying conceptual, structural and physical similarities that are masked by the individuality of each case. Our ability to locate this pattern of similar concerns indicates that the efforts of the housing network to enforce their proposals at the local level were successful.

As I have mentioned, records of these projects are often no longer extant, but in each case I attempted to draw on the widest possible range of historical materials to reconstruct its development. In addition to municipal records, contemporary press accounts, and archival materials, I drew on the resources of local historical societies and family accounts. Urban histories of Detroit and San Francisco enabled me to try to situate each subdivision within the context of larger patterns of local growth. Recent scholarly work on related concerns often provided provocative clues to the interpretation of aspects of these developments, and these are cited and discussed in each

---

section. As an example, Anne Vernez Moudon's study of nineteenth century community design practices in the Alamo Square neighborhood in San Francisco suggested a tradition of modular design within which the architect of Westwood Highlands may have been working.<sup>7</sup> Wherever possible, I have tried to draw on recent accounts of subdivision development by other scholars to provide additional comparative material.

In the second part, I have relied on numerous materials from the period as well as recent studies, all of which are acknowledged in their relevant sections. Although the main focus of our inquiry is the development of single-family homeownership in suburban subdivisions, tracing the context in which these were formed involved delving into the histories of professions and theoretical accounts of the process of professionalization, economic and business histories of the construction industry, and the histories of relevant urban reform movements, among other topics. The most potent model for the attempt to understand housing patterns within a context of broader historical developments<sup>8</sup> has been the work of Gwendolyn Wright.

Speculative suburban subdivisions of the 1920s marked the culmination of many strands of social and architectural development. To the extent that they were innovative, it

---

7

Anne Vernez Moudon, Built for Change: Neighborhood Architecture in San Francisco (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1986).

8

See note 4.

was in terms of their particular distillation of these and their synthesis as distinctive totalities. In the next chapter, we will begin to explore these totalities by looking at the two Detroit area subdivisions.

## CHAPTER 2

## TWO SUBDIVISIONS IN METROPOLITAN DETROIT

Introduction

Detroit is the fourth link in a chain of cities that grew in size in response to the expansion of manufacturing<sup>1</sup> beginning in the last quarter of the nineteenth century. From Pittsburgh to the lakeshore cities of Buffalo, Cleveland, Detroit and Milwaukee, the westward spread of industry resulted in the successive transformation of these settlements into metropolitan areas. Still a compact "walking city" at the turn of the century, even its boundaries accessible on foot, Detroit grew at an accelerating<sup>2</sup> rate over the next three decades. By the middle of the 1920s, it was the fastest growing metropolitan area in the

---

1. Olivier Zunz, The Changing Face of Inequality: Urbanization, Industrial Development, and Immigrants in Detroit, 1880-1920 (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1982), p. 16.

2. David Allan Levine vividly sketches the physical transformation of Detroit in the opening pages of Internal Combustion: The Races in Detroit 1915-1926 (Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 1976). The phrase "walking city" derives from Sam Bass Warner, Streetcar Suburbs: The Process of Growth in Boston, 1870-1900, 2nd ed. (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1978).

United States, and it had become the fourth largest.<sup>3</sup>

A range of industries, from stove manufacturing to pharmaceuticals, contributed to Detroit's early growth, but the 1903 founding of the Ford Motor Company initiated the development of what would become "Motor City." Detroit would probably have shared proportionately in the trend of population flow to urban, industrial areas in these decades, but the growth of the new automobile industry ensured that the city became a magnet for thousands of people. Of the 528,000 that more than doubled Detroit's population to 994,000 between 1910 and 1920, roughly four-fifths were newcomers to the area from elsewhere in the United States and abroad.<sup>4</sup> They were drawn to Detroit by the evident need of this industry for workers, expressed in news stories about ever-increasing production, or in ads and flyers distributed by the Ford company in poorer states to entice migration northward. Ford's notorious creation of the five-dollar-a-day wage in 1914, in the middle of the winter of a year of economic depression, lured tens of thousands of people to the city before it became clear that this largesse was not intended for all.<sup>5</sup> The industrial

---

3. Levine, p. 12.

4. Zunz, p. 287.

5. The five dollar wage was conditional on workers' adoption of middle class values, which was determined by the investigators of the Ford Sociological Department, who visited every eligible worker's home to interview relatives and neighbors. Stable family life, homeownership, and a savings account were the key criteria. Accounts of this

boom created by World War I added to the incentives for moving to Detroit.

This massive growth put severe pressure on the housing stock of the old city, mounting to crisis proportions. The Annual Report for the City of Detroit for the Year 1919 estimated that there was a shortage of 30,402 dwellings, a figure that historians consider conservative.<sup>6</sup> Few initiatives were taken to deal with this problem even after it had become an issue of public discussion. Instead, it was left to market forces, which finally responded in the years between 1923 and 1926 with an unprecedented surge in subdividing and construction activity. At this point, according to Detroit historian Sidney Glazer, "realty subdividing became highly specialized, calling for large capital requirements. Builders developed models for the construction of single-residence homes on a mass basis."<sup>7</sup>

---

aspect of Ford history can be found in Allan Nevins, Ford: The Times, the Man, the Company (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1954), chapters 20 and 21; and in Stephen Meyer III, The Five-Dollar Day: Labor, Management, and Social Control in the Ford Motor Company, 1908-1921 (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1981), chapter 6.

6. Levine, p. 39. See also Robert G. Barrows, "Beyond the Tenement: Patterns of American Urban Housing, 1870-1930," Journal of Urban History 9 (August 1983): 410, Table 5, "Excess of Families Over Dwellings as a Percentage of Total Families." He records a 1910 excess of 17.2% in Detroit, swelling to 30% in 1920. For discussion of the housing shortage nationwide, beginning with the First World War, see Edith Elmer Wood, Recent Trends in American Housing (New York: Macmillan, 1931), pp. 84-5.

7. Sidney Glazer, Detroit: A Study in Urban Development (New York: Bookman Associates, 1965), p. 95.



Many of the works that examine Detroit's response to this housing crisis have focused on the "wave of excessive subdividing" that out-distanced actual construction.<sup>8</sup> One study compared the speculative mania of the period to that which took place contemporaneously in Florida, the symbol of runaway speculation.<sup>9</sup> During the three years from 1924 to 1926 alone, "54.3% of all lots of record, representing 45% of all acreage subdivided in the entire history of the [Detroit] metropolitan area, were platted."<sup>10</sup> The Northwestern Business Booster reported in October, 1925, that "At present, plats are being filed at the rate of ten to twelve daily, a figure unprecedented in the history of the country."<sup>11</sup> The surplus of subdivided lots could be inferred from the relation between the 479% increase in population in the metropolitan area between 1900 and 1930, and the 1105% increase in subdivided acreage for the same period.<sup>12</sup> Such speculation, it was felt, undermined the provision of sound housing, since it drove prices up without assuming responsibility for the coordination or improvement of neighborhoods, and resulted in pockets of

---

8. Michigan Planning Commission, A Study of Suburban Development in the Detroit Metropolitan Area (Lansing: Michigan Planning Commission, 1939), p. 1.

9. Ibid.

10. Ibid., p. 13.

11. "Survey of 15 Years Reveals Jump in Land Subdividing," Northwestern Business Booster 1 (October 1925): 24.

12. Michigan Planning Commission, p. 10.

13

vacant land when the economy turned toward depression.

Few writers, however, have studied the housing that also was the product of this boom period. For historian David Allan Levine, in Internal Combustion: The Races in Detroit 1915-1926, and sociologist Olivier Zunz, in The Changing Face of Inequality: Urbanization, Industrial Development, and Immigrants in Detroit, 1880-1920, housing and home ownership are major indices for reconstructing social trends.<sup>14</sup> Their works help to provide a broader historical context within which to situate specific housing initiatives. But little has been written on the "models for the construction of single-residence homes on a mass basis" that Glazer refers to in the above quotation. The 1920s saw a succession of record-breaking years for suburban building, beginning in 1923 with the construction of eleven thousand houses between Detroit's city limit and the twelve-mile arc from downtown.<sup>15</sup> Many builders contributed to this process, but there has been no close analysis of the impact their work had on the formation of the built environment in the Detroit area.

In this chapter, we will examine two housing developments in the Detroit area constructed in this period,

---

13. Ibid., pp. 14, 25.

14. See notes 1 and 2.

15. E. M. Heermans, "\$55,000,000 Expended for 11,000 Suburban Homes Here in 1923," Detroit Free Press, 6 January 1924, real estate sec., p. 1.

Brightmoor and the Ford Homes. The Ford Homes were built in 1919-1921 in Dearborn by the Dearborn Realty and Construction Company, a firm established by Henry Ford and his close associates to provide housing near Ford plants that were located in Dearborn. Neither company housing nor a project undertaken by professional realtors or builders, this development manifests the application of industrialized building methods to the construction of a tract of two hundred and fifty modest single-family houses.

Brightmoor, a subdivision on the western edge of Detroit built by B. E. Taylor, builder and realtor, was a more extensive undertaking. From 1921 to 1925, Taylor assembled twenty-eight tracts of land, yielding 15,511 lots and housing for 11,319 people. Though an entirely speculative venture, and one guilty of some of the excesses in subdividing discussed above, Brightmoor is nevertheless an example of the creation of a suburban community, as we will see.

### The Ford Homes, Dearborn

#### Overview and Historical Background

In 1918, Dearborn, just west of Detroit, still had the appearance of a country village with scattered clusters of houses dotting acres of farmland.<sup>16</sup> The only industrial intrusions into its rural existence were the tracks of the Michigan Central Railroad, moving westward toward Chicago

---

16. David L. Good, "The Ford Homes," 1975, typescript in the library of the Dearborn Historical Society.

from the center of Detroit, and the Henry Ford and Son tractor plant. Ford had built the plant in 1915, south of the tracks, and by 1918 it employed about four thousand<sup>17</sup> men. Because little housing was available nearby, many of these workers had to undertake long commutes to their jobs from expensive rented quarters in Detroit. In 1919, Henry Ford supported the idea of building housing in Dearborn itself to ameliorate this problem and to promote cost-effective construction in this period of building inactivity following the First World War. The Dearborn Realty and Construction Company, established for the creation of Ford's housing development, bought a tract of land west of the tractor plant and built two hundred and fifty houses between 1919 and 1921, before itself succumbing to the vagaries of the general economy (Map 1). By September, 1920, the tractor plant had foundered, as agriculture entered a decade-long depression. The plant was dismantled, its machinery and workforce moved to the Rouge works under<sup>18</sup> construction farther to the east in Dearborn. Home sales

---

17. Ibid.

18. This was spurred by a general economic downturn that created severe financial difficulties for the Ford operations in 1920-21. The Highland Park plant was closed for six months during this period, and most of the fifty-five thousand workers there and at the Rouge plant were laid off. Tractor production, to which Ford was committed as a friend of the American farmer, was propped up for awhile by the claim of diversity, as seventeen hundred uses were found for the machine. Nevertheless, the production of tractors was moved to Ireland in 1928. See Allan Nevins and Frank Ernest Hill, Ford: Expansion and Challenge, 1915-1933 (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1957), pp. 254-55, 348.

in the Ford subdivision slowed, and new building ceased. By the time Ford's Rouge plant was completed, the construction industry had revived and Dearborn shared in the house-building boom of the mid-1920s, obviating the need for any continuation of Ford's leadership along these lines.

Although Ford supported the Dearborn housing project, it is not clear that he initiated it. He had certainly been interested in the mass production of houses from at least 1913, when he considered building houses according to a system patented by his friend Thomas Edison in 1908. Edison's scheme involved pouring concrete into cast iron molds, and produced a house in six hours, though four days were needed to allow the concrete to harden. Ford thought reusable steel forms would improve the prospects of this system.<sup>19</sup> However, this system was not used in the Dearborn subdivision, and other figures may have suggested this particular project to Ford. In his reminiscences, E. G. Liebold, Ford's personal secretary, claims to have proposed the venture.<sup>20</sup> It is also possible that the architect of

---

19. Ford R. Bryan, "Concrete Homes for Dearborn," Dearborn Historian 24 (Summer 1984): 87-89. See also Peter Collins, Concrete: The Vision of a New Architecture (New York: Horizon Press, 1959), p. 90, and David Handlin, The American Home (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1979), pp. 293-94. As early as August 1891, Ford was interested in community development. He was a member of a "Citizens' Committee of Fifty" that tried to promote the development of Oakwood, south of the area that later became the site of the Rouge plant. See Nevins and Hill, p. 200.

20. E. G. Liebold, Reminiscences, 3:239, in the Oral History Section of the Ford Archives.

the Henry Ford Hospital, Albert Wood, who designed the Ford houses, had introduced such an idea to Ford. In 1918, Wood wrote and had printed privately a booklet entitled

<sup>21</sup>  
Community Homes. In this work, Wood sketches the great immediate need for decent housing and proposes models for single-family developments. Though there are no documents to establish whether Ford or the members of the Dearborn Realty and Construction Company were aware either of Wood's booklet or of Wood's strong interests in the housing issue, Wood's role in the Dearborn project was sufficiently large to merit a brief consideration of the ideas on housing that he set forth in Community Homes.

Writing in the context of the demand for housing created by the war industries' sudden need for thousands of additional workers, Wood favored independent agencies and argued against the formation of a central authority, either governmental or corporate, which would control the development of housing. The existence of such authorities, which he considered "autocratic" and "paternalistic," undermines<sup>22</sup> the "true spirit of democracy." Wood stressed the importance of providing hygienic housing, perhaps reflecting on the ironies he saw while working on the Henry Ford Hospital, under construction at the time of his writing, when he says, "Thousands of families live among disease-breeding

---

21. Albert G. Wood, Jr., Community Homes, 1918, in the possession of his family. A discussion of Wood's career will be found in the next section.

22. Ibid., p. 9.

surroundings while fortunes are spent in the erection of hospitals which are mostly monuments to our inefficient methods of combating disease."<sup>23</sup> But he also emphasized the formative moral role that decent housing can play, referring both to the recent success of the prohibition movement and to the achievements of Hull House. The latter served as a model for instilling democratic, spiritual and moral virtues within the home and the neighborhood. Wood was not alone in his appreciation of the Chicago settlement house. We will see in the next section that Taylor created a settlement house at Brightmoor, and in Chapter 5 we will discuss the ways in which notions of community in the 1920s derived from the settlement house movement.

Along with centralized authority, Wood also rejected the wasteful system of speculative subdividing and building and the inefficiency that results from jousting among the prospective homeowner, contractors and architects. Instead, he proposed development, or stock companies, that would allow people who otherwise could not afford it to buy homes and, by joining together, they would especially have the advantage of scale that would increase efficiency and bring down the costs of housebuilding.<sup>24</sup> Short of the

---

23. Ibid., p. 21.

24. Ibid., p. 16. Wood refers to the success of such ventures in England, but does not provide specific examples. Letchworth Garden City was funded through a joint stock company, but this form of financing in fact limited the ability of its developers to construct houses and other facilities. See Walter L. Creese, The Search for Environ-

establishment of development companies,

The few farsighted real estate operators who are making it their business to plan and develop a property in its entirety, from the subdivision of the acreage to the completion of all the improvements, including the houses, should be encouraged.<sup>25</sup>

The scheme that Wood offered in Community Homes to demonstrate his ideas built upon the already widespread block of the grid as the design unit as well as the social and, ultimately, political unit. He was not concerned here with the design of individual houses, but with the organization of a neighborhood and its services in an extendable, modular form. Within a block in which ten to thirteen single-family houses, depending on costs, marked the perimeter, a common landscaped court was set aside for general use and as a protected children's play area. Garages were clustered, eliminating the need for individual driveways. A service building was included that would house a caretaker who would run the centralized heating plant and garbage incinerator, and who would serve as a sort of concierge for the block, taking deliveries, for example. Wood thought that the block might even develop beyond a functional unit into a civic unit:

If the scheme included a large number of adjacent blocks, the owners could, by appointing a representative from each block, secure a committee who would thoroughly understand the requirements and be competent to provide for the advantageous development of schools,

---

ment. The Garden City: Before and After (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1966), pp. 215-16.

25. Ibid., p. 18.



playgrounds, civic centers, and other necessary improvements. And why could we not develop a better, more efficient, community political system as a result of this co-operation?<sup>26</sup>

Wood's ideas were not unique in this period. His scheme, for example, reflects many of the same ideals that shaped Clarence A. Perry's neighborhood unity plan, which had not been published yet. Rather, what is significant to us about Wood's proposals is the fact that they do share a number of the assumptions that characterized contemporary housing discussions. We will examine these more fully in Chapter 5.

The Ford Homes project certainly did not fulfill the ideal sketched by Wood in Community Homes. But it is possible that his convictions regarding the centrality of decent housing to the physical and moral well-being of American citizens may have appealed to Ford as yet another challenge to his ability to get things done, and contributed to the decision to support the undertaking.

Some of Wood's ideas may have influenced the direction that the development took. He may have urged the institution of the policy whereby Ford employees received preference as house buyers, but were not the exclusive purchasers. As he wrote to a business correspondent in 1919, in that way the feeling of a company town would be avoided.<sup>27</sup>

---

26. Ibid., p. 23.

27. Letter from Wood to Ajax Rubber Co., 11 December 1919, in the Ford Archives, Accession 47, Box 2. Although company towns continued to be built, many employers rejected the idea as authoritarian or at least potentially trouble-

Albert Wood himself moved into one of the first houses to be completed in 1919, and lived there until 1925. The head of mechanical work for the project, Harry C. Vicary, also<sup>28</sup> bought one of the houses and lived there until 1978.

Prices were too high for unskilled workers to afford, ranging from \$6,750 to \$7,750 in 1919. By the middle of 1920, costs had increased, and this was reflected in a<sup>29</sup> price range of \$8,750 to \$9,550. By the end of 1921, the houses were not selling as quickly and prices may have fallen, but full financial records have not survived.

Wood's claim for the efficiency of large-scale projects undertaken by a single developer also would have

---

some in the wake of the experiences at Pullman, Illinois. See Stanly Buder, Pullman: An Experiment in Industrial Order and Community Planning, 1880-1930 (New York: Oxford University Press, 1967).

28. Reminiscences of Harry C. Vicary and Gary Dymski, "Ford Homes," both typescripts in the library of the Dearborn Historical Society; personal communication from the family of Albert Wood, June 1987.

29. Dearborn Realty and Construction Company files, Ford Archives. See also Joseph Oldenburg, "Ford Homes Historic District," Dearborn Historian 20 (Spring 1980): 41. These prices are higher than the average cost of a new single-family house in the United States, which was \$4,320 in 1920 and \$3,972 in 1921, according to housing reformer Leifur Magnusson in International Labour Office, The Housing Situation in the United States (Geneva: International Labour Office, 1925), p. 18; Blanche Halbert, ed. The Better Homes Manual (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1931), p. 53, citing the April 1931 Monthly Labor Review analysis of building permits in 257 cities. They are also somewhat higher than prices in a comparable development for auto workers in Flint, built in the same years by General Motors. There, prices ranged from \$3,500 to \$8,500, with the majority selling for \$5,000-5,500. Jay Hicks, "Houses by General Motors: The Flint Housing Crisis and GMC," Michigan History 71 (March/April 1987): 38.

complemented Ford's general outlook and approach to his endeavors. The Dearborn Realty and Construction Company was organized according to the pattern of "the few far-sighted real estate operators" that Wood commended. Although the final profits over its twenty-four years of existence seem to have amounted to over \$600,000,<sup>30</sup> an early statement about the project asserted that "This is strictly a non-profit plan. We are interested solely in enabling our workmen to live in Dearborn without paying the excess tax which all real estate speculation imposes on home buyers."<sup>31</sup> The sole restriction applied to the buyer, stipulating that the house could not be resold for at least seven years, was also intended to eliminate the possibility of speculative activity.

The Company's reservation of the right to buy back a house within the first seven years of occupancy if the buyer was considered to be "undesirable" reflected the tradition of surveillance in Ford's enterprises more than it advanced Wood's vision of civic development.<sup>32</sup> And the

---

30. See Liebold. Nevins and Hill suggest that no more than two percent profit was made by the company over twenty years, p. 349. The selling prices of the houses included ten percent of the materials, labor and overhead costs as profit; they were sold directly to the purchaser, without the involvement of banks, at the customary rate of six percent interest.

31. E. G. Liebold, "Ford Tractor Company to Build Homes at Cost," Detroit Journal, 11 April 1919, pp. 1, 29.

32. Liebold, in his Reminiscences, recalled only one case in which this clause had been used, provoked by complaints about one resident's home winemaking activities. Although

two social improvements that the Company committed itself to providing that would have reflected Wood's conception of the needs that a neighborhood committee might undertake to redress, were only partially carried out. One was a park and playground area, originally allocated to the strip of land at the northern boundary of the tract, bordering the Michigan Central Railroad tracks. This aspect of the project was never completed, and the area remained undeveloped, without special equipment or landscaping. However, this did not prevent it from functioning as an open and informal play area.

The Dearborn Realty and Construction Company did contract with the school district to build an elementary school. Southwestern (now DuVall) School, at Beech and Military, opened in September 1921. It had ten classrooms to serve the subdivision and to relieve overcrowding elsewhere in the district. By 1928, 320 children were attending grades kindergarten through six. In Chapter 5, we will discuss contemporary thought on the importance of such facilities to community design, but it is worth noting here the limited role conceived for this school. While it met the minimal needs of the schoolchildren, it was not originally equipped with a gymnasium, a library or a kitchen to

---

the term "undesireable" was vague, it undoubtedly was intended to cover those buyers whose activities were regarded as socially and morally suspect. Such surveillance echoes that of the Ford Sociological Department mentioned in note 5.

33

prepare hot food.

While the establishment of community amenities was not a priority, then, for the Ford Homes developers, greater emphasis was placed on providing modern services. Electricity and telephone connections reached each home from utility poles located in alleys behind the houses. Street light wiring ran underground, following the "boulevard" lighting system. As one might anticipate, the design of curbs was carefully considered; they were curved so that auto tires would not rub against them. And house purchasers could request construction of a garage, which was optional. But beyond these features, it was the organization of the process of construction that seemed to offer to the developers fertile ground for innovation.

#### The Construction of the Subdivision

The Dearborn Realty and Construction Company was incorporated on January 10, 1919. Henry Ford was not officially involved in the firm, presumably so that the project "could succeed on its own merit,"<sup>34</sup> rather than through the influence of Ford's presence, but his connections to it were never in doubt. The president of the company was E. G. Liebold, Ford's personal secretary, and Edsel Ford, his son, was its vice president.

---

33. Tara B. Gnau, "School Sketches, Part III: DuVall School," Dearborn Historian 17 (August 1977): 126; Oldenburg, p. 43. No explanation of these omissions was provided.

34. Oldenburg, p. 31.

By April 1919, the Dearborn Realty and Construction Company purchased three hundred and twelve lots in a subdivision west of the Ford tractor plant. The entire tract had been bought in 1890 by J. B. Molony, who immediately subdivided it into five hundred and two lots, measuring fifty by one hundred and twenty-five feet for the most part, on nine blocks divided by eight sixty-foot-wide streets and including twenty-foot alleys in the center of each block.<sup>35</sup> Only a few of these lots had been sold when, in 1898, the previous owner of the land foreclosed on Molony's unpaid deed. In 1910, the land was bought by Henry Ford, from whom the Dearborn Realty and Construction Company subsequently purchased it.

The workforce for the construction of the subdivision was drawn from the ranks of Ford employees. At any one time, from two hundred and fifty to five hundred men were at the work site, some of whom had worked on earlier Ford construction projects, such as the recently completed Henry Ford Hospital.<sup>36</sup> As Liebold wrote, "This is in accord with Mr. Ford's belief that men ought to spend part of the year<sup>37</sup> outside factory walls."

---

35. Ibid., p. 36.

36. "Fords Build Model Homes to House Workers in Dearborn," Detroit Journal, 21 July 1919, p. 2; "Builders with Brains Plus Courage Create an Ideal Colony for Workers," Dearborn Independent, 6 December 1919, pp. 8, 9.

37. Liebold, "Ford Tractor Company;" Henry Ford, Ford Ideals: Being a Selection from "Mr. Ford's Page" in the Dearborn Independent (Dearborn, Mich.: The Dearborn Publishing Co., 1926): p. 159.

The first structure to be built was the office, located on Nowlin between the railroad tracks and Park.<sup>38</sup> In the next block of Nowlin, between Park and Nona, a planing mill, lumber warehouse, and plumbing and tin shop were erected. Brick, lumber, piping and ducts for the heating system were bought in bulk and transported to the site on the Michigan Central tracks. In the shops, these materials were cut to standardized sizes and then taken to the building sites in narrow-gauge railway cars pulled by horses. The windows, casings, moldings, frames, doors and fixtures were completely standardized and were assembled in the shops.

Through the purchase of materials in bulk and the standardization of parts, costs were reduced. According to one account, "\$300 is being saved on the heating systems alone in each home, while the economy in lumber construction will be even greater."<sup>39</sup> This savings helped offset the cost of the relatively high quality materials that were used: for example, oak floors were put in until the cost climbed too high, and a steel beam was used in the basement to support the superstructure.

Construction was organized according to the principles of assembly-line production. "Each crew has its own spe-

---

38. Descriptions of the construction process can be found in Liebold, Reminiscences and "Ford Tractor Company," and in Vicary.

39. Liebold, "Ford Tractor Company."

cialized work to do on a house. In this way, experts in their particular line are kept entirely on their own work, making both for efficient construction and speed."<sup>40</sup> An excavation crew, using Ford tractors, first dug the basements. A second crew laid the foundations. This crew was followed by one responsible for erecting the framework (Figure 1). Next, the interior finishing crew saw to the installation of plumbing and heating fixtures, electrical wiring, glazing, trim and painting. The last crew finished the exterior, including landscaping. As Liebold described it, "That was mass production applied to building."<sup>41</sup>

#### The Design of the Houses

Ninety-four houses were built between May and November, 1919. The remaining one hundred and fifty-six were constructed in 1920, with some of the work possibly carried over to 1921. All had been designed by Albert Wood in the months between the initiation of the project in what must have been late 1918 and the beginning of construction in May 1919. We have already seen that Wood had an independent interest in housing, so that in a sense he was ready for such an undertaking. Documentary accounts of the pro-

---

40. Ibid.

41. Liebold, Reminiscences, p. 241. I will examine the historical development of industrialized building in Chapter 4. By the end of the war, however, there was widespread awareness of the possibilities of the procedures applied here. As one architect noted, "The principle which Mr. Henry Ford has so successfully applied to the production of automobiles can be worked out for the homebuilder." Milton Dana Morrill, "Standardized Small Houses," Building Age (June 1920): 19.



ject often refer to design ideas that were the inspiration of Henry Ford or of Liebold, who authored many of these accounts; Wood's contribution is never emphasized. But it is possible that some of these ideas were influenced by Wood's own suggestions, and it is certainly the case that, at the very least, he was responsible for the integration of all desiderata into workable and competent designs. It is useful, therefore, to sketch the outlines of Wood's career preliminary to consideration of the houses he designed.

Albert Gardner Wood, Jr., was born in New York City in 1886.<sup>42</sup> His father was a builder and cabinetmaker, and his mother was a teacher and pianist. Wood attended Bunker Hill Grammar School in Boston, following which he apprenticed as a carpenter with his father. At 17, he traveled to the Pacific Coast and worked in a variety of locations until joining the architectural office of A. Warren Gould in Seattle. There, he studied architecture at night school and through correspondence courses, and he left Seattle having progressed from draftsman to designer to associate of the firm. He moved to Detroit sometime after 1912 to work in an architectural office one of whose clients was Henry Ford. When Ford began plans for the Henry Ford Hospital, he hired Wood for the job. Often referred to in

---

42. Unless otherwise noted, the facts of this account were conveyed by personal communication from the family of Albert Wood, June 1987.

Ford records as chief of construction for this project,  
 Wood also was its architect.<sup>43</sup> He became a member of the  
 American Institute of Architects in 1919.<sup>44</sup> After his work  
 on the Ford Homes, Wood left Ford to establish his own firm  
 in Detroit, and his commissions included houses, schools  
 and hospitals in the region. He moved to New York in 1932,  
 where he continued to work as an architect and, in 1934, he  
 founded an interior design and craftsmanship firm, Albert  
 Wood and Five Sons, that continues to specialize in the  
 design of church and synagogue interiors. Wood died in  
 1970.

The land bought by the Dearborn Realty and Construc-  
 tion Company for their housing project had already been  
 subdivided, as recounted above. Wood was presented with a  
 pre-existing grid of nine blocks interrupted by alleys,  
 divided into lots that measured mainly fifty by one hundred  
 and twenty-five feet. The only device used by the devel-  
 opers to shape the organization of houses in order to avoid  
 uniformity and create smaller clusters of neighbors was to  
 set houses at staggered intervals from the street. Groups  
 of three or four houses were placed alternately twenty-four  
 or thirty-two feet from the street, but still aligned  
 parallel to it. Liebold claimed that this had been his  
 idea, although Wood had clearly been interested in ways to

---

43. See, for example, Western Architect 34 (April 1925):  
 plates 10-13, for photographs.

44. George S. Koyl, American Architects Directory, 2nd ed.  
 (New York: R. R. Bowker, 1962).

45

cluster houses.

From the beginning, it seems, the intention of the developers was to avoid "the error of other towns where rows of houses, all looking alike, giv[e] a monotonous tone to the neighborhood."<sup>46</sup> To achieve this end, three strategies were used: Wood designed six different models of houses; the models were allocated to specific lots in a varied order; and several exterior claddings and colors of roofing shingles were used. The second strategy meant that the purchaser could select the model he or she wanted, but not necessarily the lot. The exteriors were wood clapboard siding in two widths, brick veneer, or cedar shingles, or combinations of these.

The diversity achieved in these ways was balanced by the scheme's overall design unity and by the use of modular elements. Wood used a simplified Colonial vocabulary of forms to articulate the surfaces and the massing of the houses (Figures 2 through 8). The rectangular boxiness of the plans was relieved by bold asymmetrical roof lines, accented by large unified dormer windows, gables, and a centrally-placed chimney. The few decorative features were chosen for their ability to convey the aura of Colonial

---

45. Liebold, Reminiscences, p. 239.

46. Liebold, "Ford Tractor Company." Liebold could have had in mind urban rowhouses or double-deckers, both visible in Detroit, or company towns with uniform rows of detached houses. For an example of the latter, see Gwendolyn Wright, Building the Dream (New York: Pantheon Books, 1981), p. 191.

style in the most economical way. Shutters surround those second floor windows that face the street; small fanlights mark the attic; columns or pilastered posts frame the porch; carved hoods in either an arched or pedimented form mark the front entrances; and wood trim, around doors and windows and, especially, in a broad band above the first floor windows, unifies each composition. Colonial elements were in wide use by this period, and we will consider the significance of the choice of these stylistic references in the Ford Homes in a later chapter.

The six models that Wood developed were referred to simply by letter designations.<sup>47</sup> Model A presents the elements of design in the purest way, and can be used as the standard in terms of which we can analyze the other models as variations on its themes (Figure 2). The gable that faces the street embraces the second-story windows. On one side, the smooth slope of the pitched roof is uninterrupted; on the other side, a cross-gable rises from the first floor and intersects the main mass (Figure 3). The modular elements of the first story elevation are present in their simplest form: entrance, windows, and porch.

Models B and C can be viewed as compressed forms of this arrangement (Figures 4 and 5). At the first-story level, two of the three modules have been superimposed, so that these houses are, visually, two modules wide. The

---

47. One is reminded that Ford designated his automobile models in the same way.

porch has been set substantially within the perimeter of the house, as a kind of loggia, with either the entrance, in the case of model B, or windowed doors, in model C, set at the back of the porch. The roof lines of these models are the same, but rotated to present two different aspects to the street. In model B, the gable end and its asymmetrical treatment face the street, while in model C the slope of the roof with its centralized dormer projects a symmetrical image on the public facade.

Models E and F represent expanded versions of model A (Figures 6 and 7). Two sets of first-story windows are found on their street facades, flanking the entrance. In model E, the second window is smaller than the main set and does not create a symmetrical design as is found in model F. Hipped roofs are used in these models, with modifications. At the porch module of model E, the roof extends down to the base of the second-story windows, so that the porch extension is embraced within the silhouette of the main mass. In model F, a pitched roof is superimposed on the hipped roof, so that the truncated gable end visually joins the porch to the body of the house.

Model D contains aspects of both the compressed and the expanded variations (Figure 8). It includes two sets of window modules, but its entrance is placed within the loggia-like corner porch. The truncated hipped roof is broken by a projecting flattened gable on one side of the street facade.

The plans of all models correspond to the notion of the small, efficient house that had evolved from the turn of the century.<sup>48</sup> Thirteen houses were built with four bedrooms, using a variant of model D. All of the others had three bedrooms. The dimensions of the master bedroom averaged fifteen by ten feet, and the smaller bedrooms were about ten by ten feet. The single bathroom was also on the second floor, measured about eight by four feet, and was tiled and fitted with vitreous iron fixtures (Figure 9).<sup>49</sup> On the first floor, the living room, with fireplace, averaged twelve by eighteen feet and the dining room measured about ten by fifteen feet (Figure 10). The kitchen was about ten by twelve feet (Figure 11). A small entrance vestibule and the porch completed the array of rooms. All houses had full basements. Every model contained these elements, although the arrangement of spaces varied. As Liebold recalled, "They were all based on one central plan

---

48. For the fullest discussion of this evolution, see Gwendolyn Wright, Moralism and the Model Home: Domestic Architecture and Cultural Conflict in Chicago, 1873-1913 (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1980). A convenient source of examples of contemporary houses with similar plans and dimensions is Robert T. Jones, ed. Authentic Small Houses of the Twenties: Illustrations and Floor Plans of 254 Characteristic Homes (New York: Dover, 1987, reprint ed. of Small Homes of Architectural Distinction: A Book of Suggested Plans Designed by The Architects' Small House Service Bureau, Inc., New York: Harper and Brothers, 1929).

49. These are more commonly referred to as porcelain-enamelled cast-iron fixtures. By the First World War, this equipment, its arrangement, and the tiling of bathroom surfaces had become typical. Bekka Lindstrom, "Post-Victorian Interiors: Bathrooms," Old House Journal 15 (November-December 1987): 56-61.

50

and just altered in details."

### Conclusion

The Ford Homes were developed, then, to provide much-needed housing for plant workers and others in a community that was undergoing rapid growth through industry. This project was not unique, even within the relatively new auto industry. General Motors, for example, built housing for its workers in Flint and elsewhere.<sup>51</sup> In these developments, the companies were taking up the slack for private developers in a period of building inactivity. The Ford enterprise, like the others, was intended neither to establish a company town, nor was it a philanthropic act. Rather than creating a model community in the architectural or social senses, the Ford scheme was intended as a model for the real estate community. Perhaps influenced by the achievements of the federal government's war workers' housing projects developed under the pressures of World War I, and also, perhaps, eager to insure that construction revert in peacetime to the private sector, the Ford devel-

---

50. Liebold, Reminiscences, p. 240. Other discussions of plans appear in Liebold, "Ford Tractor Company," "Builders with Brains." Although room dimensions are slightly larger, the complement of rooms is the same as that recommended for a laborer's cottage by Benjamin R. Andrews, an associate professor of household economics at Teachers College, Columbia University, in Economics of the Household: Its Administration and Finance (New York: Macmillan, 1923), p. 183.

51. In 1919-20, the Modern Housing Corporation, a GMC subsidiary, built 950 houses in Flint. See Jay Hicks, "Houses by General Motors: The Flint Housing Crisis and GMC," Michigan History 71 (March/April 1987): 32-39.

opers were concerned principally with issues of speed and numbers.<sup>52</sup> The extension of the standardized elements embedded in balloon-frame construction, the application of assembly-line techniques to the building stages, and the integration of mechanical equipment into these activities were the aspects of the development that were intended to streamline construction and produce more housing faster. These techniques would enable developers to reduce costs in time, labor and materials without sacrificing amenities for the homeowners. The process itself would put a brake on excessive speculation because the risks of building would be minimized by controlling the development of an entire neighborhood, and profits would be guaranteed by the cost reductions resulting from this large-scale construction. In a sense, therefore, the Ford project's historical significance is based on its commitment to demonstrating how the ethics of the real estate development business would be improved for the benefit of homeowners and, by extension, for workers, industries and society as a whole, through the transformation of the process of construction.

Perhaps this explains why most of Wood's proposals, as he formulated them in Community Homes, were not realized in the Ford project. For the developers were concerned more

---

52. Examples of housing produced by the United State Shipping Board and by the Department of Labor can be found in Homes for Workmen (New Orleans: Southern Pine Association, 1919). A bibliography of sources on government projects can be found in Giorgio Ciucci, et al., The American City: From the Civil War to the New Deal (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1979), pp. 282-84.



with innovations in the production process than with experiments in community design.

I will return at a later point to the themes that are touched on here concerning the relationships among developers, builders and architects, and the place of the construction process in the development of housing, but first we will consider the second Detroit area subdivision, Brightmoor. The two projects share certain features of mass production in their building and design processes, and some of the initiatives of Brightmoor's developer, B. E. Taylor, regarding the creation of a sense of neighborhood can be compared and contrasted with Albert Wood's proposals. Before we consider the underlying parallels that characterize these schemes, however, we will focus on the history of Brightmoor and its development. In this way we will begin with a sense of the nuances of each particular subdivision that inflect the common pattern of the period.

### Brightmoor

#### Introduction

Aspects of the activities of realtor B. E. Taylor bear out some of the critiques of rampant subdividing that were made in studies of real estate development in Detroit in the twenties. The scale of his enterprise was enormous. As one account states, "Mr. Taylor has developed and improved building lots in the Grand River Avenue district which total one-third of all present vacant improved building lots in the city of Detroit under fifteen hundred

dollars in value."<sup>53</sup> Between 1921 and 1925, Taylor bought twenty-eight parcels of land in this district and subdivided them into 15,511 lots, not including areas subdivided for light industrial uses. As late as 1938, only twenty-five percent of these 4,580 acres of lots had been developed, indicating that many of the lots had been bought for purposes of speculation alone, and resulting in numerous pockets of vacant land.<sup>54</sup>

These facts represent only part of Taylor's activities, however. He also built houses, enticed businesses to the area, and constructed community facilities. In March, 1922, the first family moved into Brightmoor; by the end of 1925, the community had a population of 11,319 living in 3,958 houses, and there were 190 businesses in operation.<sup>55</sup> A number of the community institutions that were fostered by Taylor, including the local newspaper and the community center, which was established in 1922 as a settlement house, continue to operate today. Although the neighborhood was physically divided by the construction of Interstate 96, its identity remains intact.

Partly as a result of its community center, Brightmoor

---

53. Clarence M. Burton, The City of Detroit, Michigan, 1701-1922 (Detroit: S. J. Clarke Publishing Co., 1922), 3: 206.

54. Brightmoor Community Center, Inc., Brightmoor, A Community in Action (Detroit: Brightmoor Community Center, 1940), in the Burton Historical Collection of the Detroit Public Library.

55. Ibid., quoting "B. E. Taylor's Official Brightmoor Census" of April 1925.

was the object of a certain amount of study almost from its inception, mainly by social workers. A 1925 study by the Michigan Department of Health found a high incidence of diarrheal infections in Brightmoor children, due to the lack of adequate sewage disposal.<sup>56</sup> Taylor's houses did not include indoor bathrooms; as late as 1938, only three-quarters of Brightmoor homes had inside toilet facilities. Brightmoor houses were not unique in their lack of amenities. In its 1939 Study of Subdivision Development in the Detroit Metropolitan Area, the Michigan Planning Commission analyzed the efficacy of existing patterns of building restrictions. It found that there were no attempts to insure minimum standards for the ninety-one percent of all houses that cost under \$3,000, more than half of which were constructed without furnaces, bathrooms or basements.<sup>57</sup> Brightmoor houses included none of these features.

At the start, the community had no paved streets, no street lights, and no water connections; water was provided by a water wagon. By 1924, though, water was being piped in from the city of Detroit and electrical connections were installed. In that part of Brightmoor not annexed by Detroit in 1926, and included today as part of Redford Township, the streets remain unpaved.<sup>58</sup>

---

56. Ibid.

57. Michigan Planning Commission, p. 25.

58. This conforms to the pattern of urban expansion in the United States in the twenties that is analyzed by Jon C.

The houses in Brightmoor cost just under \$2,000 in 1924, which was affordable to the working class population that Taylor attracted.<sup>59</sup> A typical ad for the subdivision in the Detroit Free Press in April, 1924, mentioned among its features the fact that one of the main streets of the neighborhood, "Twelfth Street (paved) runs directly to the front door of the Ford Highland Park Plant."<sup>60</sup> The plant lies about seven miles due east from the intersection of Twelfth (now Fenkell) and Burt Road (Map 1).

As we noted earlier, the Detroit area was a magnet for people looking for work in the industrial sector in the period before and after the First World War. In the years from 1920 to 1930, most of these newcomers were between the ages of fifteen and thirty.<sup>61</sup> In 1920, although 29.6% of the population of the United States were between the ages of 25 and 44, 40% of Detroit's population were in this

---

Teaford, City and Suburb: The Political Fragmentation of Metropolitan America 1850-1970 (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1979), in chapter 5, "The Suburban Ascendancy, 1910-1940." He notes, p. 87, that "Detroit did not annex Hamtramck with its massive Dodge plant, Highland Park with its huge Ford factory, or the string of Grosse Pointes with their handsome mansions. Instead it absorbed miles of open country to the northwest with a low tax valuation and with no water mains, paved streets, or street lights." This area includes Brightmoor.

59. H. C. L. Jackson, "Building a Bungalow City in 18 Months," Building Age and The Builders' Journal (April 1924): 83.

60. Detroit Free Press, 6 April 1924, real estate sec., p. 5.

61. Elmer Akers, Southern Whites in Detroit (Ann Arbor: University Microfilms, 1979), p. 3.

<sup>62</sup>  
range. Thus, Detroit attracted settlers who were in their prime working years, and who were beginning to establish families.

Within this broad group of newcomers, it appears that Brightmoor attracted primarily migrants from within the United States, especially from Appalachia and the south. According to the 15th Decennial Census of the United States in 1930, 7.6% of the total native white population of Detroit had been born in those regions, and almost all of the 79,274 individuals represented by this figure had come north in the decade of the twenties. <sup>63</sup> At least one ad for Brightmoor describes it as a "100% American neighborhood," suggesting that foreigners were not encouraged to settle there. <sup>64</sup> As late as 1938, the foreign born accounted for more than 10% but less than 19% of the registered voters of this area. <sup>65</sup> A report written by the Wayne University School of Public Affairs and Social Work in 1941 described Brightmoor as a predominantly white, Protestant, working

---

62. Levine, p. 12.

63. Akers, p. 2. One source mentions Paducah, Kentucky, and Jonesboro, Tennessee, as particular areas from which migrants came to Detroit. See Erdmann Beynon, "The Southern White Laborer Migrates to Michigan," American Sociological Review 3 (June 1938): 339, n. 14.

64. Detroit Free Press, 6 April 1924, real estate sec., p. 5.

65. Donald S. Hecock and Harry A. Trevelyan, Detroit Voters and Recent Elections (Detroit: Bureau of Governmental Research, School of Public Affairs and Social Work, Wayne University, 1938), map II.

66

class community.

Taylor also may have solicited migrants from other states. One account claims that he hired salesmen in distant cities, and then

Greyhound busses, six or ten a week, would bring people from Ohio, Kentucky, Michigan and farther to Detroit. They would be put up in a nice downtown hotel, taken to a good dinner and show, and the next morning they would be brought to Brightmoor to look over the propositions that had been made to them in their home towns.<sup>67</sup>

Relatively young families, then, often from rural, undeveloped areas, were among the early purchasers of homes in Brightmoor.<sup>68</sup> The conditions they found there may not have been substantially different from those they had left, but the threats they posed to public health in a denser, urban setting were both more visible and potentially more dangerous. In May 1924, Taylor commissioned the Committee on Nursing Activities of the American Red Cross to operate at the community center. The center also provided recreational programs for children, cooking, sewing, gardening and other classes for women, a small library, and counsel-

---

66. Citizens Research Council of Michigan, A Social Study of Brightmoor, a Community of Detroit (Detroit: Wayne University School of Public Affairs and Social Work, 1941). The 1940 report by the Brightmoor Community Center noted that there had been a restriction against sales to blacks.

67. Frederick W. DesAutels, The Township of Redford, Its Heritage and History, 1975, p. 39. Similarly, when there had been a shortage of workers during the early years of the auto industry, "The Employers' Association [of Detroit] systematically exerted itself through agents, circulars, and news stories to draw men to the city." Nevins, p. 517.

68. Nine out of ten migrants from the south were from rural areas. Akers, pp. 4, 6.

ing by social workers to integrate the residents of Brightmoor into a new environment. We recall that Albert Wood's proposals for community design were inspired by the achievements of Hull House. At Brightmoor, Taylor created a settlement house to provide a focus for neighborhood activities.

#### B. E. Taylor, the Developer of Brightmoor

Burt Eddy Taylor was born in Sandusky, Ohio, in 1877.<sup>69</sup> He graduated from Ohio Wesleyan University in 1899. His business career began at the American Crayon Company, in Sandusky, where he became vice president. Beginning in 1908, he surveyed real estate projects and possibilities in large Great Lakes cities, and determined that Detroit's growth as a result of the new automobile industry held the greatest potential. At some point, in Sandusky, he had sold bicycles on the installment plan, and he thought that the same principle could be applied successfully to the sale of real estate and housing.<sup>70</sup> It seems that he developed subdivisions along these lines in Akron, Ohio, and in Kentucky.<sup>71</sup> Around 1913-14, Taylor settled in Detroit and began to purchase tracts of land

---

69. The source for biographical material on Taylor is Burton, 3: 206, 209, unless otherwise noted.

70. Personal communication from Burt Eddy Taylor, Jr., 25 September 1985. By comparison, the installment sale of autos emerged as a strategy in 1910. Nevins and Hill, p. 147.

71. Personal communication from B. E. Taylor, Jr., January 1986, who had no further information on their locations.

near Grand River Avenue close to the Detroit city limit.  
His enterprise flourished and grew, and he extended his activities throughout the northwestern section of the area. In 1922, his career as a realtor was sufficiently established for him to serve as general chairman of the Detroit  
73  
Better Homes and Building exhibition.

A listing of Taylor's subdivisions totals ninety-five tracts, including the twenty-eight that became  
74  
Brightmoor. In the course of the twenties, Taylor developed higher-priced properties, including some that were contiguous with golf courses, and his firm hired architects  
75  
to design the houses for these. The business suffered reversals during the Depression, but began to revive just before World War II. Taylor's son, Burt Eddy Taylor, Jr., continued the work of the firm.

---

72. DesAutels, p. 39; personal communication from B. E. Taylor, Jr., 14 December 1985.

73. Brightmoor clipping file, Burton Historical Collection, Detroit Public Library. The role of such exhibitions as promotional arenas for developers' activities will be discussed in Chapters 4 and 5.

74. List provided by B. E. Taylor, Jr.

75. Personal communication from B. E. Taylor, Jr., 25 September 1985. These later subdivisions follow more closely the precedent established by Kansas City developer J. C. Nichols' influential Country Club District, which will be discussed in later chapters. I am focusing on Brightmoor here because despite the blatant contrast it offers, in terms of amenities and design, there are instructive underlying similarities. Uncovering these will enable us to perceive the pattern and rationale that guided subdivision development in the United States in the twenties.



### The Development of Brightmoor

Brightmoor lies about twelve miles northwest of the Detroit city hall, its streets, for the most part, conforming to the direction of the rectilinear grid that characterizes all but the oldest part of the city. Whereas early French settlement had been oriented to the riverfronts, the street plan of most of the Detroit metropolitan area followed the section lines of the territorial land survey that began in 1815 and was oriented to the points of the compass.

<sup>76</sup> The River Rouge, one of the few geographical features of this flat expanse, snakes through the western part of Brightmoor. The band of parkland flanking it is the northern extension of River Rouge Park, whose development was completed in the 1920s.

In 1921, when Taylor began to buy tracts for what would become Brightmoor, this area was farmland. Its eastern edge was about a mile from the Detroit city limits, and it was part of Redford Township. In January 1926, Detroit concluded its geographical growth by annexing a block of land that included Brightmoor as far west as Telegraph Road, which remains virtually the city limit.<sup>77</sup> This brought Brightmoor residents under the umbrella of city

---

76. A brief sketch of Detroit's early planning history can be found in "Detroit Plans Its Future," American Society of Planning Officials Newsletter 19 (October 1953): 73-74. See also W. Hawkins Ferry, The Buildings of Detroit: A History, rev. ed. (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1980), p. 358.

77. The city limit lies one-half block east of Telegraph Road.

services, such as police and fire protection; the latter had been provided by a volunteer company, but there had been no police or governmental structure.<sup>78</sup> Paved streets<sup>79</sup> and street lights were other benefits of annexation.

The southern boundary of Brightmoor was the Pere Marquette (now C & O) Railroad tracks. When Brightmoor was developed, the fastest access to downtown was along Grand River Avenue, one of the radial thoroughfares that follow original Indian trails, widened by territorial governor Lewis Cass in 1830 to serve as military roads. Now, Interstate 96 provides a direct route to downtown, as well as connections to other directions, though it also segments the community. The other major thoroughfare, aside from those following the section lines, linking Brightmoor with other sectors of the city is Outer Drive. This forty-five-mile boulevard was based on a proposal made by Edward A. Bennett in the city plan that he prepared for Detroit in 1915. It runs an eccentric course, weaving through the grid from the Detroit River at Ecorse, through Dearborn and along the River Rouge, across northwestern Detroit, and ends at the traditionally fashionable north-central section of the city. It was completed in the 1920s.

Taylor had bought thirty-three parcels of land before he purchased his first Brightmoor tract, the plat for which

---

78. Polk's Redford, Brightmoor and Rosedale Park Directory (Detroit: R. L. Polk and Co., 1925).

79. See note 57.

80

he registered in June 1921. He filed each of the twenty-seven succeeding subdivisions under the name "Brightmoor," usually using the names of the farmers from whom he bought the land as subtitles. Each tract was subdivided into uniform lots generally measuring 30-34 by 100-125 feet; business lots, on the major streets, generally measured twenty feet, although corner lots were larger. The smallest tract, "Elmoor," was filed in August 1921 and yielded 175 lots; the largest, "Mercier," was registered in February 1925 and amounted to 1,440 lots. Central alleys generally divided the blocks.

Lots could be bought without improvement, as an investment, and also bought by speculative builders, but many purchasers had Taylor build a house on their lot (Figure 12). According to the account of the development published in Building Age in April 1924, "the cry for houses swelled and swelled until the construction department [of the Taylor firm] had to work feverish overtime hours to keep  
81  
abreast of the demand."

Taylor contracted with carpenters for the construction of the houses. Each contractor hired from three to eight men, and at the peak of construction as many as thirty-two carpenters' crews were at work in the subdivision. Plumbing, wiring, painting, and paper-hanging were done by sepa-

---

80. The plat books are located in the Wayne County Real Estate Index Department, City-County Building, Detroit.

81. Jackson, p. 83.

rate contractors.

Taylor provided all of the materials used in the construction of the houses, which were bought in quantity to reduce costs. The houses were built to plans that followed, as closely as possible, the standard sizes of materials, so that the minimum amount of time was expended preparing them and waste was also minimized.

Plans were designed for four-, five- and six-room bungalows, as Taylor and the press called them, including the kitchen; there were no indoor bathrooms. The houses were built on cedar posts and timber foundations, and did not include basements. All houses had a front porch. Living rooms generally had two windows, but bedrooms were designed with one window even when it would have been feasible to install another on an adjacent wall (Figures 13, 14, 15, 16 and 17).

The two four-room models contain the same spaces, rearranged within their 440-square-feet. Number 614 presents its gable end to the street; the interior partitions that divide the space in half to left and right follow the direction of the ridge line (Figure 18). In Number 514, the ridge line parallels the street and the bisecting wall divides the space equally between front and back (Figure 19). By adding a dormer window to the attic space, an enlarged version of number 514, consisting of five rooms, was available. Model 714 contains six rooms within slightly under six hundred square feet. The space is divided

into thirds, each containing two rooms, from front to back.

#### Conclusion: Situating Brightmoor

The bungalows that Taylor built at Brightmoor, then, are characterized by their simplicity of form and lack of detailing, small size, and absence of amenities. It seems to me that there are two historical housing contexts that enable us to situate this subdivision analytically. The houses in Brightmoor represent an intersection of folk-traditional and working-class cultures with mass production.

One of the aspects of the history of housing in Detroit that Zunz discusses in his study of community-building is what he calls the "dual housing market," consisting of the formal housing market on the one hand, and of owner-builders on the other.<sup>82</sup> He finds that homeownership was prevalent throughout the period of his study, 1880-1920, especially within ethnic working-class neighborhoods often made up of recent immigrants. The formal housing market, composed of realtors, architects and professional builders, served the middle and upper classes, but the work of these groups was too expensive for the majority of those who wanted houses. Their desires for houses did not go unmet, however: an alternative system developed, within the ethnic communities. This drew somewhat on local craftsmen and businesses, but principally it

---

82. Zunz, pp. 161 ff.

was forged by the homeowners themselves, who built their own houses. Zunz found that the commitment to homeownership was so strong within these communities that housebuilding was the focus of peoples' energies. Amenities such as pavements and sewer connections, which would have increased basic expenses, were secondary considerations, and often were not installed until years after the houses had been constructed. The formal housing market, on the other hand, used such infrastructural elements to shape the growth of the city into new areas, such as along the Woodward corridor, in advance of residential construction.

Seen in the light of this historical context, Taylor's development at Brightmoor seems to represent a merging of these parallel activities. Taylor formalized the level of basic housebuilding that traditionally characterized working-class neighborhoods. The housing that he provided was not substantially different from what people had constructed for themselves within their ethnic neighborhoods. But by subdividing and building on a large scale, he extended the services of the formal housing market to a class that had previously been independent of it, regularizing its access to housing within the framework of speculative real estate development. Detroit's rapid growth in population and the accompanying housing crisis made this more feasible in the twenties than it had been earlier. Also, Taylor addressed a migrant group that did not already have a developed neighborhood network into which they could fit.

Taylor's activities as a "community-builder," which was how he characterized his business, supplanted the matrix of neighborhood institutions built up over time with a combination of ready-made commercial and welfare facilities.

The houses of Brightmoor, thus, share features with those historically constructed by working-class owner-builders within evolving ethnic communities in Detroit. What differentiates them from this tradition, however, is their assimilation into the processes of the formal housing market, which simultaneously took over the responsibility for shaping neighborhood life.

The specific form that Brightmoor houses took suggests a relationship to another aspect of the tradition of owner-builder housing. It is possible that Taylor built houses that would be familiar in a number of respects to the people who would be buying them. Evidence linking Taylor

---

83. In light of this analysis, the housing developments that Brightmoor might seem to resemble are company towns, in which housing and community facilities are provided, ab nihilo, for a population of newcomers. The trend in company towns, in the aftermath of Pullman, was in fact to minimize the control of the employer and to try to approach as closely as possible the free market model of speculative development. Also, period discussions of company towns, as in the essays collected in Homes for Workmen, emphasize the garden suburb tradition in which the design of the neighborhood and the house is believed to contribute to the moral development of the residents, obviating the need for more direct paternalistic interventions. Taylor, on the other hand, preserved many of the deficiencies of working-class owner-builder housing, which were also found in some of the company-provided housing critiqued by reformers such as Leifur Magnusson in Homes for Workmen ("Housing by Employers in the United States," pp. 39-48) and elsewhere. Taylor solicited already existing institutions -- churches, businesses and, especially, the state, for educational and welfare services -- to mold the subdivision into a community.

with the Appalachian region is sketchy, and no definite source for the Brightmoor houses can be specified. But in a number of ways they recall the folk-traditional architecture of the rural upland south.

A recent study of such traditional building, Charles Martin's Hollybush: Folk Buildings and Social Change in an Appalachian Community, reconstructs the architectural development of a small community in eastern Kentucky that

84

existed from 1881 to 1960. The parallels are striking enough to pursue a bit further, although we cannot claim that Taylor's houses drew on such specific models. The example of Hollybush allows us to focus on a community that has been studied in depth, while its houses are part of the larger history of folk-traditional building whose forms

85

have been analyzed by Henry Glassie and others.

Like Brightmoor's, Hollybush's houses were small, often under three hundred square feet (Figures 21 and 22). Frequently, they consisted of only one room, although there was a trend toward providing separate rooms during the

---

84. Charles E. Martin, Hollybush: Folk Buildings and Social Change in an Appalachian Community (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1984).

85. For example, Henry Glassie, Pattern in the Material Folk Culture of the Eastern United States (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1968); also see bibliography in Martin. For a discussion of mail-order versions of this house type, which he calls "southern cabin," see Alan Gowans, The Comfortable House: North American Suburban Architecture 1890-1930 (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1986), p. 156.



86

later part of the area's history. They also contained no indoor amenities beyond a fireplace or stove.

In massing and silhouette, these houses, as Martin has reconstructed them, strongly relate to Brightmoor's. They are simple rectangles, with their gable ends at the sides, and the roofs of the frequent front porches set at a different slope from that of the main roof. They included few windows, although this feature, too, changed over the course of Hollybush's existence.

Even the spareness of Brightmoor's interiors becomes inflected in the context of practices in Hollybush. The principal decorative elements in Hollybush houses were paper: pages from catalogues and magazines, carefully  
87  
applied and arranged on the walls. Single pictures were sometimes centered or otherwise highlighted within the composition of a wall, but patterns were frequently created through the arrangement of colors. Other effects were

---

86. One of the achievements of Martin's study is his discussion of the transformations in Hollybush's architectural forms as a result of the change in livelihood of its residents, from self-sufficiency to wage labor, and their concomitant greater contact with town life. Some changes occurred when Hollybush people embraced new forms, such as board-and-batten exteriors, that they became familiar with outside the community, either nearby or in industrial centers further north. It is possible that Brightmoor, as a type of Appalachian community in the north, represents one link in this chain of mutual influences. Thus, its forms can be seen as echoing Hollybush's, but also altering them in ways that then affected later building in Appalachia.

87. Papering served to keep out drafts as well as to decorate the walls. Martin, pp. 28-31.

achieved by rubbing granulated white sandstone into floorboards and door and window facings, creating a clean appearance. At Brightmoor, kitchens were painted and the other rooms hung with wallpaper, commercial equivalents of the Appalachian practices.

The exteriors at Hollybush received no decorative treatment. Visually, one was confronted with the strength and simplicity of the raw wood, and the craft techniques that were used to assemble it. The lack of decoration of Brightmoor's exteriors achieves the same effect in relation to a different technology, for it allows a clear reading of their standardized and machined elements.

It is possible, then, to see Brightmoor as a project that, at a particular historical moment, accomplished a rather complex series of acculturations, through both its creation of neighborhood institutions and its architectural forms. Its housing reproduced qualities that would have been familiar to its residents, including scale, amenities and lack of embellishment. But these were taken out of their previous context of owner-builder processes and community resources and rendered, instead, through the formal systems of real estate and construction practices. This recast them in terms that were urban, commercial and mass-produced.

### Conclusion

By reconstructing the histories of these two Detroit area subdivisions, we begin to see the factors that guided the shaping of community development in this period. In both cases, the developers were the decisive agents. The builders contributed their labor alone; they did not affect the overall conception of the projects. And the architect of the Ford project, who did have concerns and ideas about the shape of housing communities, seems to have exercised limited influence over the actual scheme. But the organizers of these developments, Taylor and the Ford team, integrated the diverse elements of real estate acquisition in relation to existing land uses, marketing, design and construction.

In the second part, I will discuss how these factors exemplify trends in the professionalization of architects and realtors, and elucidate the implications of these trends for the processes of housebuilding. I will return, too, to other themes in this chapter, such as the changing role of builders as construction practices were rationalized, and the role of design elements in these projects. But before we discuss these issues, we will look at another subdivision, Westwood Highlands, in San Francisco, for a third inflection of the theme of residential development.

---

## CHAPTER 3

### WESTWOOD HIGHLANDS, SAN FRANCISCO

#### Introduction

In terms of domestic architecture, San Francisco is best known for its lacey, fanciful Victorian houses and its warm, craftsmanly shingled designs in the Bay Area Tradition. Perhaps the least flattering image of San Francisco housing, on the other hand, is found in the post-war linear bands of tract houses marking its southern hills and those of Daly City, across the city and county line, immortalized in Malvina Reynolds' song as "little boxes made of ticky-tacky." But between these extremes lie other forms of housing that, while neither as picturesque as the former nor as clumsy as the latter, nevertheless stamp the character of large areas of the city.

Westwood Highlands is a subdivision located in the district west of Twin Peaks (Map 2). It was developed in the 1920s, during the interwar period when much of the "Outside Lands," including the nearby Sunset, were built

<sup>1</sup>  
up. It was chosen for this study because, like Brightmoor and the Ford housing in Dearborn, it was developed as a totality by one speculative builder. In the case of Westwood Highlands, the realty and development company of Baldwin and Howell was responsible for the primary impetus and shape of the subdivision. To carry out their ideas, Baldwin and Howell worked with one builder and one architect. This team saw the development through from subdivision of the land through housebuilding and landscaping.

The larger historical patterns in suburban residential construction and design that Westwood Highlands, along with the other subdivisions studied here, can help elucidate will be discussed in later chapters. In this chapter, I will describe the history of this development, in terms of both the growth of this section of the city and, to the extent that records permit, the careers of the principal figures involved in its construction. I will also discuss the character of Westwood Highlands in the context of other subdivisions developed in this district in the interwar period. Finally, I will analyze the houses themselves and the system according to which an entire new community was

---

<sup>1</sup>  
The most detailed discussions of the early history of these districts can be found in Anita Day Hubbard, "Cities Within the City," San Francisco Bulletin, 12 and 13 September 1924, also in collected volumes, San Francisciana Collection, San Francisco Public Library, 1 (August-November 1924); Mel Scott, The San Francisco Bay Area: A Metropolis in Perspective (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1959); and Sally Woodbridge and John M. Woodbridge, Architecture San Francisco: The Guide (San Francisco: American Institute of Architects, San Francisco Chapter and 101 Productions, 1982), pp. 160-75.

generated.

The literature on the history of housing in San Francisco generally skirts the period of the 1920s, except for discussions of "period style" that I will take up in a later chapter. Most studies have focused on the picturesque traditions mentioned at the beginning of this section.<sup>2</sup> For my purposes, the most relevant and suggestive work has been that which tries to reconstruct the processes of community development. Two such recent studies have been especially helpful, even though they deal primarily with nineteenth century material. Anne Bloomfield's 1978 study of "The Real Estate Associates: A Land and Housing Developer of the 1870s in San Francisco" was useful because she describes the practices of one of the largest developers of the period.<sup>3</sup> Through the construction of scat-

<sup>2</sup>

For the Victorian period, see Carol Olwell and Judith Lynch Waldhorn, A Gift to the Street (San Francisco: Antelope Island Press, 1976); Judith Waldhorn and Sally Woodbridge, Victoria's Legacy (San Francisco: 101 Productions, 1978). For the Bay Area Tradition, see Sally B. Woodbridge, ed., Bay Area Houses (New York: Oxford University Press, 1976); Richard Longstreth, On the Edge of the World: Four Architects in San Francisco at the Turn of the Century (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1983); Elizabeth K. Thompson, "Domestic Architecture of the Bay Region," Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians 10 (October 1951): 15-21. For a study that draws on Victorian material, as well as developments in the 1930s and 1940s, see Daniel Gregory, "Be It Ever So Humble: The Impact of the Merchant Builder/Land Developer on the Evolution of Housing in the Bay Area, 1850-1979" (Berkeley: Department of Architecture, University of California, 1979).

<sup>3</sup>

Anne Bloomfield, "The Real Estate Associates: A Land and Housing Developer of the 1870s in San Francisco," Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians 37 (March 1978): 13-33.

tered clusters of houses, totaling more than one thousand by 1881, TREA helped to define the vernacular housing pattern. Although TREA was only one of fifteen hundred builders active at the time, their size allowed Bloomfield to gain insight into both common practices of the period and the particular qualities of relatively large-scale development.

The second recent study focuses on a single community rather than on a developer. The subject of Anne Vernez Moudon's Built for Change: Neighborhood Architecture in San Francisco is the Alamo Square neighborhood in the Western Addition, developed in the second half of the nineteenth-century.<sup>4</sup> She is not concerned with the identities of the builders here, but with the patterns of residential practices that emerge from very close analysis of the built environment seen in its historical evolution.

These pioneering studies of San Francisco housing create a historical backdrop against which to place the 1920s subdivision, Westwood Highlands. From this juxtaposition we can see that a number of practices concerning the organization of the site and the generation of house designs seem to persist over time. I will describe these features in greater detail in the course of this chapter, and in a later chapter I will discuss the implications of this historical continuity for the understanding of

---

4

Anne Vernez Moudon, Built for Change: Neighborhood Architecture in San Francisco (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1986).

vernacular building in the 1920s.

### The Historical Background of Westwood Highlands

Racecourses and roadhouses enticed nineteenth-century San Franciscans over the old toll road that ran through the pass between Twin Peaks and Mount Davidson. That 1860s road became Portola Drive in the second decade of the twentieth century, part of the city-wide scenic route.<sup>5</sup> The only trace of the former amusements that one finds amidst the rows and contoured rings of dwellings now spreading from the hills to the edge of the ocean is in the occasional oval street pattern (Map 4). Ingleside Terrace preserves the oval of the racetrack it replaced, and Westwood Park's oval marks the site of what had been a greyhound racetrack.<sup>6</sup>

The character of the area west of Twin Peaks began to change in the years just before and after the 1906 earthquake and fire, as the owners of land there promoted its subdivision and development. In 1911, the heirs of Adolph Sutro sold his holdings in what had once been the 4,500-acre San Miguel Rancho. The A. S. Baldwin Residential Development Company bought 725 acres and, selling some to other developers, immediately began to put residential tracts on the market.<sup>7</sup> First Forest Hill, then Mason-

---

5

Scott, p. 167.

6

Hubbard, 1:66.

7

Scott, p. 167; Woodbridge and Woodbridge, p. 160.



McDuffie's St. Francis Wood in 1912, followed by Fernando Nelson's West Portal Park and Baldwin and Howell's Westwood Park -- each major realtor in the city carved his subdivision<sup>8</sup> into the land west of Twin Peaks.

Using census data from 1910 and 1920, Margaret Goddard King calculated that the population density in the area southwest of Mt. Davidson doubled in that decade.<sup>9</sup> If we had a finer-grained instrument, though, it would probably show that the bulk of that growth occurred only in the last few years of the 'teens. The newly subdivided tracts were slow to sell until the city of San Francisco made the district west of Twin Peaks more readily accessible to the downtown area by extending the Municipal Railway.<sup>10</sup>

The transformation of this district from farms and dairy ranches punctuated by raucous recreational spots to neighborhoods of suburban respectability resulted from the combined efforts of real estate interests and city government. The city engineer from 1912 to 1934, Michael M. O'Shaughnessy, promoted the Municipal Railway as a tool for, as he wrote, "developing the city's growth in well-ordered and predetermined directions."<sup>11</sup> Extending Muni

---

<sup>8</sup> Hubbard, 1:66.

<sup>9</sup> Margaret Goddard King, "The Growth of San Francisco, Illustrated by Shifts in the Density of Population," 2 vols. (Masters Thesis, University of California, Berkeley, 1928), 2: map 15.

<sup>10</sup> Scott, p. 167.

<sup>11</sup> Michael M. O'Shaughnessy, "The Hetch-Hetchy Water and

service to the district west of Twin Peaks required boring  
 a tunnel 2.27 miles through the hills.<sup>12</sup> Although interest  
 in such a tunnel had been expressed by the earliest devel-  
 opers of housing in the district as early as 1908, once  
 planning for it began in earnest under O'Shaughnessy, real-  
 tors and developers formed the Twin Peaks Property Owners  
 Association. The Twin Peaks Tunnel was dedicated on July  
 14, 1917, and on February 4, 1918, the first Municipal  
 Railway streetcar passed through it. Mayor Rolph served as  
 motorman, and among his guests on the car was A. S.  
 Baldwin, a recognized pioneer "of the movement which led to  
 the building of the tunnel." Ironically, at the opening  
 celebration "the Twin Peaks Property Owners Association met  
 the crowded streetcars at West Portal with their auto-  
 mobiles and seized on the gala occasion to take prospective  
 buyers on conducted tours through the emerging residential  
 districts of St. Francis Wood, Forest Hill, Parkside,  
 Ingleside Terrace, and Westwood Park."<sup>13</sup> City government,  
 thus, organized the creation of the transportation link  
 that made development of the land speculators' tracts pos-

---

Power Project, the Municipal Railway, and Other Notable  
 Civic Improvements of San Francisco," n.p., n.d., quoted in  
 Scott, p. 167.

12

John Bernard McGloin, San Francisco: The Story of a  
 City (San Rafael, Ca.: Presidio Press, 1978), pp. 178-79.  
 This provides the most complete account of the details of  
 the Twin Peaks Tunnel construction project.

13

"Twin Peaks Bore Opened for Regular Traffic: First Car  
 Over Line Greeted by Thousands," San Francisco Examiner, 4  
 February 1918, p. 11; McGloin, pp. 178-79.

sible. This bears out the view of geographer James E. Vance that one should see "the [street]carline as primarily a device to encourage real estate development."<sup>14</sup> The roughly \$4 million cost of the tunnel was mainly passed on to new home buyers, since about seven-eighths of this amount was assessed those who stood to gain from the venture, the property owners west of Twin Peaks.<sup>15</sup> With the achievement of the tunnel, the trip downtown was reduced from more than an hour to twenty minutes. By 1923, five years after the inauguration of the Twin Peaks Tunnel, Prentice Duell could write in the Western Architect that "today [the subdivisions mentioned above] . . . contain the choice residences and gardens of the newer city."<sup>16</sup>

Three features characterized this "newer city" and made it distinctive in relation to the familiar patterns of residential construction in San Francisco. First of all, the subdivisions built west of Twin Peaks were conceived as commuter suburbs. As the description of the opening-day festivities for the tunnel recounts, both public, streetcar transportation and automobiles were invoked to help promote the development of the district. Although public transpor-

---

14

James E. Vance, Jr., Geography and Urban Evolution in the San Francisco Bay Area (Berkeley: Institute of Governmental Studies, University of California, 1964), p. 52.

15

McGloin, pp. 178-79.

16

Prentice Duell, "The New Era of California Architecture II: San Francisco" The Western Architect, 32 (November 1923): 127.

tation links were crucial for the success of this area's development, as they were for other "streetcar suburbs,"<sup>17</sup> most of the subdivisions' houses included garages for the accommodation of autos. The remoteness of a district in which "hunting small game was still a major diversion" was attractive once the barrier of distance from downtown was removed.<sup>18</sup>

Secondly, the design of curvilinear streets that followed the contours of the slopes broke with the standard "crossword puzzle effect,"<sup>19</sup> as one writer described the grid that covered all but San Francisco's highest peaks. These subdivisions were recognized as "among the best planned in San Francisco."<sup>20</sup> In some cases, developers adapted street plans to the pre-existing pattern left by oval racetracks, but they were also responding to progressive opinion regarding the felicity of curvilinear streets and their placement within the natural setting. The Olmsted Brothers' 1912 site plan for St. Francis Wood continued the family tradition of garden suburb design.<sup>21</sup> Developers of other tracts adapted this ideal.

---

17

The phrase derives from Sam Bass Warner, Jr., Streetcar Suburbs: The Process of Growth in Boston, 1870-1900 (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1962; 2d ed. 1978).

18

Woodbridge and Woodbridge, p. 171.

19

F. J. Glunk, "Westwood Park and Westwood Highlands," The Home Designer and Garden Beautiful, 8 (March 1925): 194.

20

Scott, p. 167.

21

For an overview of these, see Woodbridge and Woodbridge, Architecture San Francisco.

Finally, many of the subdividers working in this district created larger lots than the traditional 25-foot-wide parcels common in most San Francisco neighborhoods. Lot sizes vary from one development to another, and within individual developments, but the presence of detached, single-family houses sitting in the middle of their lots stamps the character of the area.

The Baldwin and Howell realty company was one of the early developers who shaped the "newer city" in the district west of Twin Peaks. It was a well-established firm, founded in 1885, and one of its entities, the A. S. Baldwin Residential Development Company, had made the initial purchase of acreage from Adolph Sutro's Rancho San Miguel holdings in 1911. Baldwin and Howell developed part of this land, beginning around 1917, as Westwood Park, one of the often-praised early subdivisions. It lies between Monterey Boulevard and Ocean Avenue, where a shopping district was established on the flat terrain served by the streetcar. The main oval of the tract is bisected by a planted strip that runs down its central axis, Miramar Avenue. The scheme was designed by engineer John M.

<sup>22</sup>  
Punnett. More than a dozen different builders were responsible for the construction of single-family houses on <sup>23</sup> Westwood Park's seven hundred lots.

---

22

Woodbridge and Woodbridge, p. 173. Further information about Punnett has not been located.

23

Z. A. Battu, "Merchandising Serviced Homes," Building

By 1925, Westwood Park's lots were completely sold, but even before that Baldwin and Howell had begun to develop an adjacent tract on the north side of Monterey Boulevard.<sup>24</sup> As first conceived, this new subdivision was called Woodcrest (Map 3). According to engineer Punnett's proposed street plan from 1922, the 175-acre tract extended from Portola Drive south to Monterey Boulevard, east of the existing Mason-McDuffie development, St. Francis Wood. The peak of Mt. Davidson, which rises to 927 feet, lies just south of Portola Drive, as can be seen in Map 4. Punnett divided the steepest area of the site into large, irregular blocks bounded by roads that would have curved steeply right over the summit of the hill. The southeastern part of the site is designed in a contrasting, more regularized manner, in which the curving streets radiate concentrically, in the shape of a fan, from the intersection of Yerba Buena Avenue and Monterey Boulevard.

Two other records testify to the original conception of Woodcrest as a "villa site subdivision." These are photographs of renderings for decorative structures to be placed at the Yerba Buena and Monterey intersection, the formal entrance to the subdivision (Figure 23). The formal entrance to Westwood Park, at Monterey Boulevard and Miramar Avenue, was marked by relatively simple rectangular

---

Age and National Builder, February 1927, p. 112.

<sup>24</sup>

"Westwood Park Building Up Solid," San Francisco Chronicle, 19 January 1924, p. 7.

piers embellished with wrought iron lanterns and grills; barrel vaults supporting trellises span the sidewalks (Figure 24). The projected "features" for Woodcrest are set in the roadway, and are more elaborate and classical in style. Rams and winged horses bearing urns, corinthian columns, and benches are envisioned within the still-sylvan setting. The classicism of these sculptural and architectural civic amenities harkens back to the ideals of the turn-of-the-century City Beautiful movement. More modest versions of features like these had been created by John Galen Howard and Henry Gutterson in 1912 for nearby St. Francis Wood.

Between 1922 and 1924, the proposals for Woodcrest were set aside and a different street plan and subdivision name were created. The elegant structures designed by architect John Reid, Jr., were never built. Instead, the boundary of the tract at Monterey Boulevard came to be marked by metal signs attached to lamp-posts at the corners of Yerba Buena, Plymouth, Colon, Valdez, Hazelwood and Ridgewood Avenues (Figure 25). These north-south streets, corresponding to the fan-shaped portion of the 1922 plan, now curved in relation to the topography. Hazelwood Avenue bends to the west as it climbs the slope, looping around to Yerba Buena Avenue, and this became the northern boundary of the development. The subdivision no longer included the northern and western portions of the 1922 site, and this reduction perhaps led to the rechristening of the subdivi-

sion as Westwood Highlands.

There are no records extant that explain the transformation of Woodcrest into Westwood Highlands. But most of the changes seem to relate to a different idea of the market for housing in this subdivision. The scale and elegance of Reid's features, and the varied terrain of Punnett's "villa" site plan, suggest that Woodcrest had been modeled on a prestigious enclave such as St. Francis Wood. At the same time that those aspects of the original scheme were dropped, Baldwin and Howell decided to work with a builder, Hans Nelson, and an architect, Charles Strothoff, from their Westwood Park site. At Westwood Park, which they characterized as a "restricted residence park," Baldwin and Howell made suggestions to buyers concerning appropriate houses to build, as in the booklet they published, Attractive Bungalows of Moderate Cost for West-

<sup>25</sup>wood Park. In this way, as in their use of restrictions to ensure the maintenance of aesthetic and socio-economic standards, the developer conformed to the practices typical of the projects in this district and elsewhere. However, when they engaged a builder and an architect for Westwood Highlands, Baldwin and Howell decided to sell lots only with houses already constructed on them. They must have assumed that they had a good sense of the middle-class market that had been attracted to Westwood Park, and that

---

25

Attractive Bungalows of Moderate Cost for Westwood Park (San Francisco: Baldwin and Howell, 1917).



by building 100-150 houses a year they could lower costs as well as continue to serve that market.<sup>26</sup> The tract's new name, too, suggests an extension of Westwood Park, rather than a wholly different development, perhaps with the notion in mind of appealing to a market that would be familiar with the earlier subdivision.

Figure 26 provides a typical advertisement for Westwood Highlands that reflects some of these appeals to prospective homeowners. Its photograph of houses on Plymouth Avenue prominently features an auto, but the text assures the reader of easy access by streetcar as well. In 1927, most of the houses sold for \$9,500 to \$12,000, with monthly payments around \$70.<sup>27</sup> The homebuyers in the area's subdivisions in general seem to have moved from the Mission district, "where accelerating development threatened the suburban ambience."<sup>28</sup> They were predominantly skilled workers, lower-middle-class businessmen and professionals; their ethnic backgrounds tended to be Irish,

---

26

Battu, p. 153.

27

Ibid., p. 110. The national average cost for a new single-family house in 1927 was \$4,830. Blanche Halbert, ed. The Better Homes Manual (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1931), p. 53, citing an April 1931 report in the Monthly Labor Review. The average cost of houses bought by streetcar men's families in San Francisco during 1924-29 was \$4,500. E. H. Huntington and M. G. Luck, Living on a Moderate Income (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1937), p. 72, cited in John P. Dean, Home Ownership: Is It Sound? (New York: Harper and Bros., 1945), p. 97.

28

Woodbridge and Woodbridge, p. 171.

Italian and German Catholic.

Baldwin and Howell, as the real estate developer, seems to have played the major role in shaping Westwood Highlands. To the extent that the subdivision can be seen as a unity, however, the contributions of the builder and the architect must be considered as well, for they articulated the developer's scheme. Yet few records remain concerning the working relationship among these individuals, or about this part of the builder's and architect's careers.

I have located few traces of the career of Hans Nelson, the builder. According to the February, 1927, article in Building Age that featured his work at Westwood Highlands, he arrived in the United States in 1908 from Sweden.<sup>30</sup> After taking up the trade of carpentry, he entered the building business with a brother in Colorado. He moved to San Francisco in 1911 and built his first houses in the Richmond District. In 1918, he began building houses in Westwood Park for Baldwin and Howell, sometimes working with his brother as Nelson Bros. He lived in Westwood Park during the first half of the 1920s, at 1375 Plymouth Avenue, and in Westwood Highlands, at 460 Yerba Buena Avenue, from 1928 to 1939. Hans Nelson died in the

---

29

William Issel and Robert W. Cherny, San Francisco, 1865-1932: Politics, Power and Urban Development (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1986), p. 79.

30

Battu, p. 112.

31  
mid-1950s.

Charles F. Strothoff, the architect for Westwood Highlands, was born in 1891 or 1892 in San Francisco.<sup>32</sup> He received his training at the Wilmerding School of Industrial Arts, a building trades school established by a wealthy San Francisco merchant and administered by the Regents of the University of California. The school had been created "to teach boys trades, fitting them to make their living with their hands, with little study and plenty of work."<sup>33</sup> When it opened in 1900, it offered training in carpentry, bricklaying, plumbing, architectural ironwork, clay modeling and artificial stonework, wood carving, cabinet-making and architectural drawing.

For at least one year, 1912-1913, Strothoff served as a draftsman in the office of architect Albert Farr.<sup>34</sup> Farr (1871-1945) had established his practice in San Francisco in the early 1900s, and at the time Strothoff was working

---

31

Crocker-Langley San Francisco City Directory (San Francisco: R. L. Polk and Co., 1910-1928); Polk's Crocker-Langley San Francisco City Directory (San Francisco: R. L. Polk and Co., 1929-). No obituary has been located for Nelson in the local press.

32

"Charles Strothoff, Architect, Dies," San Francisco Chronicle, 6 March 1963, p. 28. Most of the facts concerning Strothoff's career derive from this obituary.

33

The Wilmerding School of Industrial Arts (Berkeley: The University Press, 1901), p. 5. The years 1890-1910 saw the development of vocational education in the United States. For an overview of this history, see Marvin Lazerson and W. Norton Grubb, eds. American Education and Vocationalism: A Documentary History, 1870-1970 (New York: Columbia University, Teachers College Press, 1974).

34

Crocker-Langley San Francisco City Directory, 1912-13.

for him the house that he had designed for Jack London,  
 Wolf House, in Sonoma, was under construction.<sup>35</sup> Farr  
 specialized in domestic architecture that had a Tudor or  
 Georgian character, and was drawn to the baronial in scale.  
 By the 1920s, his reputation as a designer of period houses  
 was well-established.<sup>36</sup>

Strothoff's early career seems to have followed Farr's  
 in its focus on domestic projects, if on a more modest  
 scale. Later, he worked for public institutions, serving  
 as executive director of the Richmond Housing Authority.<sup>37</sup>  
 He also did work for the San Francisco Recreation and Park  
 Department and for Contra Costa Junior College. Charles  
 Strothoff died in 1963; he had been a member of the  
 American Institute of Architects since 1944.<sup>38</sup>

A few photographs from a Westwood Park photo album  
 from the 1920s illustrate the work that Nelson and  
 Strothoff did for Baldwin and Howell in that project,

---

35

Kevin Starr, Americans and the California Dream, 1850-1915 (New York: Oxford University Press, 1973), p. 222.

36

A brief biography of Albert Farr can be found in Wood-  
 bridge, ed., Bay Area Houses, pp. 318-19. In addition to a  
 discussion of his work in an essay in this volume by John  
 Beach, "The Bay Area Tradition, 1890-1918," examples of his  
 work can be seen in Architect and Engineer, June 1919, pp.  
 48-9; The Western Architect, December 1927, plates 199-202;  
Keith's Magazine on Home Building, April 1928, p. 173.

37

Because I am concentrating on the earlier period of his  
 career, I have not investigated the nature of the later  
 projects that Strothoff undertook for civic agencies.

38

George S. Koyl, American Architects Directory (New York:  
 R. R. Bowker Co., 1962).

39

separately and together. The house they collaborated on, 185 Westwood, is least characteristic of the district, for it is in a Colonial Revival style with wooden clapboards (Figure 27). It is a well-proportioned mass that very competently organizes the familiar elements of porch, dormer and pitched roof into broad horizontal bands. In this image by noted architectural photographer Gabriel Moulin, the wooded setting of the period can be glimpsed. Trees had been planted in the western part of the district beginning in the early 1870s, to forestall the encroachment of sand dunes.<sup>40</sup> Few of them remain within residential areas today.

Nelson built one of the most prominently placed houses in the subdivision, 591 Wildwood, at the intersection of Wildwood and Miramar Avenues, the center of the tract (Figure 28). At this point, the planted mall that runs the length of Miramar Avenue is punctuated by a circular landscaped island in the middle of the intersection. The four houses fronting the center all have their entrances at the corner, and two wings branching off at right angles, as in the one built by Nelson illustrated here. Although each is designed according to a different style within the broad repertory of Mediterranean Revival, their disposition in relation to the public space provides unity and underscores

39

This photograph album is in the possession of Mr. James M. Hughes of San Francisco, a descendant of one of the Baldwin and Howell principals.

40

Woodbridge and Woodbridge, p. 160.

41

the formality of the scheme.

Another house designed by Strothoff is more modest both in scale and style (Figure 29). It is a stucco cottage in which details such as window and entrance shapes, roof line, and applied decoration are used to individualize the box-like structure.<sup>42</sup> Nelson also built houses like this one (Figure 30).

At this point, then, we can see that the development of Westwood Highlands conforms, on the one hand, to a set of historical initiatives and practices. Real estate speculators and the city of San Francisco created the infrastructure to bring the rural West of Twin Peaks district into the suburban orbit of downtown. The array of early subdivisions, shaped by a number of major developers, shared features such as curvilinear street plans and single-family, detached dwellings set on landscaped lots. Baldwin and Howell contributed to the middle-class market for housing in the district in their Westwood Park subdivision, and they continued to build for this market at Westwood Highlands.

We can also see that, on the other hand, Westwood

---

41

A photo of another house that illustrates this siting strategy can be found in Woodbridge and Woodbridge, p. 173. Significantly, it was designed by Strothoff.

42

See Kirk Peterson, "Eclectic Stucco," in Charles W. Moore, Kathryn Smith and Peter Becker, eds. Home Sweet Home: American Domestic Vernacular Architecture (New York: Rizzoli, and Los Angeles: Craft and Folk Art Museum, 1983), pp. 112-117, for similar examples. We will look at stylistic and design issues further below and in Chapter 6.

Highlands represented an innovation in subdivision development in the district. Baldwin and Howell used their experience at Westwood Park, and the experience gained there by Nelson and Strothoff, to plan and build the new subdivision in its entirety. In the next sections of this chapter, we will look more closely at the built forms of Westwood Highlands. I will discuss the role that stylistic elements play and I will analyze the organizing principles of the subdivision in an attempt to understand the features that guided the design of this community.

### The Role of Style

As we will see, the houses that Nelson and Strothoff built and designed for Westwood Highlands share features with the few examples of their earlier work that were discussed above, with the exception of 185 Westwood. The purchasers of this lot had been able to choose the house style they desired, in this case Dutch Colonial, which would not be possible for the homebuyers in Westwood Highlands. Such a house is an anomaly in Westwood Park, where stucco and simplified Spanish Colonial or English styles predominate. While it would have been possible for Baldwin and Howell to accommodate such diversity in Westwood Highlands, too, in a sense to program anomalies into the design of this subdivision, in fact they did not. Instead, they chose to balance diversity of surface with unity of materials and plan. They restricted the materials, for example, to stucco, sometimes embellished by wood or brick.

---

Against this backdrop Strothoff was then able to orchestrate a great variety of details drawn from Spanish Colonial Revival, Moorish, Mission, Classical Revival, and other styles that fuse to form the Mediterranean Revival character of the community.

There was certainly precedent for such an approach in the patterns of residential building in San Francisco. The decorative inventiveness of Victorian builders had also been spun over an underlying unity of construction materials. Although that particular fabric and its embellishment were spurned in the 1920s, it is possible to see that the two periods share a similar logic in their attitudes toward the relationship between unity of materials and diversity of surface design. For the builders of the 1870s-1890s, of course, wood was used throughout, for framing, sheathing and ornamentation. The horizontal bands of flat wooden siding served as a field against which contrasts of texture, shape, and light and shadow could play; they were both structural skin and the ground for eclectic ornamental figures. At Westwood Highlands, the houses are wood-framed, and stucco is used as cladding. But stucco serves the same role here as wood had earlier, both within each building, bridging structure and surface detail, and within the tract as a whole, where its consistent use balances the multiplicity of ornamentation.

The details based on historical stylistic references, then, serve to individualize each house and to create an overall sense of variety within the subdivision. Windows,

---



entrances, porches, roof lines and applied ornamentation are treated as expressive and pictorial features. But while they define the appearance of the tract, they do not reflect or convey its underlying organization. In typical tracts, such as Westwood Park, control over the composition of the whole would be exercised by restrictions, setting price, size and setback guidelines. If a period style were selected by the homebuyer, as was the case at 185 Westwood, the builder or architect could design a house that both fit the guidelines and conformed to that style in massing, orientation and materials as well as in details. At Westwood Highlands, in contrast, the subdivision's composition was determined by Strothoff, probably according to economic goals and constraints set by Baldwin and Howell. The architect did not use stylistic elements at all to generate the overall organization of the project. Detailing is used only to vary the patterns that he established through other means. We will return to the significance of the use of Mediterranean Revival elements in this subdivision in a later chapter, but here we will continue to explore the generation of the patterns that organized the design of the community.

### The Principles of Organization

As one looks at the organization of Westwood Highlands, three significant elements emerge: the repetition of modules, the treatment of corners, and the hierarchy of streets. In the February 1927 article on the subdivision

in Building Age, the division of streets into price areas<sup>43</sup> is discussed as one of the tract's features. In a development such as Westwood Park, such a system would be enforced through restrictions, establishing a minimum that houses on each street could cost. But in Westwood Highlands, where no lots were sold without houses already constructed on them, the developers executed their own edicts. The largest houses, on somewhat larger lots, can be found along Yerba Buena Avenue, Plymouth Avenue, and Monterey Boulevard, although the majority of houses on these streets are medium-sized. Lots decrease in size as the slope increases; some of the impact of this reduction on cost may have been offset by the views these sites afford. The most modest houses are located at the eastern edge of the development, on Ridgewood Avenue. This pattern also reflects the distance from the streetcar and shopping district on Ocean Avenue of the lots on the north and east.

This kind of hierarchy was also noticed by Anne Bloomfield in her study of The Real Estate Associates. She observed that TREA built "a few larger and several medium-priced houses on the more important streets, slightly less expensive houses on the side streets, inexpensive houses on interior streets . . ."<sup>44</sup> Although she does not pursue the connection in greater detail, Bloomfield suggests that

---

<sup>43</sup>

Battu, p. 110.

<sup>44</sup>

Bloomfield, p. 17.

"Perhaps unconsciously, TREA was following principles of Georgian town planning by providing for a whole community."<sup>45</sup> The practice of organizing wealth spatially was a familiar one within the community of San Francisco developers, and the system used by Baldwin and Howell fits within this pattern.

Corner lots in Westwood Highlands are also an aspect of this hierarchical pattern, for often, though not invariably, they are larger than inside lots. This, too, follows earlier practice.<sup>46</sup> But whereas in the 19th century larger corner lots became the sites either of grander residences or of stores, they serve another function in this subdivision from the 1920s. Houses situated at corners are frequently designed so that their entrances face the intersection. This focuses attention on the street as a public, formal space. At Westwood Highlands, this is the major device used to express the relationship between the houses and the street, aside from the familiar arrangements of lawn, walkway and porch, for there are no amenities here such as malls or planted islands. This orientation also provides a continuity between the two sides of a block that meet at a corner. The corner is used not so much to anchor or conclude a horizontal row of houses on a street, as it is to produce a flow of movement around the corner. Per-

---

45

Ibid.

46

Bloomfield; Moudon.

haps this softening of the corners was intended to underscore the curvilinearity of the street plan, although it also occurs at intersections where the streets are roughly perpendicular to each other.

The use of a house plan that permits the entrance to face the intersection is not unique to Strothoff's designs for Westwood Highlands. One of Nelson's houses at Westwood Park, 591 Wildwood, has already been discussed as one of four that are configured in this way to contribute to the formality of the public space they define. This seems to be an urbanistic application of the "bent" house that one historian has called "the single most important nineteenth-<sup>47</sup> century innovation in American domestic architecture."

Deriving from pattern books of the 1840s, the bent house is composed of two perpendicular wings whose junction occurs at the entrance. An influential picturesque house type, the irregularity and segmentation of its parts permitted later designers such as Strothoff to pivot the wings to adjust to peculiarities of site, such as corners.

The third important element in the organization of Westwood Highlands bears on the earlier discussion of the relationship between unity and diversity. The overlay of decorative detailing individualizes houses that are otherwise unified by their construction materials. This balance

---

47

Dell Upton, "Pattern Books and Professionalism: Aspects of the Transformation of Domestic Architecture in America, 1800-1860," Winterthur Portfolio 19 (Summer/Autumn 1984): 144.

was also achieved by repeating elevational modules in a variety of combination. By modules, I am referring to units of the "public facade" of the house.<sup>48</sup> All of the houses present to their street side an entrance, windows, and garage doors. These units have been orchestrated in a variety of configurations so that the order they bestow is muted by a sense of diversity.

The simplest configuration consists of two modules. In these examples, there is a narrow entrance module and the broader module contains windows above and the garage doors at street level. A number of the two-module houses are located on Ridgewood Avenue, a steep north-south street that forms the eastern boundary of the subdivision (Figure 31). The lots here are narrowest, and the houses directly abut each other. The entrances are recessed, reached by straight-run steps, and there are shallow curved or angled bow-windows. The variants of this type that appear elsewhere in the subdivision are more ample: they are fully detached, and set further back from the street. This can be seen in the other concentration of the type that occurs on Brentwood Avenue between Hazelwood and Mangels Avenues, on both sides of the street (Figure 32). Here the entrances are not recessed; steps are angled.

---

48

Moudon, p. 69. Moudon is interested in the vertical modules of the public facade as elements of order, serving as stable, repetitive underpinning for the diversity of individuaized decorative embellishment. My analysis of the use of modules sees them as double-edged, instruments for variety as well as for order.

Another variation of this type consists of two-and-a-half modules (Figure 33). It includes the recessed entrance module with straight-run steps of the Ridgewood Avenue version, but is located on a larger lot. To the left of the entrance, and unified with it by a parapet, there is a small recessed window area.

The configuration with the widest range of variations is the three-module type. In its most common form, the entrance module is juxtaposed with the window module; the garage module is recessed and includes a smaller window above the garage doors (Figures 34, 35, 36 and 37). A variant of this switches the position of the entrance so that it is between the window module and the recessed garage (Figure 38). This becomes a three-and-a-half module type when the wall surface of the far side of the window module is enlarged (Figure 39).

In another variation of the three-module type, the window module is flanked by the entrance, which is raised above the garage doors and reached by a staircase set parallel to the facade, so that entrance and garage are joined in one module (Figure 40). The recess and its small second-story window have been maintained.

The two-module pattern has also been expanded to create a three-module variation (Figure 41). A set of windows above the garage doors, familiar from the two-module composition, projects forward from another window module, while the entrance is set, like a hinge, between the two.

The final three-module variant verges on becoming four modules (Figure 42). In between the recessed garage module and the window module, the entrance module has been enlarged to embrace a spacious patio. Behind the patio, bridging the recessed garage and the entrance, is another recessed wall with second-story windows.

Repetition of the main window module is the typical device used to create the four-module type, so that the composition reads recessed garage module/window module/entrance module/window module (Figure 43). Examples of this type are found on Yerba Buena and Plymouth Avenues, where lot sizes are larger.

Another characteristic of this type is the dramatic articulation of surface planes that we find in these examples. Projections and recessions are not uncommon among the other types, where bow windows, entrance hoods, porch parapets, wall angles, and other features serve to accentuate the divisions between modules and to create contrasts of light and shadow. But in the four-module type, there is a stronger emphasis on breaks in the wall surface to achieve these visual effects. This can be seen very strikingly in a variant of the type that is found along Hazelwood between Yerba Buena and Brentwood Avenues (Figure 44). Here, the lots are narrower; this is the northern boundary of the subdivision. The garage has been located under one of the windows. The fourth module is a blank wall, but its distinction from the flanking window area is

fully articulated, as are each of the other divisions between modules. The hilly site and the sense of compression conveyed by the syncopated rhythms of tall, narrow modules make the composition of this street appear quite mannerist.

A few examples of a third variant of the four-module type are found along Yerba Buena Avenue between Brentwood and Hazelwood Avenues, on larger lots (Figure 45). In these, the garage module is recessed, the entrance is set at an angle, the window module follows, and the fourth module is a small arched gateway leading to the back of the house.

These four types and the variants described so far account for almost all of the houses built in Westwood Highlands. Two other categories of variations should be noted, however. The largest houses, located on Yerba Buena Avenue and Monterey Boulevard, can be seen as stretched-out versions of these types; that is, modules are added on to create an extended design. Some examples of the addition of modules to create larger houses can be seen at 888, 944 and 950 Monterey Boulevard (Figures 46 and 47). Patios, major window modules and minor window modules are the units that are most frequently added. The entrance porch can also be enlarged to create a patio.

More interesting, though, is the way in which corner houses are treated. As I mentioned above, they are often sited so that the entrance faces the intersection. The modular organization of these houses allowed Strothoff to



pivot the units around a corner without disturbing the underlying principles of composition. The house located at the intersection of Hazelwood and Brentwood Avenues, where the block ends in an acute angle, has been dramatically pivoted to fit on its site (Figure 48). The garage is located under the entrance module, but the garage doors have been placed in the wall that is at a right angle to the entranceway, in the ell created by flipping the second window module so that it is perpendicular to the rest of the mass. At the intersection of Joost and Hazelwood Avenues, where Joost ends, the corner houses provide examples of four-module types that have been pivoted around the corner (Figures 49 and 50). Their entrance modules are the hinges of the ell-shaped compositions that result from this; the angle is softened by the placement of steps and small entrance patios where the meeting of wall surfaces might otherwise have been. The pairing of these houses across the street, and their orientation toward the intersection, create a sense of formality in relation to the public space of the street.

Analyzing the modular system of composition allows us to recover one of the major ways in which Strothoff could organize the design of the entire subdivision without losing the quality of variety. With modules as the organizing principle, houses could be varied not only visually, in their massing, but also in their size, to accommodate homebuyers' different needs and finances. The modular

system also enabled Strothoff to meet the contingencies of unusual sites, whether corners or slopes, in a consistent yet responsive way.

Although it is veiled at first by the overlay of individualized detailing, the pattern of types and their variations emerges as one observes Westwood Highlands more closely. Further study of other neighborhoods built in the 1920s might well reveal similar configurations, even where many builders were involved. In other areas of the West of Twin Peaks district, for example, one can notice familiar modular arrangements, and corners where houses are sited in a similar way. It is possible that, as our discussions of Bloomfield's and Moudon's studies suggest, there was a common body of practice among builders and designers in San Francisco by this period that Strothoff drew on when he was faced with the task of providing designs for all of the houses in a single subdivision.

Certainly, the modular framework has been useful retrospectively in allowing historians to analyze the physical elements of community design. In her study of the Alamo Square area, Moudon locates modular elements that create an underlying order amidst the variety of Victorian houses found in this neighborhood. Influenced both by urban rowhouse and suburban models, and evolving over time through Stick, Italianate and Queen Anne styles of detailing, the elevations of the houses nevertheless are composed of vertical divisions into entry, window and recess mod-

49  
 ules. This aspect of Moudon's analysis is suggestive for my study, since Strothoff was manipulating similar modular elements. To what extent his self-conscious use of modular design can be traced to an awareness of specifically Victorian practices, cannot be ascertained. Any yet his use of recessed modules is provocative. Their presence in Victorian design is accounted for by the need to maximize access to light and air within the constraints of box-like houses built close together on narrow urban lots.<sup>50</sup> Strothoff, designing predominantly detached houses on larger lots, was not working with the same constraints. But he maintained this traditional element and, in many of his compositions, enlarged it and adapted it to new uses, by locating the garage in the recessed module.

The modular treatment of the facades at Westwood Highlands also reflects to a certain extent the pattern of interior planning. Public spaces are grouped toward the front of the house or the corner; the main window module corresponds to the living room. Bedrooms are clustered at the rear of the site; a bedroom is placed over the recessed garage module.

Most of the houses contain two or three bedrooms. A series of plans for the most prevalent three-module type, consisting of entrance, window and recessed garage modules,

---

 49

Moudon, pp. 69-71.

50

Ibid., pp. 56ff.

shows the way in which variations in size are achieved within a basic format (Figures 51 and 52). Rooms can be added on at the rear, to increase the number of bedrooms, without affecting the configuration of modules on the facade. In the largest of these examples, the space of the breakfast nook has been shifted laterally so that the kitchen, the hall and the nook itself can be enlarged. This also increases the size of the entrance module, transforming the stoop into a porch.

Similar clusters of functional spaces can be seen in plans for larger corner houses, although the orientation is altered (Figure 46).

The houses generally have full basements, part of the high base that includes the garage. This base mediates between the slope of the lot and the main floor, although in some cases interior stairs between the public and private areas are also found (Figures 51 and 52a).

All houses include a separate dining room and a fireplace in the living room. The attempt was made to provide two exposures for each bedroom and, when the living room faced north, small windows flanking the fireplace on the west wall were also provided (Figures 34 and 36). Other interior amenities, such as wood or plaster moldings, built-in cabinets and curving ceilings, can be glimpsed in photographs taken in the 1920s (Figures 46, 53, 54 and 55).

### Conclusion

By analyzing the built environment, then, we have reconstructed some of the principles used to generate and organize housing in Westwood Highlands. The site was designed, first of all, as a set of curving, irregular streets that followed the topography of the hillside. The subdivision was broadly composed by allocating houses according to price range, with corner houses often given prominence through size or siting. In order to balance the unity of the tract with variety, a modular system was used to design the houses. Although decorative detailing also served to individualize structures, stylistic features played a minor role in the fundamental composition of the project. By looking at older as well as contemporary building practices, we can see that many of these principles are adaptations of historical patterns of community development.

Its complex organization, sensitivity to topography, and Mediterranean Revival style and materials distinguish Westwood Highlands from the other two subdivisions we have explored. In contrast, the Ford Homes exemplify the application of industrialized building practices to create a model for large-scale speculative residential development. A somewhat greater degree of uniformity characterizes this tract, too, due to its reliance on a pre-existing grid and its regular disposition of houses without significant variations in scale or siting. Brightmoor, on the other hand,

is a much larger scheme than these, but it is also the most retrograde in the residential amenities it provided.

As distinct as each of these subdivisions is, and as the historical and social niche that each fits into in terms of its origins is, nevertheless there are similarities that identify them as examples of one pattern of residential development. As speculative ventures, each house would have had to have found its separate buyer. Yet this individualism was set within a strong context of neighborhood. Each of these tracts expresses the idea of community differently. Brightmoor achieved its community identity through its social services, as well as through its house forms, using the settlement house as a focus of neighborhood activities and assimilation. Design devices were the dominant means of establishing such identity in the other two. The unifying Colonial style of the Ford Homes readily defines its character, although here, too, the inclusion of a civic institution, namely an elementary school, added to the definition of the neighborhood. At Westwood Highlands, the edges of the community are defined by signage and thoroughfares; its street pattern and the style and siting of houses extend some of the principles used in contiguous tracts but also apply them to identify a separate community entity within the larger district of which it is a part. All of these devices serve to create a sense of neighborhood that subsumes each individual home.

To understand how such widely dispersed and differentiated projects yet reflect similar underlying patterns, we

must move from the specificity of each subdivision's history to the broader stage of institutional, social and design history. In the following chapters, we will look first of all at the roles of architects, builders and real estate developers in determining the shape of such housing developments. The scope of large-scale residential development was made possible by changes in technology and building practices that undermined the role of builders and encouraged the professional advancement of the entrepreneurial developer. As real estate developers achieved a strong professional and public identity, they joined other housing professionals in a network of experts that sought to influence the direction of housing initiatives. One of the main ways in which this network articulated its concerns was through its definition of community development. In Chapter 5, I will discuss this network, its activities, and the meaning of community that it helped to promote. Finally, we will consider how the way in which architectural style was used in large-scale housing schemes can be seen as reflecting these wider trends and contributing to their development.

## CHAPTER 4

### THE AGENTS OF BUILT FORM

Since we have been analyzing built form, we might expect that the traditional perspective focusing on architects and patrons would provide a sufficient framework for understanding the social relations which guided its production. However, in the discussions of the three subdivisions we have seen that the homebuyer, though a hovering presence, was not an active participant in the design and decision-making process. In the next chapter, we will look at the way ideas about homeownership were shaped such that it became possible for the ostensible client to be excluded from the process until the point of purchase. Supplanting the homebuyer, it seems, was the developer, who was the patron for the services of both builder and architect. Yet the developer's role is structurally more complex, for he also actively shaped the projects we have been studying. To the extent that the developer assumed control over these schemes, he may also be seen as having displaced the architect. But does subdivision development then represent the redistribution of responsibility between these two agents

---



of built form?

At this point, it is clear that while developers, architects and builders contributed to the process of housing development, they did not do so in equal measure. Even among the projects we have discussed, variations occurred. At Brightmoor, for example, the services of an architect were not utilized at all. It is the objective of this chapter to reach a better understanding of the specific way each group contributed to subdivision development. To do this, I will discuss the history of builders and building technology, of architects involved in housing design, and of realtors. By gaining a sense of the historical trends in the activities of each group over several decades prior to the twenties, we will get a clearer picture of the elements that were most influential, and perhaps decisive, for the shape that suburban subdivisions came to have.

### The Architect

Both Westwood Highlands and the Ford Homes involved the work of architects who had an interest in housing. Albert Wood expressed his interest through the proposals he put forth in his 1918 booklet, Community Homes. Charles Strothoff had worked as a draftsman under an architect who specialized in housing, and in his later career he continued to work in the housing field. Both men's contributions to their respective projects consisted primarily of the design of single-family housing units; neither seems to

---

have been called upon to shape the overall subdivision, either physically or in terms of wider social goals. In this section, we will look at the historical issues that established the nature of architects' involvement in residential subdivision development in the 1920s.

Helpful and suggestive discussions of aspects of the history of the architectural profession can be found in Gwendolyn Wright's Moralism and the Model Home, Andrew Saint's The Image of the Architect, and in the essays collected by Spiro Kostof, in The Architect, and by Judith Blau and others, in Professionals and Urban Form.<sup>1</sup> In these studies, as well as in a review of the architectural press, the picture emerges of a profession that had great difficulty defining its activities and, when it did define them, tended to do so in a narrow way. The roots of the stresses that shaped the history of the architectural profession in the West go back to the seventeenth century.<sup>2</sup> Here we must focus, however, on the nature of the profession in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries

---

<sup>1</sup> Gwendolyn Wright, Moralism and the Model Home: Domestic Architecture and Cultural Conflict in Chicago, 1873-1913 (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1980); Andrew Saint, The Image of the Architect (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1983); Spiro Kostof, ed. The Architect: Chapters in the History of the Profession (New York: Oxford University Press, 1977); Judith R. Blau, Mark E. LaGory and John S. Pipkin, eds. Professionals and Urban Form (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1983), especially Magali Sarfatti Larson, "Emblem and Exception: The Historical Definition of the Architect's Professional Role," pp. 49-86.

<sup>2</sup> See, for example, Alberto Perez Gomez, Architecture and the Crisis of Modern Science (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1983).

in the United States.

The leaders of the architectural profession, from their founding of the American Institute of Architects (AIA) in 1857, allied their field with the traditions of Beaux-Arts theory and practice. Calvert Vaux's suggestion, around 1865, that a special membership category of the Institute be created for painters, carpenters, masons and others involved in architecture was opposed because "it would amount to a confession that the Institute members were in need of the information supposed to be imparted by the technicians and craftsmen."<sup>3</sup> Instead, by emphasizing academic principles, architects defined their activities so that, as one put it, "real architectural interest is almost as esoteric and professional as an interest in abstract law or medicine."<sup>4</sup> The terms of the definition distinguished architects from both builders and engineers, whose activities, however, accounted for the majority of actual construction. As late as the teens of the twentieth century, roughly sixty years after the initial organization of the profession, it was estimated that almost ninety percent of the buildings in the United States were constructed without the aid of architects.<sup>5</sup> And yet this was a situation that

---

<sup>3</sup>

Henry H. Saylor, The A.I.A.'s First Hundred Years (Washington, D.C.: The Octagon, 1957), p. 32.

<sup>4</sup>

William P. P. Longfellow, "The Architect's Point of View," Scribner's 9(January 1891): 119-20.

<sup>5</sup>

Saint, p. 72.

had been created, in a sense, both by the narrow theoretical and aesthetic definition of architecture, and by the devaluation of types of buildings that were seen as unsuitable to receive the attention of architects.

For our purposes, it is of special interest that the architectural profession tended to assert itself not through residential design for the middle and working classes, but through the design, for example, of public and monumental structures, and homes for the wealthy.

Gwendolyn Wright admirably charts the devaluation of domestic building by the architectural elite during the last quarter of the nineteenth century, a field that was dominated by builders and therefore challenged architects' claim to recognition on the basis of a special competency.<sup>6</sup> Architects articulated their expertise in different terms, designing public monuments that lent themselves to the application of classicizing formulas. They also distanced themselves from the activities of builders both by disparaging the mass of housing produced through their efforts and by relegating housing as a form to a realm beneath the concern of architects. An 1876 editorial in the American Architect and Building News, for example, used this disdain for domestic architecture to diminish the professional contribution of women who specialized in such areas: "the planning of houses, at least so far as the convenience of their arrangement is concerned, though a very necessary

---

6

Wright, chaps. 1, 2.

part of an architect's duty, is not architecture at all; and the ability to arrange a house conveniently does not in the least make an architect."<sup>7</sup>

By the 1890s, this attitude had become entrenched within the leadership of the profession. Inland Architect, a major journal for the midwest, announced in 1894 that it would no longer carry notices of buildings under construction that cost less than \$5,000, which included the majority of domestic building. The ideal architectural firm became Daniel Burnham's, in which specialized aspects of the commissions that came from municipalities and from the business community were allocated to staff architects and the one hundred draftsmen employed by the office, and<sup>8</sup> little residential design was undertaken.

The devaluation of housing, however, created tensions within the architectural profession. The type of construction which was most widespread and with which most people would come into contact throughout the course of their lives was designed by individuals who were able to call themselves architects, and yet who had neither the training nor the ideals recognized by the professional elite. A young architect, on the other hand, who was modeling his career development of the pattern of the elite, had difficulty acquiring small residential commissions using profes-

---

7

Quoted in Gwendolyn Wright, "On the Fringe of the Profession: Women in American Architecture," in Kostof, p. 282.

8

Wright, Moralism and the Model Home, pp. 205, 203.

sional standards, since the market was dominated by builders. Around the turn of the century, professional dismay with the work of builders and new efforts to tighten professional controls yielded a solution that heightened these tensions.

The first act to secure control over architectural standards was the achievement of state endorsement for architects through licensing. In 1897, Illinois passed the first state licensing law. Other states followed suit, although it was not until 1951 that all states had instituted licensing requirements.<sup>9</sup> Education in an accredited architectural school or passage of an examination were the criteria for registration. Although aimed at regulating the design of structures that involved new and complicated technologies, licensing also addressed housing. Only the design of single houses was exempt from architectural control, to protect owner-builders. A speculative builder who constructed more than one house a year was required to enlist the services of an architect, or to apprentice to<sup>10</sup> qualify to take the licensing exam.

Regularizing the education of architects was another aspect of establishing tighter professional controls. In 1907, the AIA's Committee on Education recommended that an architectural degree be conferred only on those who demon-

---

9

Saint, pp. 90-91; Wright, Moralism and the Model Home, pp. 212-13.

10

Wright, Moralism and the Model Home, p. 213.

strated a proficiency in Latin, completed a year of preparatory study and four years in a school of architecture, had at least a year of advanced study in ateliers in Paris, Rome or the United States, and traveled for at least a year in Europe.<sup>11</sup>

Reflecting the emphasis on formal education espoused here, twenty-one new architectural programs were established between 1893 and 1914, bringing the total in the United States to twenty-eight, and their "Curriculum and methods of teaching were either directly controlled by 'imported' French architects or dominated by Beaux-Arts programs."<sup>12</sup>

This type of training was not designed to address the kinds of problems encountered in the field of small house construction, nor was it created to attract to the study of architecture students who had an interest in that field.

In 1909, the AIA drew up a canon of ethics that also was designed to regulate professional activities. It included an injunction against architects engaging in the building trades. This mechanism was intended to ensure the disinterestedness of architects by prohibiting the possibility of seeking financial gain through the construction process, but it also formalized the desire of the professional elite to separate the role of the designer from that of the builder.

---

<sup>11</sup>

See Saylor.

<sup>12</sup>

Larson, p. 81, n. 26.

Significantly, this ethical position was not incorporated into state licensing laws because it was opposed by many practicing architects and builders.<sup>13</sup> There was also opposition to licensing proposals. The actions of the professional elite met resistance from the many architectural practitioners whose relations with building activities did not conform to the Beaux-Arts ideal. In tightening professional controls, the elite was widening the breach between design and building, and forcing many designers to choose between entering the ranks of the profession and working beyond the pale by supplementing their design activities with commercial endeavors. Many architects, working in small and still-rugged communities, chose the latter route, rejecting professional distinctions to design and build within the framework of existing commercial realities.<sup>14</sup>

The tension that was created by defining the architectural profession, which was especially strong in the area

---

13

Robert Gutman, The Design of American Housing: A Reappraisal of the Architect's Role (New York: Center for Cultural Resources, 1985), p. 51.

14

For insight into the flexible approach to work and professionalism needed by an architect on the midwestern frontier in the second half of the nineteenth century, see George Ehrlich and Peggy E. Schrock, "The A. B. Cross Lumber Company 1858-1871," Missouri Historical Review 80 (October 1985): 14-32. The decision not to participate in the profession was made by architects in other countries as well. Auguste Perret, for examples, never took his diploma for his studies at the Academie because doing so would automatically have precluded his working as a building contractor. Peter Collins, Concrete: The Vision of a New Architecture. A Study of Auguste Perret and His Precursors (New York: Horizon Press, 1959), p. 160.



of housing, is underscored by the conflicts within the AIA over the Architects' Small House Service Bureau (ASHSB) in the 1920s. The ASHSB was founded in 1919 by architect Edwin H. Brown of Minneapolis as a limited dividend corporation in which eighty-five small architectural firms participated. It published a plan magazine, Small House, and sold stock plans. The roots of the controversy over these activities lie in the tradition of such plan books and in the independence of builders and clients from architectural oversight that they fostered. Throughout the nineteenth century, pattern and plan books had been published that provided builders with stylistic and construction guidelines. Stock plan services, beginning with the magazine Godey's Lady Book in 1846 and continued by lumber companies and building supply dealers into the twentieth century, offered drawings for model home designs.<sup>15</sup> Access to these plans enabled builders to keep up with changing styles and meet the needs and desires of their clients. They were an important mechanism, in other words, for the transmission

---

15

Robert Gutman, "Architects in the Home-Building Industry," in Blau, et al., pp. 208-223. For a discussion of the role these played in antebellum developments, see Dell Upton, "Pattern Books and Professionalism: Aspects of the Transformation of Domestic Architecture in American, 1800-1860," Winterthur Portfolio 19 (Summer/Autumn 1984): 107-150. For a related analysis that extends to the turn of the century, see Michael J. Crosbie, "From 'Cookbooks' to 'Menus': The Transformation of Architecture Books in Nineteenth-Century American," Material Culture 17(Spring 1985): 1-23.

of architectural ideas.<sup>16</sup> From the standpoint of the architectural elite, as they embarked upon the project of professionalization, they were also an important mechanism for maintaining the independence of builders from architectural control. Armed with a stock plan, the builder or prospective homeowner did not need to hire an architect. The plans themselves were produced by designers from a variety of backgrounds, but even when architects had created them, the process of populist dissemination was anathema to the elite. And the stock plan turned the process of design into a commodity whereas, as Larson notes, "Professionalization movements are attempts to subtract certain areas of social life from the naked operation of market forces."<sup>17</sup> Selling the design "product," as opposed to being involved with the individual commission from beginning to end and designing for the particular situation, ran counter to the idea of professional service that architects were striving to create.

The creation of the ASHSB raised these issues once again. As Arthur Holden wrote in his defense of the project in the Journal of the American Institute of Architects in 1925, the AIA was the "moral sponsor" of the organization, although their endorsement, as this suggests, was

---

16

And for social ideas as well; see Wright, Moralism and the Model Home, chap. 1.

17

Larson, p. 79, n. 21.

18

controversial. For the ASHSB represented an attempt to reclaim a large portion of the built environment for the profession, by acknowledging and reaching an accommodation with existing market arrangements. Accepting the practices of builders, however, and working with them as designers of stock plans, was still repugnant and, indeed, unethical to many professionals. To preserve the "morality" of the profession in this sense, the elite was prepared, at the least, to deny professional recognition to dissenting fellow practitioners, if they could not also succeed in withdrawing professional services from the small house field.

While there was conflict within the profession, then, over architects' involvement in stock plan services, another approach to the definition of the profession in relation to housing was evolving in the first decade of the twentieth century. Instead of focusing on the design of individual houses, this approach concentrated on the overall planning of entire residential communities. Wright discusses this development, noting that when architects had designed whole communities in the nineteenth century, as, for example, Solon Beman did in the Chicago area, their work received no recognition in the professional press. By 1913, the year of the Chicago City Club competition and

---

18

Arthur C. Holden, "Outside Business Factors as Competitors of the Architect," Journal of the American Institute of Architects 8(1925): 308-310; Gutman, in Blau, et al., p. 211. On the history of the ASHSB, also see Thomas Harvey, "Mail-Order Architecture in the Twenties," Landscape 25(1981): 1-9.

exhibition of schemes for a model suburb, the attitude<sup>19</sup> within the profession had changed. While single residential commissions for the wealthy were not affected, the profession began to conceive of housing for the middle and working classes in terms of aggregates. Beaux-Arts principles that were being applied to the design of civic centers could also be used to regularize the design of neighborhoods and subdivisions. Other planning principles were formulated and rapidly disseminated at the turn of the century, notably garden suburb design and neighborhood unit<sup>20</sup> planning.

Albert Wood's booklet, Community Homes, exemplifies the recasting of the profession's concern with housing into planning terms. His scheme is characteristic of the new emphasis in the way it ignores the design of individual houses and concentrates on the organization of communal services with the ulterior goal of thereby shaping social relations (Figure 56). It looks to the development of the neighborhood for the creation of an environment nestled in nature, separated from the flow of traffic and commerce, instead of trying to achieve this ideal in individualized

---

19

Wright, Moralism and the Model Home, chaps. 2, 9.

20

We will discuss these planning principles in greater detail in Chapter 5. Recent research has expanded knowledge about early twentieth century architects who were interested in large-scale housing solutions. See, for example, Richard M. Candee and Greer Hardwicke, "Early Twentieth-Century Reform Housing by Kilham and Hopkins, Architects of Boston," Winterthur Portfolio 22(Spring 1987): 47-80.

terms.

But who would the clients be for these planning services of the architects? By reconceiving their role as designers of residential totalities, architects shifted the issue of patronage from individual homeowners, who relied upon builders more than architects, to necessarily corporate bodies that would be capable of organizing community building on a large scale. Albert Wood, as we noted, urged the creation of development companies, associations of prospective homeowners whose pooled resources would yield more amenities through economies of scale. These did not evolve in the United States, nor did philanthropic entities, such as the Russell Sage Foundation, sponsor of the model development of Forest Hills Gardens, emerge in significant numbers. In the aftermath of Pullman, employers were less likely to undertake community development, unless they included a number of controls to avoid the appearance of establishing a company town, as in the Ford Homes. Instead of these, the major client became the developer, the realtor who engaged in building large-scale subdivisions. In the third section of this chapter we will consider more closely the rise of the professional realtor and the nature of his role as a developer. For now, we can note that the reconception of the architect's contribution to housing as a planner had its parallel in the reformulation of the role of the speculative realtor as a community builder, which took place at the same historical moment.

The only other body that had the potential to serve as

client for such a scale of architectural services was the state. We have seen that the profession did look to the state for legitimation through the establishment of licensing laws around the turn of the century. Otherwise, however, relations between the architectural profession and government tended to be conflictual. The principal issue was the profession's struggle to eliminate the role of staff architects in favor of state commissions going to architects working in private practice.<sup>21</sup> Although by 1912 this dispute seemed to have been resolved in relation to federal projects, on the state level it continued to be a point of contention. An editorial in the first issue of the Michigan Architect and Engineer in 1919, for example, opposed a bill in the legislature that proposed the creation of an office of state architect. Such an office "would deprive the taxpayers," the editor wrote, of the "specialized experience, expert knowledge and individualized master architectural technique" of Michigan's practitioners.<sup>22</sup>

The architectural profession was able to enforce its independent position during the crisis of the First World War, although the experience seemed to move it, in fact, further along the route of collaboration with large-scale developers. A number of architects served in the federal

---

<sup>21</sup>

Saint, pp. 91-94.

<sup>22</sup>

Editorial, Michigan Architect and Engineer 1(April 1919): 3.

agencies that were responsible for the development of war workers' housing. A principal in the firm of McKim, Mead and White was the general manager of the United States Housing Corporation, for example, and the Emergency Fleet Corporation was headed by a man who later served as president of the AIA.<sup>23</sup> However, whereas the government had intended to use its staff architects to design the needed housing, the AIA persuaded it to commission for this work private architectural firms.<sup>24</sup> The general principle of maintaining the separation between public and private sectors was observed, for the federal war housing was designed by architects not employed by the government, and built by private developers.

Nevertheless, this context gave more architects first-hand experience with large-scale housing projects. And it seemed to impress upon them the value of efficiency, of business-like organization, and of collaborative work with engineers and builders. Articles in the professional press following the war reflect these new emphases. One writer urged, "Let us cease to be artists and become builders, losing our desire for individual fame in the greater desire of perfect production."<sup>25</sup> Engaging in such residential projects, another acknowledged, required abandoning "the

---

23

Gutman, The Design of American Housing, p. 29.

24

Ibid., p. 4.

25

Alfred H. Granger, "The Architect of Tomorrow," American Architect 115(15 January 1919): 93.

desire for aloof professionalism."<sup>26</sup> Few looked to the government to provide the framework of patronage for the continuation of such large-scale enterprises. Rather, the experience that the profession had had within the context created by the state prepared it for closer relations in the future with private developers.

### The Builder

#### Introduction

In a 1923 article in House and Garden, entitled "Local Materials and Local Labor," the prospective homeowner is urged to express her individuality not by imposing favorite historicist styles on inappropriate environments -- "building a Spanish Mission villa in a New England village" -- but through sensitivity to the characteristics of local building types and materials. Yet, while the virtues of searching out and respecting a prevailing local heritage are extolled, the writer assures the reader that this will not mean dependency on potentially idiosyncratic local builders. "Today, from the nature of the newer order of specialization in the building trades, local labor is generally no more than incidental."<sup>27</sup> The ironies of this fact were lost on the writer, but they accurately reflect

---

26

Frank Weitenkampf, "Art and Architecture After the War, A List of References," Architectural Record 46(November 1919): 485.

27

"Local Materials and Local Labor," House and Garden 43(April 1923): 90. Wright alludes to this development in Moralism and the Model Home, p. 197.



the process of rationalization that had occurred over the preceding hundred years.

In the course of the nineteenth century, the processes of building changed, the identity of builders was transformed, and the relationship between builders and other figures involved in construction became more complex. In this section, I will sketch the general outlines of these interrelated developments. I must note at the outset that we are principally concerned with the history of residential builders. Many of the changes that occurred in building processes and in the role of builders, however, took place first, and had their strongest impact, within the field of commercial construction. It was in connection with the development of skyscrapers that the effects of new technologies and new materials were most dramatic. Nevertheless, the trends that intensified with the introduction of skyscraper construction had been in evidence for several decades, and as large-scale residential development became a more general practice the impact of rationalized building procedures became more widespread as well.

Builders' activities were changed by the combined effects of mechanization, standardization, and specialization of their work practices. First we will consider the ways in which these features of industrialization affected builders' work, and then we will turn to a discussion of the impact of industrialized building on the builder's identity and relations of work.

---

### The Development of Industrialized Building

The roots of industrialized building lie in the development of the balloon frame in the midwest in the 1830s.<sup>28</sup> This new framing system was based on the ability of the steam-powered circular saw to rapidly produce thin lengths of wood in quantity, combined with the availability of machine-cut nails manufactured from rolled iron plates. In contrast to traditional timber framing, with its heavier members and hand-cut joinery, balloon framing reduced building loads and the total amount of wood needed for a frame, and required less labor to erect. Over the succeeding decades refinements were made to the details of balloon frame construction, culminating in the 1920s when the western, or platform, frame began to supplant it.<sup>29</sup> An offspring of balloon framing, the western frame had been developed around the period of the Gold Rush in California. Instead of using studs that ran the full height of the

---

28

The most recent accounts of the invention and elaboration of balloon framing can be found in Paul Sprague, "Chicago Balloon Frame" in H. Ward Jandl, ed. The Technology of Historic American Buildings (Washington, D.C.: Foundation for Preservation Technology, 1983), pp. 35-61, and in "The Origin of Balloon Framing," Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians 40(December 1981): 311-319, by the same author. Also see Bob Reckman, "Carpentry: The Craft and Trade" in Andrew Zimbalist, ed. Case Studies on the Labor Process (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1979), pp. 73-102; Amos J. Loveday, Jr., The Rise and Decline of the American Cut Nail Industry: A Study of the Interrelationship of Technology, Business Organization, and Management Techniques (Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 1983), pp. 8-20.

29

Sprague, "Chicago Balloon Frame," p. 45.

structure, western framing treated each floor as a self-sufficient, stackable unit. This system established an eight-foot vertical module and made construction even faster (Figure 57).

In itself, the balloon frame was not responsible for the industrialization of building, despite its reliance upon standardization and mechanization. As Dell Upton has noted in his article, "Traditional Timber Framing," balloon framing can be seen as "another in the lengthy list of popular adaptations of traditional practices."<sup>30</sup> Craft traditions were not static; they embraced improved techniques that increased flexibility and labor efficiency. Some of the elements of balloon framing had been used since the seventeenth century, so it was possible for nineteenth century craftsmen to see "the new forms . . . as modifica-<sup>31</sup>tions of the old."

But the simplification of framing techniques embodied in the balloon frame created the basis for further standardization and mechanization that could be, and was, exploited once a sufficient level of general industrial and economic development was reached. This only occurred in the years following the Civil War. With the general increase in industrial development, rationalized practices penetrated the building process more profoundly than they

---

30

Dell Upton, "Traditional Timber Framing" in Brooke Hindle, ed. The Material Culture of the Wooden Age (Tarrytown, N.Y.: Sleepy Hollow Press, 1981), p. 88.

31

Ibid., p. 92.

had through the invention of the balloon frame alone.

Although from the 1840s on new machines were developed that could speed the tasks of woodworking, the Report of the 10th Census on Power and Machinery Used in Manufacturing of 1888 found that, after 1871, woodworking machinery had displaced thousands of carpenters.<sup>32</sup> The machinery was operated principally at sawmills, which expanded their production to include finish work once the rail system was established; the former method of transporting lumber by water could not be used without damage to finished wood.<sup>33</sup> First in the Lake states and then, as timber resources were consumed, along the Pacific Coast, lumber companies diversified in order to increase the value of their raw materials. In 1884 in the west,

---

32

Reckman, pp. 86-87.

33

Robert F. Fries, Empire in Pine: The Story of Lumbering in Wisconsin 1830-1900 (Madison: The State Historical Society of Wisconsin, 1951), p. 65. The importance of lumber before the Civil War is affirmed by the 1840 census, which reported the existence of 31,560 sawmills. However, the value of the goods produced averaged only \$400 per mill. The economic expansion of the lumber industry occurred in the decades following the Civil War, and was spurred by the development of woodworking machinery. As of 1895, there were 2,500 recorded patents for saw and mill improvements; over 700 of these were filed in the decade 1870-80, and over 800 in the ten years 1885-95. See Bernhard E. Fernow, "American Lumber" in Chauncey M. Depew, ed. One Hundred Years of American Commerce, 2 vols. (New York: D.O. Haynes, 1895), 1:196-203. Economic expansion through diversification, however, also led to the concentration of the industry, for the increased costs of such machinery put smaller mills out of business. See Thomas R. Cox, Mills and Markets: A History of the Pacific Coast Lumber Industry to 1900 (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1974).

rough lumber hardly paid its cost, but the application of skilled labor and machinery in the process of planing increased the value of this same lumber by 100 percent, in the manufacture of doors by 200 percent, in the manufacture of sash 300 percent, and in the production of mouldings 500 percent.<sup>34</sup>

The impact of machine-made woodwork on builders was obvious to many, but one 1895 writer expressed the situation succinctly: "Indeed, the very houses that shelter us no longer represent the skill of the joiner, for the mill has usurped his place, and the carpenter only assembles its work."<sup>35</sup>

The mill both supplanted the builder and transformed the nature of his work. By manufacturing standardized doors, windows, trim, moldings and other woodwork, the lumber companies deprived the builder of work he had performed in the winter, when on-site construction was not possible. Furthermore, woodworking machinery took little skill to operate, and was often run, in the early years, by "greenhands," women, children and other unskilled laborers.<sup>36</sup>

And, as machine-made materials became available, employers introduced piecework, paying builders not by the day but according to a quantity of work completed. Accompanying this was the trend toward specialization, routinizing for individual workmen the assembly or instal-

---

34

Cox, p. 238.

35

William Sellers, "Machinery Manufacturing Interests" in Depew, 2: 350.

36

Jules Tygiel, "Workingmen in San Francisco 1880-1901," (Ph.D dissertation, University of California, Los Angeles, 1977), p. 105.

lation of machine-made windows, doors, floors and trim.

The savings in labor and cost were great. One compound carver replaced sixty carpenters, and planing machines required one hour and twenty-three minutes to do work that took one hundred and ten hours with a hand plane.<sup>37</sup> The output of each worker continued to increase as improvements were made to machinery -- both at the mill and, with the introduction of power tools, on the site -- and as further standardization of materials and specialization of work occurred. Between 1921 and 1928, productivity<sup>38</sup> in contract construction increased twenty-five percent.

For the builder, however, this process meant that his skills had become obsolete. Both the type of knowledge of complex calculations needed to build staircases, for example, and the sort of subtle awareness of wood's structure needed for hand drilling were unnecessary once standardized elements were available from the mill and power tools were

---

37

Thomas R. Brooks, The Road to Dignity: A Century of Conflict. A History of the United Brotherhood of Carpenters and Joiners of America, AFL-CIO, 1881-1981 (New York: Atheneum, 1981), p. 17.

38

Walter Galenson, The United Brotherhood of Carpenters: The First Hundred Years (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1983), p. 229. Ironically, in the twenties concern about high construction costs led to an investigation of seasonal unemployment. The fact that builders' off-season work had been replaced by mechanized production, controlled by a few large lumber companies, was forgotten by that time. Proposals for addressing the problem consisted of facilitating year-round construction by developing materials and techniques impervious to weather conditions. See Seasonal Operation in the Construction Industries: The Facts and Remedies (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1924), sponsored by Secretary of Commerce Herbert Hoover.

introduced.<sup>39</sup> Also, the builder's role in the process of production became attenuated, since he was needed primarily to assemble or install materials from the mill that formerly he had produced himself. As the specialization of work was refined, the builder's contribution to the conception and integration of the structure as a whole decreased.

Thus, although the invention of the balloon frame established the formal basis for standardization and mechanization, the particular course of development that these took was shaped by larger, complex processes. And while the builder's work was being transformed by the industrialization of construction practices, the definition of the builder was also changing, as were his relationships with others involved in building.

#### Relations of Production

Ambiguity begins to arise in the course of the late nineteenth century regarding whose activities are being referred to when one encounters the term "builder" in the literature. For the process of industrialization that subdivided building practices into discrete, specialized tasks also resulted in the differentiation of roles and the establishment of a new hierarchy. As the carpenter's responsibility for the overall construction process dimin-

---

39

See, for example, Richard Rutledge Myers, "The Building Workers: A Study of an Industrial Sub-Culture" (Ph.D. dissertation, University of Michigan, 1945), p. 167; Upton, "Pattern Books and Professionalism," pp. 109-11.

ished, other agents assumed control over the management and organization of building endeavors. The term "builder" came to refer to the person who performed these latter tasks rather than the manual labor of construction.

The skills of the "practical builder" of preindustrial times, whether he was called a carpenter, housewright, mason or mechanic, had been honed within the traditional, guild-based system that led from apprenticeship to the position of journeyman and then to master builder.<sup>40</sup> In a stable context, this system ensured the maintenance of an adequate supply of builders whose skills encompassed the entire range needed for construction, including the assessment of materials, the design of structures, the organization of the work schedule, as well as knowledge of the techniques of building.

Strains within this system seem to have developed in urban centers in the early years of the republic.<sup>41</sup> There, increased land values led to higher building costs. When

---

40

Catherine Bishir, "Jacob W. Holt: An American Builder" in Dell Upton and John Michael Vlach, eds. Common Places: Readings in American Vernacular Architecture (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1986), pp. 447-81, originally published in Winterthur Portfolio (Spring 1981). Pre-industrial relations of production, as well as pre-industrial practices, persisted in more isolated areas and in small-scale building enterprises. While it is important to recall the strength of these traditions and their permutations, I am focusing here on the historical trend toward industrialization that affects larger-scale residential development.

41

This account is based on Robert A. Christie, Empire in Wood: A History of the Carpenters' Union, Cornell Studies in Industrial and Labor Relations, vol. 7 (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1956), pp. 21-22.



master carpenters were unable to afford the entire cost of building projects, speculators arose who served as financial middlemen. Master carpenters became labor contractors and, in the 1790s, the earliest journeymen's trade unions were founded. In labor disputes, however, it was not always clear who the employer was, the master/contractor or the middleman. Some masters allied themselves with the speculators, others with the journeymen. Something of this ambiguity can be seen, for example, in an 1825 statement regarding a labor dispute addressed by some Boston middlemen to the journeymen on behalf of the contractors, and signed "Gentlemen Engaged in Building."<sup>42</sup> By the end of the century, the stratification of roles that was still variable in 1825 became more deeply entrenched, but the developer, or "builder," and the general contractor of the later period have their origins, it seems, in the middleman and master/contractor of the earlier one.

In the course of the nineteenth century, many organizations were formed that sought to redress problems of pay, working hours, or itinerancy that affected building workers. They tended to be both local in scope and short-lived. In 1881, however, the United Brotherhood of Carpenters and Joiners was founded, a national union whose founder recognized that "Only real national power . . . could

---

42

Ibid.

cope with real national economic forces."<sup>43</sup> The union arose in response to the inroads industrialization had made in the transformation of building practices. The use of greenhands to run woodworking machinery and the imposition of piecework wages that resulted from the availability of standardized, machine-produced elements were among the primary issues that the union addressed. Its supporters well knew that "An Ohio machine threatened the Chicago carpenter and the Philadelphia carpenter equally."<sup>44</sup>

In the face of the loss of builders' livelihoods caused by mechanization and standardization, the union attempted to preserve wages and jobs. Thus, its founder, Peter J. McGuire, a Lassallian socialist, forged the union into the spearhead of the struggle for the eight-hour day in 1886; success in achieving reduced hours won new members and led to a lasting role for the union in the leadership of the American Federation of Labor, which McGuire helped establish. The importance attributed to this strategy can be seen in the denial by the union leadership of an 1884 request from the Amalgamated Iron and Steel Workers that

---

43

Ibid., p. 39. The words are Christie's, but the spirit behind them is founder Peter J. McGuire's. The centennial of the founding of the union was the occasion for a number of histories, including Brooks' and Galenson's, already cited. Local histories include Mark Erlich, With Our Hands: The Story of Carpenters in Massachusetts (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1986) and Paul Bullock, et al. Building California: The Story of the Carpenters' Union (Los Angeles: University of California, Center for Labor Research and Education, Institute of Industrial Relations, 1982).

44

Christie, p. 39.

urged the union to help discourage the increasing use of steel nails since this new technology reduced steelworker employment. The General Executive Board replied that "while our Brotherhood sympathized with them, they did not deem it advisable to fight labor saving machinery, and recommended the Iron and Steel Workers to struggle for a reduction of the hours of labor to offset the evil."<sup>45</sup> If hours were reduced, more men would have to be hired to do the original amount of work, thus returning to the workforce those who had been laid off through mechanization.

In addition to saving carpenters' jobs through the eight-hour struggle, the union sought to preserve work that was threatened by the hiring of greenhands. In 1882, the craft qualifications for membership in the union referred only to carpenters and joiners; by 1886, "stair builders, millwrights, planing mill bench hands or cabinet makers engaged at carpenter work, or any carpenter running wood-working machinery were admitted."<sup>46</sup> By 1890, the union included twenty-one locals of planing mill hands, five locals of stair builders, and three locals of sash, blind and door makers.<sup>47</sup> By embracing industrialized work, the union ensured that the workers so employed would receive carpenters' wages and work carpenters' hours; carpenters,

---

<sup>45</sup>

Galenson, p. 41; the second quote is from the Minutes of the General Executive Board, March 1885.

<sup>46</sup>

Brooks, p. 66.

<sup>47</sup>

Galenson, p. 77.

thus, would be hired for the jobs instead of unskilled laborers. This goal continued to be pursued through the union's fight against dual unionism and through its struggle for union labeling of construction materials that guaranteed that union labor had been used in the mills.

These actions were successful, and through them the Carpenters became the largest of the building trades unions. In a number of cities, including San Francisco, the Building Trades Council, under the leadership of the Carpenters union, became the voice for all labor around the turn of the century. And yet it is, at the least, a measure of the magnitude of the forces facing builders that the issue of jurisdiction became the preoccupation of the union in the early decades of the twentieth century. Although the union determined that "Once wood, it is always the right of the carpenter to install it, no matter what the new material is," it became impossible to predict what innovations might pose a challenge to the carpenters' jurisdiction.

<sup>48</sup> As the General Executive Board acknowledged in 1915, "owing to the rapid change in the building industry in the last few years, the substitution of one material for another in construction work, as well as the methods of construction, a detailed statement of our claims today may need changing tomorrow or the next day."

---

<sup>48</sup>

Brooks, p. 92, quoting President Hutcheson.

<sup>49</sup>

Galenson, p. 113, citing the Minutes of the General Executive Board, 24 February 1915. The greatest impact of

While the union protected the livelihoods of many of the workmen engaged in diverse aspects of the construction industry, it could do nothing to affect the splintering of builders' work that mechanization, standardization and specialization created. Rather, it seems that by organizing the building trades workers, the unions, of which the United Brotherhood of Carpenters and Joiners was the largest and most powerful, articulated the new division of labor that industrialized practices gave rise to. They implicitly ratified the separation of manual work from the managerial, financial and design aspects of the building process.

As specialization increased and as new trades, such as plumbing and electrical work, arose, the need for overall coordination of the building process at the planning stage increased, too.<sup>50</sup> Depending upon the complexity and cost of the job, this managerial role was undertaken by contractors or developers. Both of these groups evolved in the course of the nineteenth century from their origins, which we touched on above, as master builders/contractors and speculators, respectively.

Contractors often allied themselves with building workers. When the Carpenters union initiated its campaign

---

these changes was felt by builders involved in commercial construction; the union's longest and most bitter jurisdictional disputes were with the Machinists' and the Steelworkers' unions.

50

Reckman, p. 97.

against piecework, for example, contractors supported its  
<sup>51</sup> efforts. On smaller jobs, including the majority of  
 nineteenth century residential construction, there con-  
 tinued to be a certain fluidity between roles, carpenters  
 especially having the opportunity to gain contracting expe-  
<sup>52</sup> rience. As the scale of both commercial and residential  
 projects grew, however, the line separating the roles of  
<sup>53</sup> building worker and contractor became less permeable.

Developers, on the other hand, were generally consis-  
 tent in their opposition to the claims of building workers.  
 In 1890 and 1891, for example, organized as an employers'  
 group called the National Builders' Association, they de-  
 feated workers' efforts to win the eight-hour day in seve-  
<sup>54</sup> ral cities. But, as the name of this early organization

---

51

Christie, p. 60. For an example of opposition between  
 contractors and building workers in Chicago in 1899-1900,  
 see Wright, Moralism and the Model Home, pp. 181-82.

52

Myers, pp. 79-81, 150ff.

53

As Wright notes, the general contractor emerged as an  
 organizer of complex building processes in the 1880s in  
 response to the demands of skyscraper construction. His  
 logistical expertise was subsequently applied to large-  
 scale residential projects. See Wright, Moralism and the  
 Model Home, p. 307, n. 21. On residential contractors, see  
 Michael J. Doucet and John C. Weaver, "Material Culture and  
 the North American House: The Era of the Common Man, 1870-  
 1920," Journal of American History 72(December 1985): 565-  
 67. Contractors specializing in commercial and public  
 construction established the Associated General Contractors  
 of America in 1918. See Booth Mooney, Builders for Prog-  
 ress: The Story of the Associated General Contractors of  
 America (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1965).

54

Christie, p. 71; Wright, Moralism and the Model Home, p.  
 94.

suggests, it was also this group that challenged the worker's role as a builder. At the same time that building workers' jobs were becoming industrialized, developers increasingly took responsibility for the planning and financing of larger-scale developments. The skills that were needed for these activities had little to do with direct knowledge or experience of any particular building craft, but depended more on organizational and entrepreneurial acumen.

Thus, by the end of the nineteenth century, both the nature of construction practices had been transformed and a new system of stratification was evolving that reallocated control over the building process from the builder/worker to the builder/entrepreneur. We will look more closely at the professional rise to prominence of the latter in the next section.

### The Realtor

#### Introduction

The realty firm of Baldwin and Howell was founded in 1885; B. E. Taylor began his real estate activities around 1914. By the time they built Westwood Highlands and Brightmoor, respectively, in the 1920s, the business they were both engaged in had achieved the identity of a profession. The process of professionalization of real estate enterprises began in the late nineteenth century; by the 1920s, as we will see, there was a national organization, with its own publication, that had working relationships

---

both with other professionals concerned with urban and development issues and with governmental agencies, and that had licensing and other mechanisms through which the qualifications and activities of its members could be controlled. While these structures were being forged, furthermore, the activities of the real estate business were becoming redefined. Among the endeavors for which realtors felt they had a special responsibility was the development of large-scale single-family housing communities. The projects built by Baldwin and Howell and by Taylor are, thus, emblematic of the activities of realtors in this period. They concretize the practices of the profession and, as well, they are illuminated by the larger historical trends of which they are a part. In this section, we will look at the ways in which realtors molded their profession and at the way that residential subdividing activity contributed to that project.

55

#### The Professional Project

The history of dealings in land in the United States is primarily one of speculation in undeveloped areas, entailing high risks, the lure of extravagant profits and the potential for abuse by "land sharks."<sup>56</sup> Arranging property

55

This phrase derives from Magali Sarfatti Larson, The Rise of Professionalism: A Sociological Analysis (Berkeley, University of California Press, 1977).

56

The best general history of land as a commodity in the United States remains A. M. Sakolski, The Great American Land Bubble: The Amazing Story of Land-Grabbing, Speculations, and Booms from Colonial Days to the Present Time



transfers in settled communities, the real estate agent traditionally served merely as a go-between, collecting commissions on transactions between buyers and sellers. By 1922, however, the activities of such businessmen had been transformed. As one writer expressed the new definition of the real estate professional,

The Realtor of today represents America's best type of citizenship. He is a thinker, a planner and a builder. His studies are those of development and his aims are those of the altruist. He believes in better habitations, better cities and more productive farms. He holds no brief for capital or labor, for class or faction, but he possesses a firm and an active faith in his community, his country and in the imperishable qualities of the commodity in which he deals.<sup>57</sup>

While the boosterism of Babbitt is surely one aspect of this picture, another is its appeal to disinterested community development. The latter reflects the new professionalized identity that had been forged over the preceding thirty years.

The mechanisms that real estate businessmen used to construct this new identity as professionals were those that were employed in other professional projects, as they have been analyzed by Magali Sarfatti Larson in The Rise of Professionalism: A Sociological Analysis.<sup>58</sup> Studied ret-

---

(New York: Harper and Bros., 1932; reprint ed., New York: Johnson Reprint Corp., 1966). See also Peter Wolf, Land in American: Its Value, Use and Control (New York: Pantheon, 1981).

57

R. E. Sherman, "The Realtor," National Real Estate Journal 23/24 (20 November 1922): 20.

58

See note 53.

respectively, such developments as the formation of a national association, the definition of ethical procedures, the transmission of expertise through the education of new practitioners and the grounding of that expertise in claims to scientific theory can be seen as steps leading consistently toward a group's redefinition as a profession.

Larson develops this analysis of professionalization primarily in relation to medicine, law and engineering, but we will see that it applies to realty as well. Like other professions that have emerged since the turn of the century, realty modeled itself on the paths that had already been trod by medicine and law to achieve market monopoly and social status.

Efforts to organize real estate businessmen into local associations had been made as early as 1847 but, until the 1880s, all were short-lived. The first attempt to create a national organization, in 1891, was undermined by the severe depression of the nineties. As soon as the economic tide turned, however, the initiative was renewed, and in 1908 the National Association of Real Estate Boards (NAREB)<sup>59</sup> was founded. The spur to organization had been the need to distinguish qualified and honest brokers from unscrupu-

---

59

The original name of the organization founded in 1908 was the National Association of Real Estate Exchanges; the present name was adopted in 1916. The source for factual information concerning early NAREB activities, unless otherwise noted, is Pearl Janet Davies, Real Estate in American History (Washington, D.C.: Public Affairs Press, 1958), written on the occasion of the fiftieth anniversary of NAREB's founding.

lous "land sharks," and this remained a concern of NAREB. In 1916, the new term "realtor" was adopted to signify a member of the organization; although the attempt to copy-right the term failed, in several states it was registered under trademark laws.<sup>60</sup> An identifying emblem was adopted in 1923. All three mechanisms, the national organization, the title and the emblem, were designed to define respectable practitioners for the public, and for realtors themselves.

One of the first issues that NAREB tackled at its yearly conferences was a code of fair practice. By 1913, a draft ethical code was formulated, following the practice of such professions as medicine, law and engineering. As one student of the professions has observed, ethicality was "prerequisite for being trusted to control the terms of work without taking advantage of such control."<sup>61</sup> Following the passage of the code in 1915, the public was assured that members of NAREB would operate in an honest manner. It served as an additional way of defining proper practice in contrast to unscrupulous activity, and was also seen as a mechanism to police the profession. State licensing laws

---

60

As late as 1921, real estate professionals felt that an advertising campaign was necessary to familiarize the public with the word "realtor" and what it stood for. See the remarks of NAREB President Fred E. Taylor in the report on his address, "Wants College Courses in Real Estate," National Real Estate Journal, 18 July 1921, p. 27, and the article on this theme, pp. 29-30 of the same issue.

61

Eliot Freidson, Profession of Medicine (New York: Dodd and Mead, 1970), p. 360, quoted in Larson, p. 57.

were urged to enforce the code, and in 1919 California and Michigan became the first states to establish regulatory  
 62  
 licensing systems.

At the yearly NAREB meetings, concerns were discussed and resolved. Between meetings, the magazine of the organization, the National Real Estate Journal, provided a venue for debate and information. This organ began publication in 1910, and was an important unifying element for the profession, framing the ideas that guided its activities. Through the discussions conducted in these two arenas, during the decade of the teens, the basic procedures governing modern real estate methods became formalized. These consisted of the principle of exclusive agency, the use of written agreements and multiple listings, and cooperative

---

62

See Davies. According to Marc A. Weiss, The Rise of the Community Builders: The American Real Estate Industry and Urban Land Planning (New York: Columbia University Press, 1987), p. 13, the California licensing act was signed into law in 1917. He also notes that NAREB members often administered the state agencies that enforced licensing laws. For an expanded account of the mechanisms NAREB used in its professionalizing effort, see Weiss, pp. 19-27. Weiss' book, appearing after I had developed the framework of ideas for this chapter, provided welcome support for the idea of the centrality of realtors in the history of subdivision development, and amplification of a number of aspects of realtors' history. Weiss focuses on the pioneering role realtors played as planners, eventually influencing federal planning policies in the 1930s. Although he documents the process of rationalization that characterized the real estate industry, he does not locate it sufficiently within its historical context. My analytical framework, considering the relative contributions of builders, architects and realtors, is intended to provide a deeper understanding of how the rationalizing process affected built form.

63 selling. Thus, a body of practice as well as an ethics of practice were established, which all realtors could reliably be expected to uphold.

Characteristically, professions emphasize the scientific or theoretical basis of their expertise, reflecting the legitimizing value that modern society places on cognitive rationality.

64 In the first two decades of the twentieth century, realtors were concerned with developing a mathematical method for determining the value of property. Competing systems were put forth and discussed at national meetings in an effort to base valuations on objective criteria. The first effort to compile data on real estate values was begun in 1907, in order to establish patterns that would aid appraisals and the prediction of future values. By 1913, realtors were often paid fees for their appraisal services, which was regarded as an acknowledgment of their role as consulting professionals, akin to  
65 doctors and lawyers.

All of these strategies of the professional project -- the creation of a professional association, the delineation of ethical and procedural norms, and the claim to a distinctive body of knowledge -- were means by which realtors, like other groups, attempted to establish control over the market for their services. Also important for this goal

---

63 Davies, pp. 114-115.

64 Larson, chapters 3 and 4.

65 Davies, p. 116.

was the development of means for standardizing "the production of the producers" of these services. Larson uses this formulation to describe the transmission of skills and knowledge to new members.<sup>66</sup> As early as 1904, the first series of lectures on real estate was offered by the Real Estate Board of Brokers in New York City. The first university courses were given at the Wharton School of Finance and Commerce of the University of Pennsylvania, and at New York University's School of Commerce,<sup>67</sup> in 1905. Following the founding of NAREB, educational issues were a major concern. A study undertaken in 1915 acknowledged the inadequacy of texts bearing on real estate, for of the forty relevant titles in the Library of Congress, less than a dozen were considered worthwhile. The war intervened before this problem could be redressed, but in 1923 NAREB sponsored the publication of nine texts by Macmillan. In the same year, conferences were held to discuss the needs of real estate education, and a two-year standard course was developed. The first research body in the United States for the economics of real estate, the Institute for Research in Land Economics and Public Utilities, was founded in 1920 by Richard T. Ely, an economist at the University of Wisconsin; from its inception, it maintained a working relationship with NAREB.

---

66

Larson, chapter 4.

67

Courses were also offered at the University of Pennsylvania's Evening School in Philadelphia. Davies, p. 121.

Larson elaborates on the overall importance of the educational system as a route toward professionalization, and on the flexibility of the system of higher education in the United States that enabled new fields to gain credibility through university affiliation.<sup>68</sup> For NAREB, the relationship with the state seems to have played an equally crucial legitimizing role. As we have seen, NAREB turned to state governments for enforcement of the code of ethics through licensing agencies. The state provided "the appearance of neutrality necessary to guarantee the 'objectively' superior competence of a category of professionals."<sup>69</sup> By accepting NAREB's criteria for competence, the state affirmed the organization's definition of real estate practice.

During the First World War, the profession also received recognition from the federal government, when realtors served in the Real Estate and Commandeering Division of the United States Housing Corporation, the Office of the Alien Property Custodian, the Shipping Board, the Bureau of Industrial Housing and Transportation of the Department of Labor, and the Real Estate Division of the War Department. Realtors within these bureaucracies contributed to the war effort by performing appraisals, providing data on housing supply and costs, managing real estate and mortgages, ac-

---

<sup>68</sup> Larson, chapters 3, 4, and 9.

<sup>69</sup> Ibid., p. 70.

quiring land and buildings, and organizing the construction of housing. Whereas direct government construction of much-needed housing for war workers was urged by planners, architects and engineers, realtors promoted government aid for the "private financing of private builders."<sup>70</sup> Although the federal government did undertake housing projects, it attempted to turn them over to private developers as quickly as possible at the conclusion of the war. Realtors' influence was also exerted in the extensive "Own Your Home" campaign that was launched after the war and was widely publicized as having the support of the Secretary of Labor. The involvement of NAREB members in government service in this period resulted in the relocation of its headquarters from Minneapolis to Washington, D.C., in 1918. The organization also briefly established a research bureau there, in 1920, to conduct fact-finding for the support of legislative work and lobbying.

By 1922, NAREB had consolidated its constituency through the establishment of norms of practice, and had successfully provided expertise during the war mobilization. Based on these early experiences, the constitution of the association was reorganized in 1922 to tighten its administrative structure and to create seven specialized

---

70

Davies, p. 135. Weiss, p. 28, notes that the United States Housing Corporation's Real Estate Division "established a special federal mortgage loan program to stimulate private construction of moderate-cost housing for war workers, supplementing the government housing construction program of the USHC directed by city planner F. L. Olmsted, Jr."



divisions. These divisions articulated the diversity of emphases that had developed within the profession. One of them was the Home Builders' and Subdividers' Division, which eventually broke off from its parent organization and became the National Association of Home Builders. Housing and the creation of subdivisions were important concerns for realtors throughout the process of professionalization, however, and I want to focus on this history and its implications in the following section.

#### Realtors as Community Builders

One of the significant features in the 1922 description of realtors quoted above is the writer's emphasis on the disinterested role of the realtor as a community developer. To the extent that realtors identified themselves with the city-building activities of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, their professional project was further enhanced. During this period in which forms of accommodation were achieved between corporate capitalism and the state, the concepts of rationality, efficiency and the public interest were forged into a single hegemonic ideological construct that was used to define new political, social and civic institutions. It was embraced by

---

71

In addition to Larson, see Samuel Haber, Efficiency and Uplift: Scientific Management in the Progressive Era (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1964); Samuel P. Hays, The Response to Industrialism: 1885-1914 (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1957); Gabriel Kolko, The Triumph of Conservatism (New York: Free Press, 1963); James Weinstein, The Corporate Ideal in the Liberal State:

both established and emerging professions, for the concepts of rationality, efficiency and the public interest allowed social practices to be conceived as scientific data to be manipulated by disinterested scientists who commanded all of the force of objective truth for which modern society reveres the activities of natural scientists. On the one hand, this ideology transformed complex and potentially divisive social issues into objective realities that could be quantified according to scientific procedures. And on the other hand, it presented the agents of these procedures as neutral facilitators of objective processes.

The city embodied many of the conflicting interests that had to be reconciled, not only politically but also physically, in order for the corporate economy to continue to grow. Many of the professions that emerged in this period, including city managers, planners, engineers and social workers, saw their role as contributing, within the framework of their particular expertise, to this process of reconciliation that would lead to greater social progress. The city, in other words, was a focus for the energies of many professionals who were striving to create a more efficient environment for general social and economic development by applying rational solutions to its problems.

As we have seen, one of the bases of realtors' profes-

---

1900-1918 (Boston: Beacon Press, 1968); M. Christine Boyer, Dreaming the Rational City: The Myth of American City Planning (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1983).

sional project was their claim to cognitive rationality in their role as appraisers, developing scientific methods for the determination of property values. By embracing the task of city-building, becoming "Architects of the fortune of cities," as one 1892 participant expressed it,<sup>72</sup> realtors also laid claim to professional status by virtue of their promotion of rational and efficient means for civic improvement in the public interest. By the 1880s, local real estate boards were supporting infrastructural development, such as the laying of streetcar and railroad tracks, and the encouragement of new industries and population growth that would promote the growth of their cities.<sup>73</sup>

The Twin Peaks Property Owners Association in San Francisco, formed in the second decade of the twentieth century, is an instance of an ad hoc organization of realtors created to support municipal construction of public transportation. Once the national association was formed, it too spoke out in favor of efforts that were instrumental for urban expansion. For example, a resolution at the 1911 NAREB meeting urged all levels of government, national, state and county, to undertake the paving of roads to meet the needs of autos and, by extension, of suburban growth.<sup>74</sup> Although individual real estate ventures would profit by

---

72

Editorial, Buffalo Real Estate and Financial News, 1892, quoted in Davies, p. 39.

73

Davies, p. 36.

74

Ibid., p. 72.

improvements such as these, the profession voiced its support for them in terms that embraced the well-being of the entire community. But what is of particular concern to us here is the way in which realtors addressed issues of housing and subdivisions.

In The Rise of the Community Builders, Marc Weiss notes the range of subdividing activity that real estate men engaged in. At the disreputable end of the scale were the "curbstoners," speculators in "vacant, unimproved lots heavily encumbered with private debt and public tax and special assessment obligations."<sup>75</sup> Often these were not licensed realtors, and the drive toward professionalization was in part an effort to eliminate just these individuals from the field.

Established realtors, who did not engage in such fraudulent practices, could be involved with subdivisions either as brokers, selling lots on behalf of the subdivider, or as subdividers themselves. The general practice was to sell unimproved lots.

Weiss maintains that, following the crisis in the mid-1920s brought on by the vast oversupply of unimproved lots created by speculative subdividing, the trend toward realtors taking responsibility for the entire development of subdivisions, from infrastructural improvements through housebuilding, deepened. Realtors who had pioneered community development had found "that combination lot-house

---

75

Weiss, p. 6.

sales were more stable, profitable, and marketable than just pure lot sales."<sup>76</sup> By the time their experiences became more generally influential, a body of discussion and practices had evolved that the wider community of realtors could draw upon.

At its 1892 meeting, the first, short-lived national association, the National Real Estate Association, discussed the importance of encouraging home ownership and the development of planned communities as a way to lower costs for buyers as well as to improve living conditions through amenities such as parks and playgrounds.<sup>77</sup> Such topics were of interest to NAREB, as well, and its 1910 meeting "centered on practical methods for laying out new home areas."<sup>78</sup> By this date, subdividers were urged to develop plans that included modern improvements, that used contoured streets to take advantage of local topography, and that made use of trees and park spaces.

Realtors' discussions of subdivision design and standards in these early years were given weight by their ability to point to models that could be emulated. The first community they singled out was Edward H. Bouton's Roland Park, in Baltimore, begun in 1891. The next influ-

---

<sup>76</sup>

Ibid., p. 42. See the discussions of Detroit and Brightmoor in Chapter 2 for references to the oversupply of lots created by speculative subdividing.

<sup>77</sup>

Davies, p. 50.

<sup>78</sup>

Ibid., p. 68.

ential subdivision was Jesse Clyde Nichols' Country Club District, in Kansas City; Nichols himself addressed NAREB's 1912 meeting and gave a report on his work. For realtors, Hugh Potter's River Oaks, in Houston, was "the country's<sup>79</sup> third nationally noted planned residential community."

These model subdivisions are of note for two reasons. First of all, it is significant that these were developments created by realtors; they served as models just as much for the way they had been organized as they did for the design principles they demonstrated. Where other professionals interested in suburban development championed the designers who introduced principles of contoured streets, landscaping and park spaces, realtors could point to the developers who harnessed these principles in works on the ground. Bouton, for example, had worked with landscape architect Frederick Law Olmsted, Jr., at Roland Park, and he was also the developer for Forest Hills Gardens. Within the realtors' community, however, Olmsted's ideas were viewed through the process of development organized by Bouton as the developer. For the profession as a whole, garden suburb design and neighborhood unit planning became accepted as standards of the period, incorporated into the general body of notions that were identified as modern and progressive, through their successful implementation in realtors' model developments.

The second significant aspect of these subdivisions as

models for realtors is their scope. In all of them, the realtor maintained control over the entire process of development, from land acquisition through street design, building, landscaping, marketing, financing, and the location of community and commercial services. In other words, through these models, realtors asserted an ideal of their activities that emphasized large-scale and multi-dimensional planning and organizational skills. They presented themselves as assuming responsibility for the shape that the physical growth of suburban residential areas would take, in terms of tree-lined enclaves of predominantly single-family houses; for the economic stability of these developments, in terms of the maintenance of property values through use, building and design controls; and for the definition of social well-being, in terms of residential areas that provided safe play areas for children, access to shops, schools, community facilities and a range of churches, separation from industry and commerce, and a controlled mixture of socio-economic groups. In short, realtors were not interested merely in short-term gain through the buying and selling of a commodity. As a 1908 editorial in the Chicago Tribune put it, "The real estate dealer is no longer a mere speculator in land or buildings. His activities have increased until he is recognized among the influential forces of the community." <sup>80</sup> He was claim-

---

80

Editorial, Chicago Tribune, May 1908, quoted in Davies, p. 55.

ing to address the needs of the community as a whole and to provide both tangible and intangible patterns for physical and social development.

Another manifestation of realtors' identification with large-scale planning concerns is their early and sustained organizational relationship with city planners. The 1909 NAREB meeting took place one month after the first National Conference on City Planning (NCCP), and included a speaker on city planning who relayed information about the latter to the realtors. NAREB leaders increasingly were involved in the NCCP, for in 1913 Jesse Clyde Nichols joined its General Committee, and several realtors were featured speakers at its annual conference in 1915. In 1917, Nichols, Bouton and two other developers were among the founding members of the American City Planning Institute,<sup>81</sup> which later became the American Institute of Planners.

Within NAREB, interest in planning issues first took organizational form in 1914, when Bouton, Nichols and Duncan McDuffie, among others, established the City Plan-<sup>82</sup>ning Committee. This committee drew together realtors who were concerned with land development, residential subdividing, and housebuilding. When NAREB was restructured in 1922 to accommodate the growth of professional speciali-

---

<sup>81</sup>

Weiss, pp. 57, 180 n. 5.

<sup>82</sup>

Ibid., p. 55. Duncan McDuffie, as one of the principals in the San Francisco firm Mason-McDuffie, was the developer of St. Francis Wood in the West of Twin Peaks district.



zations, these realtors became the leaders of the Home Builders' and Subdividers' Division. The close relationship between realtors and planners that characterized these early years culminated in 1925, when the Home Builders' and Subdividers' Division joined with the American City Planning Institute to develop guidelines on subdivision controls. The document that they formulated in 1927 became the foundation for A Standard City Planning Enabling Act, the model for land use planning and regulation that the United States Department of Commerce issued to state governments beginning in 1928.<sup>83</sup>

Thus, realtors' professionalization, and their focus on issues of community development, enabled them to join with other professionals who were shaping the physical and social patterns of urban decentralization. One emblem of the way in which realtors' concerns meshed with others' can be seen in a 1923 ad in the National Real Estate Journal. This offered to developers the services of a landscape architect and engineer whose credentials included not only a site plan incorporating curvilinear, tree-lined streets and a riverfront park, but membership in NAREB, the American Conference of City Planning, and the American Association of Engineers (Figure 58).

Another form that professional interaction took can be seen in a 1924 address by J. C. Nichols, who was one of the most vocal spokesmen for the leadership of realtors as city

---

83

Ibid., pp. 72-78.

builders. He began by asking, "What man in any city is better fitted to serve as mayor than the Realtor?" and he continued,

In Kansas City we have several Realtors members [sic] of our city council; an ex-president of the real estate board as president of the board of park commissioners; an ex-president is chairman of the city plan and zoning commission with four other Realtors on the board; a Realtor a member [sic] of the board of education; a Realtor on the fire and water board commission; our county commissioners, law enforcement league, building code commission, board of public works and health board. Your splendid president of the National Association has long been active in our welfare work; a Realtor is president of our Art Institute, vice president of the Symphony Orchestra Association and Liberty Memorial Association, and so on throughout all the activities of our city.<sup>84</sup>

Just as his Country Club District served as a model subdivision for developers in the twenties, Nichols' incantation of realtors penetrating all levels of civic administration provided a model of a network of experts leading urban development. We will see in the next chapter how, on the national level, realtors attended to Nichols' model.

In the following section, we will look at how the rise of developers, combined with the industrialization of building and architects' experiences, affected the 1920s subdivisions we are studying.

#### Conclusion: The Rationalization of Development

To different extents, the three subdivisions that we have studied in the first part embody the historical situa-

---

84

J. C. Nichols, "Responsibilities and Opportunities of Real Estate Boards in Building Cities," National Real Estate Journal, 30 June 1924, p. 25.

tions of their creators as we have presented them in this chapter. The general trends are inflected by the particular features of each community's development, but are nevertheless present. In this section, I will summarize the ways in which the historical trajectories of the agents of such developments are related, and reconsider each project in the light of these trends. Figure 59 presents graphically the changes that occurred in each role.

In our reconstructions of the formation of each subdivision, as well as in the histories in this chapter, the figure who emerges as dominant is the realtor/developer. The builders of the projects in Detroit and San Francisco, on the other hand, never come into clear focus. Even in the case of Hans Nelson, the one builder whose name we know, and who was featured in an article in a national journal, it is difficult to attribute to him responsibility for shaping any of the decisions about the development of Westwood Highlands, nor can we detect signature elements in the houses themselves that indicate his particular involvement. Both Taylor and Ford used crews whose members are virtually unknown, although it is telling that the Ford Homes' builders were drafted from tractor and auto plants. They were employed because of their jobs on Ford's assembly lines; they were not skilled building craftsmen.

This reflects the history of builders' deskilling and proletarianization. And, as we have noted, as the builder's work became simplified, specialized and rou-

tinized, the need increased for planning and logistical coordination of the construction process. For large-scale projects, the developer assumed this role. However, there is another aspect to the historical process that links the rising star of developers to the narrowing sphere of builders' work. For the house itself also began to shrink in value. Around the turn of the century, the value of housing in relation to the gross national product began to decline. At the same time, expenditures for consumer goods related to housing needs, such as refrigerators, vacuum cleaners, and other appliances and furnishings, in-  
<sup>85</sup>creased.

By 1930, when the activities of realtors who were also involved in speculative building were examined, the census report noted that their profits derived not from  
<sup>86</sup>construction, but from the sale of structures. Thus, the activity of builders diminished in terms of the nature of their work, and also in terms of the value embedded in their product. Realtors who organized the entire process of development were in a position to absorb this shift in value and still make a profit.

Architects, in contrast to builders, did play significant roles in the both the Dearborn and San Francisco projects, although they may not have taken exactly the form that was hoped for. Neither Strothoff nor Wood designed

---

<sup>85</sup>

Leo Grebler, David M. Blank and Louis Winnick, Capital Formation in Residential Real Estate: Trends and Prospects (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1956), pp. 10-14.

<sup>86</sup>

Weiss, p. 40.

the sites on which they worked. Rather, in opposition to the ideals of the professional elite, they designed sets of modular, standardized houses. Strothoff's commission was the more complex in this regard, because the topography required a variety of solutions to balance desirable views against inconvenient slopes.

We will return in a later chapter to a closer consideration of the houses each designed, but here we can note that the compromise that architects seemed to have evolved in relation to housing was not always operative. As architects began to propose plans for large-scale communities in the early decades of the twentieth century, two obstacles could thwart their efforts. On the one hand, the planning principles they offered were widely recognized by the time they began to employ them; models existed for both classicizing, Beaux-Arts applications and for the more common garden suburb designs. In other words, architects did not offer new ideas for the planning of residential communities in this period. And on the other hand, and not unrelated to this, there were other professionals who could execute site plans, such as engineers, landscape architects, and planners, so that architects did not enjoy a special competency in this regard.

As the arena of planning became more competitive, however, the field for house design was clearing. Builders, who had been architects' chief rivals, were no longer in a position to design the houses they constructed

---

as their work became increasingly simplified, specialized and routinized. And developers of large-scale residential communities were concerned with creating a harmonious totality that would endow each individual house with additional value, both aesthetically and financially.<sup>87</sup> To this end, the planning and design of each house as an element of a complex whole became more important. Strothoff's and Wood's contributions, therefore, relate to the developers' need to rationalize the overall design of the houses. Since "what the average consumer was now purchasing . . . was a new dwelling in a new district of completed dwellings, rather than a vacant lot in an undeveloped area with an uncertain future,"<sup>88</sup> the developer needed the architect's skill at balancing diversity with unity to create a totality that would seem from the outset to be stable and familiar.

Developers were concerned with the rationalizing of existing practices both within their profession and in their shaping of the built environment. Although developers -- realtors engaged in subdividing and housebuilding -- were a minority among realtors as a whole, they took an active role in regularizing the profession.<sup>89</sup> The estab-

---

87

For a contemporary architect's acknowledgement of this trend, see George F. Root, III, "Can the Architect Serve the Speculative Builder?," Architectural Forum (January 1928): 122-26.

88

Weiss, p. 2.

89

Ibid., especially pp. 40-45, for the role of developers in NAREB leadership.

lishment of the national organization and its subsequent formulation of approved practices, an ethical code, and licensing laws were necessary steps to formalize the professional identity of realtors and control the conduct of those who entered the profession. These procedures not only reassured the public that NAREB realtors would be honest businessmen, but also promoted dependable transactions among realtors.

At the same time that NAREB began to regulate the activities of its members, realtors sought ways to control the volatility of real estate in order to make it a more dependable investment. Weiss cites the use of individual deed restrictions as the initial "very significant abridgement of private property rights" that smoothed the way for later, large-scale mechanisms such as subdivision controls and zoning.<sup>90</sup>

As the urban real estate market went into recession at the beginning of the First World War, development of suburban residential areas became more attractive.<sup>91</sup>

The drawback, however, was uncertainty about the environment within which developers would be building: for their investment to succeed, there must be ways to ensure stable, use-restricted community development. Developers' alliance with city planners, which culminated, as we have seen, in their joint formulation of subdivision controls in

---

90

Ibid., p. 3. Also, see Wolf, chap. 3.

91

Ibid., p. 62, chap. 3.

the context of a master plan, was predicated on their need to secure a predictable ordering of the physical environment within which their residential communities would be able to maintain value. To the extent that developers succeeded in shaping land use in the twenties, and later, they justified the 1925 comment by a past president of the National Conference on City Planning to NAREB's Home Builders' and Subdividers' Division: "It is the Realtor subdivider who is really planning our cities today, who is<sup>92</sup> the actual city planner in practice."

The three subdivisions that we have been studying were not all the work of developers in this sense. That is to say, the Dearborn Realty and Construction Company was established by Ford for the limited purpose of developing a single tract.<sup>93</sup> But despite the limited commitment of Ford and his staff to real estate development, it is significant that the Ford Homes followed the prevailing wisdom regarding successful development. There was a concern, as we have seen, for controlling and restricting the future of the project so as to ensure stability for those who invested in these homes; the houses were designed and sited to accommodate a sense of variety within a unified scheme; and

---

92

Ibid., p. 68.

93

Although Ford considered a second project in the years 1918-20, for a more elaborate scheme called Fordson Village, to the east of the Ford Homes, plans for this were abandoned, probably owing to the downturn in the economy. See Thomas W. Brunk, Leonard B. Willeke, Excellence in Architecture and Design (Detroit: University of Detroit Press, 1986), pp. 137-47.



the residential enclave with a school and proposed park was separated from the flow of commerce.

Taylor, in contrast, manifested a number of the characteristics of the "curbstoner," whose practices NAREB leaders were intent on curtailing. Brightmoor included many more lots than the contemporary market could absorb, adding to the oversupply of the period. In addition, Taylor's improvements were negligible, and it was left to the city of Detroit to extend major utilities to the community following annexation. The physical shape that Taylor gave to Brightmoor was minimal, and his lack of concern with this aspect of the project is perhaps reflected in the fact that he did not use the services of an architect. Yet Taylor did establish a sense of community there. He carefully segregated commercial lots from those intended for residences, and he established a commercial center that served local residents and provided a geographical anchor for the community. The social services within the district, including schools and the settlement house/community center, also played an important role in defining the neighborhood as a community.

Baldwin and Howell come closest of the three developers to the model of the emerging community builder, since they were indeed realtors engaged in subdividing and house-  
 94 building, among other brokerage activities. The success

Baldwin and Howell were general brokers, engaging in individual sales transactions, property management, and

of their association with other realtors in guiding development of the West of Twin Peaks district toward protected residential use attests to the kind of dependable community of realtors that NAREB had been organized to achieve.<sup>95</sup>

Westwood Highlands itself was developed in relation to other new residential tracts in the district, and extended the patterns that had already evolved, in terms of both site design and housing. The innovative aspect of this subdivision was the developers' confidence in the market acceptance of these patterns that enabled them to build the houses as a totality rather than selling the lots alone.

In this chapter, then, we have looked at how the histories of the primary agents who were responsible for built form shaped the degree to which each contributed to the three 1920s subdivisions we are studying. That is to say, by the 1920s builders, architects and developers found avenues newly opened, or closed, for the exercise of their skills. The larger forces of industrialization within a capitalist framework that accepts the division of mental from manual labor precluded the builder from participating

---

other activities. See Weiss, chap. 2, for an overview of the facets of realtors' enterprises.

95

Weiss maintains that the real estate industry in California developed faster and with a clearer sense of purpose, especially regarding the interests of large-scale developers. He focuses on the state realty association and on the Los Angeles Realty Board in chapters 4 and 5.

in more than a marginal, though necessary, way in large-scale residential development. Architects, on the other hand, found that the previous competition from builders for small house design had been eliminated, but new demands were made by the prospective clients, the developers. The latter, a new formation of entrepreneurs, arose almost simultaneously with the form of large-scale residential subdivisions that they alone could organize.

To the extent, therefore, that developers and residential subdivisions are genetically linked, it is necessary to explore further the context of homeownership and suburbanization in the early decades of the twentieth century that nurtured them. We will turn to this theme in the next chapter.

## CHAPTER 5

### DEFINING COMMUNITY

In the preceding chapter we looked at the ways in which, by the twenties, the historical trajectories of builders and architects limited their contributions to the shaping of large-scale residential developments. Changes in builders' traditional roles due to technological and economic developments, and ideological constraints experienced by architects, created a vacuum in the field of residential construction within which realtors emerged. Basing their professional project, in part, on the articulation of their role as community builders, realtors were equipped with the entrepreneurial and organizational skills needed to shape residential development.

In this chapter, I would like to change lenses and look at the context of housing ideas and practices within which realtors developed their projects. The subdivisions we looked at in Part One entailed the speculative construction of detached, single family houses, set in a suburban environment, and unified through some notion of community. Each of these facets of the schemes has links with tradi-

---

tions in United States housing solutions, and yet the particular totality achieved in these subdivisions represents a distinctive housing form. The subdivisions of the twenties were built upon patterns of the past, but they also reinterpreted them. By looking more closely at the evolution of practices and ideas concerning suburban single family home ownership and community development in the early twentieth century, we will gain a clearer sense of how these subdivisions came to have their distinctive form.

We will begin by looking at housing trends in the period and we will see that, while the single family house was firmly entrenched as the dominant form, and suburban development was growing, home ownership was limited. This obstacle became a focus of attention for the diffuse network of interests involved in residential development. In the second section, we will look at the emergence of this network as an instrument for guiding social development, a legacy of the Progressive Era's emphasis on leadership by experts through the channels of voluntary associations. And we will consider the activities of this network to promote home ownership, by encouraging standardization to reduce costs, through public relations campaigns, and through national conferences.<sup>1</sup>

Home ownership could also be encouraged through built form. That is to say, large-scale residential development

---

1

A number of these themes are discussed in Gwendolyn Wright, Building the Dream: A Social History of Housing in America (New York: Pantheon, 1981), chap. 11.

would only be financially feasible to developers if they could sell the houses they had built by minimizing investment risks for individual homeowners. This became the function of the notion of community as it applied to suburban subdivisions, and in the third section we will look at the complex evolution of the definition of community from diverse roots in both design and social reform traditions. Crystallized by Clarence A. Perry as the "neighborhood unit plan," a schematic, minimal idea of community was promulgated that served to stamp the residential character of a tract and ensure its perpetuation.

Finally, by looking at the subdivisions in Dearborn, Detroit and San Francisco and the ways in which they incorporated community features, we will see that the ideas promoted by the national network of experts did filter down to affect design on the ground.

### The Prevalence of the Single Family Detached Suburban House

On any graph that describes housing trends in the United States, the decade of the twenties stands out like an exclamation point, punctuating periodic rises and falls with its steady climb towards, and decline from, record-breaking heights (Figure 60). The average number of non-farm housing starts per year during the twenties was 703,000, almost double that for the first decade of the

twentieth century which had previously held the record.<sup>2</sup> While this surge was in part stimulated by the all-time low during World War I that intensified housing shortages, as an increase it continued the trend toward increased residential construction evident since 1880. Analyzing housing statistics from the late nineteenth century, one historian has noted that "By all previous standards, the extent of residential construction in all American cities in the 1880s and 1890s was staggering."<sup>3</sup> This growth was amplified in each succeeding decade through the twenties.

Of this residential construction, moreover, the majority consisted of single family units. Aside from local variations, such as the prevalence of multi-family dwellings in New York City, in twenty-one out of twenty-five selected cities more than fifty percent of the houses were single family units in both 1890 and 1930; in fifteen of these the figure was seventy-five percent or more.<sup>4</sup> Although the construction of multi-family housing increased

---

<sup>2</sup> The record of the twenties was broken, of course, in the period following World War II. For a discussion of urban housing starts from 1890 to 1930, see Robert G. Barrows, "Beyond the Tenement: Patterns of American Urban Housing, 1870-1930," Journal of Urban History 9 (August 1983): 398-400. The average number of housing starts per year climbed to 833,000 between 1922 and 1929, from recovery to depression, more than double that of any previous seven year period. Kenneth T. Jackson, Crabgrass Frontier: The Suburbanization of the United States (New York: Oxford University Press, 1985), p. 175.

<sup>3</sup> Jules Tygiel, "Housing in Late Nineteenth-Century American Cities: Suggestions for Research," Historical Methods 12 (Spring 1979): 88.

<sup>4</sup> Barrows, pp. 402-3 and 414, Table 6.

dramatically during the decade of the twenties, single family units never accounted for less than fifty-six percent<sup>5</sup> of new housing starts. The impression of the dominance of the single family house as a residential form in the United States is substantiated by construction statistics from the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

Home ownership, however, was not as widespread. In 1890, 36.9% of non-farm dwellings were owner-occupied. Thirty years later, a gain of only 4% had been made, reflecting, at least in part, the effects of economic depressions and war in that interval. During the single decade of the twenties, the increase in home ownership surpassed that of the entire previous period, raising the total to 46%, but only in five of the above-cited twenty-five cities were fifty percent or more of the homes owned by their residents in 1930.<sup>6</sup> The wider availability of financing contributed to the increase in home ownership. Building and loan associations, for example, had financed less than

---

5

United States Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census, Housing Construction Statistics, 1889 to 1964 (Washington, D. C.: Government Printing Office, 1966), Table A-1, "U. S. -- New Housing Units Started: Annually 1889-1964;" also Richard A. Walker, "The Suburban Solution: Urban Geography and Urban Reform in the Capitalist Development of the United States" (Ph.D. dissertation, The Johns Hopkins University, 1977), p. 695, Figure 71.

6

United States Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census, Historical Statistics of the United States, Colonial Times to 1957 (Washington, D. C.: 1960), "Owner-Occupied Dwellings"; Barrows, p. 416, Table 7.



700,000 houses during the first decade of the century; this<sup>7</sup> increased to 4,350,000 houses during the 1920s. But there remained a wide gap between single family residence and home ownership.

Economically, as one student of the industry wrote, residential construction served as a "pulmotor," a machine that pumps oxygen into ailing lungs until they recover the strength to function on their own.<sup>8</sup> This image stands as something of a warning, for the pulmotor cannot substitute indefinitely for the body's mechanisms. In the decade of the twenties, "the average index of residential construction was forty-five percent above that of industrial production;"<sup>9</sup> without a strong general economy, the strength of residential construction alone could not avert the depression that ended the period. In fact, for many analysts this imbalance between investment in production and investment in fixed capital represents the root of the crisis

---

7

John P. Dean, Home Ownership: Is It Sound? (New York: Harper and Bros., 1945), p. 68. Savings and loans were destroyed by the long depression of the 1890s, following which they were reorganized and began a lengthy process of recovering public confidence. By the 1920s, they had succeeded in reestablishing their soundness; in 1929, Americans owed \$20 billion on their houses, of which savings and loan associations held about \$8 billion or 40% of the loans. Horace Russell, Savings and Loan Associations, 2nd ed. (New York: Matthew Bender, 1960), pp. 23-31.

8

Charles Abrams, "The Residential Construction Industry" in Walter Adams, ed. The Structure of American Industry. Some Case Studies (New York: Macmillan, 1950), p. 116.

9

Abrams, p. 115.

that culminated in the crash of 1929 and the depression.

But the image of the pulmotor also expressed the extensive impact of residential construction on the body economic, from building materials producers to wholesalers, distributors and retailers, as well as the household equipment production and non-residential construction it stimulated. The exceptional boom in the twenties resulted in new residential construction alone accounting for six percent of the gross national product in the peak year of 1924, a dramatic climb from the low of barely more than one percent during the war.

The site of this new construction, increasingly, was the suburbs. Land became available as a result of the steady fall in the prices of farm commodities in the three decades following the Civil War; as it lost its value for agricultural uses, land was sold by farmers to be developed for other purposes. In turn, lower land prices at the periphery became attractive for residential construction as transportation technologies developed. Then, beginning in 1914, a war-induced recession in urban land values

---

<sup>10</sup>

Walker, chapters 1, 2, and 5.

<sup>11</sup>

Michael Sumichrast, Profile of the Builder and His Industry (Washington, D. C.: National Association of Home Builders, 1970), p. 8.

<sup>12</sup>

Jackson, pp. 129-30.

<sup>13</sup>

Jackson's history of suburbanization discusses each of the successive developments in transportation technology.

further stimulated the market for suburban real estate. In 1900, 10.7% of the population of the United States lived in suburbs; by 1930, the proportion had grown to 18%. During the decade of the twenties, the increase in suburbanization accelerated over that of previous years, growing 39.2%. This was more than twice the growth of central cities.<sup>15</sup>

Thus, single family housing in a suburban setting was the pervasive trend in the early twentieth century. What seemed less secure, however, was the maintenance of a trend toward equally pervasive home ownership. It was in order to bolster this weak link that many of the housing initiatives of this period were made.

### The Home Ownership Network

Protecting investment was a major concern in an industry that was extremely sensitive to the periodic recessions and depressions of the economy. Although urban housing reformers such as Edith Elmer Wood urged government plan-

---

14

Marc A. Weiss, The Rise of the Community Builders: The American Real Estate Industry and Urban Land Planning (New York: Columbia University Press, 1987), p. 62.

15

Patrick J. Ashton, "Toward a Political Economy of Metropolitan Areas" (M.A. thesis, Michigan State University, 1975), pp. 1-2; Harlan Paul Douglas, "Suburbs," Encyclopedia of the Social Sciences. Also see Gary A. Tobin, "Suburbanization and the Development of Motor Transportation: Transportation Technology and the Suburbanization Process," in Barry Schwartz, ed. The Changing Face of the Suburbs (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1976), pp. 95-111; David C. Thorns, Suburbia (London: MacGibbon and Kee, 1972); Amos H. Hawley, The Changing Shape of Metropolitan America: Deconcentration Since 1920 (Glencoe, Ill.: The Free Press, 1956).

ning and financing as an alternative to reliance on under-  
pendable market forces, the prevailing mood in the twenties  
was to encourage private enterprise.<sup>16</sup> As one critic later  
wrote, "During the 1920's period of peak identification  
between governmental agencies and business welfare, it was  
unnecessary for the federal government to do more than give  
its warm approval to the home ownership movements sponsored  
by the building interests."<sup>17</sup>

Instead of government planning, another route was  
taken in this period to extend and deepen the trends of the  
preceding decades toward the ownership of detached, subur-  
ban, single family homes. This entailed the forging of a  
network of increasingly organized, well-defined and mutual-  
ly supportive groups, including realtors, building mate-  
rials producers, contractors, architects, engineers and  
planners, who gathered and shared information and engaged  
in promotional activities. The federal government did have  
a role in this network, too, for it fostered the initia-  
tives undertaken by these groups, and increasingly provided  
opportunities for them to meet.

By the end of the First World War, most of the groups  
with roles to play in residential construction had organ-

---

16

See, for example, John J. Murphy, Edith Elmer Wood and  
Frederick J. Ackerman, The Housing Famine: How to End It  
(New York: Dutton, 1920), a debate among the three writers.

17

Dean, p. 41. On the "cooperative state" in the 1920s,  
see M. Christine Boyer, Dreaming the Rational City: The  
Myth of American City Planning (Cambridge: MIT Press,  
1983), ch. 7.

ized national associations. Builders belonged to the United Brotherhood of Carpenters and Joiners, and were represented in the Building Trades Department of the American Federation of Labor. The National Association of Real Estate Boards spoke for realtors; in the 1922 restructuring of the organization, the Home Builders' and Subdividers' Division was created, in recognition of the distinct interests of this group within the profession. Building materials suppliers were organized as well; the National Lumber Manufacturers Association, for example, was founded in 1902. The embryonic planning community had established the National Conference on City Planning in 1909, which brought together people with diverse backgrounds who shared an interest in planning issues; as planners developed a professional identity, the more specialized American City Planning Institute (later called the American Institute of Planners) was formed in 1917. Contractors established the Associated General Contractors of America in 1918. Individuals at local levels who were interested in housing and planning had begun, at the turn of the century, to organize local improvement societies; these were brought together nationally in the American Civic Association in 1904. Architects' professional association, the American Institute of Architects, had limited interaction with these groups, and interested architects tended to function as individuals within this network, as did engineers; the 1921 founding of the Architects' Small

---

House Service Bureau provided a kind of organizational  
<sup>18</sup>  
 presence, however.

Gathering information was a major impetus for organization, first within each of these fields and then among them. We have seen the role it played in bringing realtors into association. Among materials suppliers, to provide another example, the exchange of information stimulated regional organization as early as the 1870s. The Chicago Lumberman's Exchange began to compile statistics on lumber deliveries in 1874; although ostensibly these became the basis for grading standards, they also allowed for controlling production during periods of oversupply.<sup>19</sup> On the one hand, "these supplier organizations provided a mere taste of the collusive, restrictive and oligopolistic arrangements for which the building-materials industry would be-

---

18

On the origins and roles of these organizations, see Robert A. Christie, Empire in Wood: A History of the Carpenters' Union (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1956); Pearl Janet Davies, Real Estate in American History (Washington, D.C.: Public Affairs Press, 1958); National Lumber Manufacturers Association, High Lights of a Decade of Achievement (n.p., 1929); Harvey S. Perloff, "Education of City Planners: Past, Present and Future," Journal of the American Institute of Planners 22 (Fall 1956): 186-217; Booth Mooney, Builders for Progress: The Story of the Associated General Contractors of America (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1965); Mel Scott, American City Planning Since 1890 (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1969); Henry H. Saylor, The A.I.A.'s First Hundred Years (Washington, D.C.: The Octagon, 1957).

19

Michael J. Doucet and John C. Weaver, "Material Culture and the North American House: The Era of the Common Man, 1870-1920," Journal of American History 72 (December 1985): 576-79.

come notorious."<sup>20</sup> But these organizations also provided an institutional framework for contact with other groups in the arena of residential construction, and the data they collected began to lay the groundwork for more comprehensive statistical studies of the industry. When the National Lumber Manufacturers Association was organized in 1902, this tradition continued, for "The maintenance of industrial statistics was recognized as one of the vital economic problems of the lumber industry."<sup>21</sup> This concern led to the compilation of production and delivery reports on a monthly basis beginning in 1912; in 1916, weekly reports were added.

Gathering information also seems to have constituted the federal government's main involvement with residential construction prior to the First World War.<sup>22</sup> The United States Census Bureau compiled varying sorts of data relating to housing; in 1890, for example, home ownership statistics were added to census reports.<sup>23</sup> The Bureau of Labor Statistics began to collect data on construction volume and building permits in 1921; these statistics laid

---

<sup>20</sup>

Ibid., p. 578.

<sup>21</sup>

National Lumber Manufacturers Association, High Lights of a Decade of Achievement, p. 16.

<sup>22</sup>

United States Congress Subcommittee on Housing and Community Development, Evolution of Role [sic] of the Federal Government in Housing and Community Development: A Chronology of Legislative and Selected Executive Actions, 1892-1974 (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1975).

<sup>23</sup>

See Tygiel, pp. 87-88, for the changes in census information relating to housing.

the basis for studies of the industry by economists and  
<sup>24</sup>  
 others.

Under Secretary of Commerce Herbert Hoover, this trend became more widespread as this agency became "a clearing  
<sup>25</sup>  
 house [for the] helpful dissemination of ideas." Data collection and reports proliferated. Characteristic of Hoover's administration of the Department of Commerce, too, was the use he made of voluntary associations to form and enforce policy recommendations. This had been an element of Hoover's style of management since embarking upon public service in 1912 as an international organizer for the Panama-Pacific Exposition. Later, as head of the Food Administration, he had explained to a Senate committee in 1917, "Our theory of administration is that we should  
<sup>26</sup>  
 centralize ideas and decentralize execution." His aim was to avoid legislation and, instead, bring networks of representative experts together to formulate recommendations that would then be promulgated to the wider memberships of their organizations through reports, publicity, press and journal articles, and personal contact. The

---

<sup>24</sup>

Davies, p. 126. An example of such a study is W. Floyd Maxwell, "The Building Industry Since the War," Review of Economic Statistics 13 (May 1931): 68-75.

<sup>25</sup>

Hoover in a letter to national and state trade associations, 1 April 1923, cited in Craig Lloyd, Aggressive Introvert: A Study of Herbert Hoover and Public Relations Management 1912-1932 (Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 1972), p. 109.

<sup>26</sup>

Cited in Lloyd, p. 56, n. 33.



associations that had been formed by groups connected to the residential construction industry were exactly the sorts of voluntary organizations that Hoover looked to "to resolve the great social problems of the day without scraping such 'national instincts' as individual initiative, equal opportunity, and local responsibility, and without resorting to the 'dangers of centralized and federally imposed control'."<sup>27</sup>

As we noted in studying realtors' activities, professional organizations maintained contact through attendance at each others' national meetings. Sporadic interchange also occurred over specific concerns as when, for example, the American Institute of Architects and the National Association of Builders' Exchanges jointly published standard contract forms in 1915.<sup>28</sup> Similar interaction, independent of government sponsorship, continued to take place, but increasingly federal resources and support were provided, especially when discussion led to policy formulations. In marshalling the expertise of all aspects of the residential construction industry, Hoover helped strengthen a network of organizations whose leaders would be in a position to shape the course of housing. The promotion of both stan-

---

27

Lloyd, pp. 101-102, citing a public statement by Hoover headlined "Neighborhood (Settlement) Houses Help Solve Social Problems." The reference is undated but the statement was made in the period 1919-1920.

28

See Saylor. This was an update of the Uniform Contract that had been formulated in 1888 in association with the National Association of Builders.

standardization and home ownership became guiding themes for this network.

Standardization was the leitmotif of Hoover's program to rebuild the postwar economy. Inspired by the work of the Conservation Division of the War Industries Board during World War I, whose functions were transferred to the Commerce Department's Division of Simplified Practice after the war, Hoover saw in "simplification the best means to lower production costs and thus broaden markets."<sup>29</sup> Within the housing arena, the concept was applied to every level of activity. In 1921, for example, the Bureau of Standards established Simplified Practice Recommendations for all industries, including manufacturers of building materials and equipment. The National Lumber Manufacturers Association worked very closely with the Department of Commerce<sup>30</sup> to establish lumber standards. In 1922, the Building Code Committee, organized by Hoover and consisting of architects and engineers, recommended standard regulations for the construction of one and two-family houses, based on information gathered from architectural and engineering

---

29

Lloyd, pp. 124-25. As president of the Federated American Engineering Societies in 1920, Hoover had initiated the study Waste in Industry. The conclusions reached by this study also served to guide his program of standardization. On the relationship among Hoover, the Waste in Industry study, and Taylorism, see Samuel Haber, Efficiency and Uplift: Scientific Management in the Progressive Era 1890-1920 (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1964), pp. 156-59.

30

Miles L. Colean, American Housing: Problems and Prospects (New York: The Twentieth Century Fund, 1949). Also see National Lumber Manufacturers Association, cited above.

societies, builders' exchanges, organizations of building materials suppliers, and building officials.<sup>31</sup> Similarly, in 1921 Hoover appointed realtors, planners, engineers and housing specialists, among others, to the Advisory Committee on Zoning. This group produced A Standard State Zoning Enabling Act in 1924. A similar body developed A Standard City Planning Enabling Act in 1928.<sup>32</sup> Each of these groups established a model with which general practices could be made to conform.

Some of the activities of the Department of Commerce in relation to residential development became centralized when Hoover established the Division of Building and Housing in 1921. In 1923, this unit published How to Own Your Home: A Handbook for Prospective Home Owners, by John M. Gries and James S. Taylor; first Gries, and then Taylor, headed the new unit. Consisting of advice concerning financing and evaluating lots and houses, the book included a

---

31

"Report on House Building Issued by Commerce Department," National Real Estate Journal (12 March 1923): 35; "Recommended Minimum Requirements for Small House Construction," National Real Estate Journal (12 March 1923): 40. The first is a press release, datelined Washington, D.C., that describes the constitution of the committee and quotes Hoover's praise of its endeavors. The second piece, in the same issue, reports on the general outlines of the recommendations. This citation illustrates the method of dissemination of such recommendations, which could only be enforced on the local level. The organizations within the national network informed their members of these recommendations, encouraging their adoption as mainstream practice. Local leadership could then design regulations that could be used to enforce such practices.

32

Weiss, p. 67; Perloff, p. 213.

"Foreward" by Secretary Hoover that seems to have been directed as much toward the business community as it was toward the prospective buyer. After extolling the virtues that homeownership yields in terms of health, family happiness, material wealth and civic responsibility, Hoover added

[Businessmen] see that taking a neighborly interest in developing sound financing and other machinery for the use of home seekers, and insisting on the observance of honest, straightforward methods by those who deal with home seeker is not paternalism but good business and good citizenship. It is the "square deal" -- and it is not only right but essential that the cards should not be stacked against the home seeker.<sup>33</sup>

If read by such a home seeker, this book provided reassurance and advice. But its intended audience seems to have been home builders and realtors, for whom its outlook would provide a model for respectable business practices.

This book complemented a promotional effort that had been initiated by the real estate community just before the United States entered the war but that flourished in the post-war building climate. Under the slogan "Own Your Home," local realtors organized expositions to demonstrate "how modern real estate developments, modern building conditions and modern financing are making home ownership possible."<sup>34</sup> A 1920 ad for the campaign in Building Age referred to the slogan as "A New Declaration of Independ-

---

33

John M. Gries and James S. Taylor, How to Own Your Home: A Handbook for Prospective Home Owners (Washington, D.C.: Department of Commerce, 1923), p. vi.

34

"Home Owning Move Launched," Detroit Free Press, 6 January 1924, Real Estate News section, p. 4.

ence," supported by Uncle Sam (Figure 61). To launch these drives, the realtors sought the collaboration of "representatives called from forty-seven national organizations covering financial groups, architectural bodies and building equipment and furnishing interests with home purchase and home building [sic]."<sup>35</sup> Posters advertising these expositions were signed by the Secretary of Labor. Local real estate boards promoted them in their communities, often tying them in with other local organizations and activities. An account of the activities of the Toledo Real Estate Board, for example, described the involvement of school children, and without embarrassment claimed that

this plan constitutes a general campaign directed principally to the children of the city to instill in their minds a comprehension of the responsibilities of citizenship and the "Own Your Own Home" thought is interwoven with numerous lessons pertaining to the duties and privileges inherent to citizenship and the obligation of the individual in governmental, political and social matters.<sup>36</sup>

Another promotional effort that grew in strength throughout the decade and that received government support was the Better Homes in America movement.<sup>37</sup> This was

---

35

"Home Owning Move Launched."

36

"Teaching Good Citizenship and Home Ownership," National Real Estate Journal 23 (20 November 1922): 15.

37

See movement publications such as Midas Gold (New York: Butterick Publishing Co., 1925); Guidebook for Better Homes Campaigns (Washington, D.C.: Better Homes in America, Inc., 1929); Blanche Halbert, ed. The Better Homes Manual (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1931). Also, Janet Hutchison, "The Cure for Domestic Neglect: Better Homes in America, 1922-1935" in Camille Wells, ed. Perspectives in Vernacular Architecture, II (Columbia: University of

established in 1922 by Marie Meloney, an editor of The Delineator, a Butterick publication with a circulation that exceeded one million. The focus of the organization was to hold annual Better Homes weeks for which local committees would develop model demonstration houses; its National Advisory Council selected winners nationwide. The movement grew rapidly: in 1922, over five hundred committees exhibited houses; participation doubled the following year and, by 1930, there were at least 7,279 committees.

The Better Homes campaign was launched by the 1922 construction of a National Better Home on the Mall in Washington, D. C., by the General Federation of Women's Clubs.<sup>38</sup> President Harding led the opening ceremony at the site. Secretary Hoover had been aware of the organization from its inception, when it was brought to his attention by an aide whose job it was to serve as liason to the world of the periodical press. In a memo to Hoover, the aide noted that the Better Homes campaign was "exactly the thing needed to shove over the whole housing and better homes ideas [sic] of the Department."<sup>39</sup> Hoover contacted Meloney, joined the advisory council,

---

Missouri Press, 1986), pp. 168-78.

38

This was an evocation of the "Home Sweet Home," the seventeenth century Long Island birthplace of the author of the song, which had been written in 1822. See Donn Barber, "Our First National Better Home: The Modern Version of Home Sweet Home," The Delineator, September 1923, p. 2; also Hutchison, pp. 169-173.

39

Cited in Lloyd, p. 132.

and before long had become the organization's most prominent booster, assisting in its 'Demonstration Home' exhibits and securing, in his words, 'advance blasts . . . of propaganda' for them by persuading the president to sign endorsements and by writing material for presidential speeches.<sup>40</sup>

When the Delineator could no longer fund the project, Hoover reorganized it as a national educational corporation, secured private funding for it through a grant from the Laura Spelman Foundation, and made it "a sort of collateral arm to the Housing Division of the Department of Commerce," as he described it.<sup>41</sup> Hoover served as its president, Gries as its treasurer. As he did on numerous occasions, Hoover asked his friend, the president of Harvard University, to "lend" him a faculty member to serve the government; James Ford, a professor of social ethics, became executive director of Better Homes in America,<sup>42</sup> Inc.

The culmination of this strategy of using the network of organizations with a stake in residential construction to pool information and resources to promote single family homeownership was the President's Conference on Home Building and Home Ownership. Established by President Hoover, the Conference was held in December 1931 and was attended by more than thirty-seven hundred people concerned with

---

<sup>40</sup>

Ibid., p. 133.

<sup>41</sup>

From a 1924 letter from Hoover to President Coolidge, cited in Lloyd, p. 133.

<sup>42</sup>

Ibid., p. 133.

diverse aspects of housing. More than five hundred specialists from all relevant organizations and professions participated in thirty-one committees that issued reports published in eleven volumes in 1932. These dealt with financing and taxation, types of dwellings, the relationship of income to homeownership, house design and construction, household management and homemaking, methods of subdividing, and planning and community concerns, as well as urban housing problems, black housing and rural housing. One of the co-editors of the reports was John M. Gries, who served as executive secretary of the Conference. Gries had been the first head of the Division of Building and Housing of the Commerce Department, under Hoover, and had co-authored How to Own Your Home.<sup>43</sup> The other editor was James Ford, executive director of the reorganized Better Homes in America movement. The brother of city planner George B. Ford, he had taught sociology at Harvard University since 1909, and in 1918-19 had managed the Homes Registration and Information Division of the United States Housing Corporation.<sup>44</sup>

The Conference reports established federal policy in relation to residential construction, which is to say that they ratified the approach laid out by Hoover at the beginning of the decade: the promotion of single family home-

---

43

Later, Gries served on the Federal Home Loan Board. Obituary, New York Times 25 September 1953, p. 21.

44

Obituary, New York Times, 13 May 1944, p. 19; Scott, p. 120. In the 1930s, Ford's work focused on slum clearance.



ownership by fostering the organized elements within the industry, compiling information, and establishing standards. As one reviewer wrote, "The Conference, on the whole, appeared to endorse the policy of leaving the field to private enterprise, contenting itself with appeals to existing organizations, threats of government action, and recommendations for further research."<sup>45</sup> The Conference editors acknowledged such a point of view when they wrote,

Since the World War there has been a significant change. Today it is possible, as it was not in the past, for a community to guide and regulate its house building. Today public interest and private interest, sound social policy and sound economic policy more evidently run together.<sup>46</sup>

Written during a period of deepening depression, this statement seems especially blind to realities. And yet it continued to represent the major position on the relationship between government and the private residential construction sector.<sup>47</sup>

The positions expressed by the Conference reiterated the justifications for single family homeownership that were leitmotifs throughout the literature of the residential construction industry and its allies in the twenties.

<sup>45</sup>

E. G. S. Elliot, "American Housing Before the New Deal," Town Planning Review 16 (June 1935): 247-48.

<sup>46</sup>

John M. Gries and James Ford, eds. Home Ownership, Income and Types of Dwellings (Washington, D. C.: President's Conference on Home Building and Home Ownership, 1932), p. 145.

<sup>47</sup>

For its continuation during the New Deal, see Weiss, chapter 6, "Community Builders and the Federal Housing Administration," pp. 141-58.

In one of the most succinct statements of this rationale, Gries and Ford wrote,

In designating the Conference as one on Home Building and Home Ownership, the President was profoundly aware of the importance of the ownership of homes in safeguarding the traditions and developing the ideals of our Nation. Responsible citizenship is largely dependent upon individuals having a stake in the community, which is the major source of civic pride and judicious participation in the affairs of local government. Through the relation of his home to its neighborhood and to the city government, the home owner acquires a keener civic interest and a greater sense of civic responsibility. In addition, home ownership means high standards and better control of the environment by the occupant. It helps also in the development of thrift and self-respect, facilitates wholesome living, and promotes character development in that it gives the family a fresh incentive for sacrifice and a new and high ideal.<sup>48</sup>

The question of the kind of home that would be owned was not in doubt. The editors wrote that "it is unnecessary to argue for the detached single-family house or for the suburban community suitable for homes for those who have moderate incomes. A family usually has a natural desire to own such a home and live in such surroundings."<sup>49</sup> It was

48

Gries and Ford, Home Ownership, Income and Types of Dwellings, p. xi.

49

Gries and Ford, Home Ownership, Income and Types of Dwellings, p. 3. By locating the source of these virtues in home ownership, the writers, and Hoover, were continuing a tradition that can be traced to the 1820s, when the "cult of domesticity" began to take shape. For an introduction to the history of this tradition, see Jackson, pp. 47-52. For more extended accounts see Gwendolyn Wright, Moralism and the Model Home: Domestic Architecture and Cultural Conflict in Chicago 1873-1913 (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1980); David P. Handlin, The American Home: Architecture and Society, 1815-1915 (Boston: Little, Brown and Co., 1979); and Clifford Edward Clark, Jr., The American Family Home, 1800-1960 (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1986).

the task of the Conference, then, to affirm and encourage these established trends by specifying the best means to achieve them.

The reports consisted of discussions and analyses of current practices, and recommendations. Committee members represented organizations or professions involved in that aspect of the housing question under consideration. For example, the committee on construction was chaired by the president of the Associated General Contractors of America. Three other contractors joined him, along with the director of the National Association of Real Estate Boards, five representatives of building materials producers, two architects, one developer, an engineer, and one representative of a finance agency. A representative of the Division of Building and Housing of the Department of Commerce served as secretary. The sole representative of labor, the president of the Building Trades Department of the American Federation of Labor, dissented from the report, interestingly enough; his remarks were included in the final publication. Whereas the report supported efforts to standardize construction, the representative of the building trades stated

I am opposed to too much standardization in home building, as it takes the individuality out of the construction of homes, and is a means of adding to our already large number of unemployed building tradesmen. . . . I am not in favor of erecting homes in the same manner as automobiles are built. The report savors too much of a machine-made home and, as a practical building trades mechanic, I know that the reforms as advocated in this report are not practical; hence, I am

opposed to the report in full.

The report of the construction committee ratified the progressive standardization of construction practices that had been occurring over the preceding decades, as we saw in the previous chapter, and that had received support from the Department of Commerce during the twenties. The spokesperson for the builders indicated by his dissent from the report how out of step with developments the representatives of labor were.

Standardization was also endorsed by the committee on design, which was chaired by the president of the Architects' Small House Service Bureau. Twenty other architects, drawn from across the United States, served on the committee, along with E. H. Bouton, who had developed Roland Park in Baltimore, the executive secretary of the National Association of Real Estate Boards, and the head of the Division of Economics of the United States Department of Agriculture. The committee's research secretary was Henry Wright, co-designer of Radburn, New Jersey. Their report on house design observed that "The committee noted a marked similarity in the building product of each type [of dwelling] in many cities, extending often to details. . . . There is thus a certain standardization followed by builders all over the country, indicating that it is prac-

ticable to establish standards."<sup>51</sup> Unless we keep in mind that the object under consideration was the small house, this conclusion, given the level of debate among architects that we saw in the previous chapter, would seem highly improbable. It is significant, in this regard, that the committee was headed by a representative of the Architects' Small House Service Bureau. In fact, the report urges cooperation between architects and developers, including<sup>52</sup> the former's provision of stock plans.

It appears that with the level of standardization that had been attained by the twenties, the rationalization of the single family house had reached its limit. This is acknowledged in the report by the correlating committee on technological developments, whose charge was to define directions for future research aimed at further reducing the cost of single family houses. Composed mainly of engineers and research and development directors from corporations such as General Motors and General Electric, the committee's recommendations stressed the development of<sup>53</sup> shop fabrication. Short of prefabrication, further sim-

---

51

Gries and Ford, House Design, Construction and Equipment, p. 15.

52

Ibid., p. 21.

53

This committee was one of six correlating committees whose mandates complemented the tasks of the twenty-five fact-finding committees. The report of the correlating committee on technological development is published in John M. Gries and James Ford, Housing Objectives and Programs (Washington, D.C.: President's Conference on Home Building and Home Ownership, 1932), pp. 27-100.

plification of the shell elements and their assembly was not foreseen.

In fact, as critics of detached, suburban, single family homeownership such as Lewis Mumford pointed out, the cost of the shell and its assembly was relatively low compared to expenditures on land, financing, utilities and site improvements.<sup>54</sup> Developers had realized this, too, when the market for suburban real estate became more competitive following the 1914 recession in urban land values. This led to an increased interest in subdivision strategies. We will look at this aspect of discussion and practices, and its culminating formulation in the reports of the President's Conference on Home Building and Home Ownership, in the next section.

### The Neighborhood Unit Plan

By 1921, when an editorial in the National Real Estate Journal described the Garden of Eden as the first subdivision, it was clear that developers saw themselves as the primary shapers and lawgivers of new communities.<sup>55</sup> This contrasts with the pattern of development that Sam Bass Warner reconstructed for late nineteenth century Boston

---

54

Lewis Mumford, "Mass Production and Housing," in City Development: Studies in Disintegration and Renewal (New York: Harcourt, Brace and World, 1945), p. 70. This essay originally appeared in Architectural Record in the January and February 1930 issues, pp. 13-20 and 110-16 respectively..pn176

55

Editorial, National Real Estate Journal (28 March 1921): 22.

suburbs, which he called "regulation without laws" to express the order that was achieved despite "extreme individualization of agency" as "nine thousand different people made separate decisions to build houses."<sup>56</sup> This kind of subdivision activity persisted, but contemporaneously there were some developers who also built houses on a speculative basis in their subdivided tracts; The Real Estate Associates, in San Francisco, is one we have already had occasion to note, and another often-cited example is the much larger-scale work of Samuel Eberly Gross in Chicago in the 1880s.<sup>57</sup> As this form of residential development became more widespread, the issue of how to design such subdivisions grew in importance. What shape should these latter-day gardens of Eden be given?

The answer that emerged drew on a wide range of sources. First we will consider the contribution made by the traditions of romantic and garden suburb design, and then we will look at the work of Clarence A. Perry, whose formulation of the neighborhood unit plan synthesized the design tradition with concerns stemming from social reform movements. Finally, we will discuss the impact of Perry's scheme and the emphasis on community among developers.

One of the distinctive features of developers' subdi-

---

56

Sam Bass Warner, Jr., Streetcar Suburbs: The Process of Growth in Boston, 1870-1900, 2nd ed. (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1978), p. 117.

57

Perry R. Duis and Glen E. Holt, "Little Boxes, Big Fortunes," Chicago (November 1977): pp. 116-7.

visions was the emphasis placed on nature, from planning the layout to providing for ongoing maintenance. Ideally, the natural topography of a site would be used to guide the pattern of a subdivision's streets, creating curvilinear arrangements where possible. Landscape features would be used along roadways, and some portion of the tract would be dedicated to development as a shared park and recreation area. In addition, of course, each house would have its own natural environment of trees, shrubs and flowers.

This notion of "rus in urbe," as one report from the President's Conference on Home Building and Home Ownership described it -- "The benefits of country life along with<sup>58</sup> the advantages and conveniences of urban living" -- had its roots in the ideals of suburban residence formulated by Andrew Jackson Downing in the 1840s. Concretized in early romantic suburbs such as Alexander Jackson Davis' Llewellyn Park (1852) and in Riverside (1868), planned by Frederick Law Olmsted, and promoted from pulpits and press as the healthiest environment for the family, both physically and morally, these ideals were influential throughout the nine-

---

58

Gries and Ford, Housing Objectives and Programs, p. 159. Using more vivid language, William Smythe described it as "the cream of the country and the cream of the city, leaving the skim-milk for those who like that sort of thing," in City Homes on Country Lanes (New York: Macmillan, 1922), p. 60, cited in Peter J. Schmitt, Back to Nature: The Arcadian Myth in Urban America (New York: Oxford University Press, 1969), p. xvii. For the beginnings of this notion see also John Archer, "Country and City in the American Romantic Suburb," Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians 42 (May 1983): 139-56.



59

teenth century. Around the turn of the century, they were infused with English garden suburb planning ideas and began to be incorporated into builders' subdivision

60

designs.

Among realtors, one of the most visible promoters of "garden-like" suburban development in the second and third decades of the twentieth century was Jesse Clyde Nichols, developer of Kansas City's Country Club District. Nichols had been impressed with garden city design while on a bicycle tour of England during his college years at the University of Kansas. His interest in attempting similar developments in the United States began to take shape following a year's study of law and real estate at Harvard

61

University. In speeches, articles and interviews, he related his experiences and argued for the strategies he had worked out for successful subdivisions. In an address that he gave at the fifth annual National Association of

59

On Downing, see Handlin; on Llewellyn Park, see Richard Guy Wilson, "Idealism and the Origin of the First American Suburb: Llewellyn Park, New Jersey," American Art Journal 11 (October 1979): 79-90; on Riverside, see Walter L. Creese, The Crowning of the American Landscape: Eight Great Spaces and Their Buildings (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1985), pp. 219-40. For the most recent summary of these developments, and further bibliography, see Jackson, chapters 3 and 4.

60

On the history of garden suburb design, see Walter L. Creese, The Search for Environment (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1966).

61

"Portrait of a Salesman: Jesse Clyde Nichols," National Real Estate Journal (February 1939): 19; Richard Longstreth, "J. C. Nichols, the Country Club Plaza, and Notions of Modernity," Harvard Architecture Review 5 (1986): 123.

Real Estate Boards convention in 1912, for example, entitled "Real Estate Subdivisions: The Best Manner of Handling Them," and later published by the American Civic Association, he argued that the City Beautiful movement, which had focused on civic centers, must extend to residential development as well. After describing the curvilinear streets, parks, and plantings that enhanced his project, he concluded, "It really does pay to spend more money upon the beautiful things."<sup>62</sup>

Both streets and landscaping were important devices for linking new subdivisions to existing development, through the extension of thoroughfares and park systems, as well as for separating them. Boundaries could be defined by traffic arteries and landscape buffers, and the interior of the subdivisions distinguished by independent street patterns and park areas. Both could contribute, in other words, to the creation of a community identity, the other way in which developers increasingly shaped their projects.

The leitmotif of the early romantic suburb was nature, and a pure example of it was often used as the focus of the community's design. Downing conceived a park as the centerpiece of his ideal community, and the public space at Llewellyn Park was The Ramble. In his plans for Riverside, however, Olmsted included facilities for schools and rec-

---

62

J. C. Nichols, Real Estate Subdivisions: The Best Manner of Handling Them (Washington, D.C.: American Civic Association, 1912), p. 15.

reational activities, and by the 1920s it was common to find these, too, as important elements in subdivision design.

Over the intervening decades, such facilities came to be seen as anchors for neighborhood identity, an aspect of residential environments that, it was argued, was crucial. A broad network of Progressive Era reformers contributed to the formulation of this argument, which was given its most succinct form, "the neighborhood unit plan," by Clarence A. Perry in 1925 (Figure 62). Perry's concept became one of the central themes of the reports from the President's Conference on Home Building and Home Ownership. Although there were other rationales for including schools and recreational facilities in subdivisions, as we will see, the notions of neighborhood and community provided the language in which developers articulated their projects. First we will look at the development of these notions and their synthesis in terms of Perry's neighborhood unit plan, and then we will consider their application by the builders of suburban subdivisions.

The generative element in Perry's scheme for neighborhood units was the elementary school. The size of the community would be determined demographically by the number of families necessary to provide the enrollment for one school, and geographically by a radius of one-half mile from the school, the maximum distance schoolchildren should have to walk. The school would serve as a center for community activities, possibly supplemented by other neigh-

borhood institutions. Concerned with a safe environment for children, Perry located main traffic arteries at the boundaries of the neighborhood and limited the size of streets within it. Scattered parks and open spaces were included throughout the neighborhood; shops were grouped at the edges.

Perry made his first public presentation of the neighborhood unit plan in a lecture entitled "A Community Unit in City Planning and Development" in December 1923 at a joint meeting of the National Community Center Association<sup>63</sup> and the American Sociological Society. The first published account of the neighborhood unit plan appeared in a volume of selected papers from the proceedings of the 1925 American Sociological Society annual meeting.<sup>64</sup> It received wider attention as part of the multi-volume Regional Plan of New York and Its Environs, sponsored by the Russell Sage Foundation and published in 1929.<sup>65</sup>

The ideas presented in the concept of the neighborhood

---

63

For the history and background of Perry's neighborhood unit plan, see James Dahir, The Neighborhood Unit Plan, Its Spread and Acceptance, A Selected Bibliography with Interpretive Comments (New York: Russell Sage Foundation, 1947).

64

Clarence Arthur Perry, "The Local Community as a Unit in the Planning of Urban Residential Areas," in Ernest W. Burgess, ed. The Urban Community (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1926), pp. 238-41.

65

Clarence A. Perry, "The Neighborhood Unit, a Scheme of Arrangement for the Family Community," Regional Plan of New York and Its Environs (New York: Regional Plan of New York and Its Environs, 1929), volume 7. Perry's final statement of the plan appears in his last work, Housing for the Machine Age (New York: Russell Sage Foundation, 1939).

unit plan were not novel. Rather, they represented, in a simplified form, a synthesis of proposals that had evolved in the contexts of planning and design theory, on the one hand, and social reform movements, on the other. Perry's personal experience placed him at a junction of these two worlds; since he drew on his experiences for the formulation of the neighborhood unit plan, we will look briefly at his background and, through it, to the network of influences that helped shape his scheme.

In 1909, Perry began working for the Department of Recreation of the Russell Sage Foundation, a philanthropic organization that had been founded two years earlier.<sup>66</sup> He was hired "to find out to what extent school buildings and grounds were used outside of school hours, or might advantageously be used, for recreation and for other social and civic purposes."<sup>67</sup> His study of this question resulted in the 1910 publication Wider Use of the School Plant, which became very influential and inaugurated Perry's activities

---

66

Perry studied at Stanford University, Cornell University, and Teachers College, Columbia University. He taught in the Philippines, was a high school principal in Puerto Rico, and worked for the United States Immigration Commission before joining the staff of the Russell Sage Foundation, where he worked until his retirement in 1937. For biographical information on Perry, see John M. Glenn, Lilian Brandt and F. Emerson Andrews, 2 vols. Russell Sage Foundation 1907-1946 (New York: Russell Sage Foundation, 1947) and Patricia Mooney Melvin, ed. American Community Organizations: A Historical Dictionary (New York: Greenwood Press, 1986), pp. 146-7.

67

Glenn, et al., p. 72.

68

in the development of neighborhood centers. This exhaustive examination of the uses served by school facilities after day-class hours, both existing and potential, was based on the conviction that "The school is the natural focal point of the community's social life since it centers the universal interest in children and cuts through social, religious and even racial lines."<sup>69</sup> By using the school for evening and summer vacation classes, public lectures and entertainments, meetings and recreational activities, it could serve as a center for neighborhood social and civic life.

The idea of using the local school as a community center had been proposed as early as the 1890s by Jacob Riis and, in 1902, by John Dewey.<sup>70</sup> Its roots were in the emphasis placed on neighborhood self-development by the social settlement movement. Inspired by the founding of Toynbee Hall in East London in 1884, the first American

---

68

Clarence A. Perry, Wider Use of the School Plant (New York: Russell Sage Foundation, 1910).

69

Luther Halsey Gulick, "Introduction" to Perry, Wider Use of the School Plant, p. viii. Gulick was the first president of the Playground Association of America, founded in 1906 and funded by the Russell Sage Foundation. For a history and analysis of the Progressive Era movement to reform play facilities, see Dominick Cavallo, Muscles and Morals: Organized Playgrounds and Urban Reform, 1880-1920 (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1981).

70

Allen F. Davis, Spearheads for Reform: The Social Settlements and the Progressive Movement, 1890-1914 (New York: Oxford University Press, 1967), p. 77. Also see Roy Lubove, The Progressives and the Slums: Tenement House Reform in New York City 1890-1917 (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1962), especially chapters 7 and 8.

settlement house, Neighborhood Guild, was established in New York City in 1886. By 1910, there were over four hundred settlement houses throughout the United States.<sup>71</sup>

The settlement program tended to focus on poor and working class urban immigrant communities, in which assimilation to a new culture as well as issues of health, nutrition and education were primary concerns. With the influential writings of sociologist Charles Horton Cooley, in the first decade of the century, a theoretical foundation was laid for extending the emphasis on community development to all sectors of society.<sup>72</sup> Cooley's work stressed the role of human contact, especially through primary associations in family and community groups, in the development of personality and social organization. The dislocating forces of industrialization and urbanization were seen as affecting all social groups, and the community center movement, as it came to be known, encouraged the reconstruction of a sense of neighborhood through the use of the local school. Such a neighborhood center was also seen as "a

---

71

John C. Teafor, The Twentieth-Century American City: Problem, Promise, and Reality (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1986), p. 31.

72

Cooley's principle works were Human Nature and the Social Order (1902) and Social Organization (1909). On Cooley's ideas, see Jean B. Quandt, From the Small Town to the Great Community: The Social Thought of Progressive Intellectuals (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1970), ch. 4. For discussions of the impact of Cooley's ideas on Perry and others, see Perry, Housing for the Machine Age, p. 217; Dahir; Lewis Mumford, "The Neighborhood and the Neighborhood Unit," Town Planning Review 24 (January 1954): 256-70.

possible cure for the evils of the political machine," since it offered an independent locus for political discussions and voluntary associations.<sup>73</sup>

The first city-wide program for the use of school buildings for social and civic activities was initiated in Rochester, New York, in 1907, by Edward J. Ward. In 1909, Ward established the Wisconsin Bureau of Civic and Social Center Development, providing the framework for extending school centers on a state-wide basis. Two years later, Ward moved to the national level, organizing the first National Conference on Civic and Social Center Development, which Perry attended as an active delegate. Perry was one of the organizers of the National Community Center Association, an outgrowth of the Conference, in 1916.<sup>74</sup> This body was short-lived, however; in 1924 it was absorbed into the National Education Association. Nevertheless, Perry continued to work with the idea of the school as the focus of community life while he turned his attention to other aspects of residential design that affect the definition of neighborhood identity.

---

73

Perry, Housing for the Machine Age, p. 205. It is illuminating to recall, in this context, the proposals made by Ford's architect, Albert Wood, in his booklet Community Homes. One of the inspirations for neighborhood development that he singled out was the example of Hull House.

74

Patricia Mooney Melvin, The Organic City: Urban Definition and Community Organization 1880-1920 (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 1987), pp. 23-4; Sidney Dillick, Community Organization for Neighborhood Development -- Past and Present (New York: Woman's Press and William Morrow and Co., 1953), p. 65.



If his work at the Russell Sage Foundation led Perry to become involved with the community center movement and to incorporate its emphasis on the school into his neighborhood unit plan, his living situation, also through the auspices of the Foundation, provided inspiration for his plan as well. From 1912, Perry lived in Forest Hills Gardens, the model suburb designed by Frederick Law Olmsted, Jr., and Grosvenor Atterbury, developed by realtor Edward H. Bouton, and funded by the Russell Sage Foundation. As Perry noted in his chapter on the history of the neighborhood unit plan in his later book, Housing for the Machine Age, "When the writer analyzed the Gardens development into its essential elements, he found that they constituted the main principles of an ideal neighborhood."<sup>75</sup> Incorporating some of the concepts of English garden suburb design, Forest Hills Gardens presented Perry with a model for his own schematic neighborhood plan. In size, in the inclusion of open space, and in the provision of special structures to serve neighborhood institutions, Perry found his own community exemplary. Its street system was admirable to the extent that it broke away from the uniformity of the grid, but on the other hand it neither made adequate provision for the automobile, nor separated through-traffic from the internal realm of the community. As a model, however, "Even its unsatisfactory features were helpful" in

---

75

Perry, Housing for the Machine Age, p. 211.

76

solving the problems of neighborhood design.

Thus, in the neighborhood unit plan Perry wed the Progressive goal of creating opportunities for community organization and face-to-face interactions with the garden suburb aesthetic of curvilinear streets, landscaping, and distinctive internal architectural features. Lewis Mumford, writing about Perry's work, pointed out that

What Perry did was to take the fact of the neighborhood; and show how, through deliberate design, it could be transformed into what he called a neighborhood unit, the modern equivalent of the medieval quarter or parish: a unit that would now exist, not merely on a spontaneous or instinctual basis, but through the deliberate decentralisation of institutions that had, in their over-centralisation, ceased to serve efficiently the city as a whole.<sup>77</sup>

Such ideas were basic to the social thought of the Progressive Era and were so widespread that, as Mumford acknowledged, Perry had "crystallis[ed] many diffuse efforts."

One earlier local initiative, the plan created in 1907 by the Committee on Civic Centers in St. Louis to establish neighborhood centers, appears not to have been known to

78

Perry. He probably was aware, however, of another significant example of interest in community development, the 1913 competition organized by the City Club of Chicago "for Subdividing a Typical Quarter Section of Land in the Out-

76

Perry, Housing for the Machine Age, p. 211.

77

Mumford, "The Neighborhood and the Neighborhood Unit," p. 262.

78

Scott, pp. 72-4; Howard Gillette, Jr., "The Evolution of Neighborhood Planning, From the Progressive Era to the 1949 Housing Act," Journal of Urban History 9 (August 1983): 423-24.

skirts of Chicago."<sup>79</sup> The program of the competition included providing for social and recreational centers and one of the entries specifically described its design as a neighborhood unit plan.<sup>80</sup> Perry's scheme, though, was much more simplified than the plans submitted to the Chicago City Club. In the spirit of the times which, we have seen, emphasized standard models, Perry produced a distillation of elements that could be applied in varied forms to situations ranging from new suburban developments to the renewal of decayed urban areas.<sup>81</sup>

By the time Clarence Stein and Henry Wright designed Radburn, in 1928, they had discussed the neighborhood unit plan with Perry; this testifies to the awareness of his ideas within the progressive planning community.<sup>82</sup> The publication of his contribution to the Regional Plan of New York and Its Environs the following year extended his audience. In 1931, he participated in the President's Conference on Home Building and Home Ownership, serving on the committee on housing and the community, which consid-

---

79

Alfred B. Yeomans, ed. City Residential Land Development: Studies in Planning. Competitive Plans for Subdividing a Typical Quarter Section of Land in the Outskirts of Chicago (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1916).

80

Yeomans, pp. 37-44. This was the plan submitted by Prairie School architect William Drummond.

81

Clarence Arthur Perry, The Rebuilding of Blighted Areas (New York: Regional Plan Association, 1933).

82

Mumford, "The Neighborhood and the Neighborhood Unit" p. 263.

ered issues of health, crime and safety. The impact of his ideas was reflected, however, in the reports on city planning, subdivision layout, and house design, as well. Each of these embraced neighborhood unit planning as the best way to create physical, economic and social stability within a healthy, safe and moral environment.

The neighborhood unit plan represented a diagrammatic, replicable model that, by the time of the 1931 Conference, paralleled the practices of many large-scale suburban residential developers. As we saw in the last chapter, realtors who engaged in large-scale development adopted the language of Progressive community-building as part of their professional project. Another impetus for their focus on community, however, came from the desire to stabilize property values so that their investments would be protected. This concern was expressed in many different ways, but one illustration of it can be seen in the juxtaposition of speakers at a realtors' convention in Michigan in 1921: Carl O. Sauer, a professor at the University of Michigan and land-use specialist, discussed land values which, he concluded, were subject to the play of market forces. Lawyer and planner Edward M. Bassett followed, with an address on zoning ordinances, of which he was a well-known proponent.<sup>83</sup> Increasingly, realtors looked to planning instruments and public regulations, including master plans,

---

83

Report on the Michigan State Convention, National Real Estate Journal (10 October 1921).

subdivision controls, and zoning, to supplement the traditional device of deed restrictions, in their search for  
<sup>84</sup>  
 greater economic predictability and stability.

Physical design and construction could play the same role as these, at least within a subdivision. Contoured streets, the diversion of through-traffic, landscaping, and schools and recreational facilities would contribute to the definition of the neighborhood, in this sense, as a predictable and self-perpetuating type of community. In his many addresses to National Association of Real Estate Boards conventions and other bodies, developer Jesse Clyde Nichols increasingly stressed the interconnections among subdivision design, community planning, and profitability. The report in the National Real Estate Journal on a talk he gave entitled "Suburban Divisions with Community Features" noted that the topic was "one Mr. Nichols is especially well qualified to discuss because of the thorough manner in which he has carried out the development of the community  
<sup>85</sup>  
 idea in his own subdivisions." The social and recreational facilities of the Country Club District, including its four golf clubs, were well-known features of the project. In another address to the same 1924 convention, Nichols emphasized the economic goals of development: "The Realtor can and should stabilize our property values, not

---

84

Weiss, pp. 6-12.

85

Report on the Home Builders' and Subdividers' Division meetings, National Real Estate Journal (16 June 1924): 50.

only as a national economic saving insuring permanency of investment, but to justify the security for larger loans." After listing various types of zoning and design considerations that would serve these goals, Nichols also noted that "There is a growing consciousness of the subdivider that he is not alone concerned in the values and prices at which he may sell lots in his subdivision, but that he has a professional responsibility for the maintenance of the value of the wares he sells his client."<sup>86</sup> Through the kinds of planning and design decisions that developers made, the investments of individual homeowners would be preserved as well as those of the realtors.

If homeownership were to become more widespread, it seemed, it would have to be through the reduction of risk provided by the kinds of large-scale development that shared the features of neighborhood unit planning, for which Nichols argued and with which he was identified. With land use regulations, design controls, independent street patterns, landscaping, schools, and other facilities, the character of the community as a residential enclave could reasonably be assured for the indefinite future.

#### Conclusion: Communities on the Ground

The web of social concerns and solutions that we have

---

86

J. C. Nichols, "Responsibilities and Opportunities of Real Estate Boards in Building Cities," National Real Estate Journal (30 June 1924): 25.

traced -- settlements, Cooley's theory of community, the school center movement, garden suburb design, the neighborhood unit plan, assuring the security of property investments -- mirrors, in its multiplicity, the network of interactions among diverse groups within the arena of residential design and construction that shaped suburban subdivision development. There was no single line of influence, but an intersection of varied and overlapping proposals that met within the fluid framework of "associational progressivism."<sup>87</sup> By the time Hoover forged his theory of administration, the idea that expertise from diverse fields could be pooled to resolve public issues was widespread. The loose network of realtors, architects, planners, engineers, and others concerned with housing was already in place and prepared to develop the model structures, both regulative and physical, that would shape the built environment.

If, in the previous chapter, we emphasized the competition that existed among some of these groups (architects, realtors, and builders) as they struggled for professional recognition, this chapter has focused on collaboration among some of these same groups (realtors, architects, and planners) as professional equals. The establishment of professional competence, including an organizational frame-

---

87

Ellis W. Hawley refers to Hoover as an "associational progressive" in his untitled contribution to J. Joseph Huthmacher and Warren I. Susman, eds. Herbert Hoover and the Crisis of American Capitalism (Cambridge, MA: Schenkman, 1973), p. 27.

work with ethical and procedural standards, was necessary in order to receive recognition within the world of expertise. Once this was achieved, the ethos of managing social development through gathering information and marshalling experts meant that cooperation was necessary. A succinct statement of this spirit can be found in an article from 1912 on "Model Towns in America" by architect Grosvenor Atterbury, written while the development of Forest Hills Gardens was underway. He wrote that "cooperative design and development make possible the employment of experts in all departments by distributing the greater part of the first cost of their services over a large area of development."<sup>88</sup>

Similar encouragement of cooperation among experts in the development of residential projects can be found in writings by realtors such as Nichols and, as we have noted, in the reports from the President's Conference on Home Building and Home Ownership. It is worth mentioning, however, that builders remained peripheral to this network, as the history of their deskilling might suggest.

The experts that we necessarily focus on here were the ones who were active on the national level and in interaction with each other. But it is important to remember that they were representatives of organizations that functioned pyramidally to disseminate information and ideas to their

---

88

Grosvenor Atterbury, "Model Towns in America," Scribner's Magazine 52 (July 1912): 27. On Atterbury's ideas, also see Handlin, pp. 285-88.



grass-roots memberships. Through reprints of speeches, reports on meetings, and news of publications printed in professional journals such as the National Real Estate Journal, and through regional and local meetings, the models established by the national network filtered throughout each professional group. This was the process of education and enforcement encouraged by associational progressivism.

Thus, when we return to the three subdivisions that we investigated earlier in the light of the discussions in this chapter, we can see the impact of this process, especially in regard to the notion of neighborhood. For although each subdivision manifested this feature in a different way, it was significant in all of them and to a great extent guided the overall conception of each scheme.

Taylor, as we saw, self-consciously referred to his work as that of a "community builder," and although the design elements that defined Brightmoor were minimal, he did anchor the subdivision with community facilities. In this connection, the Brightmoor settlement house can be seen as a literal transposition of a late nineteenth century solution to urban problems to a suburban context. By the 1920s, the community facilities in most suburban subdivisions were not as obviously rooted in institutions of social reform. It is likely that Taylor felt that the inhabitants he was soliciting for his community, being new to the urban industrial environment, could benefit from the same kind of neighborhood center that had been created to

---

、 foster the assimilation of earlier newcomers. In later subdivisions that he built for residents with somewhat higher incomes, Taylor followed Nichols' precedent and substituted golf clubs to serve as the centerpieces of his communities.

In the Ford Homes, this was achieved with the construction of the elementary school, the only community facility that was actually built, although a park had also been projected. We can now see this as exemplifying a broader theory of neighborhood development current in this period.

Westwood Highlands, on the other hand, embodies aspects of this theory that emphasize layout and design. For the grid that Taylor merely extended in Brightmoor, and that had already been platted in Dearborn, Baldwin and Howell substituted contoured streets that followed the site's topography. The boundaries of the subdivision were clear, especially on the south, where the major traffic artery skirted the project. Design features, such as the subdivision signage along this main boundary, defined the community, as did the treatment of corner houses within the tract to acknowledge public space and suggest a larger whole of which each house was a part.

On the other hand, Westwood Highlands was less of a self-sufficient neighborhood than the other two subdivisions, for its community facilities were shared with contiguous developments in the West of Twin Peaks district,

including, of course, an earlier tract developed by Baldwin and Howell. In terms of the district as a whole, however, we can see other features of neighborhood design, such as the location of shopping areas along the periphery on Ocean Avenue, a main thoroughfare that was served by a streetcar line. Taylor used the commercial area in Brightmoor to define the neighborhood, too, but he located it closer to the center of the community rather than at its edge.

In their different ways, then, each of these subdivisions was developed to create some notion of community. This contrasts with the streetcar suburbs that Sam Bass Warner studied, where he found that "there was nothing in the process of late nineteenth century suburban construction that built communities or neighborhoods." Rather, it was geared to "an economically efficient geometry [the grid] which divided large parcels of land as they came on the market," and thus "The result was not integrated communities arranged about common centers, but a historical and accidental traffic pattern."<sup>89</sup> The subdivisions we have been studying reflect the deliberate design of a new community environment that Mumford remarked on in his description of Perry's work.

By the 1920s, the awareness of neighborhoods as significant arenas for socialization, and the integrated design precedent found in garden suburb schemes, had merged with realtors' needs for secure investments to provide a new

model for subdivision development. Landscaping, street pattern, schools and community facilities were devices that created physical and social coherence that could be self-perpetuating. The potentially long-term stability that this suggested protected the realtor's original investment as well as those of the neighborhood's homeowners. By controlling the character of the community, the developer was better able to control otherwise unpredictable market forces. The Federal Housing Administration and the structure of the federal income tax code, both dating from the New Deal, offered additional assurances to encourage homeownership. But short of these final building blocks, the observation made by Dolores Hayden that "The development of suburban home ownership as the national housing policy in the United States offered a post-World War I idea to a post-World War II society," is borne out by the history we have traced here.<sup>90</sup>

One other unifying element of these projects that we have not discussed is the houses themselves. How these contributed to the totalizing form that suburban subdivision development took in the twenties will be the subject of the next chapter.

---

90

Dolores Hayden, The Grand Domestic Revolution: A History of Feminist Designs for American Homes, Neighborhoods, and Cities (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1981), p. 23. For the realtors' relation to New Deal legislation, see Weiss, ch. 6.

## CHAPTER 6

## ARCHITECTURAL STYLE: THE CHARM OF CONTINUITY

The previous two chapters have enabled us to see the ways in which realtors' professional project, trends in housing construction, conceptions of reversing the disintegrating effects of industrialization and urbanization through housing initiatives, and the interaction among those concerned with residential construction within the framework of associational progressivism were mutually reinforcing during the early decades of the twentieth century. The source for 1920s large-scale residential development, therefore, lies not only in American romantic and English garden suburb design precedents, but also in the emphasis on creating neighborhoods that emerged first within the context of social reform movements; in the increased standardization of construction that both minimized the role of builders and allowed for the ascendancy of a non-crafts-based, entrepreneurial form of expertise to organize the construction process; in economic pressures that operated to encourage suburbanization and the search for ways to stabilize real estate investments; and in an organi-

---

zational context among professionals in which all of these trends and ideas were sifted and disseminated. To put it another way, at the same time that the effects of the industrialization of building practices and changes in building technology were felt, other forces and ideas that also led to the need for increased organizational oversight to integrate and manage the construction process were present as well. Community development, as a solution to both urban dilemmas and financing problems, required the kinds of managerial skills that the emerging realty professionals, and specifically the developers among them, were able to offer. Furthermore, this type of entrepreneurial management of social, economic and physical development can be seen as a manifestation of the dominant tendency of the Progressive period to effect social aims through networks of professionals.

If 1920s subdivisions can be seen, then, as the products of these complex and diverse historical developments, one of the questions that remains to be considered is whether the houses built for these tracts derive from or reflect a similarly dense fabric of influences. In this chapter, I will explore this by looking more closely at the design of the houses in the three subdivisions I have studied. Before proceeding with this, though, it is useful to review the more general patterns affecting house design that have already emerged in the course of our study and, briefly, to locate our analysis within the context of contemporary studies.

---

The primary decision that developers of 1920s subdivisions made with regard to the type of housing they would provide was that of extending the already entrenched tradition of detached single-family houses. As we have seen, this was the dominant form of housing in the United States. Several recent studies have documented the ways in which this housing form was promoted during the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries by pattern book writers, journalists, social reformers, architects, and others, including Gwendolyn Wright's Moralism and the Model Home and The American Family Home<sup>1</sup> by Clifford Clark. On the other hand, the selection of detached single family houses was also made by individuals who had had little or no contact with this persuasive literature, as Olivier Zunz has pointed out in his study of housing patterns in Detroit. He found a higher incidence of such housing among recently arrived immigrant groups than among native born middle class residents, those most likely to have been the target of promotional efforts in popular magazines and other literature.<sup>2</sup> A higher proportion of the native born middle

---

<sup>1</sup> Gwendolyn Wright, Moralism and the Model Home: Domestic Architecture and Cultural Conflict in Chicago, 1873-1913 (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1980); Clifford Edward Clark, Jr., The American Family Home, 1800-1960 (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1986).

<sup>2</sup> Olivier Zunz, The Changing Face of Inequality: Urbanization, Industrial Development, and Immigrants in Detroit, 1880-1920 (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1982), p. 152ff. There was a certain amount of promotional literature aimed toward immigrant groups through their community and foreign-language presses. See Guy A. Szuberla, "Dom.

class lived in apartment buildings. On the national level, increased apartment building construction during the twenties seemed to challenge the hegemony of detached single-family housing. While Zunz' fine-grained study suggests that this may have been the case in a particular locality and for a particular class, nevertheless the norm throughout the United States remained the single-family house.<sup>3</sup>

As Wright's and Clark's studies suggest, the literature devoted to the encouragement of single family housing did not promote merely the housing form, but ways of life and behavior. Through its siting, plan, design and furnishings, the house was presented as conveying meanings that reflected values, attitudes and conditions in United States society. This literature is especially valuable, then, as a record of the tensions revealed through these discussions. In the period we are concerned with, for example, the issue of homeownership was emphasized. This was not a completely new theme, of course. Nineteenth century plan book writers such as the Pallisers, who published books of house designs, certainly encouraged homeownership in the course of promoting their own services. But the more disinterested encouragement represented by the

---

Namai, Heim: Images of the New Immigrant's Home," in Jack Salzman, ed. Prospects: An Annual of American Cultural Studies (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1985), pp. 139-68.

3

Robert G. Barrows, "Beyond the Tenement: Patterns of American Urban Housing, 1870-1930," Journal of Urban History 9(August 1983): 395-420.



Department of Commerce's book, How to Own Your Home, or the pooling of marketing and community development resources evidenced in the "Own Your Home" and Better Homes in America campaigns, marked a departure from the appeals of designers such as the Pallisers.

One resolution of the tension created by what was considered to be a low rate of homeownership was the construction of large-scale speculative developments, where an attempt was made to protect homebuyers' financial investments and provide a sense of security through some form of community identity. Did the design of the housing itself, though, contribute to the advancement of this strategy?

Although some writing on the period addresses facets of this question, much of the literature on twenties residential architecture is centered on different concerns. Until relatively recently, studies of house design in the United States tended to regard this period as an embarrassing interlude between the bold innovations of Frank Lloyd Wright and California architects such as Irving Gill, and the tentative stirrings of modernism in the thirties. With Jonathan Lane's pioneering 1961 article, "The Period House in the Nineteen-Twenties," an attempt was made to look beyond the eclecticism of its surfaces to the ways in which this period's houses contributed to the evolution of residential design in the United States.<sup>4</sup> Lane argued that

---

<sup>4</sup> Jonathan Lane, "The Period House in the Nineteen-Twenties," Journal of the Society of Architectural His-

innovations such as the open plan, informal one-story designs, and the use of outdoor living areas characterized much of this housing, despite the backward-looking appearance of exteriors; his examples were drawn from published work in the architectural press of the period.

Since Lane's study, the surfaces themselves have received more serious scrutiny in works by students of revival styles such as David Gebhard and William Rhoads. We will look at their work more closely when we turn to the subdivisions themselves. We can note here, though, that such studies reflect, and have contributed to, the contemporary interest in the symbolic or representational role of architecture that characterizes postmodernism.

The spirit that animates the overlapping fields of vernacular architectural studies, popular culture studies, and historic preservation is evident in the recent work by Alan Gowans, The Comfortable House: North American Suburban Architecture 1890-1930.<sup>5</sup> Gowans looks at the issue of style in this period through the lens of housing built by commercial builders and mail order houses, so that he is focusing on the modest majority of dwellings rather than on those designed by privately commissioned architects. This allows him to highlight pervasive period styles that are often overlooked in considerations that concentrate on

---

torians 20(December 1961): 169-78.

5

Alan Gowans, The Comfortable House: North American Suburban Architecture 1890-1930 (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1986).

revival-based vocabularies. Beyond formulating a guide to styles, however, Gowans is also concerned with what he calls the social function of styles, with "how styles worked, in and for society, and what they were made to do." <sup>6</sup> Although he is not looking at large-scale developments and the nexus of issues raised by these that we have been considering, Gowans' emphasis on the work of commercial builders makes his conclusions regarding the meanings conveyed by "the comfortable house" relevant for us, and I will return to them following my discussions of the three subdivisions.

### The Ford Homes

As we noted in Chapter 2, the Ford Homes were conceived as a unified composition. We do not know to what extent the architect's ideas, as he expressed them in Community Homes, influenced his colleagues in the Dearborn Realty and Construction Company, but a number of design decisions contributed to the definition of the subdivision as a visual whole. At the same time, however, the attempt was made to enliven the unity by introducing variety. Although the elements used by the designer were fairly simple and straightforward, it is useful to look more closely at the methods he employed to create a sense of differentiation within an overriding totality. To achieve this goal, the architect coordinated the project on three

---

6

Ibid., p. xiv.

levels: the community as an entirety, an intermediate level of smaller groupings of houses, and the individual house.

In addition to their similarity in scale, it was the style of the houses that served to unify the community. Through the use of a few key devices, including roof lines, dormer windows, shutters, fanlights, columns, and trim, Wood was able to evoke the image of an eclectic Colonial style. The repetition of these structural and decorative features still serves to distinguish the community from surrounding houses.

The only original planning device used for the project, given that the grid and lots had already been plotted, was the staggered setback of houses in groups of three or four. This was intended to provide visual variety along the streetscape, and was also an attempt to define intermediate clusters of houses. There was substantial interest during this period in grouping houses to avoid the monotony of dwellings spaced evenly along the perimeter of blocks, and to create subgroups of neighbors in the spirit of Cooley's notions of primary group associations. Wood's proposals in Community Homes reflect such ideas, and a multitude of examples appeared in period journals. The

---

7

For example, "Grouping Houses to Get Ideal Homes," Building Age (August 1921): 58; "Beauty by Grouping Homes," Building Age (September 1922): 25-7. Some of the interest in bungalow courts in this period stemmed from this emphasis on grouping houses. Albert Marple, "The Modern Bungalow Court," Building Age (March 1920): 19-22, 40, among

staggered setbacks used in the Ford Homes created little real sense of subdivisions within the community as a whole, however, since they did not alter the uniformly frontal siting of the houses.

While the attempt to define a more intimate scale between the subdivision and the individual house was not successful, the designer did achieve a balance between the unity of the total scheme and variety at the level of the single dwelling. Although the devices that defined the style of the tract were standardized and repeated, the configurations of the masses within which they appeared changed according to the modular scheme we discussed earlier. Assured that the six models would be scattered by their assignment to specific lots, the designer could use a limited range of detailing to simultaneously link and differentiate the houses. When the few decisions that were left to homebuyers were made, affecting the type of exterior cladding and the color of the roofing shingles, the function of the details as unifying accents became more apparent. Massing, combined with color and texture variations, created the individualizing features.

The Colonial Revival style certainly lent itself to this kind of manipulation of details within related configurations of mass. Its rectangular shape and gabled roof

---

numerous examples. For an analysis of these, see Stefanos Polyzoides, et al. Courtyard Housing in Los Angeles (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1982).

---

were readily adapted to balloon frame construction, and its decorative wood details were easily standardized and mass-produced. In addition to conforming to the needs of the production process, the Colonial Revival style was also appropriate to the design needs of the sort of project represented by the Ford Homes. By the twenties, this style had become very familiar in the United States. Beginning with the centennial in 1876, interest in colonial architecture and artifacts had grown during the succeeding decades. Through the rehabilitation of colonial structures, as well as their reconstruction, reproduction or reinvention in contemporary forms, the vocabulary and image of colonial styles came to be immediately recognizable.<sup>8</sup> This made it possible to conjure up the whole through its parts, to successfully suggest a colonial village by the selective use of structural or decorative details.

Documents on the history of the Ford Homes do not record whose decision it was to use elements of Colonial Revival style. In Community Homes, Wood did not present elevations or discuss style. But considering Henry Ford's predilections, architectural and historical, it is very likely that the choice of this style was his. In 1923, Ford bought the Wayside Inn in Sudbury, Massachusetts, a colonial structure celebrated by Henry Wadsworth Longfellow

---

8

See William B. Rhoads, "The Colonial Revival and American Nationalism," Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians 35(December 1976): 239-54, and The Colonial Revival (New York: Garland, 1977) by the same author.

in his 1863 Tales of a Wayside Inn. Ford had it restored and operated it as a museum and restaurant. In 1927, he began his acquisition and reconstruction of colonial buildings at Greenfield Village, virtually next door to the Ford Homes.<sup>9</sup> In this highly eclectic, idiosyncratic and idealized environment, where colonial structures from Pennsylvania, Massachusetts and other states were relocated not far from Ford's own mid-nineteenth-century boyhood home, the Wright brothers' bicycle shop, and virtually the entire Menlo Park laboratory of Thomas Edison, the meaning of the Colonial style for Ford can be seen. It symbolized the perseverance, creativity and ingenuity that he identified with the history of technology and its impact on daily life in the United States.

Students of the Colonial Revival seem to agree that by the twenties the style was linked with a sense of national identity.<sup>10</sup> For Ford and others concerned with Americanization, it served a didactic role.<sup>11</sup> Within architectural circles, there was an interest in the historical record,

---

9

William B. Rhoads, "Roadside Colonial: Early American Design for the Automobile Age, 1900-1940," Winterthur Portfolio 21 (Summer/Autumn 1986): 136-38; James S. Walmsley, American Ingenuity: Henry Ford Museum and Greenfield Village (New York: Harry N. Abrams, 1985).

10

Rhoads, "The Colonial Revival and American Nationalism;" David Gebhard, "The American Colonial Revival in the 1930s," Winterthur Portfolio 22 (Summer/Autumn 1987): 109-48.

11

William B. Rhoads, "The Colonial Revival and the Americanization of Immigrants," in Alan Axelrod, ed. The Colonial Revival in America (New York: W. W. Norton, 1985), pp. 341-61.

conveyed through measured drawings and renderings of extant buildings, but no need felt to imitate this heritage slavishly. Talbot Hamlin's comments in The American Spirit in Architecture, published in 1926, reflect this flexible and diffuse attitude toward the style:

In recent years at least, the most prolific source of inspiration in house design has been the Georgian and colonial of our own country's youth. It has proved to "belong"; its own closeness to us has made it seem at home . . . throughout the country . . . [The illustrated example] shows how beautifully a modern adaptation of colonial precedent can suit a small house. Like most modern colonial, this is a free adaptation; it is in no sense archaeological.<sup>12</sup>

As a range of forms that suggested links with the nation's past, Colonial became the stylistic currency for the wider public as well. As the editors of Popular Mechanics wrote in 1929, "Styles in houses come and go like styles in cars. . . . It pays to build in a style as liquid in public approval as a Liberty bond at a bank. Colonial is such a style."<sup>13</sup>

Thus, while Henry Ford held a special brief for the Colonial style, the style itself was sufficiently widespread at the time to hold at least a general significance for many people, designer and prospective homeowner alike. But one of the most important reasons for its successful use in the Ford Homes was the fact that its details could

---

<sup>12</sup>

Talbot Hamlin, The American Spirit in Architecture (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1926), p. 267.

<sup>13</sup>

"A Style That Never Grows Old," Popular Mechanics 52 (November 1929): 879, cited in Gebhard, "The American Colonial Revival in the 1930s," p. 109.



suggest the style in its more elaborate versions. Through a sensitive selection of details, Wood was able to create a unified composition that preserved a sense of individuality in its parts. Because its elements could be simplified and standardized, fit into the industrialized process of construction, the Colonial style remained a flexible conveyor of meaning in the context of large-scale residential design.

### Brightmoor

Unlike the Ford Homes or the dwellings in Westwood Highlands, the houses that B. E. Taylor built at Brightmoor were not designed within the framework of a revival style. Rather, the simplicity of their massing and their lack of ornamentation tended to emphasize their clear shapes and standardized, machined elements. Nevertheless, if the links that we noted between the Brightmoor houses and owner-builder traditions in Appalachia are justified, this simplicity and absence of detail did not mean that these structures lacked architectural associations or the ability to convey meaning. On the contrary, one of the aspects of Brightmoor that emerges from our analysis, in contrast to the other subdivisions we are studying, is that this community seems to have been conceived in relation to a particular group of prospective homeowners. The houses at Brightmoor, we have suggested, were designed to seem familiar to families from the rural upland South newly arrived in Detroit to work in the factories. Although constructed

according to industrialized building practices and processes, Brightmoor houses maintained continuity in design with traditional housing forms. Using Gowans' terminology, the Brightmoor houses are examples of the Southern Cabin<sup>14</sup> form of homestead.

By pointing out this continuity in design, I do not mean to overlook the impoverishment of the community that Taylor abetted by omitting bathrooms, basements and other amenities. The absence of these features may also have been familiar to Brightmoor homeowners, but the cost reductions achieved in this way risked residents' health and became social costs when private, municipal and state agencies were called upon to redress the problems they created.

Size, ornamentation, range of amenities are all features of housing that can vary depending on the projected cost of the structure and therefore, in the case of speculative subdivisions of the sort we are studying, on the class of the homeowners whom the developer intends to attract. Brightmoor is readily legible, in these terms, as a community built for the working poor, whereas the Ford Homes and Westwood Highlands were conceived for a broader range of working class and middle class homeowners. Beyond class, however, the language of forms used in the latter projects does not convey any other sense of the residents' backgrounds. At Brightmoor, however, the choice of forms

---

14

Gowans, p. 156.

reflected the homeowners' residential roots.

It is important to note, too, that the simplicity of Brightmoor's houses also derives from Taylor's ability to preserve traditional, crafts-based, owner-builder patterns while using standardized elements and industrialized building processes.

### Westwood Highlands

We saw in our analysis of Westwood Highlands that the overall organization of the subdivision was generated by the manipulation of modular elements. The configurations of modules designed by Strothoff allowed him to take into account different siting problems or house sizes, and to create a sense of variety while maintaining an underlying unity. Although stylistic elements were not central to this fundamental level of planning the community as a whole, they were used to achieve a complementary balance in visual terms. Materials and textures -- primarily stucco wall surfaces, Spanish tile, and carved wood trim -- were consistent, but their shapes and detailing varied a good deal. It is interesting to note here the contrast with the Ford Homes. In Dearborn, details were uniform, whereas both a certain variety of materials and textures and their distribution were programmatically left unplanned and allowed to achieve irregularity, since these were the features that prospective homeowners could determine. In the Ford Homes, the details were chosen for their ability to evoke Colonial style, and hence played a major role in the

---

visual and associational unity of the project. At Westwood Highlands, on the other hand, specific materials and textures were necessary to convey the sense of the Mediterranean Revival style that dominates the community. Being a more diffuse stylistic category, however, there was a wider range of details possible that would contribute to its evocation. This diversity in appropriate details allowed for the appearance, too, of greater individuality within the overarching associational totality.

Another feature of Westwood Highlands that it is useful to recall is the provocative echo of past planning and design strategies we found there. Although a complete exploration of the nature of the links between residential construction in the twenties and that of the nineteenth century in the Bay Area would carry us beyond our scope, the latter serves as a helpful background against which to consider the meanings expressed through twenties' design. For we noted a similar contrast in Victorian design between the uniformity of the sheathing, that served as a visual ground, and the multiplicity of ornamentation, through which variety within a structure, and from building to building, was created. This suggests that the ornamental elaboration and diversity that characterizes the houses at Westwood Highlands might owe as much to local traditions regarding the relationship between surface and decorative detail as it does to the particular stylistic language used there. Or, to put this another way, one of the aspects of Mediterranean Revival that made it attractive in the early

decades of the twentieth century may have been this conceptual similarity with the tradition of Victorian design in the area, despite the obvious differences of materials, massing and vocabulary of forms.

These differences were certainly important, however, for the explicit references to the past that Mediterranean Revival was understood to suggest were to an earlier period than that represented by Victorian structures. Not long after the centennial celebrations and the explorations of New England colonial architecture that they stimulated, a similar interest in colonial building in the west arose within architectural and wider intellectual circles in

California.<sup>15</sup> Studies were made of the Missions and of colonial and indigenous domestic structures, although the architecture inspired by them tended to be selective and picturesque rather than archaeological in spirit.<sup>16</sup> Stucco

---

15

Kevin Starr, Americans and the California Dream, 1850-1915 (New York: Oxford University Press, 1973), Chapter 12, "An American Mediterranean," pp. 396-411; Harold Kirker, California's Architectural Frontier: Style and Tradition in the Nineteenth Century (Santa Barbara, Calif.: Peregrine Smith, 1973); and the following articles by David Gebhard: "The Spanish Colonial Revival in Southern California (1895-1930)," Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians 26(May 1967): 131-47; "Architectural Imagery, the Mission and California," Harvard Architecture Review 1(Spring 1980): 137-45; and "Tile, Stucco Walls and Arches: The Spanish Tradition in the Popular American House," in Charles W. Moore, Kathryn Smith and Peter Becker, eds. Home Sweet Home: American Domestic Vernacular Architecture (New York: Rizzoli, 1983), pp. 104-11.

16

See Christopher Wilson, "The Spanish Pueblo Revival Defined, 1904-1921," New Mexico Studies in the Fine Arts 7(1982): 24-30, for a discussion of historically changing perceptions of indigenous buildings in New Mexico and how

walls, tile roofs, arched openings, and parapets were sufficient to suggest the Spanish colonial past of the region, while more ambitious designs included quatrefoil windows, cusped Moorish arches, and towers.

Colonial and Colonial Revival architecture in the west did not, of course, have the overtones of nation-building that were part of the range of associations of east coast Colonial. Instead, western revival styles evolved to include references that were based on geographic and climatic considerations. Influences from Spain, North Africa and Mexico were joined by design inspiration from Italy, and produced a regional visual identity that emphasized the appearance of cooling, solid masonry walls and the possibility of contact with the outdoors. By the time the Panama-Pacific Exposition popularized the Spanish Colonial Revival in 1915, architects in California had already moved toward the eclectic synthesis of elements from these diverse sources to yield the Mediterranean Revival style that characterized the architecture of the region through the 1920s.

The use of the Mediterranean Revival vocabulary of forms and materials at Westwood Highlands reflects the fact that the style had become the contemporary vernacular. Although houses built in earlier subdivisions in the district west of Twin Peaks were designed in a number of styles, stucco and tile increasingly came to dominate this

---

this affected architectural reconstructions.

---

newer area of development. In addition to the claims of fashion and the desire to construct a regional identity, another impetus for the adoption of this style was the desire, in the aftermath of the 1906 earthquake and fire, to minimize the appearance of wood.<sup>17</sup> The materials used in Mediterranean Revival designs were visually reassuring, despite the frame structures underlying them. Breaking with the appearance of the local traditions of wood building, Mediterranean Revival houses seemed safer and more up-to-date.

Thus, eclectic as Mediterranean Revival was, it was also synthetic, in the sense that it fused images of the past with those of contemporary living.

#### Conclusion: The Charm of Continuity

Each of the subdivisions we have been studying, then, marshalls selected details, materials, shapes or textures from past architectural styles to evoke a range of associations. The Ford Homes suggested the roots of the national past in the colonial experience in New England. The use of Mediterranean Revival styles at Westwood Highlands fused allusions to colonial experiences in the west with a sense of place; by drawing on styles from related geographic and climatic sources, these designs suggested an organic as well as an historic rootedness. At Brightmoor, where an

---

17

John Beach, "The Bay Area Tradition, 1890-1918," in Sally B. Woodbridge, ed. Bay Area Houses (New York: Oxford University Press, 1976), p. 80.

historicist style was not used, the particular tradition of the anticipated residents was adapted to provide a familiar image of home.

Whichever style or model the design of subdivision houses emulated, the stylistic precedent was treated very loosely, as Talbot Hamlin observed of Colonial Revival designs in the passage quoted earlier.<sup>18</sup> That is to say, there was no attempt to recreate the past faithfully. In all cases, the contemporary character of the design was allowed to remain visible, through the simplicity or selectivity of forms, the free play of details or materials, or through the emphasis on standardized and machined elements.

In this concluding section, I will look more closely at this interplay of associations to the past and acknowledgement of the present, in order to gain a clearer sense of the fundamental role of style in these projects.

On one level, each style had its particular connotations, as we have suggested. Some contemporary writers stressed the romanticism of Spanish Colonial Revival,<sup>19</sup> others stressed the durability of New England Colonial. Some writers were identified with their promotion of individual styles: Rexford Newcomb was especially enthusiastic

---

18

See note 12.

19

See David Gebhard, "Learning from the 1920s: The Ideals of Romance, Charm and Personality," Review (School of Architecture, Tulane University) (1984-85): 50-55, and "American Colonial Revival in the 1930s" for discussions of these styles and further references.



about Mediterranean styles, for example.<sup>20</sup> But aside from expressing concern for geographical appropriateness, as in the censure of the House and Garden writer in 1923 toward "building a Spanish Mission villa in a New England village,"<sup>21</sup> there was little contention for stylistic supremacy. Rather, as Gowan notes, it was a period of pluralism regarding stylistic selection, in which many styles co-existed.<sup>22</sup> The availability of a range of suitable styles was reflected in the lack of emphasis on this subject in the reports from the President's Conference on Home Building and Home Ownership, including the report of the committee on house design.<sup>23</sup>

To many in the field, this stylistic pluralism represented a major achievement of modern architecture. As one writer expressed this,

I wish people would accept the present method of construction for what it is, and be satisfied to call the result 'modern.' A modern style . . . takes sound traditions wherever they can be found and adapts them

---

20

See, for example, Rexford Newcomb, The Spanish House for America (Philadelphia: Lippincott, 1927) and Mediterranean Domestic Architecture in the United States (Cleveland: J. H. Jansen, 1928).

21

"Local Materials and Local Labor," House and Garden 43(April 1923): 90. Such censure reflected the fact that the "wrong" styles were used, as we noted in the anomalous Colonial Revival house at 185 Westwood in Westwood Park, San Francisco.

22

Gowans, pp. 211-12. See also Gwendolyn Wright, Building the Dream: A Social History of Housing in America (New York: Pantheon, 1981), chapter 11.

23

John M. Gries and James Ford, eds. Housing Design, Construction and Equipment (Washington, D.C.: President's Conference on Home Building and Home Ownership, 1932).

---

24

to present day conditions.

According to this position, modern architecture, because of the inherent flexibility and cost reductions of new building practices, mined the riches of the past and effectively put them to the service of contemporary uses. This was an evolutionary view, that saw modern construction practices as enhancing the ability of architects to reinterpret the resources of history to meet present needs.

Another view of modern architecture, one with which the writer just quoted seems to be arguing with some exasperation, looked to the new methods of construction for the creation of a new language of forms. Expressed increasingly in the architectural press from the middle of the twenties, this position received strong support from those most aware of contemporary European developments.<sup>25</sup>

The subdivisions we have been analyzing all depended upon rationalized construction practices involving mechanized mass production and standardization for their development. But while these methods are evident to a certain extent in the repetition of forms and in the relative simplicity and tendency toward clean lines found in each of

24

---

William A. Delano, quoted in A. Lawrence Kocher, "The Country House," Architectural Record 62(1927): 342, cited in Lane, p. 171. Also see Gebhard, "The American Colonial Revival in the 1930s," p. 110. For an examination of the interpretations of "modern" architecture in architectural circles in the twenties, see Daniel Platt Gregory, "Magazine Modern: A Study of the American Architectural Press, 1919-1930" (Ph.D. dissertation, University of California, Berkeley, 1982).

25

See, for example, Gregory, p. 85ff.

these tracts, we cannot say that the construction methods are expressed. That is, the modern system of building that had evolved and that made the construction of these large-scale developments feasible is not represented in a new formal language. Gowans, contrasting the attitudes of post-Victorian American builders with those of European Modernists, claims that the Americans inherently treated technology as "their servant, not their master."<sup>26</sup> But I would argue that three other features of the development of housing in the United States account for the appearance of stylistic pluralism rather than the creation of a style that articulated modern building practices, at least in subdivisions of the sort we are studying. These features, which I will discuss more fully below, can be summarized as: 1) the distancing of builders and architects from a conceptual role in the design of housing, 2) the occurrence of dynamic social and technological changes within the household itself that stylistic pluralism attempted to mitigate by representing the house as stable and rooted in tradition, and 3) the visual assurance provided by stylistic pluralism that realtors' and homeowners' investments were safely embedded in a stable community.

One aspect of our examination of the histories of builders, architects and realtors in Chapter 4 that is

---

26

Gowans, p. 213, rejects a radical, Utopian interpretation of European Modernism. For such a reading, see Kenneth Frampton, "Industrialization and the Crises in Architecture," Oppositions 1(1973): 57-82.

relevant here is the conclusion that the first two of these groups were not centrally involved in subdivision house design. As we saw, the new system of building evolved over several decades, involving changes in the structure of work that were sometimes bitterly contested, as well as technological changes, within a context of industrial development that affected the shaping of all material wealth. The craftsmen, who were in the best position to see the implications of this process of change in construction were, however, in the most conflictual relationship to it. They were experiencing increased routinization and specialization, a deskilling and displacement that diminished their ability to contribute to the overall design of structures. At the same time, during most of this period, the architectural elite was uninterested in the problems of small house design and thus took no leadership role in its advancement. Without claiming that had things been different, either builders or architects would have developed a new style of housing to articulate modern building practices, it is possible to note that the two groups who would have been capable of achieving this were not engaged in the conceptualization of subdivision design in this period.

Another feature of housing in the United States that contributed to stylistic pluralism in subdivision design was the degree to which technological and social change permeated life within the house. We noted in connection with the devaluing of builders' skills discussed in Chapter

---

4 that in the decades after 1890 there was a decline in<sup>27</sup> real capital invested in the house itself. Equipment within the house assumed greater importance, and accounted for a larger though more dispersed share of capital, as the efficient house absorbed new technologies such as plumbing and electricity. By the twenties, major corporations were introducing new products for individual home use and, with them, the dilemmas of consumer choice that have since<sup>28</sup> become familiar. These products also introduced changes in patterns of work in the home, and at the same time family relationships were shifting through the growing

---

27

Leo Grebler, David M. Blank and Louis Winnick, Capital Formation in Residential Real Estate: Trends and Prospects (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1956), pp. 8-15.

28

Appliances that were first developed as large units, used in collective or institutional settings, such as vacuum cleaners and washing machines, were redesigned for privatized use in the twenties. Companies identified with the manufacture of consumer durables, such as Bendix or Maytag, entered the consumer market in this period with resources gained from other endeavors, in these cases the production of airplane parts and farm machinery, respectively. On these developments, see Ruth Schwartz Cowan, More Work for Mother: The Ironies of Household Technology from the Open Hearth to the Microwave (New York: Basic Books, 1983). On the rapid spread of new household technologies and equipment, see the classic studies Zanesville, Ohio and 36 Other American Communities (New York: R. O. Eastman, Inc., 1927) and Robert S. Lynd and Helen M. Lynd, Middletown: A Study of American Culture (New York: Harcourt, Brace and Co., 1929). The press of the period is unequivocal in promoting new technologies. A newspaper article on the national spread of electricity by 1924, for example, is accompanied by four smaller pieces on the needs for various electrical appliances. As one states, "The kitchen today is not properly equipped if it does not have an electric vacuum cleaner, dishwasher, clothes washer, irons and range. No woman can without these helps keep her youth and vitality and remain attractive." Sally E. Davidson, "Electricity Comfort Key," Detroit Free Press 6 January 1924, p. 6.

emphasis on peer groups and other external agencies of  
<sup>29</sup> socialization. It is beyond our scope to elaborate on  
 these developments; it must suffice to acknowledge that the  
 home was a site of dynamic change.

In contrast, the styles of the subdivisions that we  
 are concerned with carry associations of tradition, rooted-  
 ness and continuity. The image of home that is conveyed  
 through stylistic pluralism is not one of transformation,  
 but one of stability, longevity and familiarity. Gowans  
 compares the pluralism of architectural styles in this  
 period to the rotation of baseball teams going up to bat  
 and to the liberal political process in which "one side may  
 gain an ascendancy and make some laws to promote its inter-  
 ests for a few years, then the other takes over and pro-  
 motes its interests for a while, but both have common goals  
 in view."<sup>30</sup> For stylistic pluralism, the goal was any  
 image of home that would suggest continuity, a sense of the  
 present as rooted in the past and extending into a knowable

---

29

See, for example, John Modell, "Dating Becomes the Way  
 of American Youth," in Leslie Page Moch and Gary D. Stark,  
 eds. Essays on the Family and Historical Change (College  
 Station: Texas A & M University Press, 1983), pp. 91-126;  
 Elaine Tyler May, "The Pressure to Provide: Class, Con-  
 sumerism, and Divorce in Urban America, 1880-1920," in Mel  
 Albin and Dominick Cavallo, Family Life in America, 1620-  
 2000 (St. James, N.Y.: Revisionary Press, 1981), pp. 279-  
 89; Beth L. Bailey, From Front Porch to Back Seat: Court-  
 ship in Twentieth-Century America (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins  
 University Press, 1988); Christopher Lasch, Haven in a  
 Heartless World: The Family Besieged (New York: Basic  
 Books, 1979).

30

Gowans, p. 212.

31  
future.

If we accept, then, that activities and relationships within households were shifting, we can see the image of continuity suggested by stylistic pluralism as a sort of talisman, a symbol of a desire rather than confirmation of an achieved status.

The third aspect of housing in the twenties that accounts for the presence of stylistic pluralism grounds this image of continuity in the requirements of the built forms we have been studying. For if, as we noted, neither builders nor the architectural elite were in leadership positions regarding subdivision design and development, we have seen that realtors were. And one of the primary concerns realtors had about such subdivisions was the assurance of the perpetuation of these residential communities in order to minimize risks to both the developer's and the homeowner's investment. For the realtor/developer, the use of traditional or historicist styles served as a visual

---

31

It was the common thread of association, whereby each of various styles suggested traditional home-like qualities, that unified subdivisions of the twenties in which the houses were individually commissioned. Nichols' Country Club District and the Van Sweringens' Shaker Heights are examples of this type of development. It is also worth noting that many of these same styles -- Colonial, Mediterranean, Tudor, et al. -- were adapted to other building types, such as road architecture and small commercial structures. Not only was there no single style identified with the idea of home, but this idea was itself diffuse enough to migrate with diverse styles to imbue a range of building types with images of reassuring familiarity and rootedness.

buttress to the continuity of the subdivision as a totality. Such styles suggested that the houses and the community as a whole belonged and would remain as a viable residential neighborhood.

Thus, the architectural styles that were used in subdivision design were integral to these projects as attempts to create new, speculative communities. Despite the latitude regarding choice of styles and their range of associations, all contributed to an image of continuity. Rather than interpret the changing conditions of building practices and community development, the role of these styles was to serve as visual charms that might ensure stability.



## CHAPTER 7

### CONCLUSION: ARCHITECTURE AS SOCIAL PROCESS: CULTIVATING PLANLESSNESS

The impetus for this study, as I noted in the first chapter, was the desire to explore the apparently unplanned structure of suburban residential development in the United States in the 1920s that nevertheless produced recognizable patterns of single-family housing. We have seen that a diffuse network of housing experts, including newly professionalized realtor/developers, formulated and disseminated models for suburban communities. Building on the existing prevalence of single-family housing, the design on these communities drew on garden suburb planning traditions, on the evolution of small house design, and on urban reform experience to yield schemes that ensured a minimal sense of neighborhood identity. By fostering such a sense of community, these developments offered a response to the dislocations and disintegration accompanying modern urban life that specifically focused on homeownership as a route toward the achievement of stability and continuity. Thus, the patterns of twenties subdivisions embody the intersec-

tion of architectural design with broad trends in economic and social institutions. In this chapter, we will reflect on the way in which this study reached these conclusions, and on the nature of the housing patterns we have discerned.

We began by examining the histories of three speculative subdivisions that were developed in the twenties. We attempted to recover the process of development that each had undergone by investigating the careers of the developers, architects and builders involved in its development, analyzing design and construction practices, and situating each within its local context. Thus, we noted the decision by the Dearborn Realty and Construction Company to build for the market, rather than to construct a company town, and its focus on rationalizing the construction process. Although the architect of the Ford Homes project was concerned with housing issues, few of his ideas were adapted for this scheme, which provided variety within a visually unified design framework but, otherwise, included minimal community amenities. Brightmoor was developed as a far more extensive tract for the working poor attracted to Detroit industries from the rural upland South. Taylor built substandard housing that maintained visual links to the settlers' traditional house forms, articulating these in terms of standardized and mechanized building processes. In addition to such regularity in design, Taylor anchored the community by encouraging the development of a wide range of commercial and social facilities in the district.

---

Westwood Highland's development was part of a continuous process of suburban expansion in the district west of San Francisco's Twin Peaks, initiated by real estate developers and cemented by the extension of municipal transportation. Street patterns and siting were used to define the tract, while the modular system and Mediterranean Revival style used by the architect generated a sense of variety within it.

Despite the particularity of each scheme's genesis and development, our reconstructions of these histories did illuminate a common emphasis on neighborhood identity. This was expressed through design unity, site planning, and the provision of community services. Also, we found that the developers in all three seemed to play the decisive role in shaping these projects. Builders' contributions to the overall conception seem to have been negligible, even where the identity of the builder is known, as in the case of Westwood Highlands. The architects of the Ford Homes and of Westwood Highlands, on the other hand, provided essential services in developing modular plans and deploying stylistic languages that balanced individuality with the overarching unity of the subdivisions' totalities. But they accomplished this within the framework of subdivision goals that had been established by the developers.

The second part of the study, then, turned toward an investigation of wider social and historical trends that might be germane to the decisions about subdivision devel-

opment that we had located in these three examples. First we considered the history of building practices. Following the trajectories of builders, architects and real estate developers, we observed that the latter arose as self-conscious community builders in a period when industrialized construction practices had undermined the role of builders' skills and when management and entrepreneurial abilities became necessary assets to organize building processes. Contributing to the realtors' professional project, developers also benefitted from the organizational controls over realty practices and the opportunities for national interaction that the establishment of a professional association fostered. The architectural profession, in contrast, had historically relinquished responsibility for providing housing solutions and provided little institutional support or encouragement for those architects who were interested in such issues. Realtors, thus, emerged as entrepreneurs not only in the sense of undertaking financial risks in their enterprises, but also in terms of both organizing the processes of construction and marshalling design expertise.

The promotion of single-family homeownership in the 1920s extended beyond the realm of the National Association of Real Estate Boards, however. The realtors' professional association was itself a conduit for the dissemination of design and planning ideas that were shaped within a more diverse movement of housing experts. Next, we explored this network of urban reformers, planners, social scien-

tists, architects, realtors, and others who were concerned with housing issues. Often meeting and formulating proposals under the auspices of the federal government, their efforts and publications culminated in the 1931 President's Conference on Home Building and Home Ownership. We also saw that, on the basis of his interaction with aspects of this network, Clarence A. Perry formulated the neighborhood unit plan, which served as a diagrammatic model for community design.

In the last chapter, we looked at the way architectural style contributed to the definition of subdivision development. This aspect of subdivision design had not been an explicit concern of the housing network. The context of stylistic pluralism that we noted in this period, however, assured that whichever specific vocabulary of forms was used, it would articulate the idiom of community continuity that affirmed the stability of these residential projects.

Thus, we can see that the two levels of investigation that we embarked upon have illuminated the processes whereby housing solutions were proposed and disseminated. Tracing broader, national historical and social trends sheds light on the focus on community in the subdivisions we have studied and on the roles of the developers, builders and architects in contributing to their design. At the same time, by studying the individual schemes we see how the housing network's proposals were carried out as well as

inflected by local needs and conditions. We would expect to find variations in each additional subdivision we might explore, but our examination of these three examples suggests that all would embody some aspects of the pattern we have located here. By working at these two levels of analysis, we have also pursued the kind of dialogue between the local and particular and the historical and structural that, we have argued, led to the housing solutions we have been studying.

It remains to consider whether the residential pattern that we have traced represents a coherent or systematic approach to the fulfillment of housing needs. In terms of any notion of unified or centralized planning, we could not say that this pattern of speculative suburban subdivision design constitutes a planned solution. We find, instead, an assemblage of ideas that were promulgated as guidelines for development in a variety of ways by a diffuse network of housing professionals. As we noted in Chapter 5, the organizational model that this network followed was that of associational progressivism, according to which experts shared ideas and established standards that would then be disseminated to local levels through professional and civic associations. This was an explicit alternative to centralized planning. The absence of planning in subdivision development, and the appearance of disorganization in built form, far from being accidents, mistakes, or oversights, were cultivated. They were deliberate consequences of the ideal of decentralized administration that grew out of the

---

Progressive Era and that was identified with Herbert Hoover's theory of bureaucratic management.

While the pattern of speculative suburban subdivision development in the 1920s does not reflect the operation of a single, uniform plan, it does articulate the commodification of housing in the United States. This refers to the dual and contradictory nature of such structures, serving both as fulfillments of needs (use value) and as objects that can be bought and sold (exchange value). As use value, a house is an individual realm of retreat and privacy. As exchange value, though, a house is a nexus of social realities expressed in terms of the market. Speculative suburban subdivisions can be seen as an expression of these realities in a systematic way. The establishment of some sense of neighborhood through planning devices, social amenities, and visual emblems of community, and the selection of architectural styles that suggest continuity, preserve the district's future marketability. This aim controls the use and prospects of each individual house, and thus situates its use within the framework established by the market. Seen in this way, even the architectural unity that characterizes subdivision development becomes, beyond its aesthetic dimension, a language to assert the control of larger social realities over the fate of the individual homeowner.<sup>1</sup>

---

1

Constance Perin, in Everything in Its Place: Social Order and Land Use in America (Princeton: Princeton University

Thus, an examination of ordinary and pervasive built forms, even ones that seem as inchoate as twenties suburban subdivisions, yields insight into social processes and into the ways that architecture can embody and perhaps enforce those processes. Dell Upton has described vernacular buildings

. . . as the visual embodiment of a social process, in which available architectural ideas from many sources, local and international, traditional and novel, are shaped into buildings answering the special requirements of a social class, an economic group or a local or ethnic community. . . . It is this quality of complex response to indigenous demands, rather than to abstract intellectual or aesthetic concepts, that makes vernacular building ordinary building: It is architecture in the service of large groups of people . . .<sup>2</sup>

The houses we have been studying conform to this description, and the complexity of the shaping ideas that guided their development is perhaps best understood within this context. Subdivision patterns evolved in response to the

---

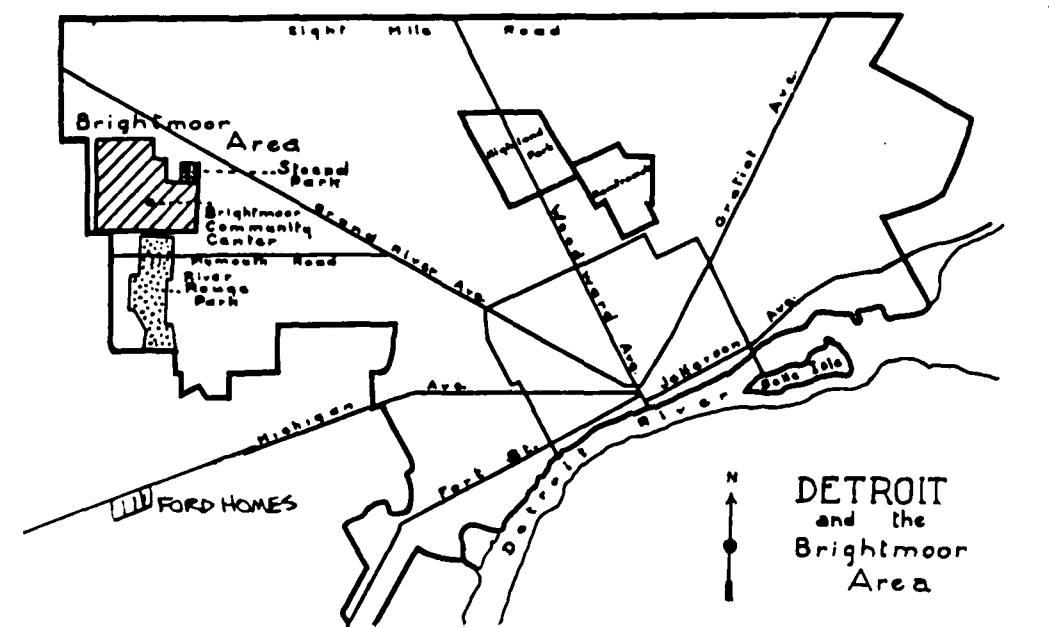
Press, 1977), an anthropological study of the symbolic meaning of homeownership, draws a similar conclusion. "For although the single-family house is itself a possession and an asset, often enough a concrete symbol of higher income, it is less that fact which confers the high status culturally and more the achievement of a social relationship with the banker," p. 66. "Thus it is that the ideal of homeownership is actually the ideal of perfected citizenship. . . . [In contrast to the renter, the homeowner is] integrated into the wider system through the sanctions of foreclosure, the loss of property, lifesavings, and social worth," pp. 76-77. Suburban subdivisions physically and visually embody the way in which this commodity relationship becomes the form through which membership in a community is expressed.

2

<sup>2</sup> Dell Upton, "Vernacular Buildings," in Diane Maddex, ed. Built in the U. S. A.: American Buildings from Airports to Zoos (Washington, D.C.: Preservation Press, 1985), pp. 167-68.



needs for housing created by the dynamic and unpredictable swings in the United States economy that yielded urban dislocation and disintegration in the early decades of the twentieth century. The distillation of the experiences of urban reformers, garden suburb planners and designers, model developers, and social theorists into schematic form, the neighborhood unit plan, created a minimal but flexible solution that could be applied universally. By using this notion of community and architectural idioms that bespoke continuity to bring a measure of control to the turbulence of market forces, developers also embedded dense layers of social meaning within their communities on the ground.



Map 1. Detroit and the Brightmoor area, including the Ford Homes, Dearborn. (Courtesy of the Burton Historical Collection, Detroit Public Library.)

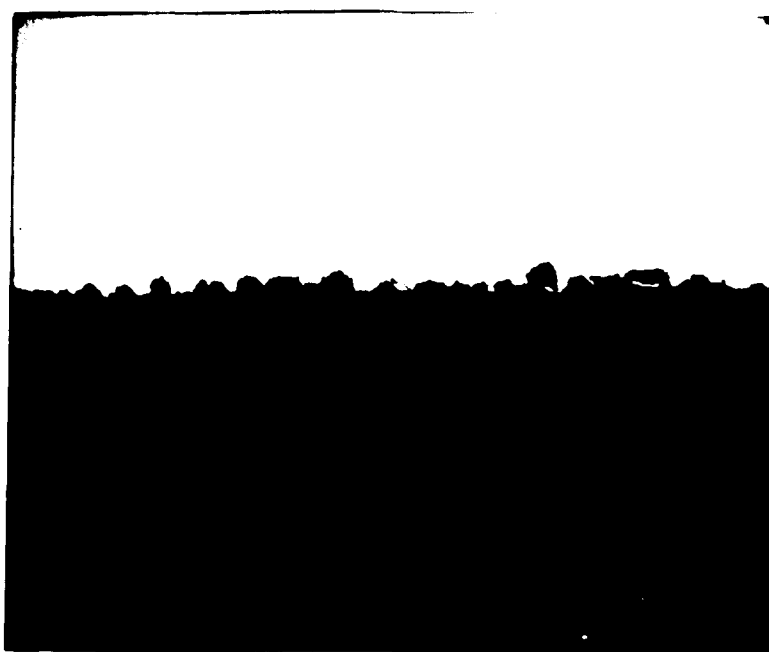


Figure 1. View of early stage of construction, Ford Homes. (Courtesy of the Archives and Library, Henry Ford Museum and Greenfield Village.)



Figure 2. Model A, Ford Homes. (Courtesy of the Archives and Library, Henry Ford Museum and Greenfield Village.)



Figure 3. Model A, Ford Homes. (Courtesy of the Archives and Library, Henry Ford Museum and Greenfield Village.)



Figure 4. Model B, Ford Homes. (Courtesy of the Archives and Library, Henry Ford Museum and Greenfield Village.)



Figure 5. Model C, Ford Homes. (Courtesy of the Archives and Library, Henry Ford Museum and Greenfield Village.)

---



Figure 6. Model E, Ford Homes. (Courtesy of the Archives and Library, Henry Ford Museum and Greenfield Village.)





Figure 7. Model F, Ford Homes. (Courtesy of the Archives and Library, Henry Ford Museum and Greenfield Village.)



Figure 8. Model D, Ford Homes. (Courtesy of the Archives and Library, Henry Ford Museum and Greenfield Village.)



Figure 9. Typical bathroom, Ford Homes. (Courtesy of the Archives and Library, Henry Ford Museum and Greenfield Village.)



Figure 10. Typical living room, Ford Homes. (Courtesy of the Archives and Library, Henry Ford Museum and Greenfield Village.)



Figure 11. Typical kitchen, Ford Homes. (Courtesy of the Archives and Library, Henry Ford Museum and Greenfield Village.)

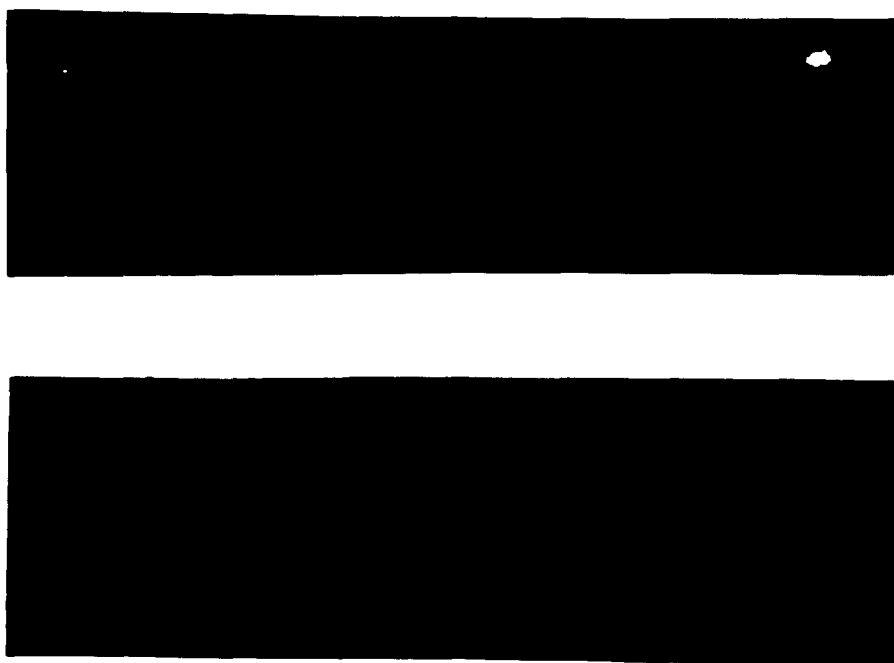


Figure 12. Brightmoor streets. (From Building Age, April 1924.)



Figure 13. Living room, Brightmoor. (From Building Age, April 1924.)



Figure 14. Bedroom, Brightmoor. (From Building Age, April 1924.)





Figure 15. Sitting room, Brightmoor. (From Building Age, April 1924.)



Figure 16. Kitchen, Brightmoor. (From Building Age, April 1924.)

---



Figure 17. Kitchen, Brightmoor. (From Building Age, April 1924.)

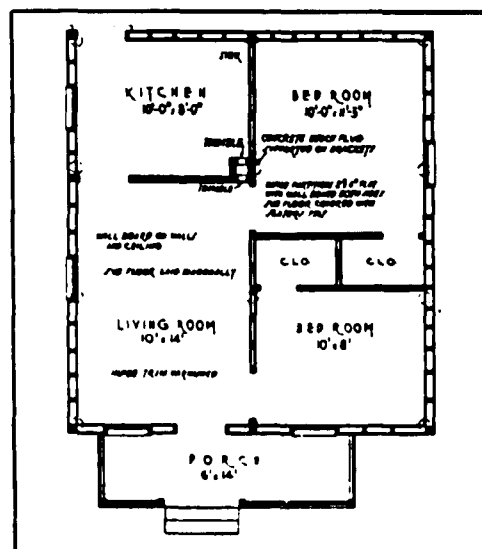


Figure 18. Model 614, Brightmoor. (From Building Age, April 1924.)

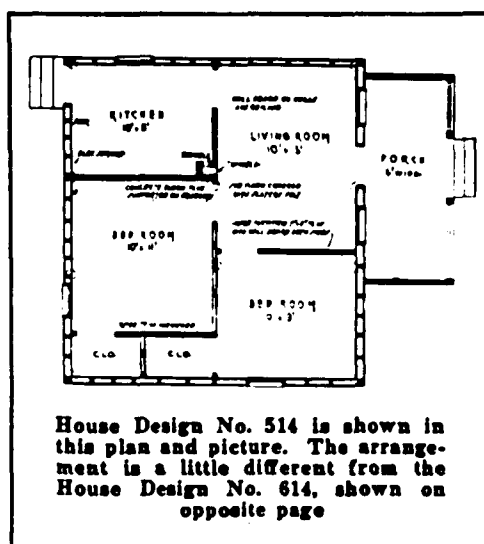


Figure 19. Model 514, Brightmoor. (From Building Age, April 1924.)

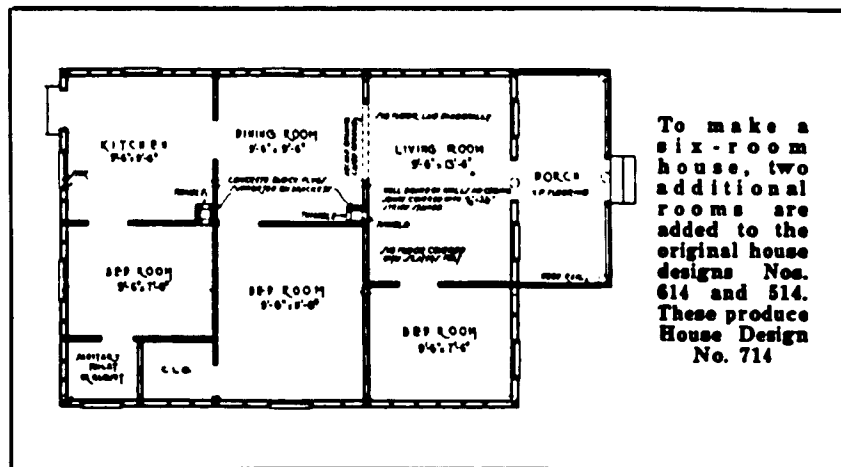


Figure 20. Plan of model 714, Brightmoor. (From Building Age, April 1924.)



Figure 21. Hollybush house, 1949, photographed in 1979. (From Charles E. Martin, Hollybush: Folk Buildings and Social Change in an Appalachian Community (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1984), p. 58.)

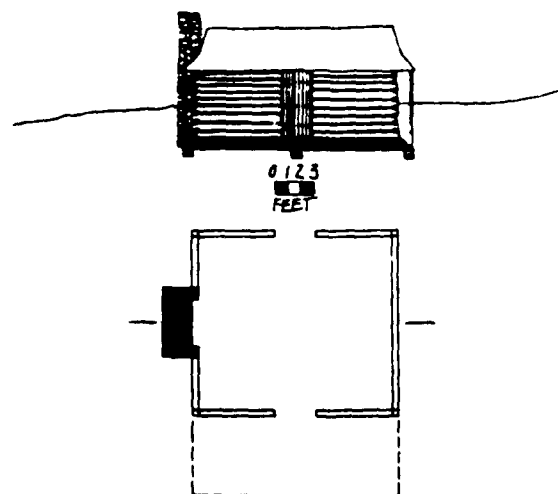
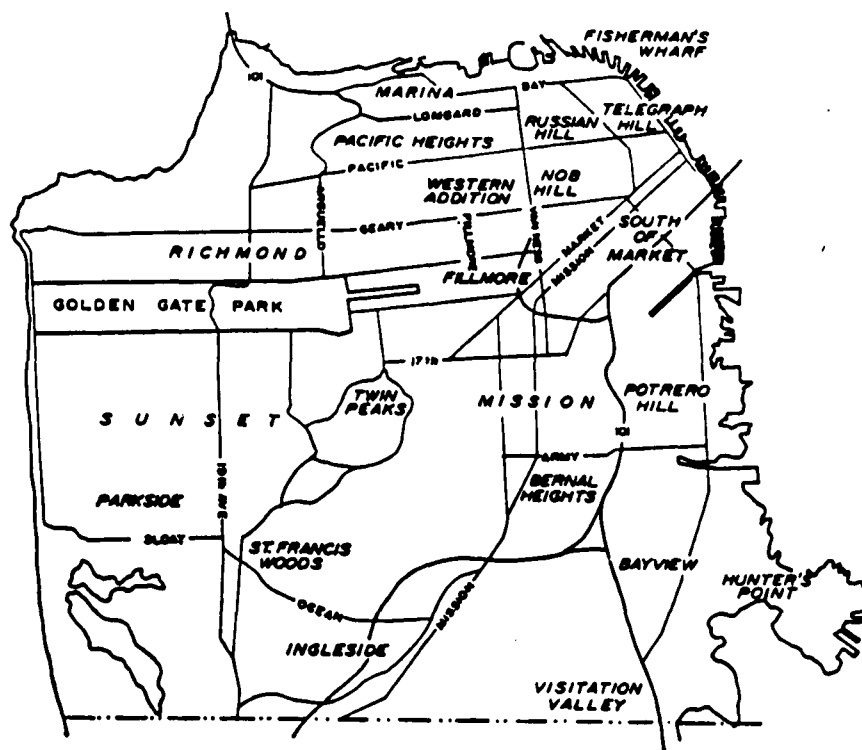


Figure 22. Elevation and plan of 1915 Hollybush house.  
(From Martin, Hollybush, p. 43.)

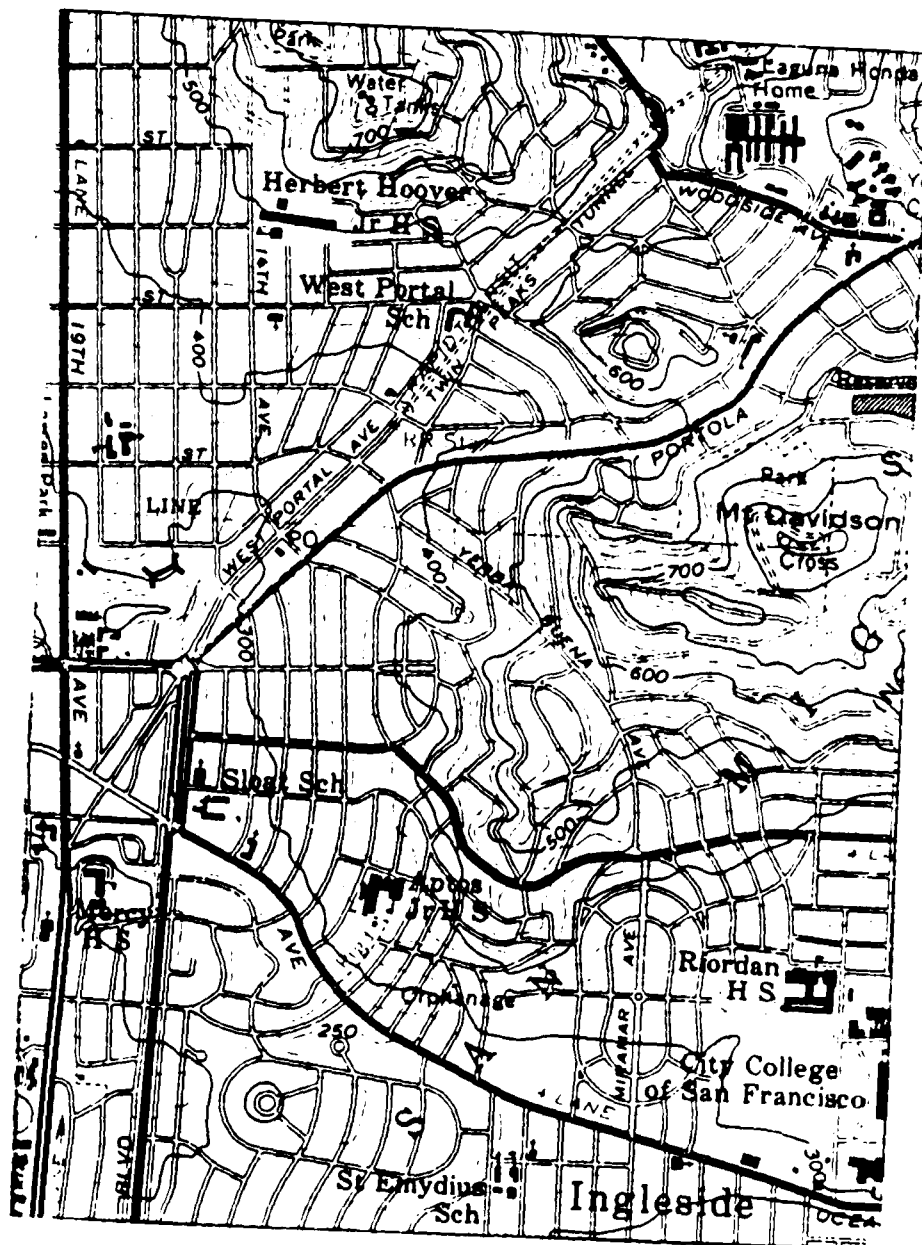




Map 2. San Francisco Districts. (From Frederick M. Wirt, Power in the City: Decision-making in San Francisco (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1974).)



Map 3. Woodcrest. (Courtesy of James M. Hughes.)



Map 4. Topography and street plan of the West of Twin Peaks district, San Francisco. (From United States Department of the Interior, Geological Survey, 1956, revised 1980.)

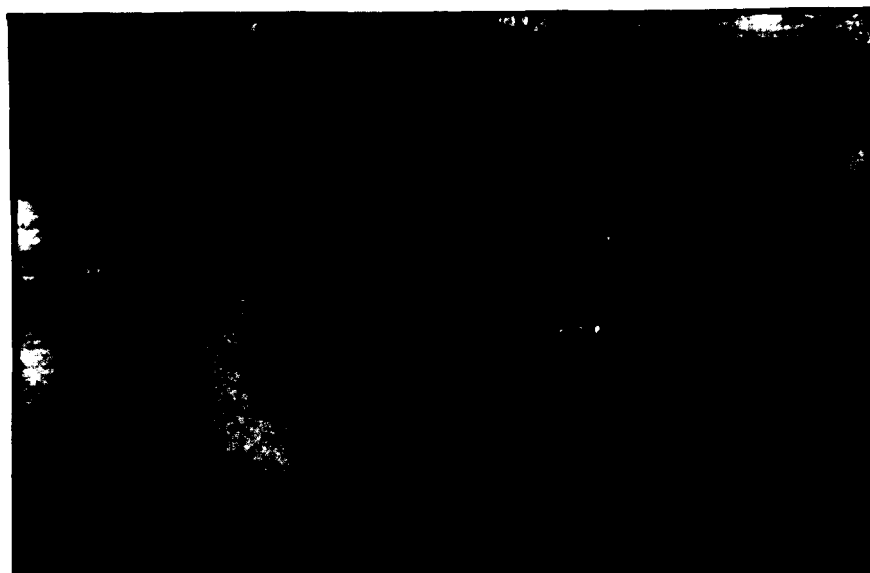


Figure 23. Woodcrest features. (Courtesy of James M. Hughes.)



Figure 24. Westwood Park entrance. (Author.)



Figure 25. Westwood Highlands sign. (Author.)



*Our Best Advertisement is —*

### WESTWOOD HIGHLANDS

Better than pages of printed claims are the hundreds of modern, artistic, well planned and beautifully built homes that comprise not only "Westwood Park" (now all sold out), but also "Westwood Highlands," most popular of moderately priced Home Tracts in all San Francisco.

*Large Lots—none less than 40 feet front*  
*Planning—exclusive—the work of Charles Bevington*  
*Ideal Floor Plans—the result of careful planning*  
*Sound Construction—built to a standard, not a price*  
*Lawns and Flowers—included with every home*  
*Roadless Transportation—by car and automobile*  
*Moderate Prices—much less than it would cost you to build such a home*  
*Easy Terms—Modern Cash Payment and Terms for Rent*

All of these important details are represented by the slogan:  
**"Built By NELSON BROS."**

Home buyers are welcome at "Westwood Highlands" at all times. It makes no difference whether you are contemplating the immediate purchase of a home or not. Come out and look around and ask no questions. "Home Building" is our hobby. We are always glad to give home seekers useful and helpful information without any obligation on their part.

**NELSON BROS.**  
 510 MONTEBELLO BUILDING      PHONE BANCROFT 1191

Figure 26. Nelson Bros. advertisement. (From Home Design and Garden Beautiful, March 1925, courtesy of Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley.)



Figure 27. 185 Westwood, Westwood Park, under construction. (Courtesy of James M. Hughes.)





Figure 28. 591 Wildwood, Westwood Park, under construction. (Courtesy of James M. Hughes.)

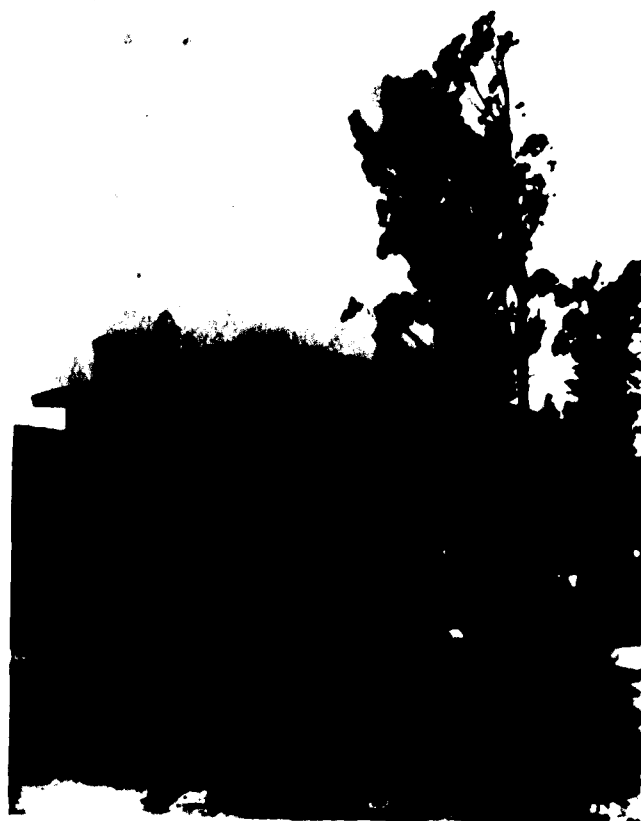


Figure 29. 25 Northwood, Westwood Park, under construction. (Courtesy of James M. Hughes.)



Figure 30. 1550 and 1566 Plymouth, Westwood Park, under construction. (Courtesy of James M. Hughes.)



Figure 31. Two-module type, Ridgewood between Joost and Mangels, Westwood Highlands. (Author.)



Figure 32. Two-module type, Brentwood between Hazelwood and Mangels, Westwood Highlands. (Author.)



Figure 33. Two-and-a-half-module type, Yerba Buena between Brentwood and Hazelwood, Westwood Highlands. (Author.)



Figure 34. Three-module type, 725 Mangels, Westwood Highlands. (Author.)



Figure 35. Three-module type, 812 and 806 Monterey,  
Westwood Highlands. (Author.)





Figure 36. Three-module type, 870 Joost, Westwood Highlands. (Author.)

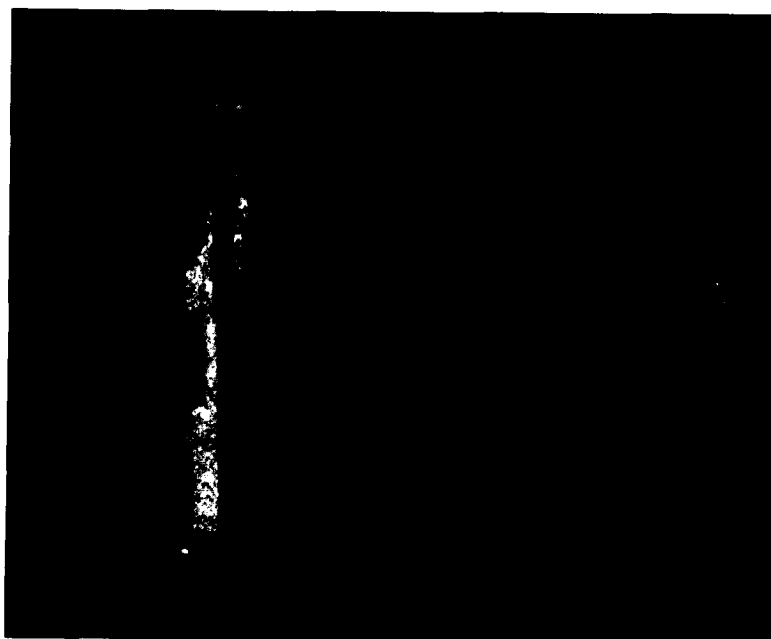


Figure 37. Three-module type, 335 Valdez, Westwood Highlands. (From Building Age, February 1927.)

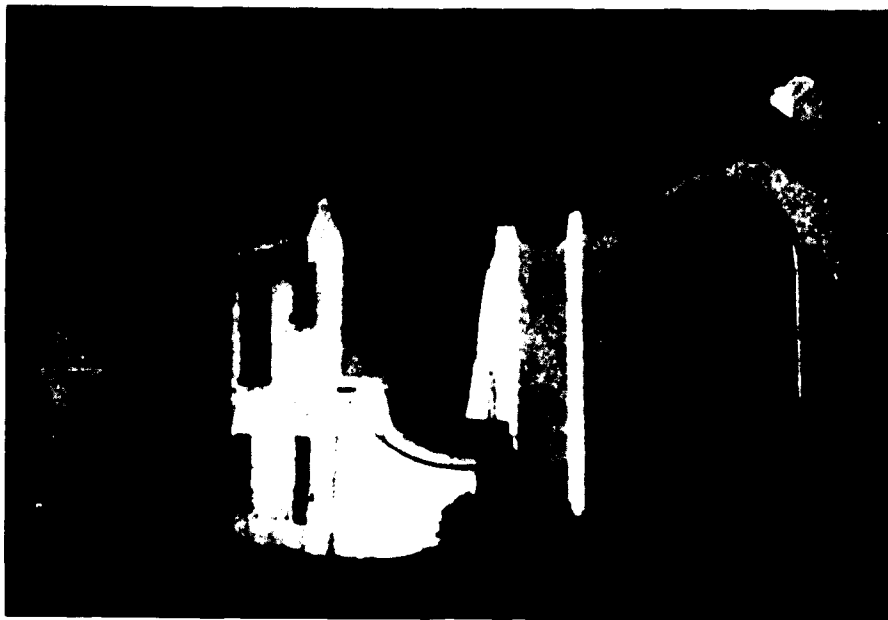


Figure 38. Three-module type, 325 Colon, Westwood Highlands. (From Building Age, February 1927.)



Figure 39. Three-and-a-half-module type, Colon between Monterey and Mangels, Westwood Highlands. (Author.)



Figure 40. Three-module type, Hazelwood between Brentwood and Mangels, Westwood Highlands. (Author.)

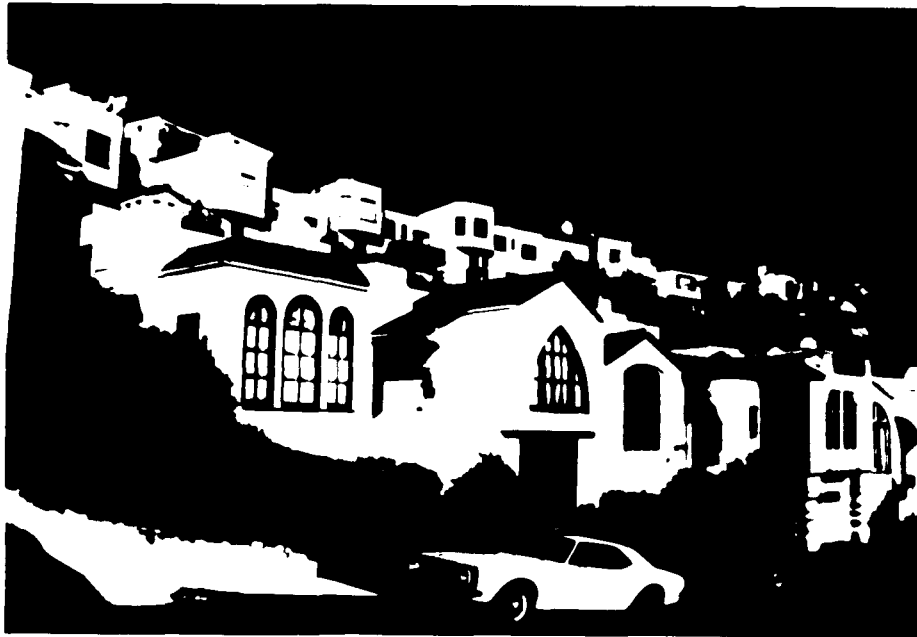


Figure 41. Three-module type, Hazelwood between Los Palms and Brentwood, Westwood Highlands. (Author.)



Figure 42. Three-module type, 1611 Plymouth, Westwood Highlands. (Author.)



Figure 43. Four-module type, Yerba Buena between Monterey and Brentwood, Westwood Highlands. (Author.)





Figure 44. Four-module type, Hazelwood between Yerba Buena and Brentwood, Westwood Highlands. (Author.)



Figure 45. Four-module type, Yerba Buena between Brentwood and Hazelwood, Westwood Highlands. (Author.)

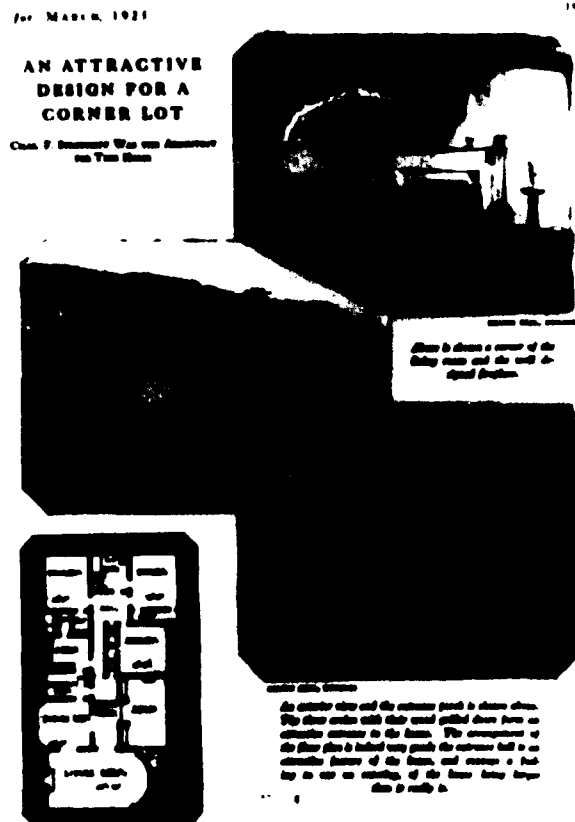


Figure 46. 944 Monterey, Westwood Highlands. (From Home Design and Garden Beautiful, March 1925, courtesy of Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley.)



Figure 47. 950 Monterey, Westwood Highlands.  
(Author.)



Figure 48. Corner house at the intersection of Hazelwood and Brentwood, Westwood Highlands. (Author.)



Figure 49. Corner house at 250 Hazelwood, northeast corner, Westwood Highlands. (Author.)



Figure 50. Corner house at 248 Hazelwood, southeast corner, Westwood Highlands. (Author.)

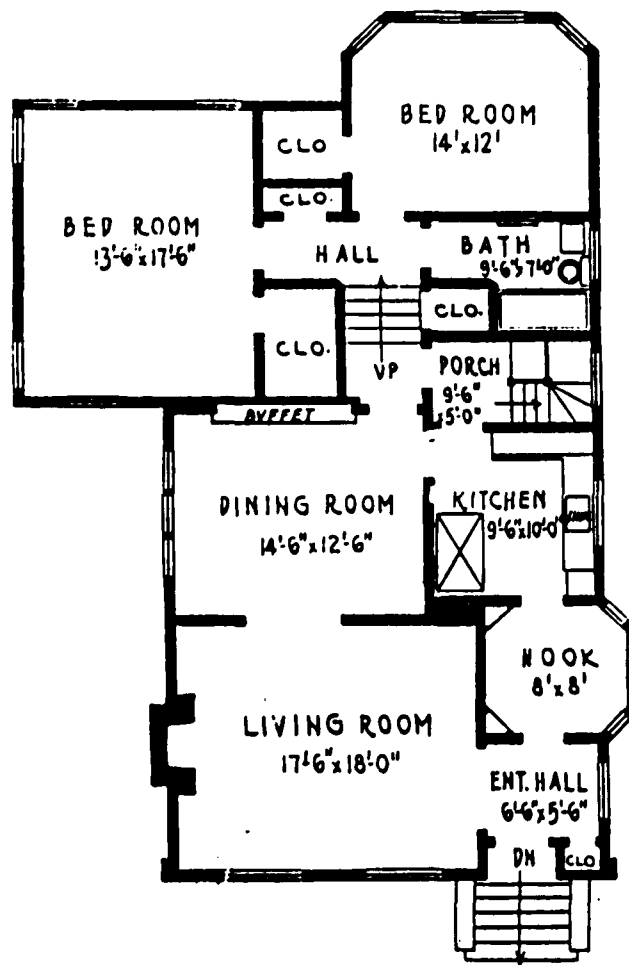
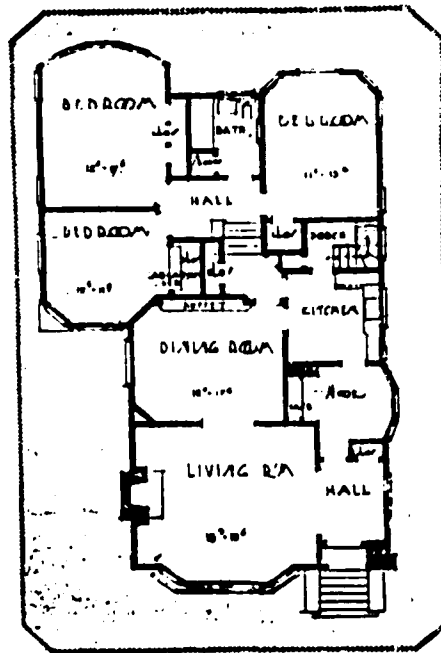
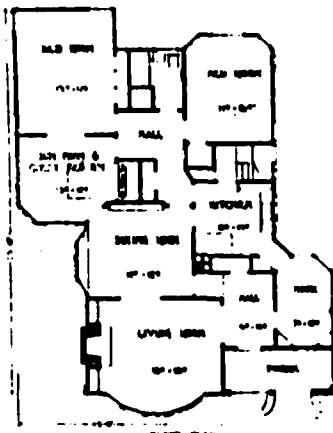


Figure 51. Two-bedroom plan, Westwood Highlands.  
(From Building Age, February 1927.)





### *Nelson Bros. build with Ad-A-Room Beds*



Western Highlands Residence for  
Mr. W. M. Mendenhall  
Chas. F. Sirois, Architects  
Nelson Brothers, Builders

This floor plan is typical of 12 residences under construction by Nelson Brothers in Western Highlands, San Francisco.

These homes represent the latest ideas in home designing. One feature has proven very popular—the combination sun room and guest bedroom. The guest bedroom, while indispensable in a home, is used only occasionally. In these homes the housewife has the use of this room during the day. It is furnished as a sun room and makes a pleasant room in which to rest and read or sew; or it may be furnished as a library, radio den or nursery, yet when guests arrive it is available as a bedroom.

The designing of these two rooms in one was made possible through the use of an AD-A-ROOM BED—the modern guest bedroom. During the day the bed is in the closet, concealed by a door, turning the door brings the bed into the room, adding the bedroom.

Just think what this feature adds to these homes—an extra room without the cost of building and furnishing.

Can we give you additional information about the AD-A-ROOM BED?

**MARSHALL & STEARNS COMPANY**  
OFFICE AND DISPLAY ROOM, PHelan BUILDING, SAN FRANCISCO  
OAKLAND DISPLAY ROOM, 411 19TH STREET

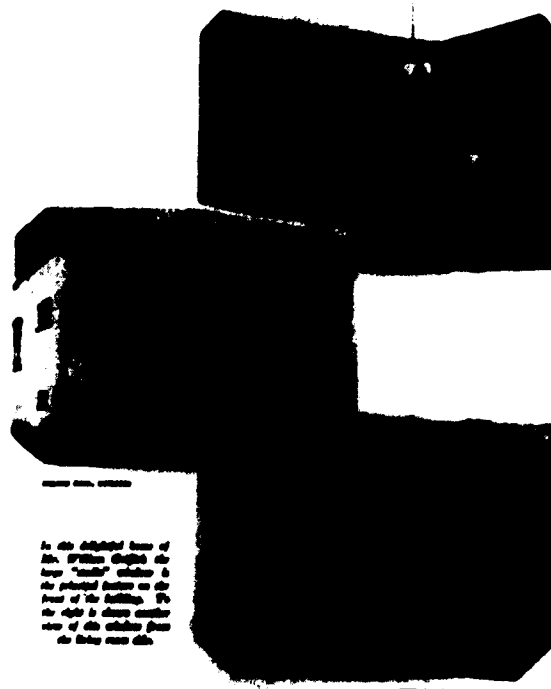
Figure 52. Three-bedroom plans: a) and b) expanded.  
(From Home Design and Garden Beautiful, March 1925,  
courtesy of Bancroft Library, University of California,  
Berkeley.)



Figure 53. Interior, Westwood Highlands. (From Building Age, February 1927.)

for MARCH 1925

194



**A MODERN HOME IN WESTWOOD  
HIGHLANDS**

Figure 54. 225 Valdez, Westwood Highlands, including interior views. (From Home Design and Garden Beautiful, March 1925, courtesy of Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley.)



Figure 55. Interior, 944 Monterey, Westwood Highlands. (From Home Design and Garden Beautiful, March 1925, courtesy of Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley.)

Figure 55. Interior, 944 Monterey, Westwood Highlands.  
(From Home Design and Garden Beautiful, March 1925,  
courtesy of Bancroft Library, University of California,  
Berkeley.)

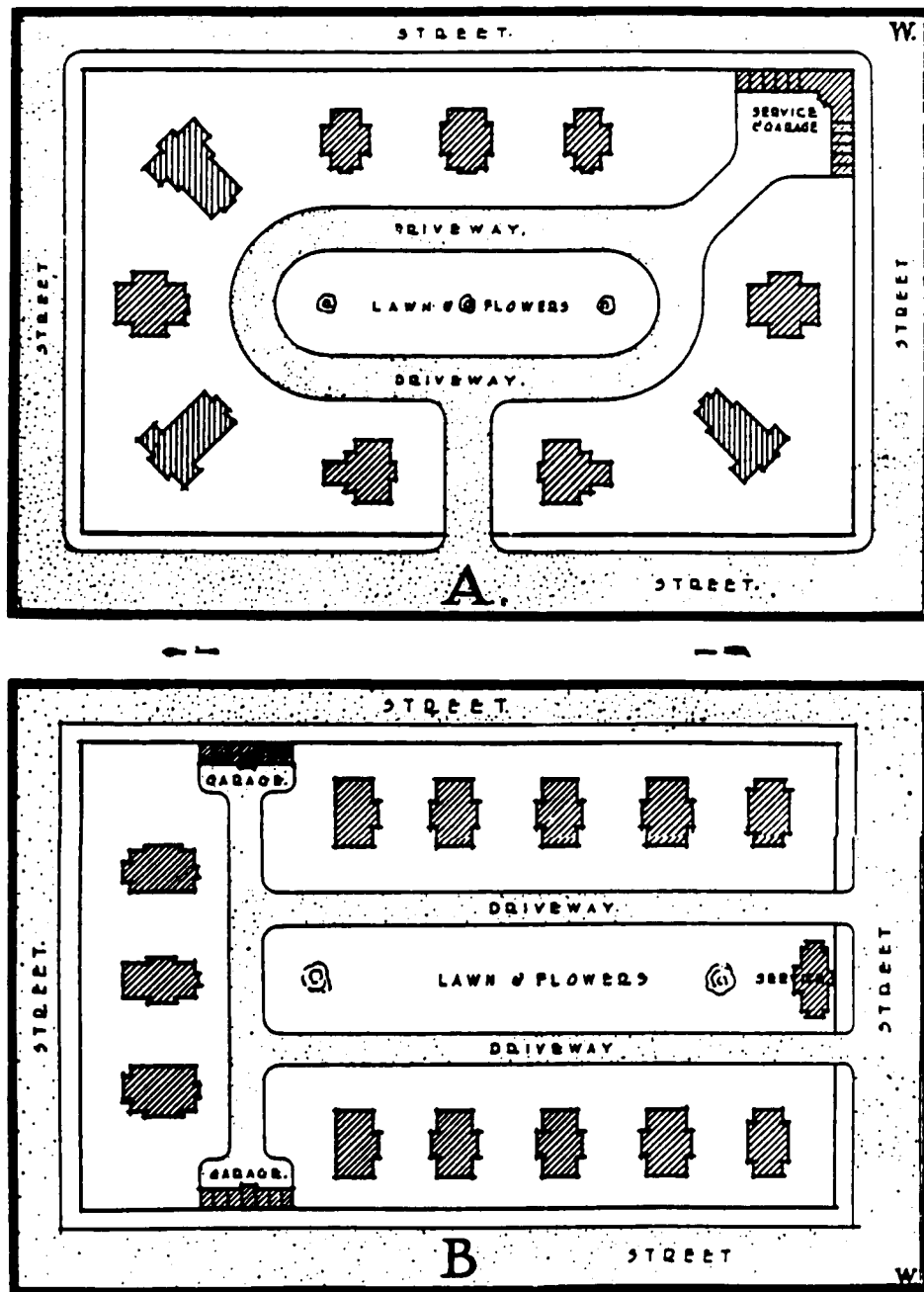


Figure 56. Community scheme from Albert Wood, Community Homes. (Courtesy of the family of Albert Wood.)

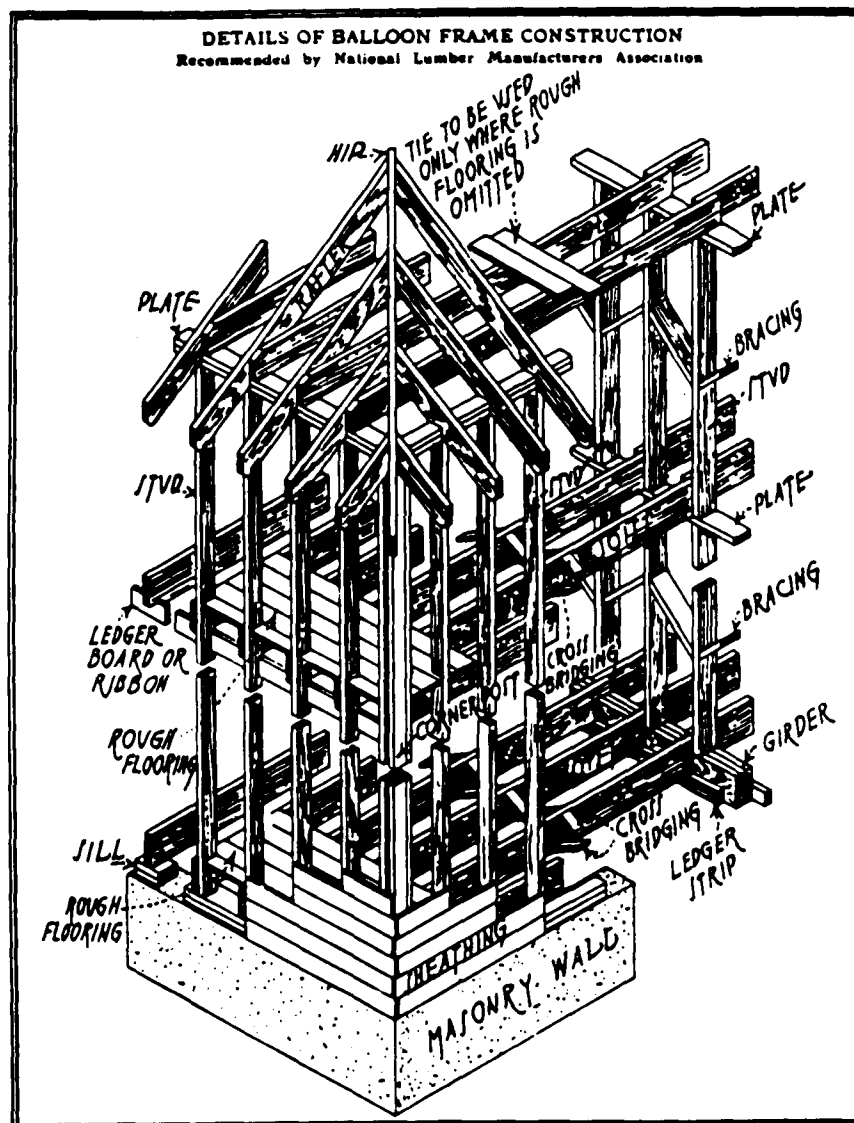
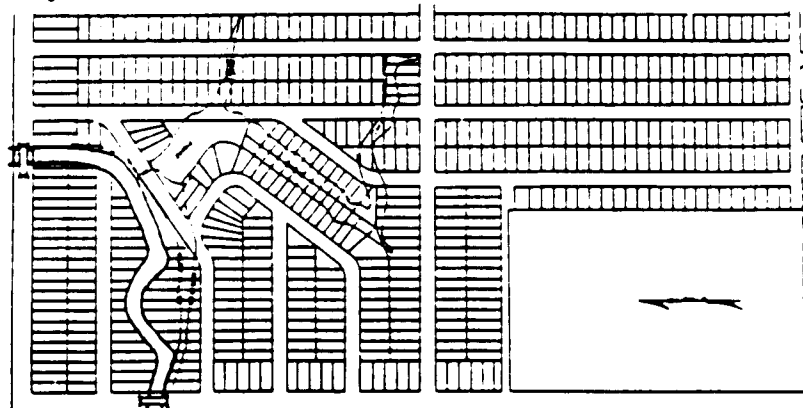


Figure 57. Details of balloon frame construction.  
(From Building Age, April 1923.)

An illustration of how I saved 2,000 feet of selling frontage — a minimum value of \$100,000.00 for the M. S. Ramsayer Company, one of the largest builders of homes and subdivision operators in Toledo.

Mr. Ramsayer called me into consultation on Plat No. 1, after a comprehensive study of the property I designed for his company. Plat No. 2 with a saving of \$100,000 in selling frontage with only a slight additional expense for the development.



My Office renders a complete Landscape Engineering service, beginning with the design, site and record plans, topographical surveys, establishment of grades, planning storm drains, sanitary sewers and water systems, ornamental lighting, entrance ways, sales contracts, and restriction deeds.

For the purpose of expert advice and guidance to our clients, I have compiled a complete record of all legal decisions relating to restrictions and zoning of land.

I have designed and developed a great many large subdivisions throughout the United States and in constant consultation on many others. I have saved Thousands of Dollars in selling frontage for my clients.

We render the highest standard of service. Every man associated on my staff is an expert. My fees are moderate, will consider lots in trade for service.

Write me freely regarding your problems

**JOHN J. WATSON,** Landscape Architect and Engineer 619-624 Gardner Bldg., Toledo, Ohio

Members of the National Real Estate Board, American Association of Engineers, American Conference on City Planning

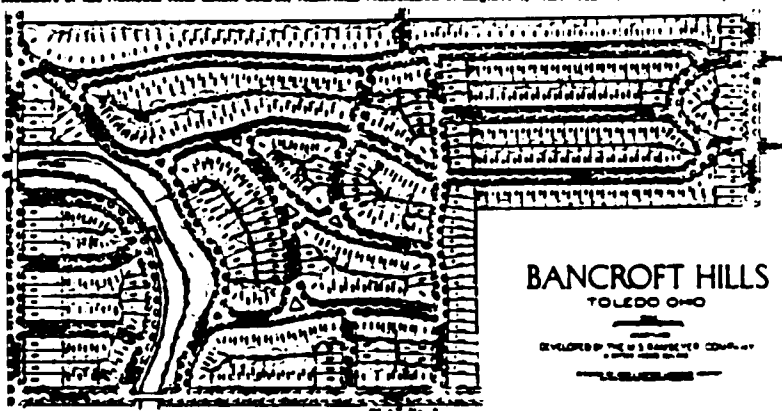
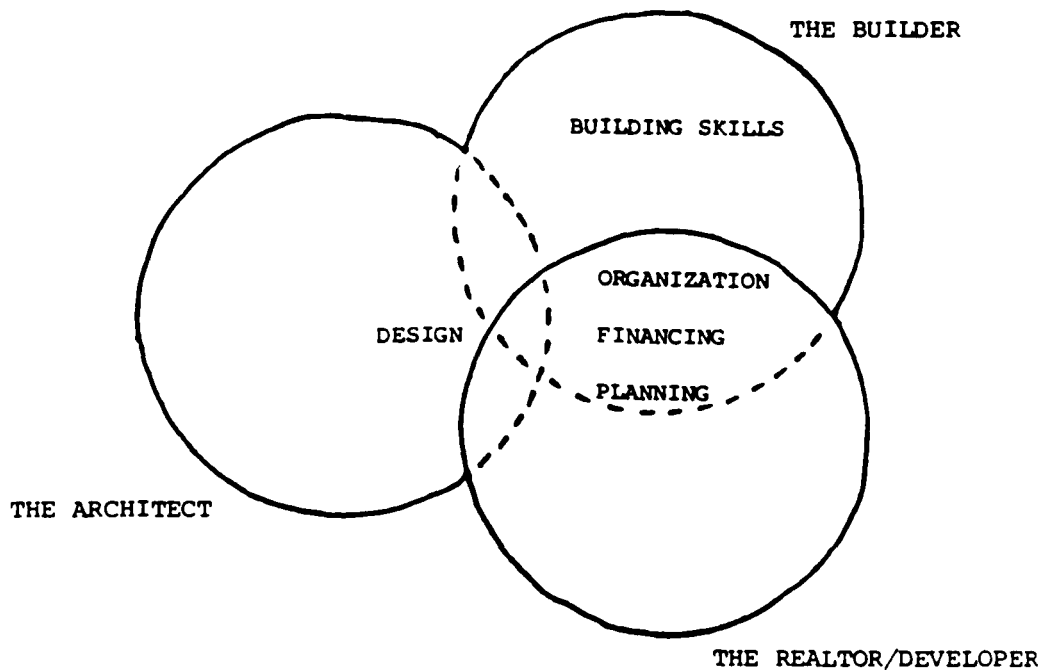


Figure 58. Advertisement for subdivision layout.  
(From National Real Estate Journal, 12 March 1923.)



The broken lines and overlapping spheres suggest the redistribution of activities during the late 19th and early 20th centuries:

The builder no longer contributes significantly to the design, overall conception, or organization of the project. Manual labor remains.

The architect assumes control, under the direction of the developer, over design. The builder, formerly engaged in design activities, no longer plays an active role.

The tasks of planning, financing and organizing the project, formerly seen to by the builder, are assumed by the realtor, who also approves the design.

|                    | <u>Architect</u>  | <u>Builder</u>                                | <u>Realtor/Developer</u>                |
|--------------------|-------------------|-----------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------|
| Ford Homes         | Albert Wood       | Ford Motor Co.<br>laborers                    | Dearborn Realty and<br>Construction Co. |
| Brightmoor         | none              | building work-<br>ers contracted<br>by Taylor | B. E. Taylor                            |
| Westwood Highlands | Charles Strothoff | Hans Nelson                                   | Baldwin and Howell                      |

Figure 59. Distribution of roles among architects, builders, and realtor/developers. (Author.)



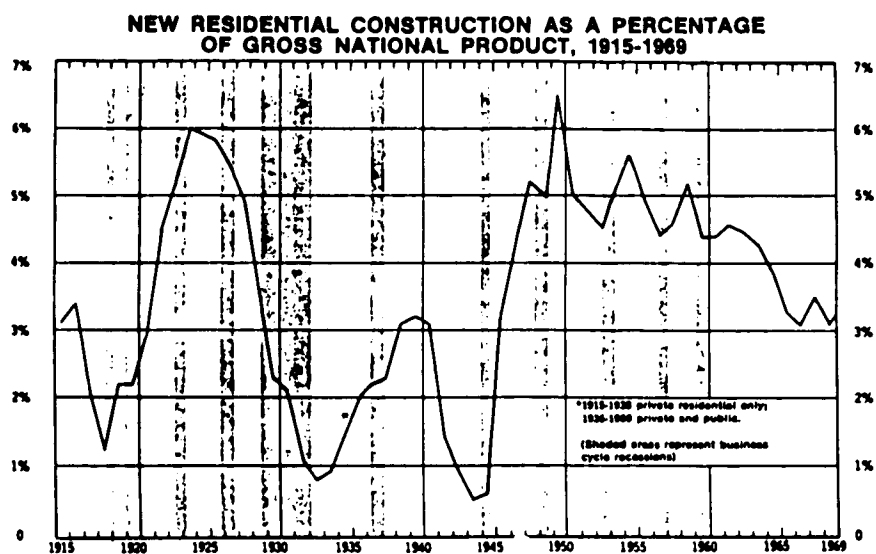


Figure 60. Graphic analysis of the construction curve in the 1920s. (From Michael Sumichrast, Profile of the Builder and His Industry (Washington, D.C.: National Association of Home Builders, 1970).)

## A new Declaration of Independence Own your Home



Rent your Home and be raised  
by the Landlord

Own your Home and  
raise your family

Figure 61. "Own Your Home." (From Building Age, June 1920.)

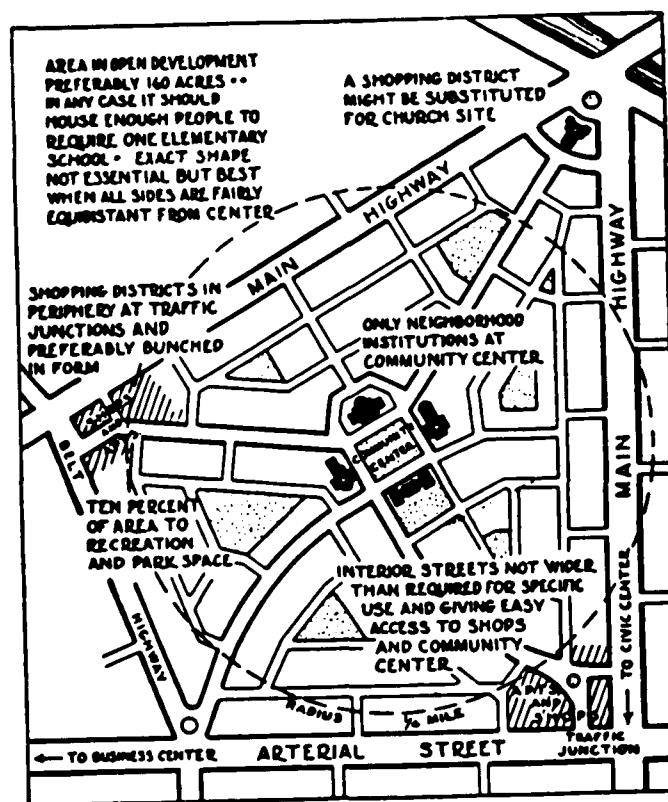


Figure 62. Clarence A. Perry's neighborhood unit plan. (From Clarence A. Perry, "The Neighborhood Unit," in Regional Plan of New York and Its Environs, vol. 7: Neighborhood and Community Planning (New York: Regional Plan of New York and Its Environs, 1929).)

### SELECTED BIBLIOGRAPHY

In addition to citations of significant individual articles, the following periodicals are valuable sources for materials on the period of the 1920s:

Architect and Engineer, San Francisco  
Architectural Forum, Boston  
Architectural Record, New York  
Building Age, New York  
Building Review, San Francisco (1919-1923)  
Home Designer and Garden Beautiful, Oakland, Calif. (1921-1928)  
Keith's Magazine on Home Building, Minneapolis  
Michigan Architect and Engineer, Detroit  
National Real Estate Journal, Cedar Rapids, Iowa  
Pacific Coast Architect, San Francisco (1924-1929)  
Western Architect, Minneapolis

Because of the geographical focus of Part 1, the selected bibliography that follows is organized according to four sections: Brightmoor and the Detroit Metropolitan Area; The Ford Homes, Dearborn; Westwood Highlands and San Francisco; and Agency, Form, and Meaning. Within each section, entries are divided into the categories of "Period Materials" and "Secondary Works."

#### Brightmoor and the Detroit Metropolitan Area

##### Period Materials

Akers, Elmer. Southern Whites in Detroit. Ann Arbor: University Microfilms, 1979 (originally published 1937, publisher unknown).

Beynon, Erdmann. "The Southern White Laborer Migrates to Michigan." American Sociological Review 3 (June 1938):333-43.

Brightmoor Community Center, Inc. Brightmoor. A Community in Action. Detroit: Brightmoor Community Center, Inc., 1940.

- Burton, Clarence M., ed. The City of Detroit. 5 vols. Detroit: S. J. Clarke Publishing Co., 1922.
- Carey, John W. "A History of the Brightmoor Community Center." M.A. thesis, University of Notre Dame, 1941.
- Citizens Research Council of Michigan. A Social Study of Brightmoor, A Community of Detroit. Report no. 19. Detroit: Wayne University School of Public Affairs and Social Work, 1941.
- Hecock, Donald S., and Trevelyan, Harry A. Detroit Voters and Recent Elections. Detroit: Bureau of Governmental Research, Inc., School of Public Affairs and Social Work, Wayne University, 1938.
- Jackson, H. C. L. "Building a Bungalow City in 18 Months." Building Age (April 1924):83-88.
- Insurance Maps of Detroit, Michigan. New York: Sanborn Map Co., 1926.
- Michigan State Planning Commission. A Study of Subdivision Development in the Detroit Metropolitan Area. Lansing: Michigan Planning Commission, 1939.
- Miscellaneous documents, Brightmoor clipping file, Burton Historical Collection, Detroit Public Library.
- "More Brightmoor Homes Planned." Detroit Free Press, 13 January 1924, p. 3, real estate section.
- Personal communications from Mr. Burt Eddy Taylor, Jr., 1985, 1986.
- Plat books, Wayne County Real Estate Index Department, City-County Building, Detroit.
- Polk's Redford, Brightmoor and Rosedale Park Directory. Detroit: R. L. Polk and Co., 1925.
- "7,149 Persons in Brightmoor," Detroit Free Press, 13 April 1924, p. 3, section 6.
- Upson, Lent D. The Growth of the City Government. Detroit: Detroit Bureau of Governmental Research, 1931.
- Wilson, Leonard S. "Functional Areas of Detroit 1890-1933." Papers of the Michigan Academy of Science, Arts and Letters 22 (1936):397-409.

## Secondary Works

- DesAutels, Fred. Redford Township: Its Heritage and Its History. N. p., 1975.
- "Detroit Plans Its Future." American Society of Planning Officials Newsletter. 19 (October 1953):73-84.
- Ferry, W. Hawkins. The Buildings of Detroit: A History. Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1968.
- Glazer, Sidney. Detroit: A Study in Urban Development. New York: Bookman Associates, 1965.
- Jackson, Kenneth T. "Detroit: The Write-in Challenge." In The Ku Klux Klan in the City, 1915-1930, pp. 127-43. New York: Oxford University Press, 1967.
- Levine, David A. Internal Combustion: The Races in Detroit 1915-1926. Westport, Ct.: Greenwood Press, 1976.
- Schramm, Jack E.; Henning, William M.; and Dworman, Thomas J. Detroit's Street Railways, 1922-1956. Chicago: Central Electric Railfans' Association, 1980.
- Vinyard, JoEllen McNergney. "The Changing Face of Inequality: An Interview with the Author." Detroit in Perspective 6 (Fall 1982):1-20.
- Zunz, Olivier. The Changing Face of Inequality: Urbanization, Industrial Development and Immigrants in Detroit, 1880-1920. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1982.
- \_\_\_\_\_. "Neighborhoods, Homes and the Dual Housing Market." Michigan History 66 (November/December 1982):33-41.

## The Ford Homes, Dearborn

### Period Materials

- "Builders with Brains Plus Courage Create an Ideal Colony for Workers." Dearborn Independent, 6 December 1919, pp. 8-9.
- "The Call of a Cozy Home." Ford News, 1 November 1920, p. 5.
- Dearborn Realty and Construction Company records, Accessions 33, 47, and 306, Ford Archives, The Edison Institute, Henry Ford Museum and Greenfield Village.

"Ford Builds Model Homes to House Workers in Dearborn."  
Detroit Journal, 21 July 1919, p. 2.

Ford, Henry. Ford Ideals: Being a Selection from "Mr. Ford's Page" in The Dearborn Independent. Dearborn, Mich.: Dearborn Publishing Co., 1926.

Liebold, E. G. The Reminiscences of E. G. Liebold. Oral History Section, Ford Archives, The Edison Institute, Henry Ford Museum and Greenfield Village.

Personal communication from Mr. M. Wood, 1987.

Reminiscences of Harry C. Vicary. Dearborn Historical Society. (Transcript of interview conducted by Donald V. Baut, 1969.)

Sinclair, Upton. The Flivver King: A Story of Ford-America. Detroit: United Auto Workers, and Pasadena: author, 1937.

"Standard of Living of Employees of Ford Motor Co. in Detroit." Monthly Labor Review 30 (1930):1209-52.

Wood, Albert G., Jr. Community Homes. By the Author, 1918.

#### Secondary Works

Dymski, Gary. "Ford Homes." Dearborn Historical Society. (Typewritten.)

Gnau, Tara B. "School Sketches, Part III: DuVall School." Dearborn Historian 17 (Autumn 1977):126.

Good, David L. "The Ford Homes." 1975. Dearborn Historical Society. (Typewritten.)

Hatch, Jean H. "A Capsule History of Dearborn." Dearborn Historian 11 (Autumn 1971):127-34.

Meyer, Stephen, III. The Five-Dollar Day: Labor, Management, and Social Control in the Ford Motor Company, 1908-1921. Albany: State University of New York Press, 1981.

Nevins, Allan, and Hill, Frank Ernest. Ford: Expansion and Challenge, 1915-1933. New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1957.

Oldenburg, Joseph. "Ford Homes Historic District." Dearborn Historian 20 (Spring 1980):31-50.

Wamsley, James S. American Ingenuity: Henry Ford Museum and Greenfield Village. New York: Harry N. Abrams, 1985

Westwood Highlands and San Francisco

Period Material:

"Attractive Bungalows of Moderate Cost for Westwood Park."  
San Francisco: Baldwin and Howell, 1917.

Bartholomew, Harland. The San Francisco Bay Region: A Statement Concerning the Nature and Importance of a Plan for Future Growth. San Francisco: Regional Plan Association of the San Francisco Bay Counties, 1925.

Battu, Z. A. "Merchanising Services Homes." Building Age. (February 1927):110-12, 153.

Duell, Prentice. "The New Era of California Architecture: II, San Francisco." Western Architect 32 (November 1923):126-28.

Glunk, F. J. "Westwood Park and Westwood Highlands." Home Designer and Garden Beautiful (March 1925):194-96, 203.

Hubbard, Anita Day. "Cities Within the City." San Francisco Bulletin 12, 13 September 1924.

Johnson, Reginald D. "Development of Architectural Styles in California." Architect and Engineer (October 1926):108-9.

King, Margaret Goddard. "The Growth of San Francisco, Illustrated by Shifts in the Density of Population." M.A. thesis, University of California, Berkeley, 1928.

Morrow, Irving F. "George F. Babbitt Looks at California Houses." Architect and Engineer (May 1927):39-44.

Personal communication and miscellaneous records from Mr. James Hughes, San Francisco, 1987.

Ryan, Frederick L. Industrial Relations in the San Francisco Building Trades. Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1935.

"Steady Growth of San Francisco Shown by Home Sales -- West of Twin Peaks is Found Attractive to the Average Family." San Francisco Chronicle, 6 September 1924, p. 10.

"Twin Peaks Bore Opened for Regular Traffic: First Car Over Line Greeted by Thousands." San Francisco Examiner, 4 February 1918, p. 11.



"Westwood Park Building Up Solid." San Francisco Chronicle, 19 January 1924, p. 7.

The Wilmerding School of Industrial Arts. Berkeley: The University Press, 1901.

#### Secondary Works

Bloomfield, Anne. "The Real Estate Associates: A Land and Housing Developer of the 1870s in San Francisco." Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians 37 (March 1978):13-33.

Bowden, Martyn John. "The Dynamics of City Growth: An Historical Geography of the San Francisco Central District 1850-1931." Ph.D. dissertation, University of California, Berkeley, 1967.

Corbett, Mario. "The California House: Through the Evolution of California Architecture." 1977. Environmental Design Library, University of California, Berkeley. (Typewritten.)

Gregory, Daniel. "Be It Ever So Humble: The Impact of the Merchant-Builder/Developer on the Evolution of Housing in the Bay Area 1850-1979." Berkeley: Department of Architecture, University of California, 1979.

Hansen, Gladys. San Francisco Almanac: Everything You Wanted to Know About the City. San Rafael, Calif.: Presidio Press, 1980.

Harmon, Robert. The "Instant City" -- San Francisco's Architectural Heritage: A Selected Bibliography. Monticello, Ill.: Vance Bibliographies, 1981.

Issel, William, and Cherny, Robert W. San Francisco, 1865-1932: Politics, Power and Urban Development. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1986.

Kahn, Judd. Imperial San Francisco: Politics and Planning in an American City, 1897-1906. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1979.

Kazin, Michael. Barons of Labor: The San Francisco Building Trades and Union Power in the Progressive Era. Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1987.

Kirker, Harold. California's Architectural Frontier: Style and Tradition in the Nineteenth Century. San Marino, Calif.: 1960; reprint ed. Santa Barbara and Salt Lake City: Peregrine Smith, 1973.

- \_\_\_\_\_. "California Architecture and Its Relation to Contemporary Trends in Europe and American." California History Quarterly 51 (1972):289-305.
- Knight, Robert. Industrial Relations in the San Francisco Bay Area, 1900-1918. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1960.
- Lewis, Oscar. San Francisco: Mission to Metropolis. Berkeley: Howell-North Books, 1966.
- McGloin, John Bernard, S. J. San Francisco. The Story of a City. San Rafael, Calif.: Presidio Press, 1978.
- Moudon, Anne Vernez. Built for Change: Neighborhood Architecture in San Francisco. Cambridge: MIT Press, 1986.
- Scott, Mel. The San Francisco Bay Area: A Metropolis in Perspective. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1959.
- Starr, Kevin. Americans and the California Dream. New York: Oxford University Press, 1973.
- \_\_\_\_\_. Inventing the Dream: California through the Progressive Era. New York: Oxford University Press, 1985.
- Tygiel, Jules. "Workingmen in San Francisco 1880-1901." Ph.D. dissertation, University of California, Los Angeles, 1977.
- Vance, James E., Jr. Geography and Urban Evolution in the San Francisco Bay Area. Berkeley: Institute of Governmental Studies, University of California, 1964.
- Woodbridge, Sally B., ed. Bay Area Houses. New York: Oxford University Press, 1976.
- Woodbridge, Sally, and Woodbridge, John M. Architecture San Francisco: The Guide. San Francisco: American Institute of Architects, San Francisco Chapter/101 Productions, 1982.

### Agency. Form and Meaning

#### Period Materials

- Abrams, Charles. Revolution in Land. New York: Harper and Bros., 1939.
- Allen, Edith Louise. Mechanical Devices in the Home. Peoria, Ill.: Manual Arts Press, 1922.

- \_\_\_\_\_. American Housing as Affected by Social and Economic Conditions. Peoria, Ill.: Manual Arts Press, 1930.
- Andrews, Benjamin R. Economies of the Household: Its Administration and Finance. New York: Macmillan, 1923.
- Atterbury, Grosvenor. "Model Towns in American." Scribner's Magazine 52 (July 1912):20-35.
- Bauer, Catherine. Modern Housing. Boston and New York: Houghton Mifflin, 1934.
- Bennett, Charles A. History of Manual and Industrial Education, 1870 to 1917. Peoria, Ill.: Manual Arts Press, 1937.
- Better Homes in America. Guidebook for Better Homes Campaigns, 1930. Washington, D.C.: Better Homes in America, Inc., 1929.
- Bodfish, H. M. History of Building and Loan in the United States. Chicago: 1931.
- Brown, Nelson C. The American Lumber Industry. New York: John Wiley and Sons, 1923.
- Bushnell, C. J. "Community Center Movement as a Moral Force." International Journal of Ethics 30 (April 1920):326-35.
- Comey, Arthur. "Plans for an American Garden Suburb." American City (July 1914).
- Compton, Wilson. The Organization of the Lumber Industry. Chicago: American Lumberman, 1916.
- Conference on Unemployment, Washington D.C. 1921, Committee on Seasonal Operation in the Construction Industries. Seasonal Operation in the Construction Industries. New York: McGraw-Hill, 1924.
- Depew, Chauncey M., ed. One Hundred Years of American Commerce. 2 vols. New York: D. O. Haynes and Co., 1895.
- Elliot, E. G. S. "American Housing Before the New Deal." Town Planning Review (June 1935):247-53.
- Encyclopedia of the Social Sciences, 1934. "Suburbs," by Harlan Paul Douglass.
- Fisher, E. M. Real Estate Subdividing Activity and Population Growth in Nine Urban Areas. Michigan Business Studies, vol. 1. Ann Arbor: 1928.

- \_\_\_\_\_. "Speculation in Suburban Lands." American Economic Review 23 (March 1933):152-62 (supplement).
- Gleason, Arthur. "Houses: The Need." Nation 110 (17 April 1920):511-13.
- Gries, John M., and Ford, James, eds. Planning for Residential Districts. President's Conference on Home Building and Home Ownership, vol. 1. Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1932.
- \_\_\_\_\_. Home Finance and Taxation. President's Conference on Home Building and Home Ownership, vol. 2. Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1932.
- \_\_\_\_\_. Home Ownership, Income and Types of Dwellings. President's Conference on Home Building and Home Ownership, vol. 4. Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1932.
- \_\_\_\_\_. House Design, Construction and Equipment. President's Conference on Home Building and Home Ownership, vol. 5. Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1932.
- \_\_\_\_\_. Housing and the Community -- Home Repair and Remodeling. President's Conference on Home Building and Home Ownership, vol. 8. Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1932.
- \_\_\_\_\_. Household Management and Kitchens. President's Conference on Home Building and Home Ownership, vol. 9. Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1932.
- \_\_\_\_\_. Homemaking, Home Furnishing and Information Services. President's Conference on Home Building and Home Ownership, vol. 10. Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1932.
- \_\_\_\_\_. Housing Objectives and Programs. President's Conference on Home Building and Home Ownership, vol. 11. Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1932.
- Haber, William. Industrial Relations in the Building Industry. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1930.
- Halbert, Blanche, ed. The Better Homes Manual. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1931.
- Hamlin, Talbot Faulkner. The American Spirit in Architecture. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1926.
- Harmon, William E. "Playgrounds in New Land Subdivisions." City Planning 2 (April 1926).

Holden, Arthur C. The Settlement Idea: A Vision of Social Justice. New York: Macmillan, 1922; reprint ed., New York: Arno Press, 1970.

\_\_\_\_\_. "Outside Business Factors as Competitors of the Architect." Journal of the American Institute of Architects 8 (1925):308-10.

Homes for Workmen. New Orleans: Southern Pine Association, 1919.

Ingalls, A. G. "Camouflage and Carpentry: How the Housing Shortage Has Played into the Open Hand of the Jerry-Builder." Scientific American 129 (August 1923):80-81.

International Labor Office. Housing Situation in the United States. Geneva: International Labor Office, 1925.

James, Harlean. Land Planning in the United States for the City, State, and Nation. New York: Macmillan, 1926.

Jones, Robert T. Authentic Small Houses of the Twenties. 1929; reprint ed., New York: Dover, 1987.

Knowles, Morris. Industrial Housing. New York: McGraw-Hill, 1920; reprint ed., New York: Arno Press, 1974.

Lardner, Ring. Own Your Own Home. Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill, 1919.

Maxwell, W. Floyd. "The Building Industry Since the War." Review of Economic Statistics 13 (May 1931):68-75.

McNitt, Rollin L. "Architectural Control Under the Police Power." Community Builder 1 (January 1928):26-38.

Midas Gold. New York: Butterick Publishing Co., 1925.

Mumford, Lewis. "The Wilderness of Suburbia." New Republic 28 (7 September 1921):44-5.

\_\_\_\_\_. "The City." In Civilization in the United States: An Inquiry by Thirty Americans, pp. 3-20. Edited by Harold E. Stearns. New York: 1922.

Murphy, John J.; Wood, Edith Elmer; and Ackerman, Frederick J. The Housing Famine: How to End It. New York: Dutton, 1920.

National Lumber Manufacturers Association. High Lights of a Decade of Achievement. N.p., 1929.

Newcomb, Rexford. The Spanish House for America. Philadelphia: Lippincott, 1927.

- \_\_\_\_\_. Mediterranean Domestic Architecture in the United States. Cleveland: J. H. Jansen, 1928.
- Nichols, Jesse Clyde. "Housing and the Real Estate Problem." In Housing and Town Planning. Philadelphia: American Academy of Political and Social Sciences, 1914.
- \_\_\_\_\_. Real Estate Subdivisions. Washington, D.C.: American Civic Association, 1916.
- Perry, Clarence A. Wider Use of the School Plant. New York: Russell Sage Foundation, 1910.
- \_\_\_\_\_. Ten Years of the Community Center Movement. New York: Russell Sage Foundation, 1921.
- \_\_\_\_\_. "The Local Community as a Unit in the Planning of Urban Residential Areas." In The Urban Community, pp. 238-41. Edited by Ernest W. Burgess. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1926.
- \_\_\_\_\_. "The Neighborhood Unit." In Regional Survey of New York and Its Environs, vol. 7. New York: 1929.
- \_\_\_\_\_. "Neighborhood Planning for Better Living." Building Age (February 1930):42-3, 94.
- \_\_\_\_\_. Housing for the Machine Age. New York: Russell Sage Foundation, 1939.
- "The Planned Community." Architectural Forum 58 (April 1933):253-74.
- "Portrait of a Salesman: Jesse Clyde Nichols." National Real Estate Journal 40 (February 1939):18-23, 76.
- Sexton, Randolph W. Spanish Influence on American Architecture and Decoration. New York: Brentano's, 1927.
- Taylor, Graham R. Satellite Cities: A Study of Industrial Suburbs. New York: D. Appleton and Co., 1915.
- Tylor, W. Russell. "The Neighborhood Unit Principle in Town Planning." Town Planning Review 18 (July 1939):174-86.
- United States Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census, 15th Census, 1930. Construction Industry. Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1933.
- United States Department of Commerce, Division of Building and Housing, Bureau of Standards. How to Own Your Home. Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1923.

United States Federal Housing Administration. The Structure and Growth of Residential Neighborhoods in America. Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1939.

Weitenkampf, Frank. "Art and Architecture After the War, A List of References." Architectural Record 46 (November 1919):485-89.

Whitten, Robert. A Research into the Economics of Land Subdivision. With Particular Reference to a Complete Neighborhood Unit for Low or Medium Cost Housing. Syracuse, N.Y.: School of Citizenship and Public Affairs, Syracuse University, 1927.

Wood, Edith Elmer. Recent Trends in American Housing. New York: Macmillan, 1931.

Yeomans, Alfred. City Residential Land Development. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1916.

Zanesville, Ohio and Thirty-Six Other American Communities. New York: R. O. Eastman, Inc., 1927.

#### Secondary Works

Abrams, C. "The Residential Construction Industry." In The Structure of American Industry. Edited by Walter Adams. New York: Macmillan, 1950.

Adams, Frederick, and Hodge, Gerald. "City Planning Instruction in the United States: The Pioneering Days, 1900-1930." Journal of the American Institute of Planners 31 (1965):43-51.

Adams, J. S. "Residential Structure of Midwestern Cities." Annual of the Association of American Geographers 60 (1970):37-62.

Allen, F. L. "The Big Change in Suburbia, Part 1." Harper's Magazine 208 (June 1954):21-8.

Ashton, Patrick J. "Toward a Political Economy of Metropolitan Areas." M.A. thesis, Michigan State University, 1975.

Axelrod, Alan, ed. The Colonial Revival in America. New York: W. W. Norton, 1985.

Barrows, Robert G. "Beyond the Tenement: Patterns of American Urban Housing, 1870-1930." Journal of Urban History 9 (August 1983):395-420.

- Blau, Judith R.; LaGory, Mark E.; and Pipkin, John S., eds. Professionals and Urban Form. Albany: State University of New York Press, 1983.
- Boyer, Christine. Dreaming the Rational City: The Myth of American City Planning. Cambridge: MIT Press, 1983.
- Braeman, John; Bremner, Robert H.; and Brody, David, eds. Change and Continuity in Twentieth-Century America: The Twenties. Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 1968.
- Bronner, Simon J. "Manner Books and Suburban Houses." Winterthur Portfolio 18 (Spring 1983):61-68.
- Callow, Alexander B., Jr., ed. American Urban History: An Interpretative Reader with Commentaries. 3rd ed. New York: Oxford University Press, 1982.
- Chambers, Clarke. Seedtime of Reform: American Social Service and Social Action, 1918-1933. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1963.
- Christie, Robert. Empire in Wood: A History of the Carpenter's Union. Cornell Studies in Industrial and Labor Relations, vol. 7. Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1956.
- Chudacoff, Howard P. The Evolution of American Urban Society. 2nd ed. Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, 1981.
- Ciucci, G.; et al. The American City From the Civil War to the New Deal. Cambridge: MIT Press, 1979.
- Clark, Clifford Edward, Jr. The American Family Home. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1986.
- Clark, Simon, and Ginsberg, Norman. "Political Economy of Housing." Kapitalstate 4/5 (1976).
- Cohn, Jan. The Palace or the Poorhouse: The American House as a Cultural Symbol. East Lansing: Michigan State University Press, 1979.
- Colean, Miles. American Housing: Problems and Prospects. New York: The Twentieth Century Fund, 1947.
- Cooper, Clare. "The House as Symbol of Self." Working Paper no. 120. Berkeley: Institute of Urban and Regional Development, University of California, 1971.
- Cox, Kevin R., ed. Urbanization and Conflict in Market Societies. Chicago: Maaroufa Press, 1978.



- Craig, Lois. "Suburbs." Design Quarterly 132 (1986): whole issue.
- Dahir, James. The Neighborhood Unit Plan: Its Spread and Acceptance: A Selected Bibliography, with Interpretative Comments. New York: Russell Sage Foundation, 1947.
- Davies, Pearl Janet. Real Estate in American History. Washington, D.C.: Public Affairs Press, 1958.
- Davis, Allen F. Spearheads for Reform: The Social Settlements and the Progressive Movement, 1890-1914. New York: Oxford University Press, 1967.
- Dean, J. P. Home Ownership: Is It Sound?. New York: Harper Bros., 1945.
- Dear, Michael, and Scott, Allen J., eds. Urbanization and Urban Planning in Capitalist Society. New York: Methuen, 1981.
- Dillick, Sidney. Community Organization for Neighborhood Development: Past and Present. New York: William Morrow, 1953.
- Doucet, Michael, and Weaver, John. "The North American Shelter Business, 1860-1920: A Study of a Canadian Real Estate and Property Management Agency." Business History Review 58 (Summer 1984):234-62.
- \_\_\_\_\_. "Material Culture and the North American House: The Era of the Common Man." Journal of American History 72 (1985):560-87.
- Duncan, James S., ed. Housing and Identity: Cross-Cultural Perspectives. New York: Holmes and Meier, 1982.
- Ebner, Michael H. "Re-Reading Suburban America: Urban Population Deconcentration, 1810-1980." American Quarterly 37 (1985):368-81.
- Edel, Matthew; Sklar, Elliott D.; and Luria, Daniel. Shaky Palaces: Homeownership and Social Mobility in Boston's Suburbanization. New York: Columbia University Press, 1984.
- Edwards, Arthur M. The Design of Suburbia: A Critical Study in Environmental History. London: Pembridge Press, 1981.
- Eichler, E. P., and Kaplan, M. The Community Builders. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1967.

- Field, Walker. "A Reexamination into the Invention of the Balloon Frame." Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians 2 (1942):3-29.
- Fisher, Robert. "From Grass-Roots Organizing to Community Service: Community Organization Practice in the Community Center Movement, 1907-1930." In Community Organization for Urban Social Change: A Historical Perspective, pp. 33-58. Edited by Robert Fisher and Peter Romanofsky. Westport, Ct.: Greenwood Press, 1981.
- Fitch, James Marston. American Building: The Historical Forces That Shaped It. 2nd ed. Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1966.
- Foglesong, Richard E. Planning the Capitalist City: The Colonial Era to the 1920s. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1986.
- Frampton, Kenneth. "Industrialization and the Crises in Architecture." Oppositions 1 (1973):57-82.
- Gebhard, David. "Learning from the 1920s -- the Ideals of Romance, Charm, and Personality." Review (School of Architecture, Tulane University) (1984-85):50-55.
- \_\_\_\_\_. "The American Colonial Revival in the 1930s." Winterthur Portfolio 22 (Summer/Autumn 1987):109-48.
- Gillette, Howard P., Jr. "The Evolution of Neighborhood Planning: From the Progressive Era to the 1949 Housing Act." Journal of Urban History 9 (August 1983):421-44.
- Glenn, John M.; Brandt, Lillian; and Andrews, F. Emerson. Russell Sage Foundation 1907-1946. 2 vols. New York: Russell Sage Foundation, 1947.
- Gottdiener, Mark. Planned Sprawl. Private and Public Interests in Suburbia. Beverly Hills and London: Sage Publications, 1977.
- Gowans, Alan. The Comfortable House: North American Suburban Architecture, 1890-1930. Cambridge: MIT Press, 1986.
- Grebler, Leo; Blank, David; and Winnick, Louis. Capital Formation in Residential Real Estate. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1956.
- Gregory, Daniel Platt. "Magazine Modern: A Study of the American Architectural Press, 1919-1930." Ph.D. dissertation, University of California, Berkeley, 1982.

- Hancock, John L. "Planners in the Changing American City, 1900-1940." Journal of the American Institute of Planners 33 (September 1967):290-304.
- Handlin, David P. "The Detached House in the Age of the Object and Beyond." Environmental Design: Research and Practice (Proceedings of the Environmental Design Research Association 3/AR 8 Conference, 1972).
- \_\_\_\_\_. The American Home: Architecture and Society, 1815-1915. Boston: Little, Brown and Co., 1979.
- Harris, Chauncy D. "Suburbs." American Journal of Sociology 49 (July 1943):1-13.
- Harris, Richard, and Hamnett, Chris. "The Myth of the Promised Land: The Social Diffusion of Home Ownership in Britain and North America." Annals of the Association of American Geographers 77 (1987):173-90.
- Harvey, David. "The Urban Process Under Capitalism: A Framework for Analysis." International Journal of Urban and Regional Research 6 (1977):101-31.
- \_\_\_\_\_. "Labor, Capital and Class Struggle Around the Build Environment in Advanced Capitalist Societies." In Urbanization and Conflict in Market Societies, pp. 9-37 Edited by Kevin R. Cox. Chicago: Maanoufa Press, 1978.
- \_\_\_\_\_. The Limits to Capital. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1982.
- \_\_\_\_\_. Consciousness and the Urban Experience: Studies in the History and Theory of Capitalist Urbanization. Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1985.
- \_\_\_\_\_. The Urbanization of Capital: Studies in the History and Theory of Capitalist Urbanization. Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1985.
- Harvey, Thomas. "Mail-Order Architecture in the Twenties." Landscape 25 (1981):1-9.
- Hawley, Amos H. The Changing Shape of Metropolitan America: Deconcentration Since 1920. Glencoe, Ill.: 1956.
- Hutchison, Janet. "The Cure for Domestic Neglect: Better Homes in America, 1922-1935." In Perspectives in Vernacular Architecture II. Edited by Camille Wells. Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 1986.
- Huthmacher, J. Joseph, and Susman, Warren I., eds. Herbert Hoover and the Crisis of American Capitalism. Cambridge, Mass.: Schenkman Publishing Co., 1973.

- Jackson, Kenneth T. Crabgrass Frontier: The Suburbanization of the United States. New York: Oxford University Press, 1985.
- Jakle, John A. "Twentieth Century Revival Architecture and The Gentry." Journal of Cultural Geography 4 (Fall-Winter 1983):28-43.
- Jandl, H. Ward, ed. The Technology of Historic American Buildings: Studies of the Materials, Craft Processes, and the Mechanization of Building Construction. Washington, D.C.: Foundation for Preservation Technology, 1984.
- Johnston, Norman J. "A Preface to the Institute." Journal of the American Institute of Planners 31 (1965):198-209.
- Kemeny, Jim. "Home Ownership and Privatization." International Journal of Urban and Regional Research (September 1980):372-87.
- King, Anthony. "Culture and the Political Economy of Building Form." Habitat International 7 (1983):237-48.
- Kostof, S. The Architect: Chapters in the History of the Profession. New York: Oxford University Press, 1977.
- Krueckenberg, Donald A., ed. The American Planner: Biographies and Recollections. New York: Methuen, 1983.
- \_\_\_\_\_. Introduction to Planning History in the United States. New Brunswick, N.J.: Center for Urban Policy Research, Rutgers University, 1983.
- Lane, Jonathan. "The Period House in the 1920s." Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians (December 1961):169-78.
- Larson, Magali Sarfatti. The Rise of Professionalism: A Sociological Analysis. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1977.
- Leuchtenburg, William E. The Perils of Prosperity, 1914-1932. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1958.
- Lindstrom, Bekka. "Post-Victorian Interiors: Bathrooms." Old-House Journal 15 (November/December 1987):56-61.
- Lipsey, Robert E., and Preston, Doris. Source Book of Statistics Relating to Construction. New York: National Bureau of Economic Research, 1966.

- Lloyd, Craig. Aggressive Introvert: A Study of Herbert Hoover and Public Relations Management 1912-1932. Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 1972.
- Lubove, Roy. The Progressives and the Slums: Tenement House Reform in New York City 1890-1917. Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1962.
- \_\_\_\_\_. Community Planning in the 1920s: The Contribution of the Regional Planning Association of America. Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1963.
- \_\_\_\_\_. The Urban Community: Housing and Planning in the Progressive Era. Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, 1967.
- Luria, Daniel D. "Wealth, Capital and Power: The Social Meaning of Home Ownership." Journal of Interdisciplinary History 7 (Autumn 1976):261-82.
- Machor, James L. Pastoral Cities: Urban Ideals and the Symbolic Landscape of America. Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1987.
- Martin, Charles E. Hollybush: Folk Buildings and Social Change in an Appalachian Community. Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1984.
- McKelvey, Blake. The Emergence of Metropolitan America 1915-1966. New Brunswick, N.J.: Rutgers University Press, 1968.
- Melvin, Patricia Mooney. The Organic City: Urban Definition and Community Organization 1880-1920. Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 1987.
- Mooney, Booth. Builders for Progress. The Story of the Associated General Contractors of America. New York: McGraw-Hill, 1965.
- Moore, Charles W.; Smith, Kathryn; and Becker, Peter, eds. Home Sweet Home: American Domestic Vernacular Architecture. Los Angeles: Craft and Folk Art Museum, and New York: Rizzoli, 1983.
- Mumford, Lewis. City Development: Studies in Disintegration and Renewal. New York: Harcourt, Brace and World, 1945.
- \_\_\_\_\_. "The Neighborhood and the Neighborhood Unit." Town Planning Review 24 (1954):256-70.
- Myers, Richard R. "The Building Workers, A Study of an Industrial Sub-Culture." Ph.D. dissertation, University of Michigan, 1945.

- \_\_\_\_\_. "Inter-Personal Relations in the Building Industry." Applied Anthropology (Spring 1946).
- O'Connor, Carol A. "Sorting Out the Suburbs: Patterns of Land Use, Class, and Culture." American Quarterly 37 (1985):382-94.
- O'Neal, William B. "Pattern Books in American Architecture 1730-1930." In Palladian Studies in America I: Building by the Book. Edited by Mario di Valmarana. Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1984.
- Perin, Constance. Everything in Its Place: Social Order and Land Use in America. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1977.
- Perloff, Harvey S. "Education of City Planners: Past, Present and Future." Journal of the American Institute of Planners 22 (1956):186-217.
- Quandt, Jean B. From the Small Town to the Great Community: The Social Thought of Progressive Intellectuals. New Brunswick, N.J.: Rutgers University Press, 1970.
- Rachlis, Eugene, and Marqusee, John E. The Land Lords. New York: 1963.
- Reckman, Bob. "Carpentry: The Craft and Trade." In Case Studies on the Labor Process, pp. 73-102. Edited by Andrew Zimbalist. New York: Monthly Review Press, 1979.
- Rhoads, William. "The Colonial Revival and American Nationalism." Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians 35 (December 1976):239-54.
- \_\_\_\_\_. "Roadside Colonial: Early American Design for the Automobile Age, 1900-1940." Winterthur Portfolio 21 (Summer/Fall 1986):133-52.
- Russell, Horace. Savings and Loan Associations. 2nd ed. New York: Matthew Bender and Co., 1960.
- Saint, Andrew. The Image of the Architect. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1983.
- Sakolski, A. M. The Great American Land Bubble: The Amazing Story of Land-Grabbing, Speculations, and Booms from Colonial Days to the Present Time. New York: Harper and Bros., 1932; reprint ed., New York: Johnson Reprint Corp., 1966.
- Sawyers, L. "Urban Form and the Mode of Production." Review of Radical Political Economics 7 (Spring 1975):52-68.

- Saylor, Henry. The A.I.A.'s First Hundred Years. Washington, D.C.: The Octagon, 1957.
- Schnore, Leo F. "The Timing of Metropolitan Decentralization: A Contribution to the Debate." Journal of the American Institute of Planners 25 (November 1959):200-206.
- Schumpeter, Joseph A. "The Decade of the Twenties." American Economic Review 36 (May 1946):1-10.
- Scott, Mel. American City Planning Since 1890. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1969.
- Singleton, Gregory H. "The Genesis of Suburbia: A Complex of Historical Trends." In The Urbanization of the Suburbs, pp. 29-50. Edited by Louis H. Masotti and Jeffrey K. Hadden. Beverly Hills: Sage Publications, 1973.
- Sprague, Paul E. "The Origin of Balloon Framing." Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians 40 (December 1981):311-19.
- Stern, Robert A. M., and Massengale, J. M. "The Angle-American Suburb." Architectural Design 51 (October-November 1981): whole issue.
- Susman, Warren I. "Culture and Civilization: The 1920s." In Culture as History. The Transformation of American Society in the Twentieth Century, pp. 105-21. New York: Pantheon, 1984.
- Sutcliffe, Anthony. Towards the Planned City: Germany, Britain, the United States and France 1780-1914. New York: St. Martin's Press, 1981.
- Teaford, Jon C. "The Suburban Ascendancy, 1910-1940." In City and Suburb: The Political Fragmentation of Metropolitan American 1850-1970, pp. 76-104. Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1979.
- \_\_\_\_\_. The Twentieth-Century American City: Problem, Promise and Reality. Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1986.
- Thorns, David C. Suburbia. London: MacGibbon and Kee, 1972.
- Tobin, Gary A. "Suburbanization and the Development of Motor Transportation: Transportation Technology and the Suburbanization Process." In The Changing Face of the Suburbs, pp. 95-111. Edited by Barry Schwartz. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1976.

- Trolander, Judith Ann. Professionalism and Social Change: From the Settlement House Movement to Neighborhood Centers, 1886 to the Present. New York: Columbia University Press, 1987.
- Tygiel, Jules. "Tramping Artisans: The Case of the Carpenters in Industrial America." Labor History 22 (Summer 1981):348-76.
- United States Congress Subcommittee on Housing and Community Development. Evolution of Role [sic] of the Federal Government in Housing and Community Development. Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1975.
- United States Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census. Historical Statistics of the United States, Colonial Times to 1957. Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1960.
- United States Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census. Housing Construction Statistics, 1889 to 1964. Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1966.
- Upton, Dell. "Traditional Timber Framing." In The Material Culture of the Wooden Age, pp. 35-93. Edited by Brooke Hindle. Tarrytown, N.Y.: Sleepy Hollow Press, 1981.
- \_\_\_\_\_. "Pattern Books and Professionalism: Aspects of the Transformation of Domestic Architecture in America 1800-1860." Winterthur Portfolio 19 (Summer/Autumn 1984):107-50.
- Walker, Richard A. "The Suburban Solution: Urban Geography and Urban Reform in the Capitalist Development of the United States." Ph.D. dissertation, The John Hopkins University, 1977.
- Warner, Sam Bass, Jr. Streetcar Suburbs: The Process of Growth in Boston, 1870-1900. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1978.
- Weiss, Marc A. The Rise of the Community Builders: The American Real Estate Industry and Urban Land Planning. New York: Columbia University Press, 1987.
- Wolf, Peter. Land in America: Its Value, Use and Control. New York: Pantheon, 1981.
- Wright, Gwendolyn. Moralism and the Model Home: Domestic Architecture and Cultural Conflict in Chicago, 1873-1913. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1980.
- \_\_\_\_\_. Building the Dream: A Social History of Housing in America. New York: Pantheon, 1981.



Zaremba, Joseph. Economics of the American Lumber Industry.  
New York: Robert Speller and Sons, 1963.