

Homebuilder's Songbook  
by  
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Bachelor of Science, Urban and Regional Studies  
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Submitted to the Department of Architecture  
in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of

MASTER OF ARCHITECTURE

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ABSTRACT

This thesis considers the potentials of cultural practices in transforming single-family housing in the present-day United States through a series of speculative designs. An archival assemblage documenting historical modifications to houses, along with music and other cultural artifacts, forms the working material for these speculations.

In examining the role architects have played in imaging the single-family house, this thesis first explores a paper trail of pattern books, catalogs, and manuals. This lineage of disseminated media shows how designers have continually recast the house in response to larger social and technological changes through largely consistent representational strategies.

A parallel examination of archives like the Historic American Building Survey demonstrates how communities have continually leveraged accessible building methods to make alterations to their own houses, developing new modes of building and dwelling in what Bell Hooks described as "Architecture as cultural practice."

In the past century, cultures of expertise have driven decisions about housing further and further from those impacted, limiting the cultural reconstruction of housing by its inhabitants. Left unchanged, inherited neighborhoods of single-family dwellings fail to meet the pluralistic needs of the communities left with them, and those excluded from them.

Questioning the architect's historic role in single-family housing, this thesis moves away from the prescriptive format of the catalog and towards a cultural anthology. Architecture can learn from methods of music production and scholarship for their potential to celebrate the subjectivity of voice, acknowledge co-authorship, and reflect cultural diversity. Where the catalog offers the available options, the songbook provides material with which to play. Through design and collaboration with active musicians and songwriters, this thesis speculates as to how architects, as participants and facilitators, might enliven homes with song.

Thesis Supervisor: Ana Miljački  
Professor of Architecture

# HOMEBUILDER'S SONGBOOK

SAMMAY

Thank You

---

*To Ana*

for guiding me from beginning to end.

*To Roi*

for challenging me as a mentor and encouraging me as a friend.

*To Garnette*

for lending a trained ear and remarkable mind.

*To Jack and James*

for giving so much of yourselves to this experiment.

*To Hop, Willo, Justin, Sojung, Silas, Selin, Tristan, Amanda, Lauren and Adriana*  
for helping me through it and humoring me along the way.

*To my mother, father and brothers*

for supporting me in this and everything I do.

*To Sasha*

for making every day worthwhile  
with immeasurable patience, thoughtfulness and generosity.



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# 1 Historical Transformations of the Single-Family House



The House as Disseminated Media

## An Iterative Lineage

The endpaper from Virginia Lee Burton's popular 1942 children's book, *The Little House*, shows a lone house on a hill persisting with the passage of time. With each frame of the illustration, infrastructure and transportation methods change as industrialism rises around the little house. As smog and large towers surround it, the house seems to resist these intrusions with a gentle glow of light. This endpaper summarizes the story of a single, fictional house, but also serves as a fitting encapsulation of the ever presence of the detached, single-family house as a mediated image through the history of the American settler state. Through pattern books, catalogs and field guides, architects have continually recast the house, absorbing different technological, social and infrastructural changes, and rendering it anew through consistent representational strategies.

FIGURE 001  
Virginia Lee Burton,  
*The Little House*,  
Endpaper, 1942.  
(Houghton Mifflin  
Harcourt)

This lineage of print media emerges out of a tradition of architectural books and plates, making its way to America



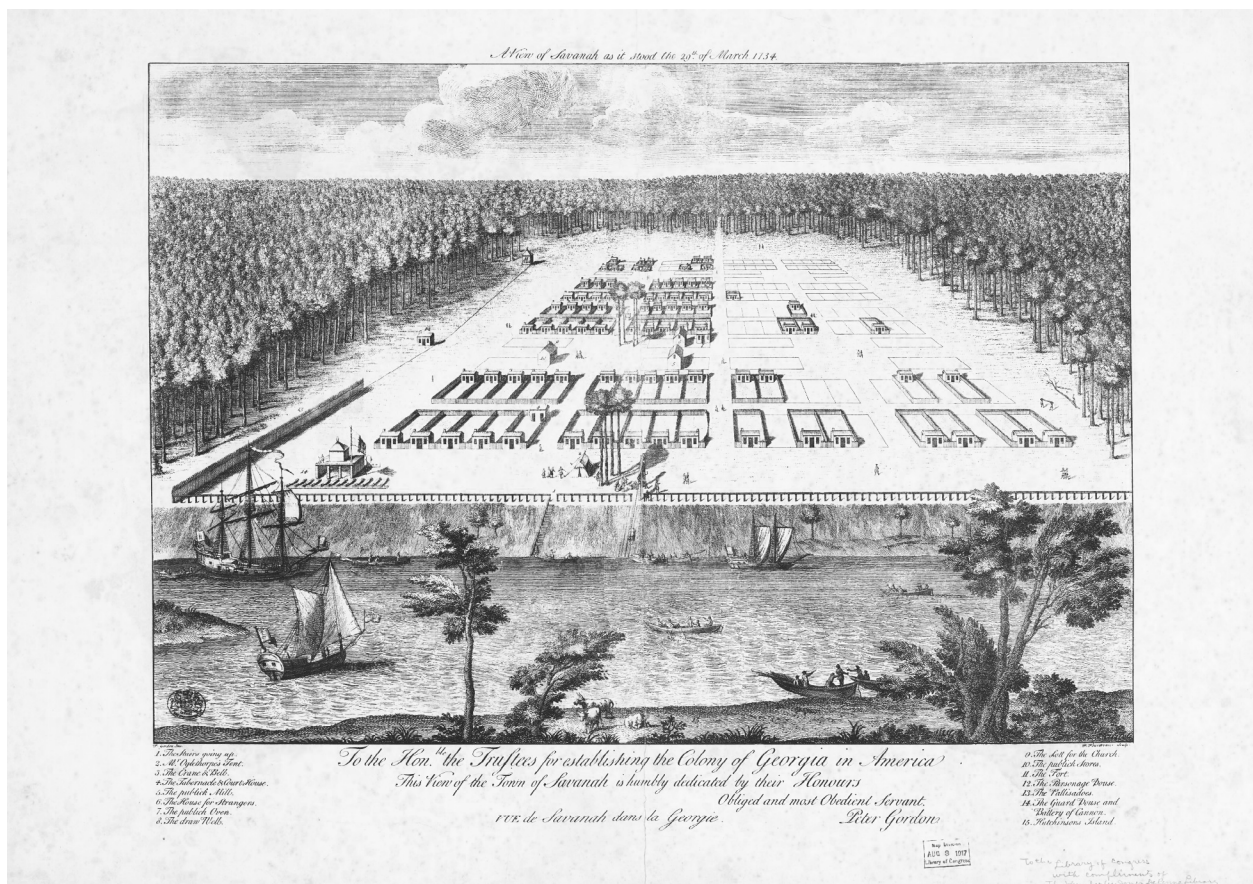


FIGURE 002  
Peter Gordon, A  
view of Savannah as  
it stood the 29th of  
March 1734. (Library  
of Congress Maps  
Division)

via England through the works of Gandy, Ruskin, Stuart and Revett. It was first adopted in the United States by individuals like Asher Benjamin and Andrew Jackson Downing for the publication of house designs appropriate for the newly sovereign state.<sup>1</sup> Over the course of 19th Century, pattern books of houses transformed from a bourgeois exhibition of taste to a means of mass consumption with the development of plans-for-purchase and mail-order housing. Proliferating in the 20th Century, this lineage continues into the digital age with customizable floor plan websites, online shopping and do-it-yourself videos.

## The Westward-Moving House<sup>2</sup>

The institution of single-family housing dates back to the beginnings of English colonial settlement in the present-day United States. One early representation of a neighborhood

FIGURE 003  
Frances Flora Bond  
Palmer, Across the  
Continent. "Westward  
the Course of Empire  
Takes Its Way", 1868.  
(National Gallery of  
Art, Collection of Mr.  
and Mrs. Paul Mellon)

of such houses comes with James Oglethorpe's plan for Savannah, Georgia.<sup>3</sup> In this image, a series of houses and lots form a patterned street grid overlayed over flat ground. This simulated tabula rasa has been carved out of the pine forests of the south Georgia lowcountry. The central axis of its grid cuts into the distance, penetrating a wilderness beyond.

The axis cutting through Oglethorpe's vision of a new colony foreshadows the through lines of road and rail that would eventually continue across the continent in the progressive colonization of the American landscape. The motif of the house would run alongside these lines the whole way, with infrastructures of steam and oil bringing light timber framing to places with no forests of their own. An image of the Anton Smock homestead illustrates this, showing a balloon frame house next to its predecessor, a sod house.<sup>4</sup>



FIGURE 004  
Anton Smock home-  
stead near Oconto,  
Custer County, Ne-  
braska, 1904. (History  
Nebraska, RG2608-  
1265)

FIGURE 005  
(Pages 15-16)  
Collected timeline of  
pattern book housing  
views, by author

FIGURE 006  
(Pages 17-18)  
Colonial to Colonial,  
by author



## Picturesque Abstractions

Though construction methods and dwelling patterns have changed significantly over the past several centuries, free-standing houses have maintained a consistent symbolic importance for white settlers as an expression of constituency, land ownership and individualism. Pattern books, catalogues and field guides have been critical in the maintenance of this symbol. Using these tools, architects have iterated upon the freestanding house and lot, absorbing social and technological change into an increasingly abstracted mode of housing. Borrowing the format of Virginia Lee Burton's endpaper, a timeline of housing illustrations from various US homebuilding publications shows the consistency of this enduring picturesque symbol through the past two centuries. (Following Spread)



1842



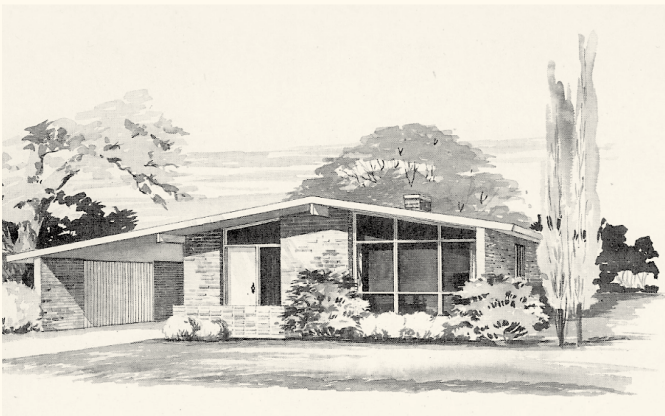
1879



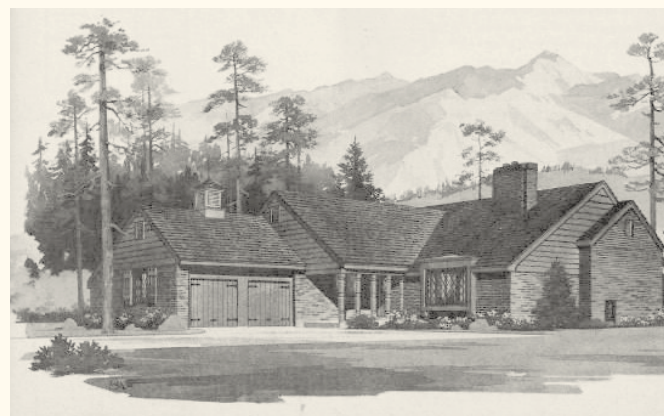
1908



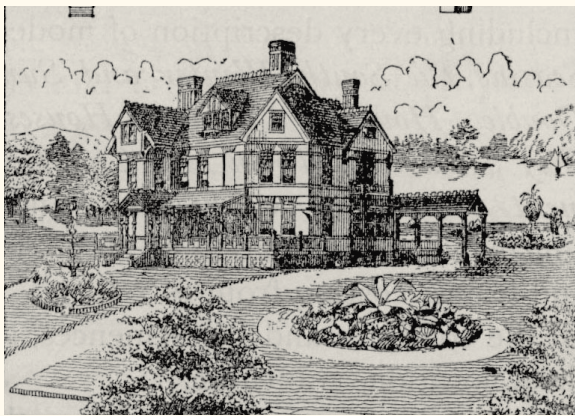
1925



1969

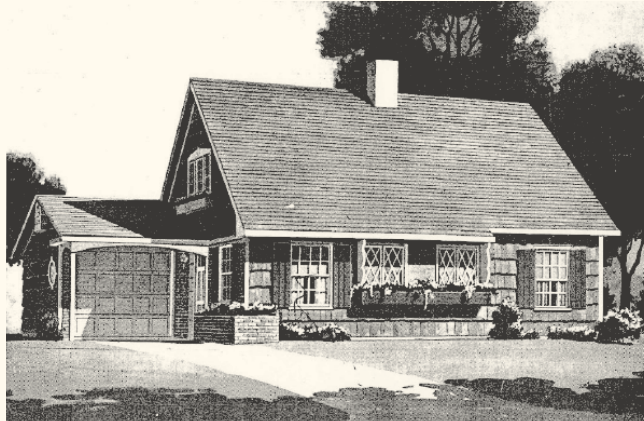


1977



1887

1903



1931

1958



2007

2022



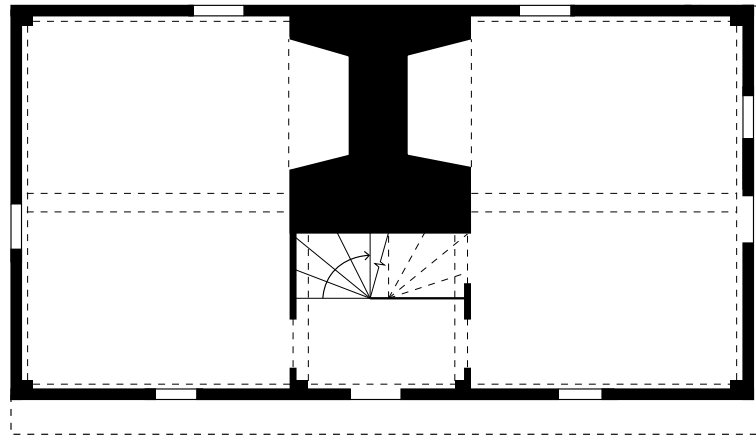
○

1660



1960

FIGURE 007  
Floor plan of Stanley-Whitman house.  
(Redrawn by author  
from Albert Frederic  
Brown and Norman  
Isham)



10'1"    5'    10'

## Colonial to Colonial

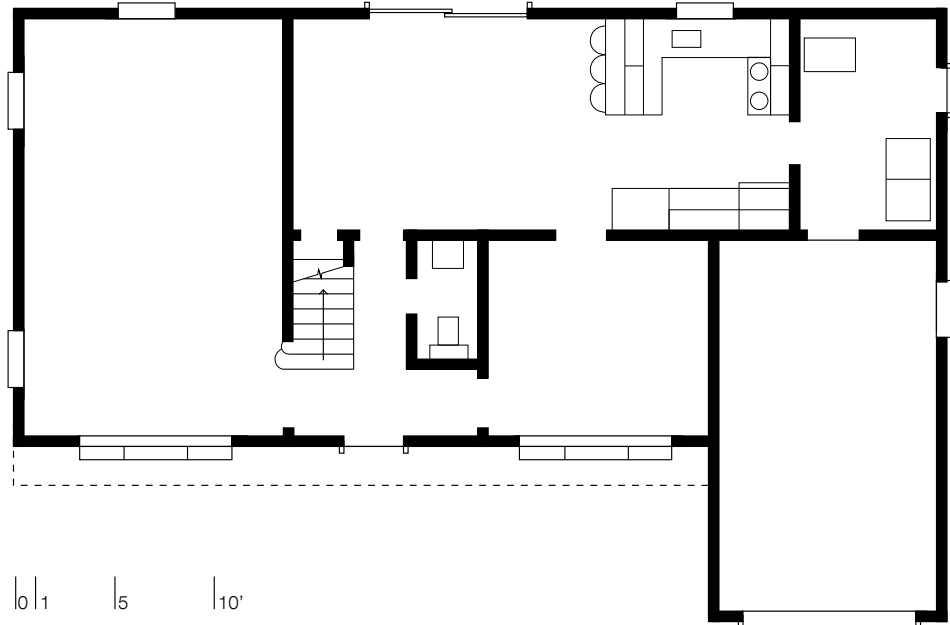
To further illustrate the continuity in this lineage, one might compare the Stanley-Whitman House, constructed in 1660, with the Levitt and Son's Gladstone Colonial Model, constructed three hundred years after. (Shown in Previous Spread)

The Levitt and Sons house is modeled on New England colonial-era homes like the Stanley-Whitman house, taking on a similar form and scale.<sup>5</sup> However, beneath their respective siding, the two houses are composed of vastly different building systems. Notably, the second floor overhang, which reflects a common practice of mortise and tenon framing for two story buildings in the Stanley-Whitman house, becomes only a stylistic motif for the Levitt and Sons platform-framed house.<sup>6</sup>

Even in plan, the two homes are similar in size and layout. However, the immense technological and social change that has occurred between these two constructions would

FIGURE 008  
Floor plan of 12500  
Swirl Lane, redrawn  
by author from HABS.

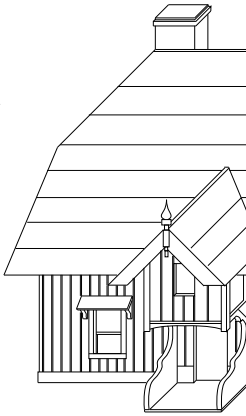
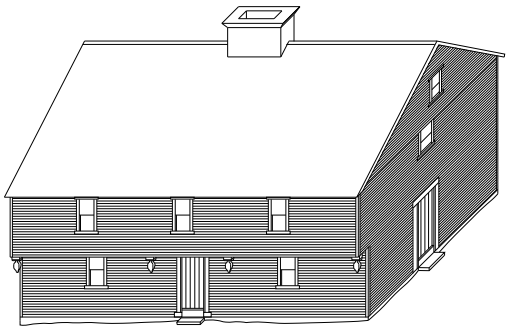
FIGURE 009  
(Page 21)  
Partial Iterative Lin-  
eage, by author.



make the daily inhabitation of these two houses dramatically different. For the Stanley-Whitman house, heating and cooking revolves around a single monumental fireplace at the center of the home.<sup>7</sup> Meanwhile, the Levitt and Sons colonial model has centralized heating and possibly air conditioning, indoor plumbing, a kitchen kitted with modern appliances, laundry machines, and an attached garage for a private automobile.<sup>8</sup>

These two houses represent different points in a long lineage. Between them are many other houses in a gradual divorcing of the single-family suburban home from the rural dwelling on which it was initially modelled. With each of these iterations, architects have used books as a primary medium for reimagining the house and perpetuating its importance in the American conscience.

The following passage considers a number of built homes and their relationship to significant authors, homebuilders and their published media.



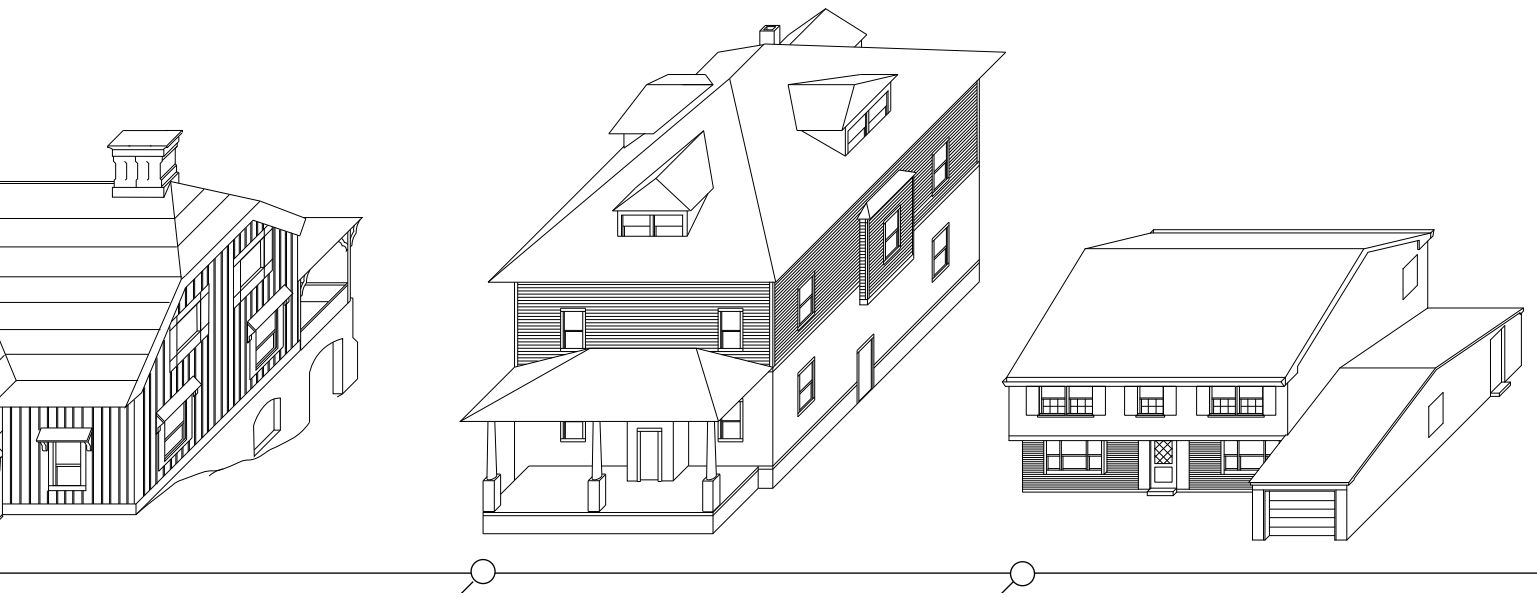


FIGURE 010  
Oblique View of  
Coleman-Hollister  
House, by author.



## Coleman-Hollister House

Asher Benjamin

Following the revolutionary war, Asher Benjamin published several volumes for carpenters and architects, helping to popularize the Federal and later Greek Revival styles in the United States.<sup>1</sup> Benjamin's use of classical motifs expressed the ambitions of the newly independent sovereign state while using local material techniques.<sup>2</sup>

The plates of Benjamin's books represent classical orders interpreted from various European treatises. However, his built works as a housewright in the Boston area show the inventiveness with which Benjamin adapted these classical orders to suit the local construction methods of late 18th Century New England.<sup>3</sup>

The Coleman-Hollister House is of timber frame construction and clad in clapboard in an assembly not so different from the Stanley-Whitman house or other New England colonial homes that might have preceded it.<sup>4</sup> However, this clapboard exterior is interrupted by ornamental elements

FIGURE 011  
Asher Benjamin, "Fancy  
Cornices," from  
the American Builders  
Companion. (Getty  
Research Institute)

including pillasters and swags. In frontal elevation these elements are proportionally conventional while in side view they barely extend past the depth of the clapboards.<sup>5</sup> This represents an early example of the economical thinness in ornament that would characterize many styles in the future.

Though Benjamin was active as an architect regionally, his books, published in Boston, would influence architectural detailing as far afield as several plantations in Mississippi.<sup>6</sup>

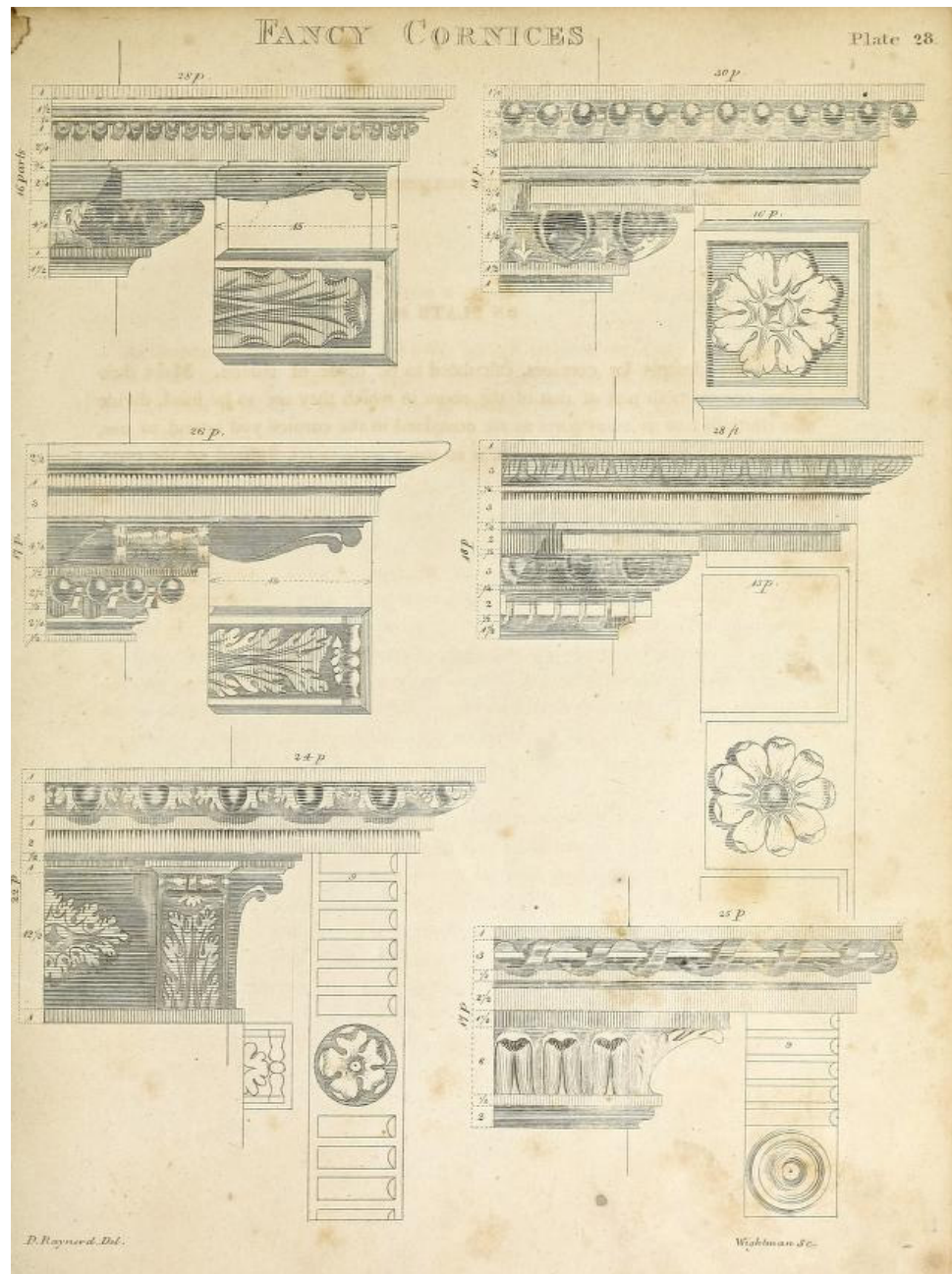


FIGURE 012  
Oblique View of  
Springside Mansion,  
by author.



### **Springside Mansion** Andrew Jackson Downing

Andrew Jackson Downing was a landscape architect and public figure in the New York area. In addition to advocating for the creation of New York's Central Park,<sup>1</sup> he published some of the first residential pattern books in the United States.<sup>2</sup> Influenced by Ruskin and Gandy, Downing moved away from the classical revival styles promoted by Benjamin and towards a picturesque gothic revival. Downing collaborated with Andrew Jackson Davis to produce plates of "gothic cottages" in consistent compositions of perspective, floor plan and text.<sup>3</sup> This general format continued to be used in pattern books well into the 20th century.

Through his publications, Downing became a progressive tastemaker amidst new waves of German and Irish immigration and the early emergences of industrialism through steam power.<sup>4</sup> Many of his design ideals are reflected in the carpenter gothic mansions of the Hudson river valley's early steamboat suburbs.<sup>5</sup>

Downing was commissioned by philanthropist, Matthew Vassar, to design a mansion and grounds at Springside.<sup>6</sup> The house sits within an elaborate asymmetrical landscape, highlighting Downing's care for the grounds around his houses.<sup>7</sup> The work comes in the decades following the invention of the manual lawn mower, allowing for managed green lawns to divorce from the ownership of livestock for the first time.<sup>8</sup>

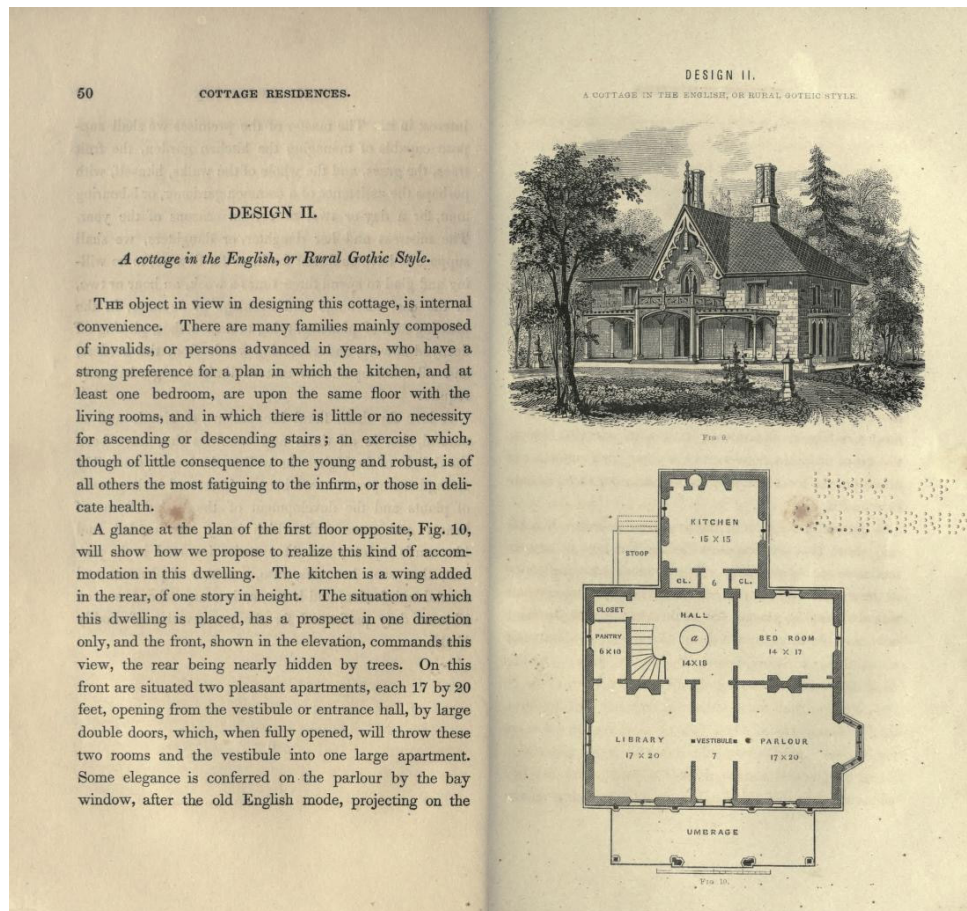


FIGURE 013  
AJ Downing,  
Cottage Residences,  
Design II. (University  
of California Libraries)

FIGURE 014  
Oblique View of Sears  
Chelsea Model, by  
author.



**Chelsea Model**  
Sears, Roebuck & Co.

Over the mid to late 19th Century, many developments occurred in both the way that houses were constructed and the methods by which they were disseminated through print media. Light timber construction methods famously emerged out of the Chicago area, developing continuously within the city and the western homesteads beyond.<sup>1</sup> Shortly after, Palliser, Palliser & Co., a Connecticut based organization, pioneered a business model of plans-for-purchase, to be ordered by mail from their series of pattern books.<sup>2</sup>

At the turn of the century, further revolutions in both the construction and marketing of housing occurred as Sears, Aladdin, Montgomery Ward and others began selling mail-order houses through catalogues.<sup>3</sup> A mail-order house would arrive in its component parts, cut to size, only to be assembled on site. Such a service was enabled by the rail logistics of the time and mail-order houses became popular in the emerging rail and streetcar suburbs.<sup>4</sup> The Sears Chelsea represents one of many *foursquare*-type models that

FIGURE 015  
Sears, Roebuck  
& Co., Honor-Bilt  
Modern Homes,  
Cover (Historic New  
England, Ephemera  
Collection)

Sears offered in their early catalogues. Its blocky massing and unadorned exterior shows a utilitarian sensibility. As Sears homes continued into the 1920s and '30s, the catalogues would offer an increasingly wide range of styles and sizes from which to choose.

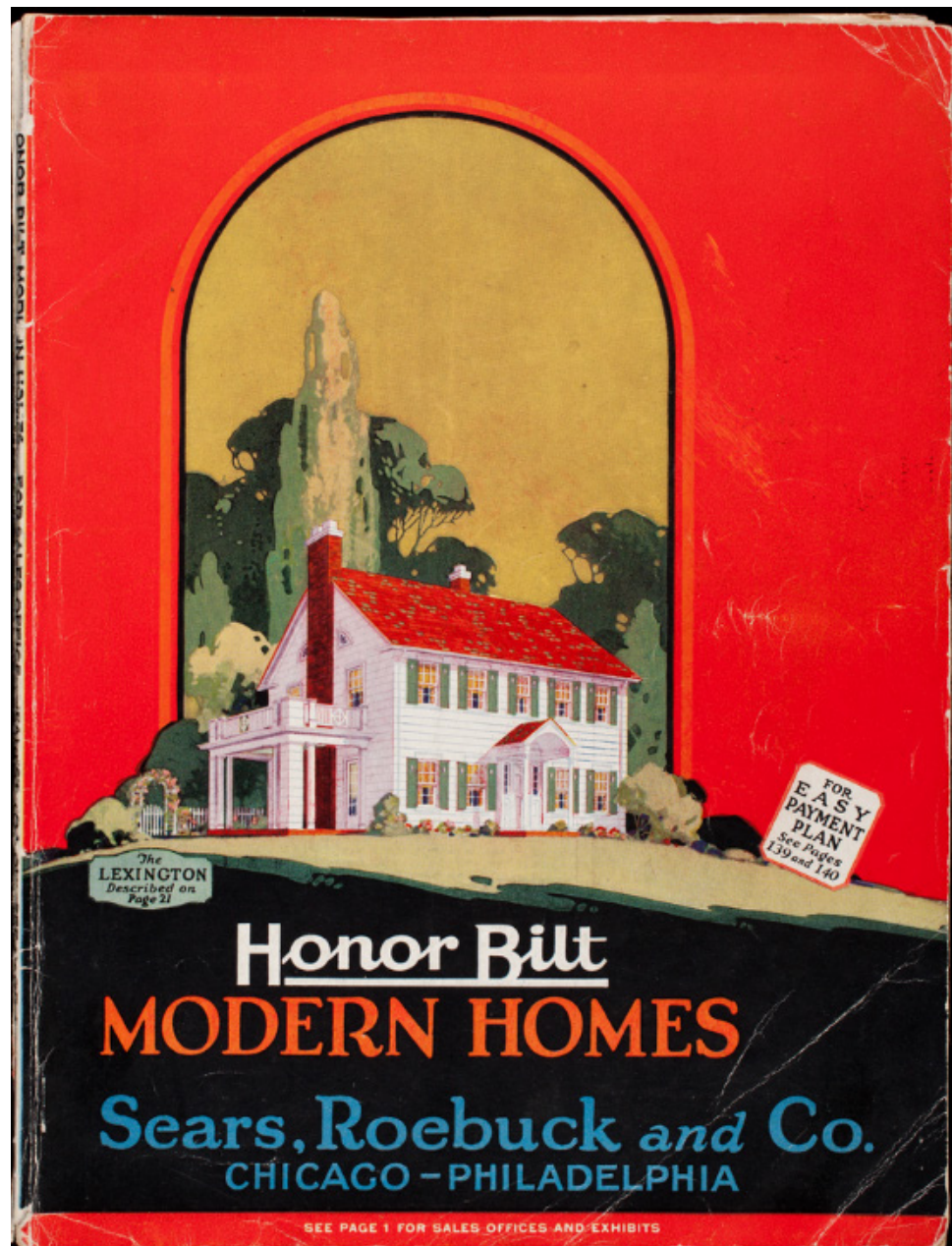


FIGURE 016  
Oblique View of  
12500 Swirl Lane, by  
author.



### **12500 Swirl Lane** Levitt and Sons

In the mid 20th century, the development of tract housing offered yet another transformation in the way houses were being constructed in the United States. Where Sears could ship houses in parts from their factory, Levitt and Sons brought the assembly line to the development site, moving contractors from lot to lot in the erection of hundreds of nearly identical houses.<sup>1</sup> 12500 Swirl Lane is one of several “Gladstone” colonial-style houses constructed in Belair at Bowie, Maryland.<sup>2</sup>

In some ways, this form of development reduced the importance of the pattern book, but print media still played a major role in the promotion of “a new way of life.” A Time Magazine issue covered the economics and lifestyle of various Levittowns, punctuated by full page advertisements for cars and dishwashers.<sup>3</sup> What this publication fails to mention is Levitt & Sons’ systematic refusal to sell to black homebuyers.<sup>4</sup> Levitt even barred Jews from certain developments, despite being Jewish, himself.<sup>5</sup>

FIGURE 017  
Time Magazine, For  
Sale: A New Way  
of Life, 1950. (Time  
Magazine Archives)



## Endnotes

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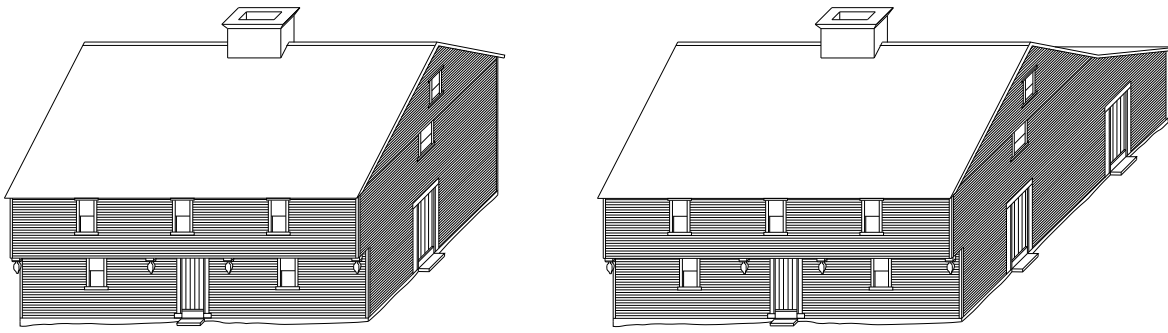
Homebuilding as Cultural Practice

## An Incremental Lineage

FIGURE 018  
View of North Side,  
Henry Williams  
House, Nicodemus,  
Kansas. (Historic  
American Building  
Survey, Library of  
Congress)

Architects have not acted alone as agents in transforming the single-family house over time. Parallel to the architect's lineage of print media, there is also a rich heritage of individuals and subcultures making incremental changes to their environments, formulating new approaches to building and dwelling in the process. The following section illustrates a small handful of such practices, showing the impact of those outside the formal discipline of architecture.



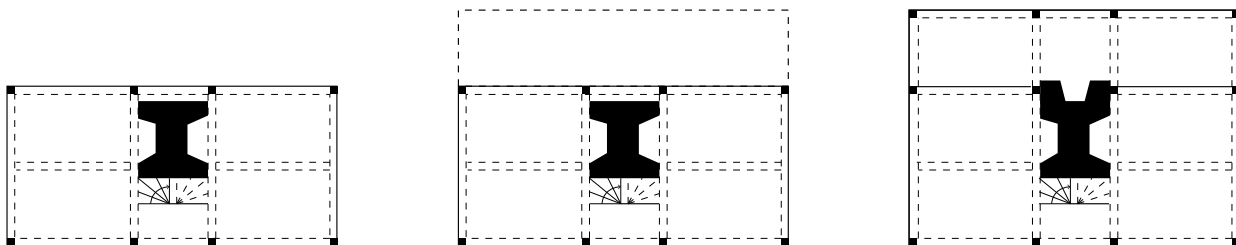


## Stanley-Whitman House

FIGURE 019  
Stanley-Whitman  
House, Incremental  
Timeline, by Author.

FIGURE 020  
Saltbox Lean-to  
Addition Plans, by  
author.

Revisiting the Stanley-Whitman house of 1660 offers an early example of such incremental transformations. Only a few decades after its construction, this house received a lean-to addition, increasing the occupiable area on the first floor of the house by roughly a third.<sup>1</sup> This became a common practice among the mortise and tenon-joined houses of colonial New England. This common addition leveraged the flexibility afforded by pliable building materials and a simple domestic layout to produce a new typology, now known commonly as the *Saltbox*.<sup>2</sup> Initially accounting for growth in family size or other needs for space such as a summer kitchen, it eventually became common for saltboxes to be built from the ground-up as a distinct type of house.<sup>3</sup>



## Vandergrift-Biddle House

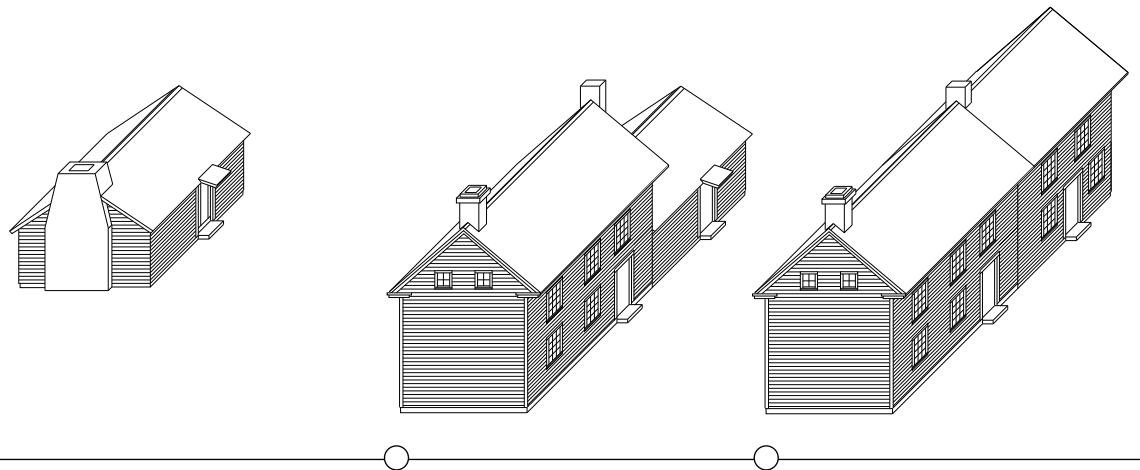
FIGURE 021  
Vandergrift-Biddle  
House, Incremental  
Timeline, by Author.

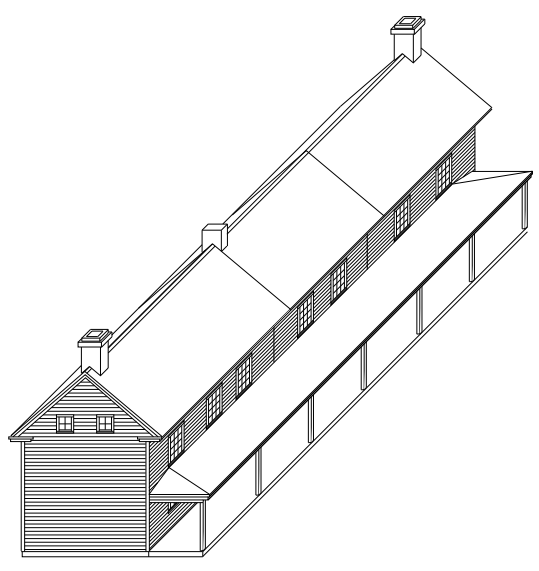
FIGURE 022  
(Page 39)  
Plan of Vandergrift-  
Biddle House  
from HABS  
Documentation.  
(Historic American  
Buildings Survey,  
Library of Congress)

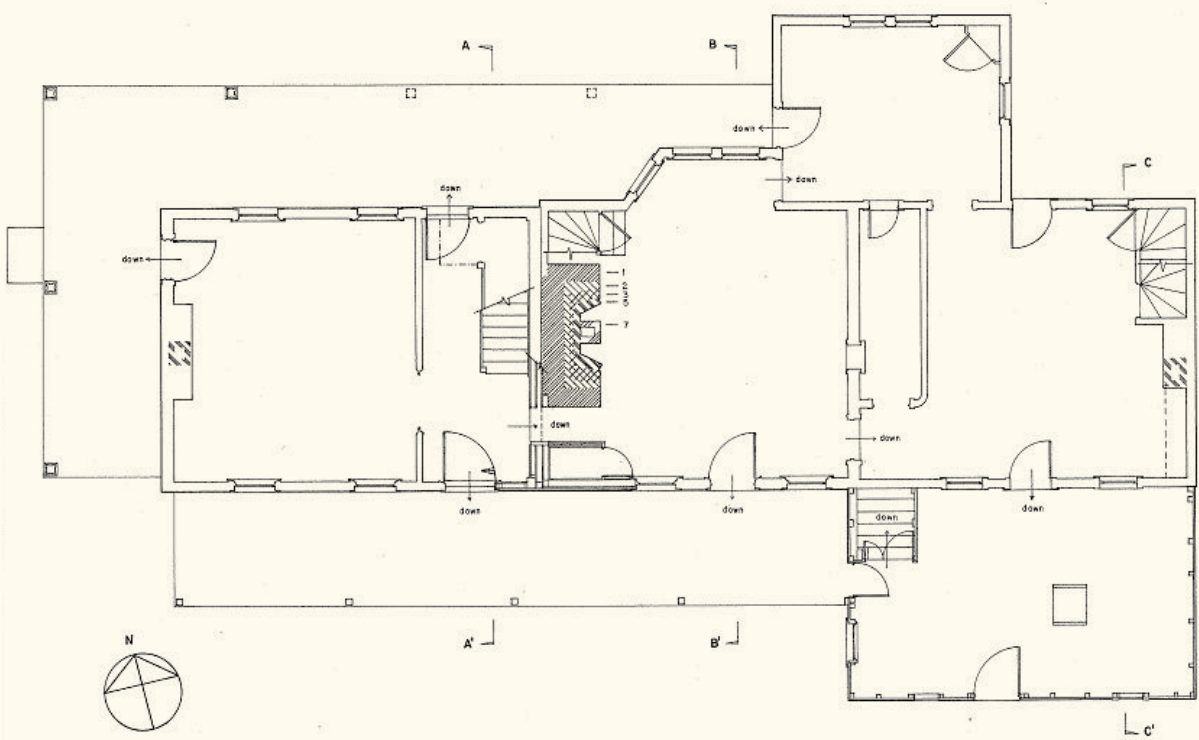
FIGURE 023  
(Page 40)  
History of the  
Hearth of the  
Vandergrift-Biddle  
House from HABS  
Documentation.  
(Historic American  
Buildings Survey,  
Library of Congress)

The expansion of small, detached dwellings and the leveraging of the adaptability of timber construction methods became a common practice in settler architecture. One particularly poignant example comes with the Vandergrift-Biddle house, which has gone through seven major phases between the mid-18th and the early 20th centuries.<sup>4</sup> Over this period, it transformed from a small log cabin, to a large cross-gabled mansion, with multiple porched facades.<sup>5</sup>

With each addition to this house, modifications to the central hearth were made, tracing a history of standards in thermal comfort through an individual, architectural element.<sup>6</sup> (following spread)



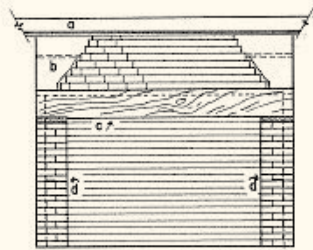




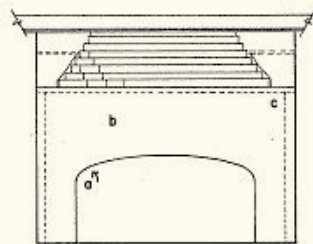
MAIN FLOOR PLAN

SCALE: 1/4" = 1' 0 1 2 3 4 5

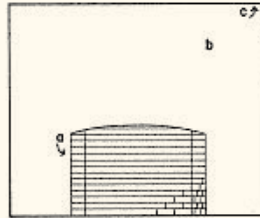
## HISTORY OF THE HEARTH



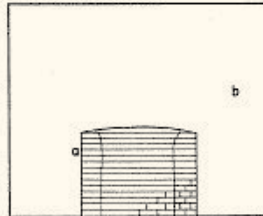
- PERIOD I**      mid 16<sup>th</sup> century
- a EXPOSED, CHAMFERED JOISTS
  - b EVIDENCE FOR PLASTERED CUPBOARDS, ABOVE LINTEL
  - c LINTEL
  - d BLOCKS FOR BOLECTION MOULDING



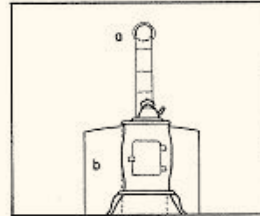
- PERIOD II**      circa 1800
- a FIREBOX CLOSED DOWN WITH SEGMENTAL ARCH
  - b CHIMNEY BREAST FACE & FIREBOX PLASTERED
  - c BOLECTION & CUPBOARD OF 1<sup>ST</sup> PERIOD RETAINED



- PERIOD III**      circa 1830
- a FIREBOX FURTHER ENCLOSED
  - b LINTEL, CUPBOARDS & TRIM OF PERIOD I REMOVED; CHIMNEY BREAST WALL RAISED; PERIOD III TRIM UNKNOWN
  - c CEILING ADDED



- PERIOD V**      circa 1870
- a FIREBOX FURTHER ENCLOSED
  - b TRIM UNKNOWN



- PERIOD VII**      circa 1900
- a BRICK FLUE, (NOT VISIBLE) INSTALLED FOR CAST IRON STOVE
  - b OPENING COVERED

SCALE: 3/8" = 1'

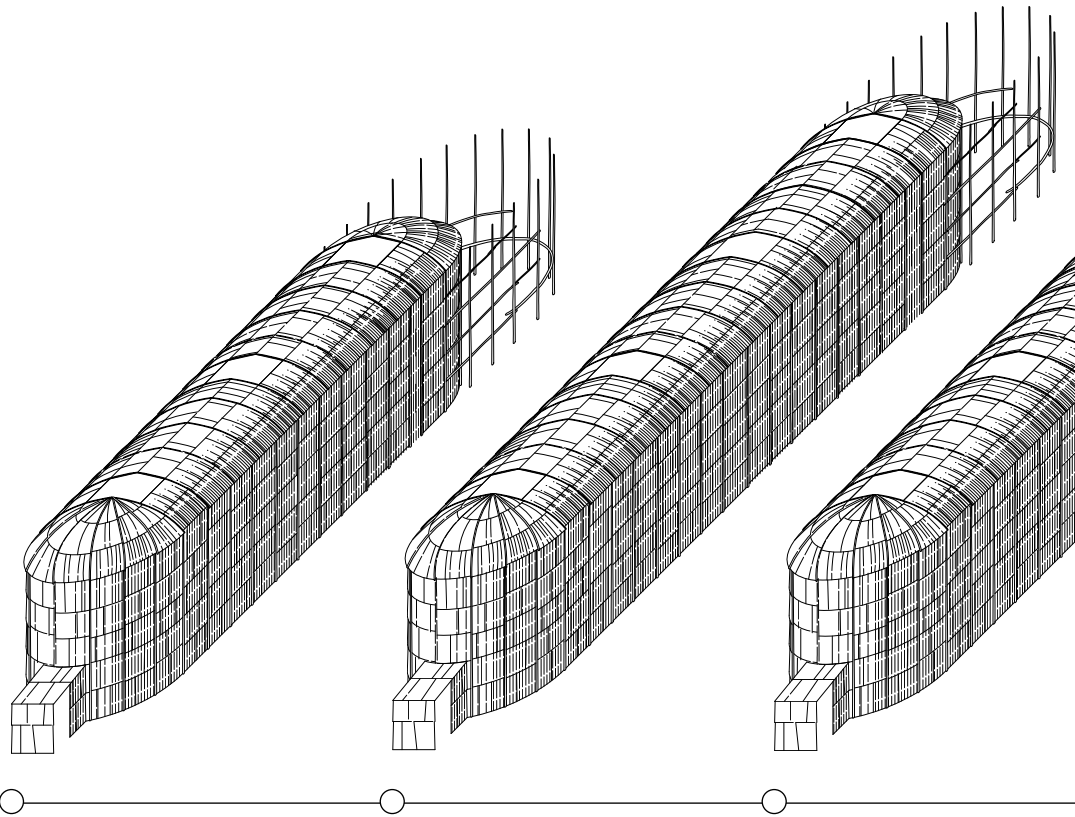
## Haudenosaunee Longhouse

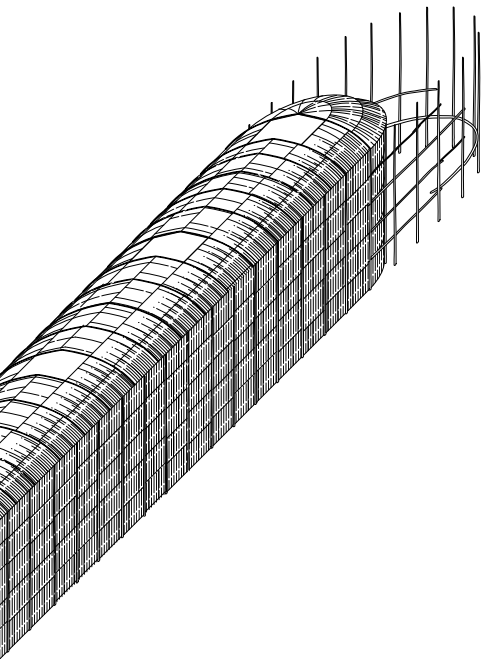
FIGURE 024  
Haudenosaunee  
Longhouse, Partial  
Incremental Timeline,  
by author.

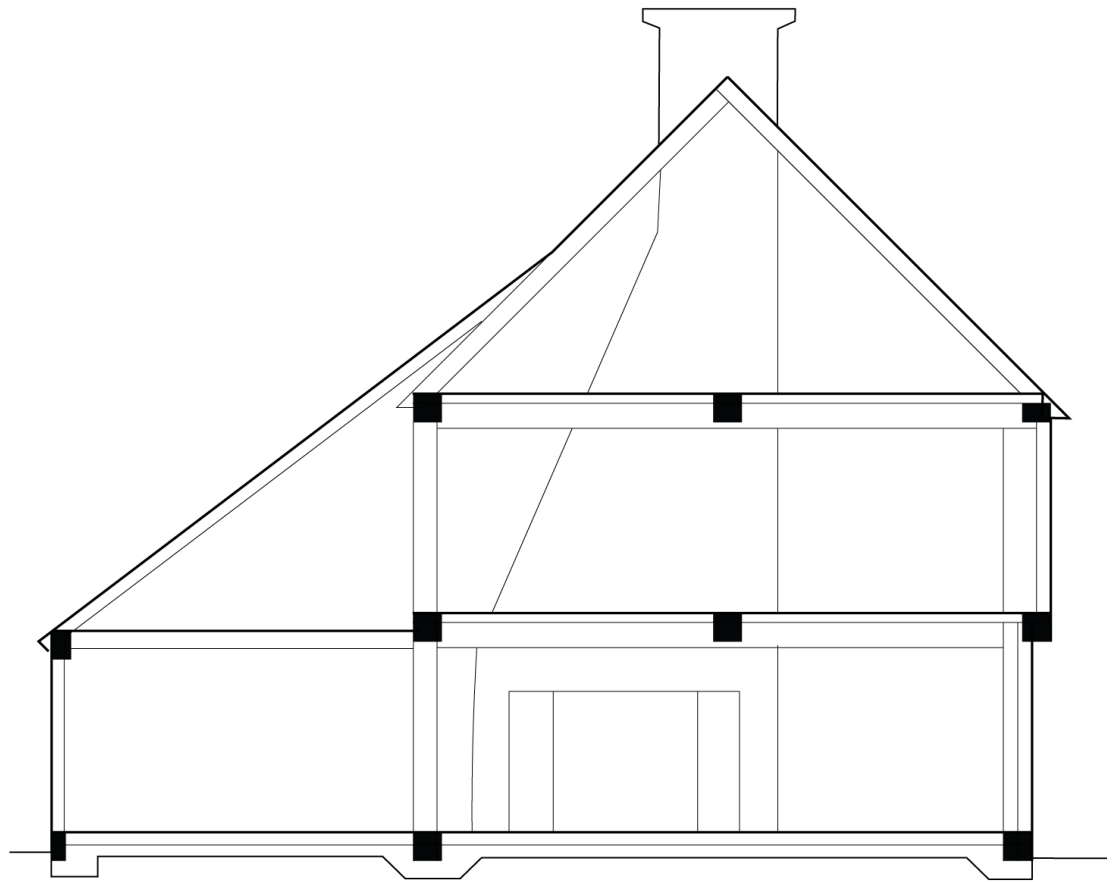
FIGURE 025  
(Page 43)  
Typical Section of  
Saltbox House, by  
author.

FIGURE 026  
(Page 44)  
Typical Section  
of Longhouse, by  
author.

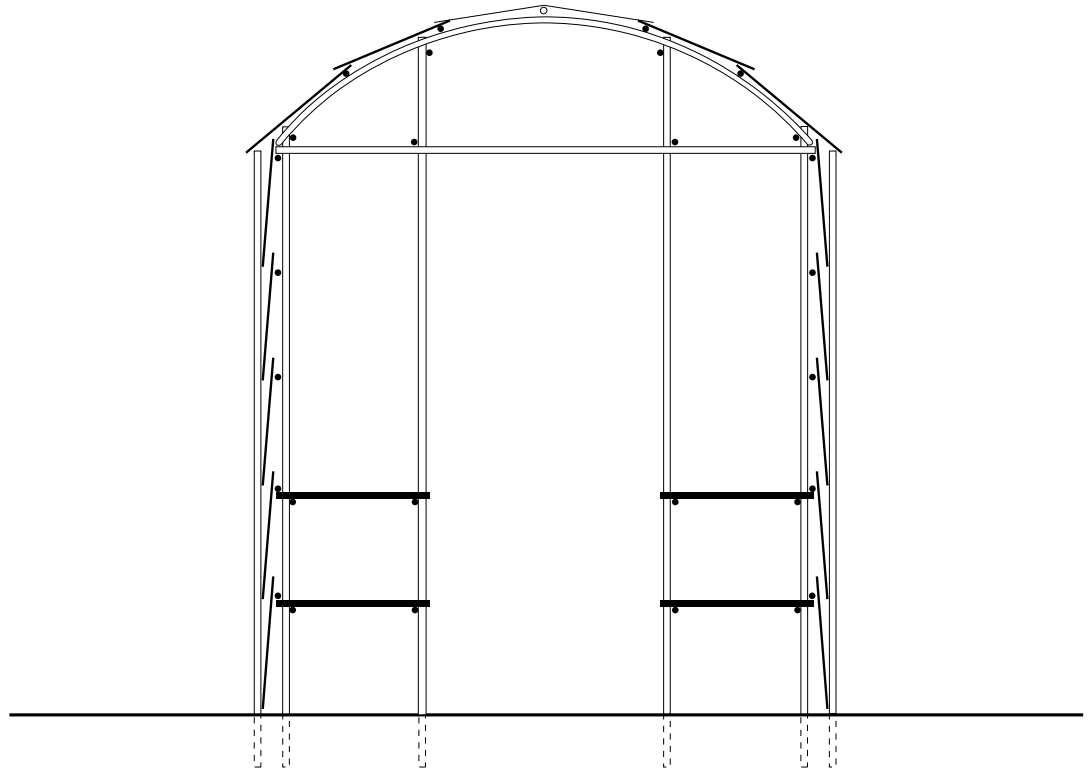
Dwellings that adapt to family size and need in the present-day United States significantly predate the colonial period. Haudenosaunee Longhouses, maintaining a constant section in one axis, would grow by a bay in length each time a new mother would begin a family.<sup>1</sup> Longhouses, designed to withstand the harsh winters of the territories of the Haudenosaunee confederacy (present-day Ontario and upstate New York), were constructed from an assemblage of ash bark, logs and sticks, often gathered from living trees.<sup>2</sup> This building assembly reflects Native American cultivation of the Eastern woodlands as a productive landscape, contradicting colonial narratives of the American forest as wilderness.<sup>3</sup>



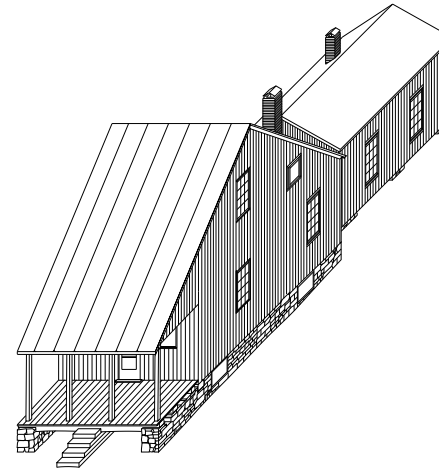
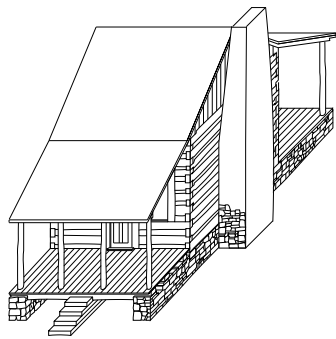




0 1 5 10 ft



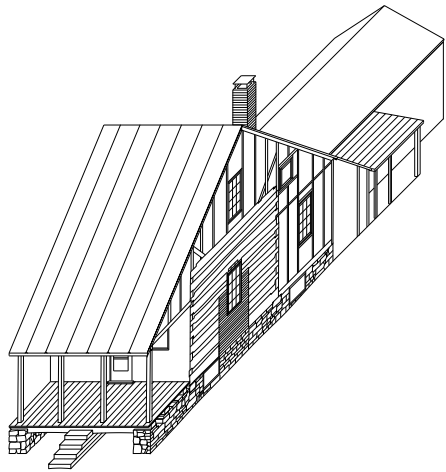
0 1 5 10 ft



## Allard House

FIGURE 027  
Incremental Timeline  
of Allard House, by  
author.

With the passage of the Homestead Act, many individuals and families moved to the plains of the Midwest and built settlement housing there.<sup>1</sup> The homestead became a working laboratory for experiments in domestic construction practices as settlers attempted to make the most of affordable and available materials.<sup>2</sup> The Allard house offers one example of such architectonic experimentation. Beginning as a log cabin under French colonization, the house was then expanded with a summer kitchen through the use of brick-nogged, light timber framing and board-and-batten siding.<sup>3</sup> Following later expansion with more commonplace light timber framing, the house stands as one of many midwestern homes utilizing peculiar hybrid construction methods in the development of now standardized light timber platform framing methodologies.<sup>4</sup>



Among those erecting new houses and ways of living on the frontier at this time were newly-freed black Americans in the aftermath of the Civil War. Nicodemus was a community of former slaves founded a community in Kansas for its connections to John Brown.<sup>1</sup> Though Nicodemus has been documented to some extent in the Historic American Building Survey, much of the reconstruction architecture of black communities have been omitted from historic archives and narratives.

### **Kuntz Shotgun House**

One lingering emergence from the architectures of black reconstruction is the typology of the *shotgun* house. This typology came amidst a rise in land ownership among black Americans and a complex cultural dialogue between Haitian immigrants, former slaves, and European Americans in the Mississippi Delta.<sup>2</sup> One shotgun house listed on the National Register, the Kuntz Shotgun House, exemplifies the *camelback* variant, with a bedroom elevated to a rear

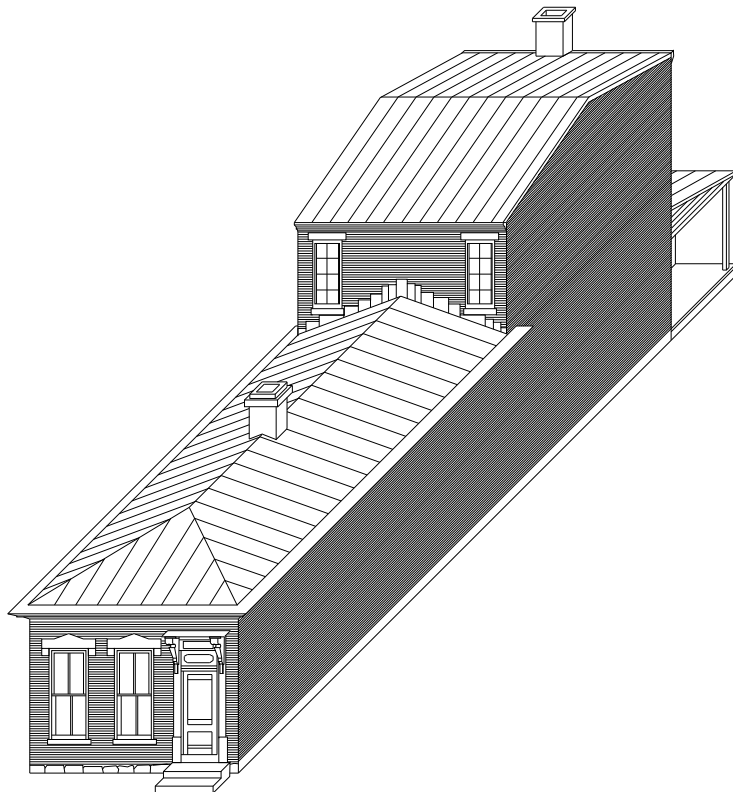


FIGURE 028  
Oblique View of Kuntz  
Shotgun House, by  
author.

second floor for maximum quiet and privacy.<sup>3</sup> This house was constructed in Louisville, Kentucky, demonstrating how far the shotgun spread from the Louisiana gulf.<sup>4</sup>

The rise of the shotgun represents the possibilities of self-determinacy for black Americans in the aftermath of the Civil War.<sup>5</sup> Through widespread harrassment, lynching and the enstatement of Jim Crow, racist whites sought to truncate this trend, limiting the further development of black American housing typologies after the turn of the century.<sup>6</sup>

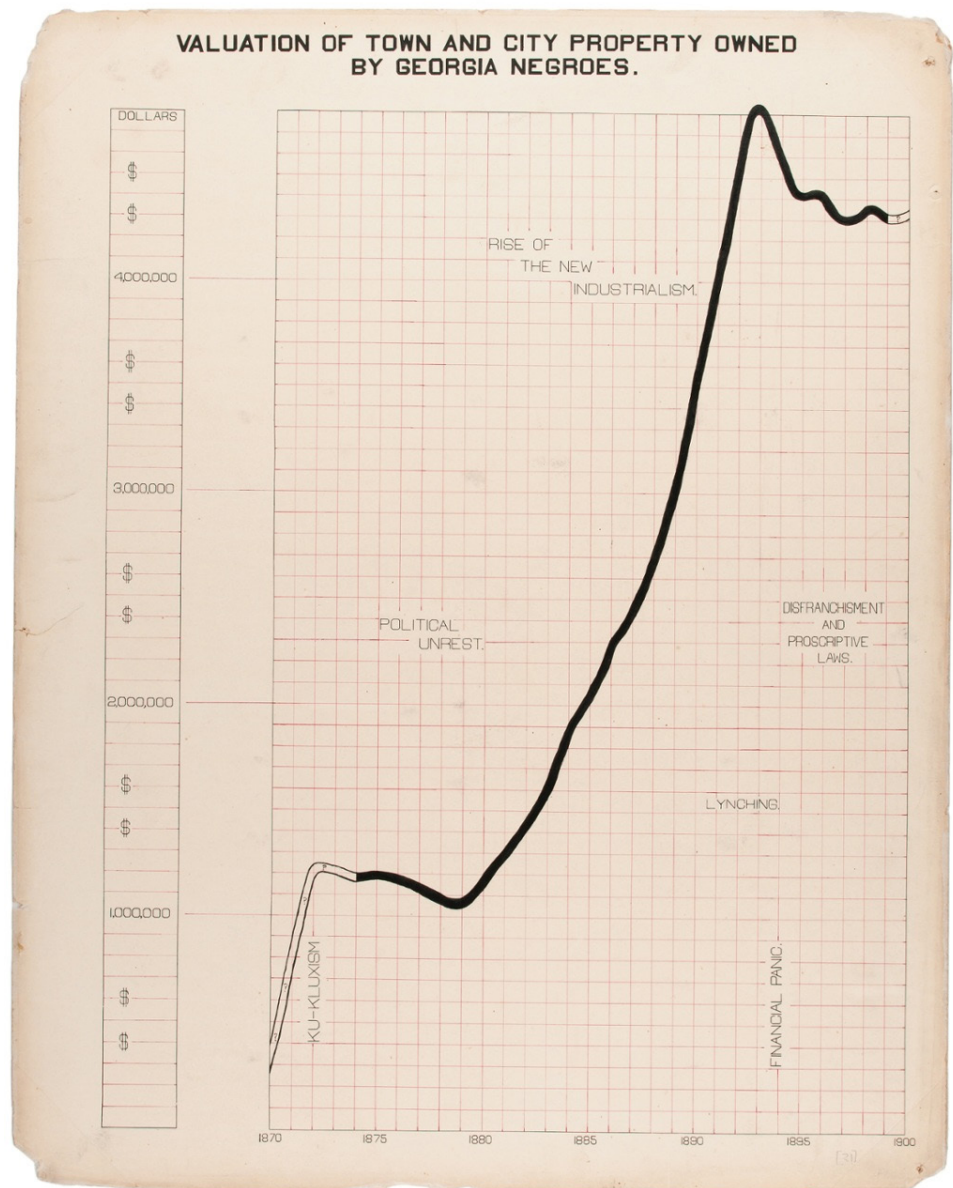


FIGURE 029  
W.E.B. DuBois, "Val-  
uation of Town and  
City Property Owned  
by Georgia Negroes,"  
1900. (Library of  
Congress)

## Architecture as Cultural Practice

Bell Hooks brought attention to the construction practices of rural black communities, specifically in the south, in her essay, “Black Vernacular: Architecture as Cultural Practice.”<sup>7</sup> Describing such practices through personal experience, Hooks observes,

the absence of material privilege did not mean that poor and working-class black folks (such as my grandparents) did not think creatively about space. While lack of material privilege limited what could be done with one’s surroundings, it was nevertheless always possible to make changes.<sup>8</sup>

Citing architecture professor, La Verne Welles-Bowie, Hooks goes on to note her observations that,

“vernacular architecture is a language of cultural expression” that “exemplifies how the physical environment reflects the uniqueness of a culture.”<sup>9</sup>

With this notion, Hooks moves away from universalizing understandings of architecture and encourages contextual readings through the lens of culture.

The histories of domestic architecture in the present-day United States are manifold. Those individuals and communities erecting their own homes play as much a part in these histories as any disciplinarian. An attentiveness to this diversity of actors, and an appreciation for their inventiveness through cultural reading, helps to trace more thoroughly the lineages of the house.

## Endnotes

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- 1 Historic American Buildings Survey, *Stanley-Whitman House, 37 High Street, Farmington, Hartford County, CT*, 1933.
- 2 Albert Frederic Brown and Norman Morrison Isham, *Early Connecticut Houses: An Historical and Architectural Study* (Providence, RI: The Preston and Pounds Company, 1900).
- 3 Patricia Poor, "Saltbox and Catslide Houses," *Early Homes*, Spring 2010, 10.
- 4 Historic American Buildings Survey, *Vandergrift-Biddle House, Vandergrift-Biddle House, Junction of US Route 13 & County Road 2, Saint Georges Hundred, Biddles Corner, New Castle County, DE*, 1983.
- 5 Ibid.
- 6 Ibid.
- 7 "Mohawk Haudenosaunee (Iroquois) Longhouse." New York State Museum, Accessed 2023, <http://www.nysm.nysed.gov/exhibitions/ongoing/native-peoples-new-york/mohawk-longhouse>.
- 8 John L. Creese, "Extending the Rafters: The Iroquoian Longhouse as a Sociotechnical System," *Palethnologie [En ligne]*, 8 (2016), accessed 2023, <http://journals.openedition.org/palethnologie/477> ; DOI : <https://doi.org/10.4000/palethnologie.477>
- 9 Ibid.
- 10 "About the Homestead Act," National Park Service, Accessed 2023, <https://www.nps.gov/home/learn/historyculture/abouthomesteadactlaw.htm>.
- 11 Fred W. Peterson, "Anglo-American Wooden Frame Farmhouses in the Midwest, 1830-1900: Origins of Balloon Frame Construction." *Perspectives in Vernacular Architecture* 8 (2000), 13.
- 12 "Allard House, Survey 25, Claim 1384," Illinois Historic American Building Survey, Illinois Historic Preservation Agency, (1996).
- 13 Ibid.
- 14 Kenneth Hamilton, "The Settlement of Nicodemus: Its Origins and Early Promotion," in *Promised Land on the Solomon: Black Settlement in Nicodemus, Kansas* (Washington, DC: National Park Service, Government Printing Office, 1986) 2-34.

- 15 John Michael Vlach, "The Shotgun House: An African Architectural Legacy: PART II (Part I Appeared in the January 1976 Issue)." *Pioneer America* 8, no. 2 (1976): 57–70.
- 16 Historic American Buildings Survey, *Kuntz Shotgun House, 1401 East Washington Street, Louisville, Jefferson County, KY*, 1974.
- 17 Ibid.
- 18 John Michael Vlach, "The Shotgun House: An African Architectural Legacy. Part I." *Pioneer America* 8, no. 1 (1976), 54.
- 19 "What Was Jim Crow?" Ferris State University, Jim Crow Museum, Accessed 2023, <https://www.ferris.edu/HTMLS/news/jimcrow/what.htm>.
- 20 Bell Hooks, "Black Vernacular: Architecture as Cultural Practice," in *Art on my Mind: Visual Politics*, (New York: The New Press, 1995), 145–151.
- 21 Ibid., 149.
- 22 Ibid.



## 2 From Catalogues to Songbooks



# Problems with the Problem

In the 20th century, the rise of Euclidean zoning converted the single-family house from a dwelling pattern into an abstract legal framework. As Sonia Hirt has carefully demonstrated, the land use policies for housing in the United States are unlike those of any other nation.<sup>1</sup> Today, federal policy, municipal code and preservationist sentiment protect valued single-family residential neighborhoods as well-situated, low density enclaves of wealth, contributing to segregation and displacement. Left unchanged, inherited neighborhoods of single-family dwellings fail to meet the pluralistic needs of the communities left with them, and those excluded from them.

It is worth noting, however, that such a polemic against single-family housing is driven by the same “good intentions” that underpinned the Modern problem-solving attitudes that brought us to this point. Defining the problem requires some assertion of expertise. It also begins to imply a narrow set of solutions.<sup>2</sup>

FIGURE 030  
Common single-family  
housing massing  
regulations, by author

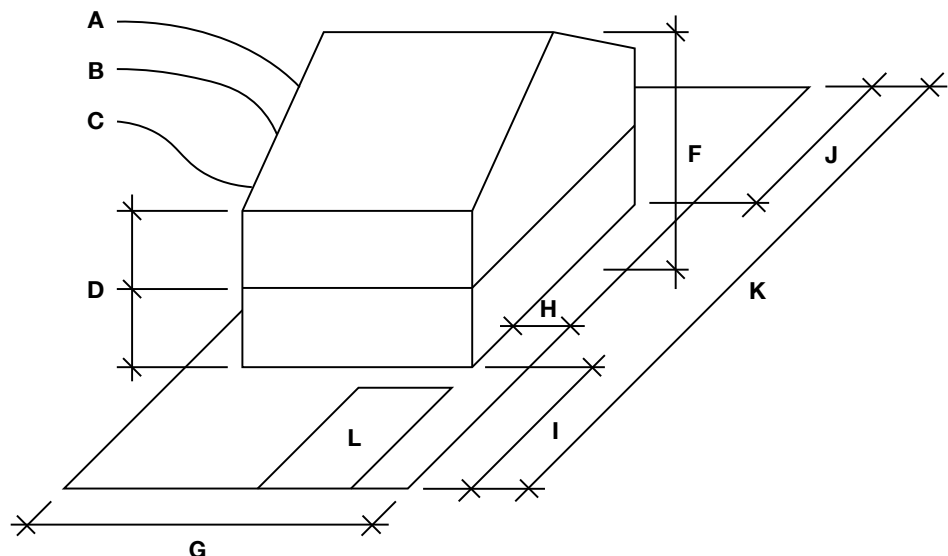
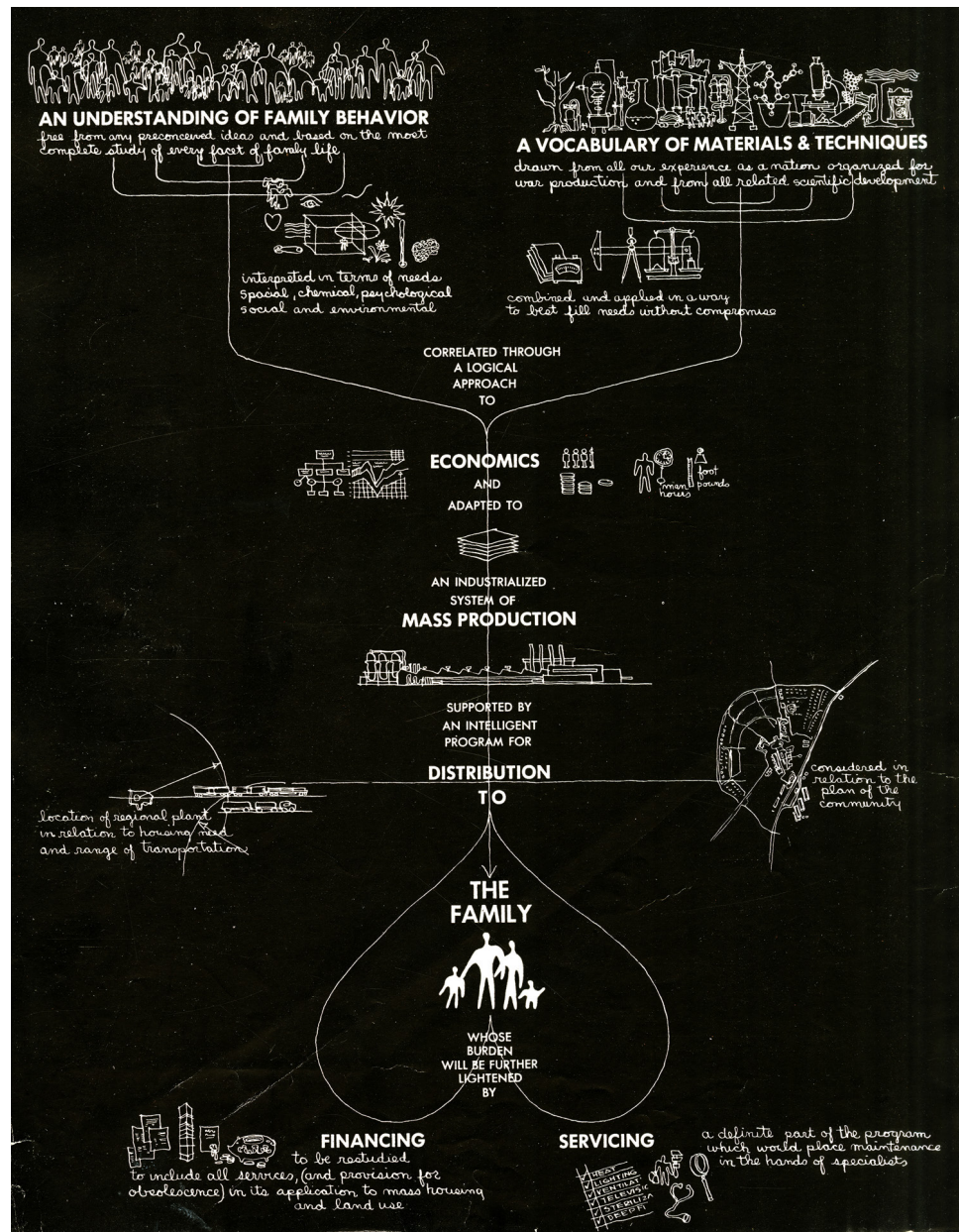


FIGURE 031  
 Charles and Ray  
 Eames, "What is a  
 House?" 1960. (Co-  
 lumbia University Buell  
 Center)



In his book, "Disabling Professions", Ivan Illich criticizes professional disciplines, including architecture, for holding "legal power to create the need that, by law, they alone will be allowed to satisfy."<sup>3</sup> In questions of housing, this has led to a privileged few determining the lifestyles of many.

The distance between decision makers and occupants is well summarized in a diagram produced by Ray and Charles Eames' office in 1960, titled *What is a House?*<sup>4</sup> The diagram

suggests a large volume of research expertise filtering through a range of public and private networks before falling finally to an occupying family. Though the diagram does not encapsulate the ways housing has been constructed, it aptly summarizes dominant patterns of thinking as questions of housing scale.

Such cultures of expertise have driven decisions about housing further and further from those impacted, limiting the cultural reconstruction of housing by its inhabitants. In the same essay where she identifies a “language of cultural expression” in the small living quarters of rural black southerners, Bell Hooks describes how the introduction of modernist public housing limited the potential for individuals in those communities to take agency over their own environments.<sup>5</sup> In many places, stringent land use codes, industry standardization, professionalization and financing structures have done the same to those fortunate enough to own a home.<sup>6</sup> Moving forward, disciplinary approaches to housing should focus on diversifying technique and voice to permit the realignment of building with a multitude of cultures.

## Endnotes

---

- 1 Sonia A. Hirt, *Zoned in the USA: The Origins and Implications of American Land-Use Regulation* (New York: Cornell University Press, 2014).
- 2 Horst W. J. Rittel and Melvin M. Webber, “Dilemmas in a General Theory of Planning,” *Policy Sciences* 4 (1973), 155-169.
- 3 Ivan Illich, “Disabling Professions,” in Ivan Illich et al., *Disabling Professions* (New York: Marion Boyars, 2000), 16. Quoted in Ann Lui, “Toward an Office of the Public Architect,” *Log 48: Expanding Modes of Practice*, (Anyone Corporation, 2020), 49.
- 4 Charles Eames and Ray Eames, Diagram for “What is A House?,” *California Arts and Architecture*, July 1994, 32. Issue edited by John Entenza, Herbert Matter, Charles and Ray Eames, Eero Saarinen, and Buckminster Fuller., in “House Housing, An Untimely History of Architecture and Real Estate,” Columbia University Buell Center, Accessed 2023, <https://househousing.buellcenter.columbia.edu/>
- 5 Bell Hooks, “Black Vernacular,” 150.
- 6 Emily Badger and Quoc Trung Bui, “Cities Start to Question an American Ideal: A House With a Yard on Every Lot: Townhomes, duplexes and apartments are effectively banned in many neighborhoods. Now some communities regret it,” *The New York Times*, (June 18, 2019).

## Are Suburbs Music?

Taking Bell Hooks' call to celebrate architecture as a cultural practice seriously, a question arises as to what role architecture plays, as a discipline. What is the architect in questions of housing if not the expert; the behavioralist; the problem solver? How might architects facilitate and participate in such cultural enterprises without taking control of the process?

In an essay from 2013 by Vijay Iyer, the acclaimed jazz musician considers some of these questions. Writing specifically about New York, he compares the interactions and frictions of the metropolis to various musical acts, posing the question: Are cities music?<sup>1</sup>

Iyer challenges scientific views of urban life amidst the emergence of the “smart cities” movement, writing,

It's too easy to write off the arts as a mere footnote to questions of infrastructure and capital. But we know that culture provides a city with a very different kind of energy, which is not strictly entrepreneurial. Culture is what carries much of the city's identity – it creates communities, it attracts people from elsewhere, it generates desire. To scientists of cities I ask: what can culture tell us?<sup>2</sup>

Iyer goes on to argue that cities, as places of cultural interplay, have much in common with the music that emerges out of them. He claims that music is “essentially the sound of ourselves – the joyful noise of people doing things together,” and that “knowing how to listen to each other is a skill worth having.”<sup>3</sup>

What Iyer gets at here is that cities are made up of the complex interplay between a wide range of inhabitants, performing in conversation in many ways and at many scales. Within this notion lies an idea that urban environments are in a state of continual co-authorship, negotiating the many voices therein. However, whereas discourses in music often celebrate such interplay, the disciplines of architecture and urbanism struggle to accept this interdeterminacy - especially when it comes to questions of housing.

Architecture can learn from methods of music production and scholarship for their potential to celebrate the subjectivity of voice, acknowledge co-authorship, and reflect cultural diversity. There can be room for multiple genres and traditions, for personal preference, and for those outside of the academy and profession to produce work worth celebrating within them. The more architects can grasp design and building as cultural processes, the more readily architectures of non-dominant cultures can be understood, accepted and encouraged.

In his essay, Vijay Iyer draws comparisons between New York City and music ranging from the authoritarianism of opera to the counterculturalism of Dead Prez to the way-out jazz arrangements of Butch Morris.<sup>4</sup> A place with the vibrancy of New York might easily reflect several forms of music all at one time, but what kinds of sounds emerge from different suburban neighborhoods? What kinds of music do we hear as we walk or drive past a row of single-family houses?

This question might have many different answer in many different places. However, I would assert that there is a connection between the lineage of the single-family house, in its seriality, geography and popularity, with various forms of popular song prevalent in American cultures. One house may sound like the piedmont blues of Cephas and Wiggins while another may bring to mind the surf-rock of the Beach

Boys. Yet, while popular music has proliferated into a range of genres and styles, most houses seem to sing a more narrow set of tunes.

In the consideration of this, I have turned to Virginia Savage McAlester's comprehensive text, *A Field Guide to American Houses*. In this book, McAlester, a leading authority on the American single-family home, charts out a series of infra-structural changes that permitted different forms of suburban development, as well as a lineage of different styles popular in American housing over time.<sup>5</sup> Graphing McAlester's stages of single-family housing development against the percentage of American citizens living in urban conditions (following spread) illustrates a key trend: The emergence and development of the suburb coincides with a dramatic urbanization of the US population.

As industrialism transformed the nation's economy, the suburban house allowed white Americans to accept urbanization while holding on to certain agrarian ideals of ownership and individualism descended from Jefferson as well as English pastoralism. The suburb, urban in the eyes of the US Census Bureau, offers a kind of *faux-rural* experience in its arrangement of freestanding houses presiding over parceled tracts of land.

In its pastoral aesthetics, the consumer imagery of single-family housing has a particular cultural relationship to the genre of country music, which emerges alongside the suburb in the 20th Century. In an address to the Smithsonian Institute titled, "An Appeal for Cultural Equity", ethnomusicologist Alan Lomax described the emergence of Nashville's country music scene with the following passage:

The origin of the so-called "Nashville sound" is another case in point. Nashville was once the sleepy capital of the state of Tennessee. In the 1920s a Nashville radio station began to broadcast

the music of the nearby Appalachian Mountains between advertising announcements. These particular local audiences bought products so enthusiastically that other southern radio stations followed suit by employing local musicians. This provided the economic base for the development of a vigorous modern southern rural musical tradition. Today it has several indigenous forms of orchestration which match the storied folk orchestras of Spain and Central Europe in virtuosity. Nashville has become the music capital of the U.S. because the once scorned style it purveys — reedy-voiced solo ballads accompanied by string instruments — has always been a favored style of the majority of white working-class Americans. This extraordinary event was taking place while most American intellectuals were bewailing the demise of American folk music. The reason that this tradition has survived was that talented local performers got time on the air to broadcast it to local and regional audiences.<sup>6</sup>

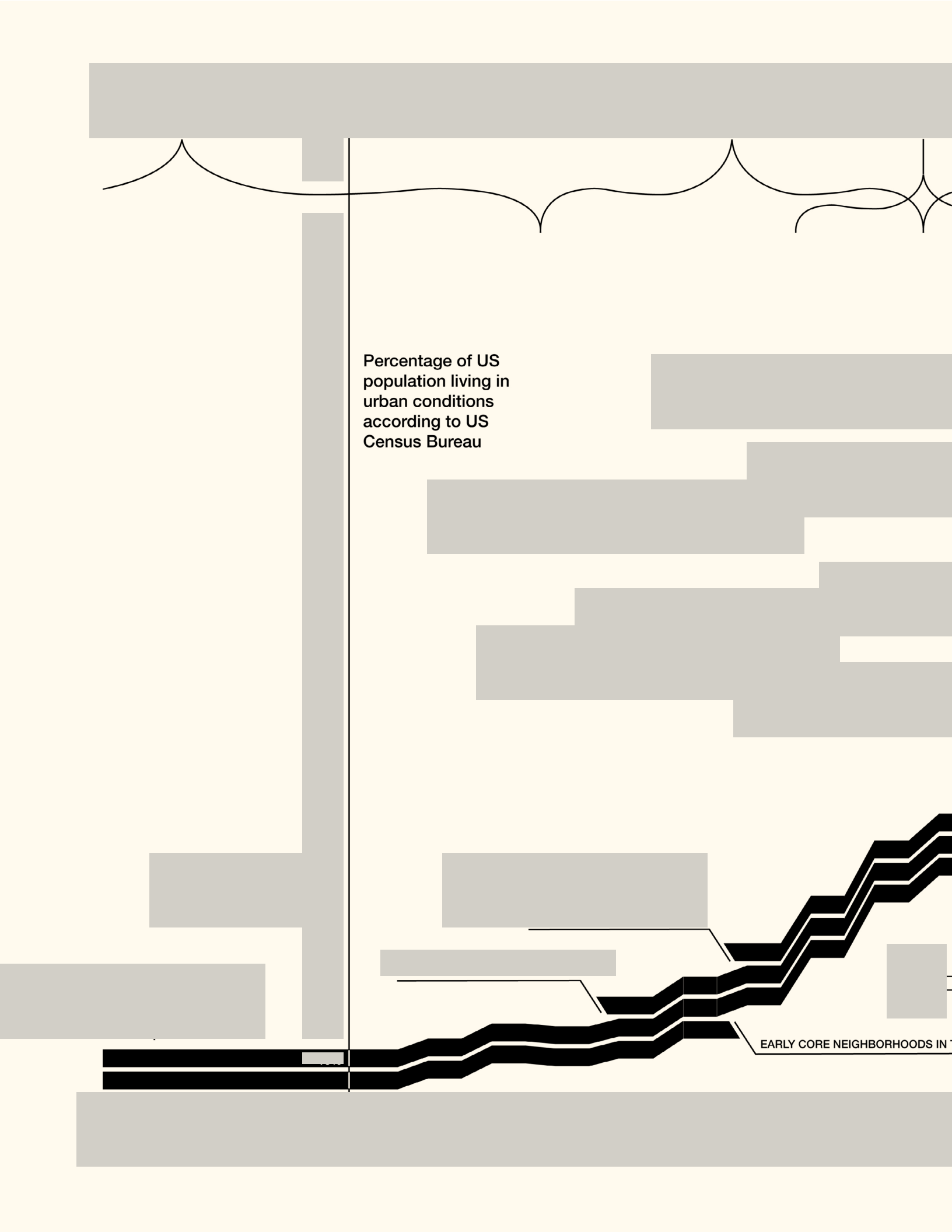
FIGURE 032  
Timeline of Detached,  
Single-Family Housing  
in the United States,  
by author.

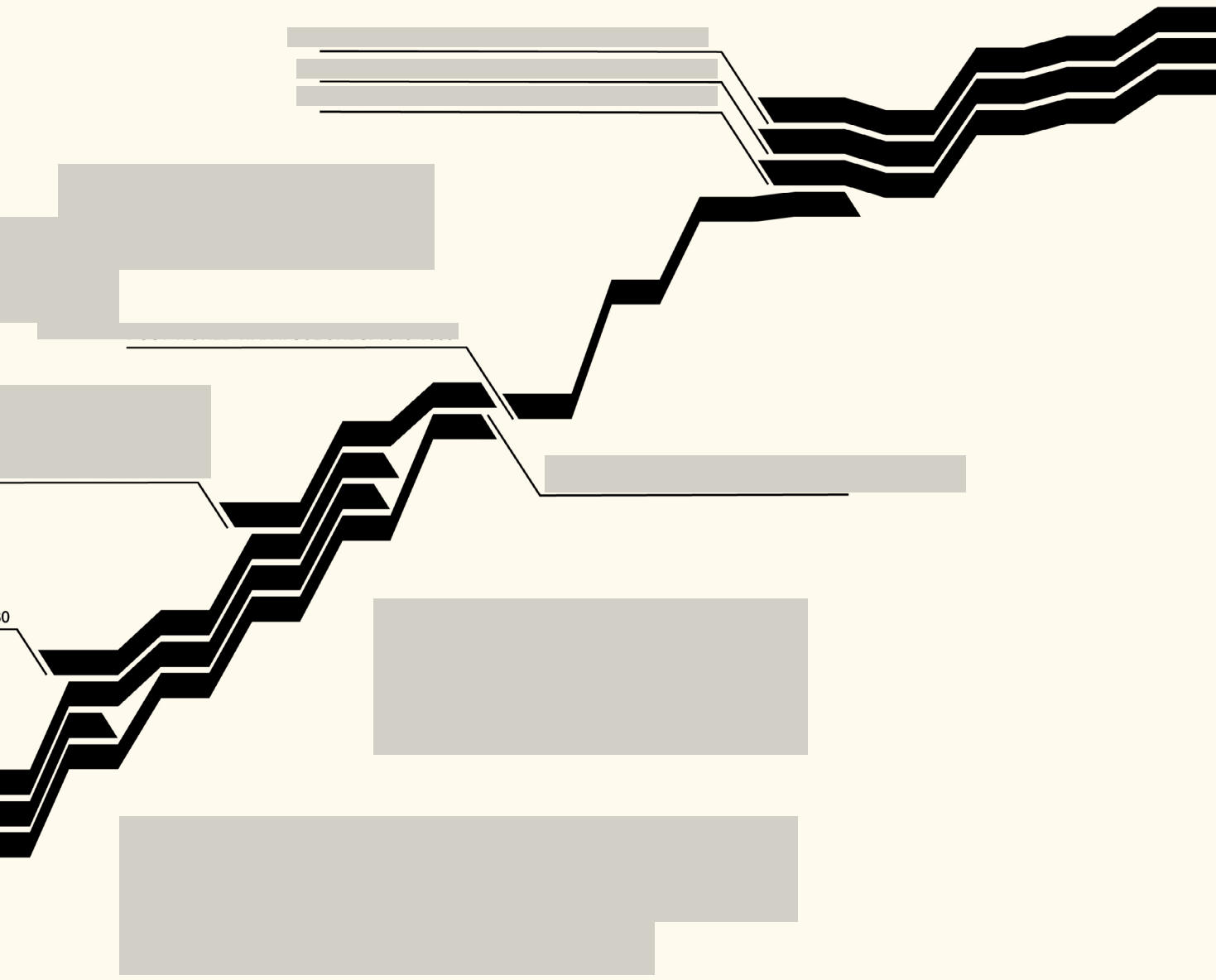
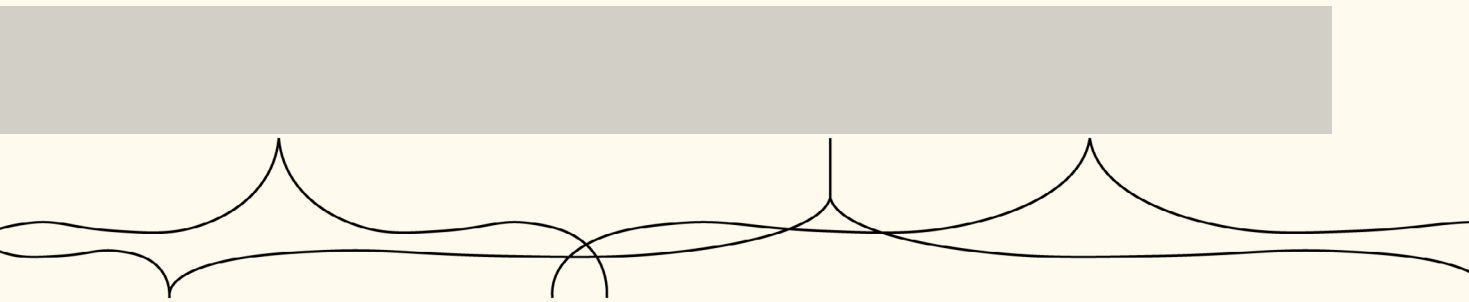
Nashville, a mid-sized city of diverse ethnic makeup, developed a primary cultural export of rural white music over the decades of the nation's most rapid urbanization. The emergence of country music in such a context offers a musical parallel to the urban-rural contradictions latent in the homes of Sears, Roebuck & Co. or Levitt and Sons, along with the middle- and working-class white families to which they catered, often exclusively.

But architecture and music also share in their capacity to take on new relations and meanings as they transform over time. Toots and the Maytals can make a reggae track out of “Take Me Home, Country Roads”, just as easily as Willie Nelson can take on a jazz standard like “Moonlight in Vermont.” An exploration of how such adaptations take place in practices

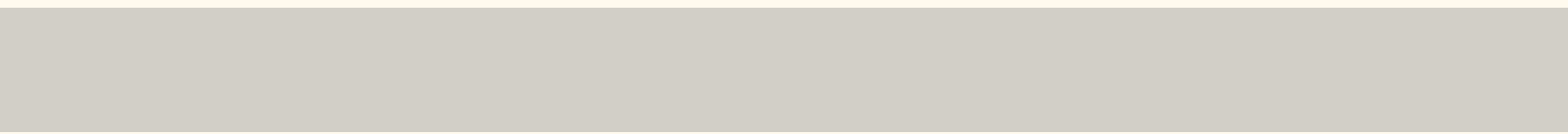
Percentage of US population living in urban conditions according to US Census Bureau

EARLY CORE NEIGHBORHOODS IN





**Timeline of Detached,  
Single-Family Housing  
in the United States**



of music might help us to consider the possibilities of such cultural transformations in single-family housing.

## **Making Songs**

The musical traditions of jazz and country share in a common tradition of song that recognizes performance and songwriting as distinct forms of authorship. A musician may serve in one or both of these roles on a given song, but there is room to recognize a contribution as either. Critically, this permits the work of one person or group to become that of another, not in theft, but in dialogue. Session musicians and writers of Nashville and New York walk this earth with an index of songs that permit interplay with other musicians, serving as reference material in the development of new sounds.

This mode of working through common rituals and creative reordering is what I think of as a methodology of the songbook: Where the catalog offers the available options, the songbook provides material with which to play. Where the manual dictates operative steps, the songbook permits its holder to speak back, often with amplification.

The research for this thesis has been, in part, an attempt to develop a personal cultural anthology for the single-family house. Its material comes primarily from the scholarship of historic preservationists over the last half century. However, where preservationists record the buildings of the past in order to maintain them, the aims of the following speculative exercises are to find ways to turn single-family housing into something it isn't.

In this, an archive of historic houses, along with a loose collection of musical recordings, contemporary journalism, demography and personal experience becomes the creative material for reworking. These forms, seen as registers of culture, become indiscrete from one another and take on a

capacity to exist in conversation.

The houses that come of this working material suit myself and possibly even communities to which I have belonged. In communicating them through model, drawing, word and song, my hope is that they might detach from my subjectivity and be taken on by other individuals and cultures — transformed and even renamed.

Moving towards the interdeterminacies of music’s cultural practices, I have invited two great musicians to join me in this exploration: James Wyatt Woodall was raised in the New York area but works carefully across many of the instruments and crafts that make up the distinctive Nashville sound. Inversely, Jack Aylor grew up with me in Nashville but plays the stand-up bass within the lineage of his maestro, Ron Carter, alongside many of the other jazz giants still active in New York. Through a continual exchange of materials and ideas, they have taken on my speculative designs and translated them back into the format of song with which many of them begin.

FIGURE 033  
(Left) James Wyatt Woodall performing live. (James Wyatt Woodall)

FIGURE 034  
(Right) Jack Aylor, Recording. (James Wyatt Woodall)



## Endnotes

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- 1 Vijay Iyer, “New York Stories: Vijay Iyer, The jazz pianist tackles the question, ‘Are cities music?’” *The Daily Note*, (May 15, 2013).
- 2 Ibid.
- 3 Ibid.
- 4 Ibid.
- 5 Virginia McAlester et al., *A Field Guide to American Houses: The Definitive Guide to Identifying and Understanding America’s Domestic Architecture*, (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2013).
- 6 Alan Lomax, “An Appeal For Cultural Equity,” From the Program of the Festival of American Folklife, edited by Thomas Vennum, Jr., Smithsonian Institution, 1985, First published in *World of Music*, XIV [2] 1972, <https://www.culturalequity.org/alan-lomax/appeal>







Model No. 1

## Fence House

Ella Fitzgerald made a number of albums performing the tunes of famous Tin Pan Alley and Broadway songwriters. One of these albums: *Ella Fitzgerald Sings the Cole Porter Songbook* has been a persistent touchpoint in this project for its celebration of co-authorship and collaboration through time.<sup>1</sup>

As we listen to a song like “Don’t Fence Me In”, we hear the

FIGURE 035  
(Page 70) Fence  
House Entrance,  
Photograph by Tristan  
Searight.

FIGURE 036  
Ella Fitzgerald Sings  
the Cole Porter  
Songbook, Album Art.  
(Verve Records)



first person narrative of a fictional character named Wild Cat Kelly through words written by Cole Porter and sung by Ella Fitzgerald to the tune of an ensemble of musicians. In consideration of the song’s meaning, we might project onto each of these actors differently as individuals. Taken collectively, the sound of the message becomes much wider.

“Don’t Fence Me In” is about resisting the pressures of social conformity and the confinements of the systems and structures in place. The single-family house has been a strong force for conformity in the United States. Specifically, this project focuses on how controls over the size and density of houses limits individuals’ choices.

In the past half century, the median size of the house in the United States has grown significantly, while the number

of people per household has plummeted.<sup>2</sup> This means that people, more often forming smaller families or making the choice to live alone, struggle to find smaller dwellings that accommodate these life choices.

One factor in influencing the size of new housing is local jurisdiction on minimum lot sizes and the size and appearance of dwellings thereon.<sup>3</sup> In many residential neighborhoods, everything on the lot, down to the fence that delineates its boundary, is dictated by land-use code.

Fences represent conceptual lines between two pieces of property. As such, they have no thickness. However, any real fence is as thick as the material from which it is made. A simple picket fence may be only six inches wide, while a split log fence might be as wide as three feet in some places. While most municipal codes dictate the height of fences in front, side and rear yards, many contain ambiguities about the width of a fence and its material make-up. This begs the question: How wide can a fence be? What can a fence be made of?

This proposal exhibits a fence made out of a house.

In keeping with common municipal code standards, it maintains an eight-foot maximum height in the side and rear yard of the property, carving into the earth to create space for a one-bedroom residence. The fill from this excavation is relocated to the rear yard of the Fence House to create a path over the boundary for Wild Cat Kelly, or any others wishing not to be fenced in.

## **Musical Notes**

By James Wyatt Woodall

### “Don’t Fence Me In”

With our arrangement of “Don’t Fence Me In”, I didn’t want to be fenced in by the traditional harmony. Thus, we reharmonized the intro with a more modern jazz harmony than might be expected from a Cole Porter tune. Nevertheless, we return to a more traditional swing arrangement (with guitar and bass reminiscent of Eldon Shamblin and Leon Rausch on Bob Wills’ “Faded Love”).

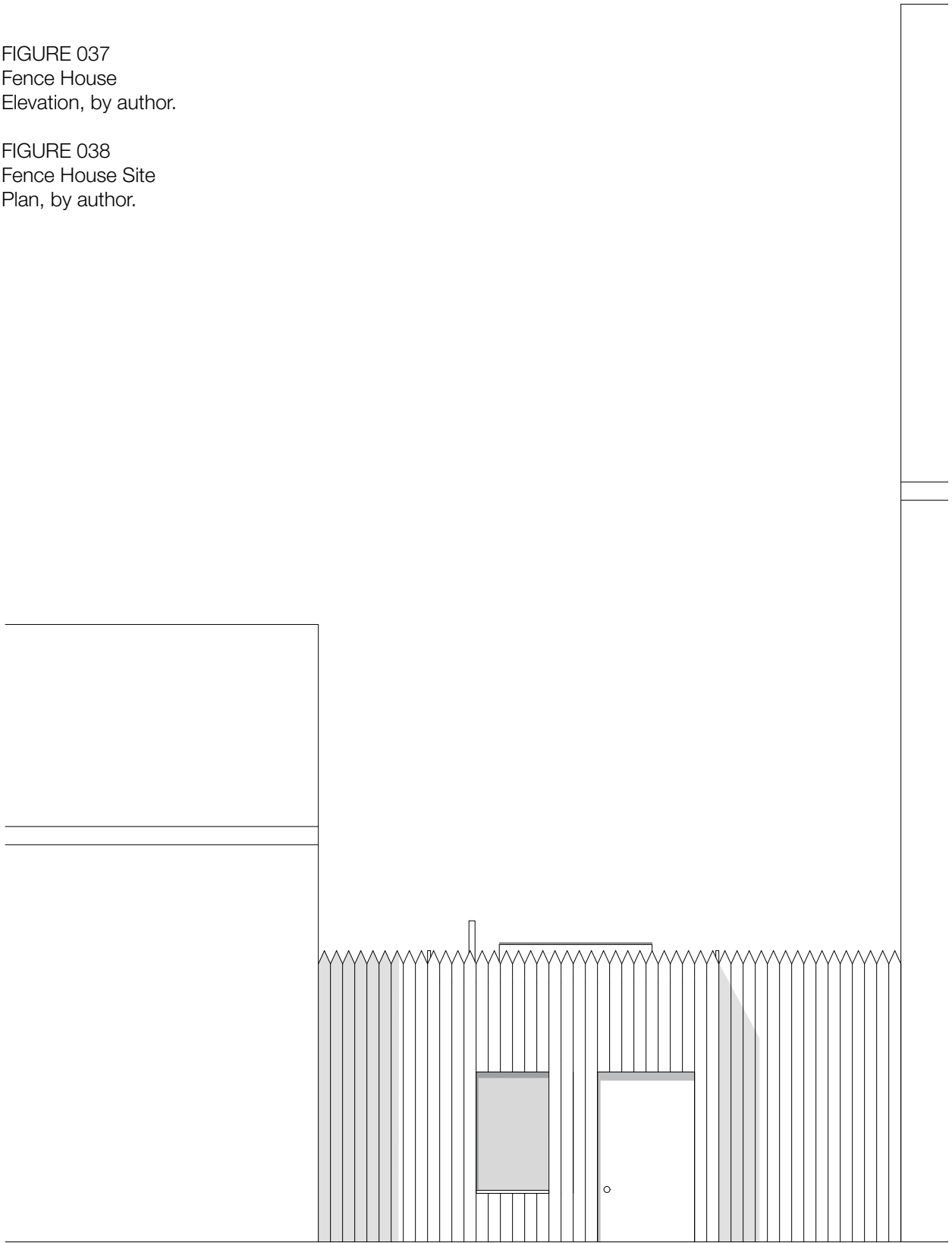
## Endnotes

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- 1 Ella Fitzgerald, *Ella Fitzgerald Sings the Cole Porter Songbook*, Verve Records, 1956.
- 2 Emily Badger, “Whatever Happened to the Starter Home? The economics of the housing market, and the local rules that shape it, have squeezed out entry-level homes,” *New York Times*, September 25, 2022.
- 3 Ibid.

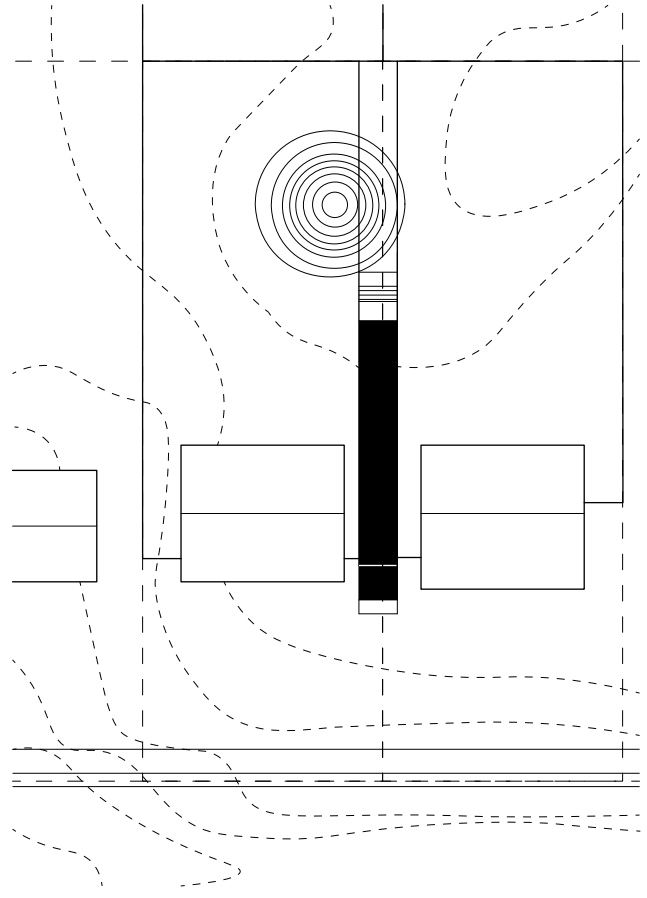
FIGURE 037  
Fence House  
Elevation, by author.

FIGURE 038  
Fence House Site  
Plan, by author.

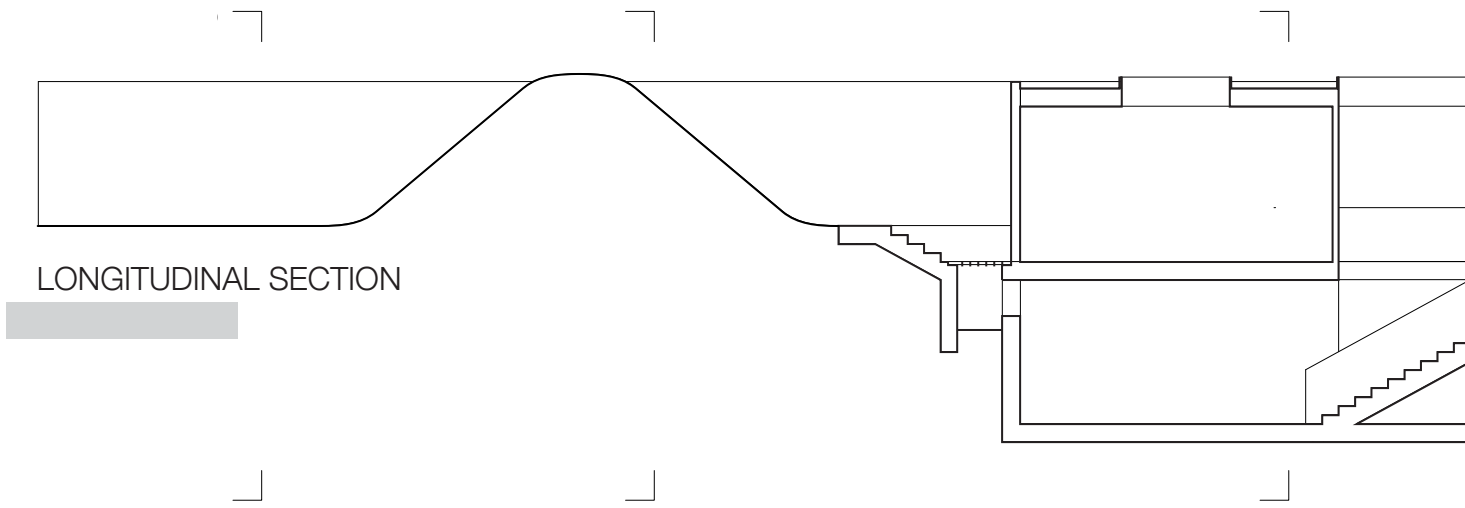


ELEVATION



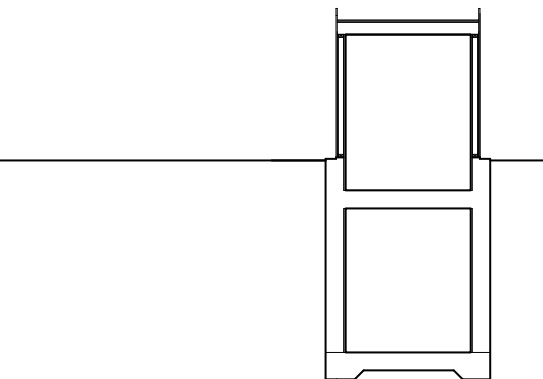
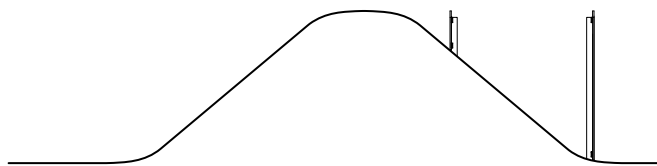
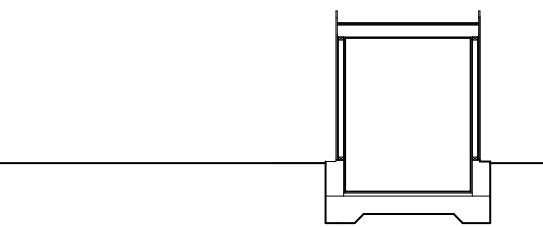
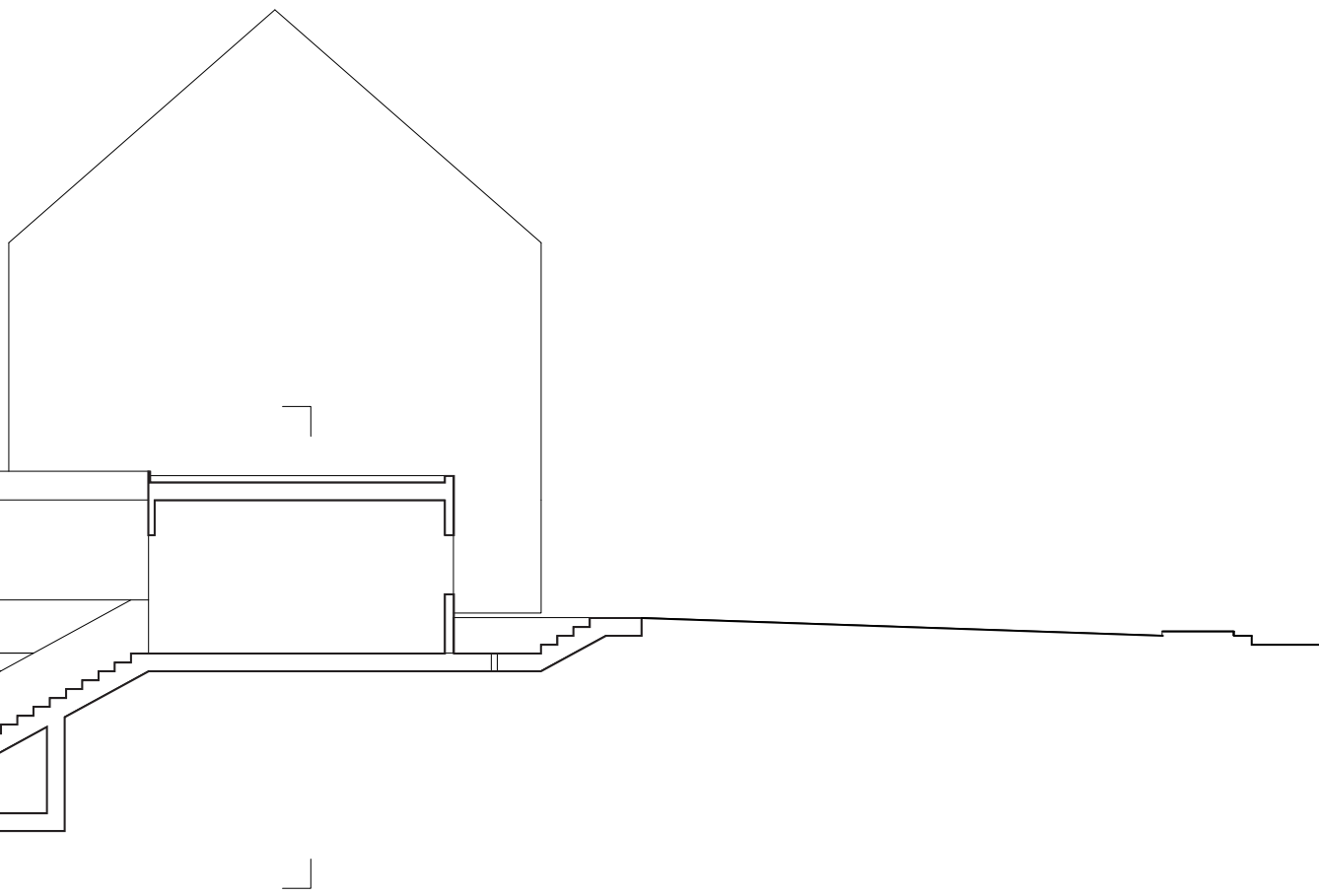


SITE PLAN



LONGITUDINAL SECTION

FIGURE 039  
Virginia Lee Burton,  
The Litte House, End-  
paper, 1947.



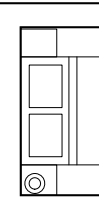
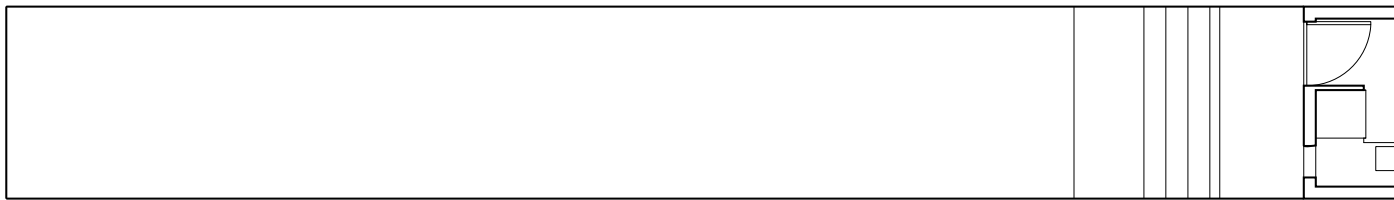
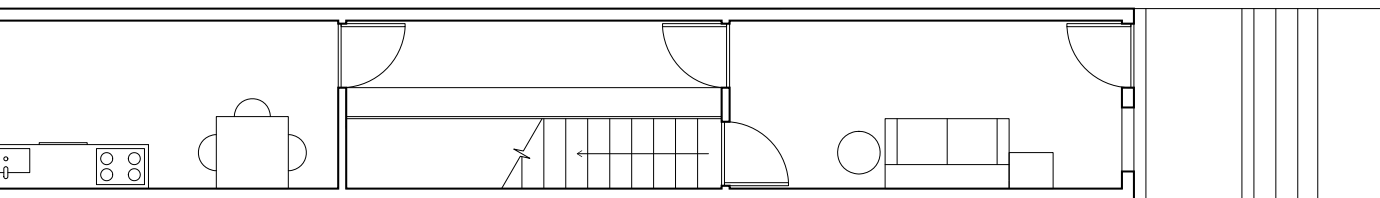
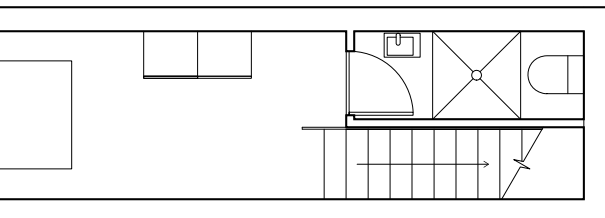


FIGURE 040  
Virginia Lee Burton,  
The Litte House, End-  
paper, 1947.



PLAN - LEVEL 1



PLAN - BASEMENT



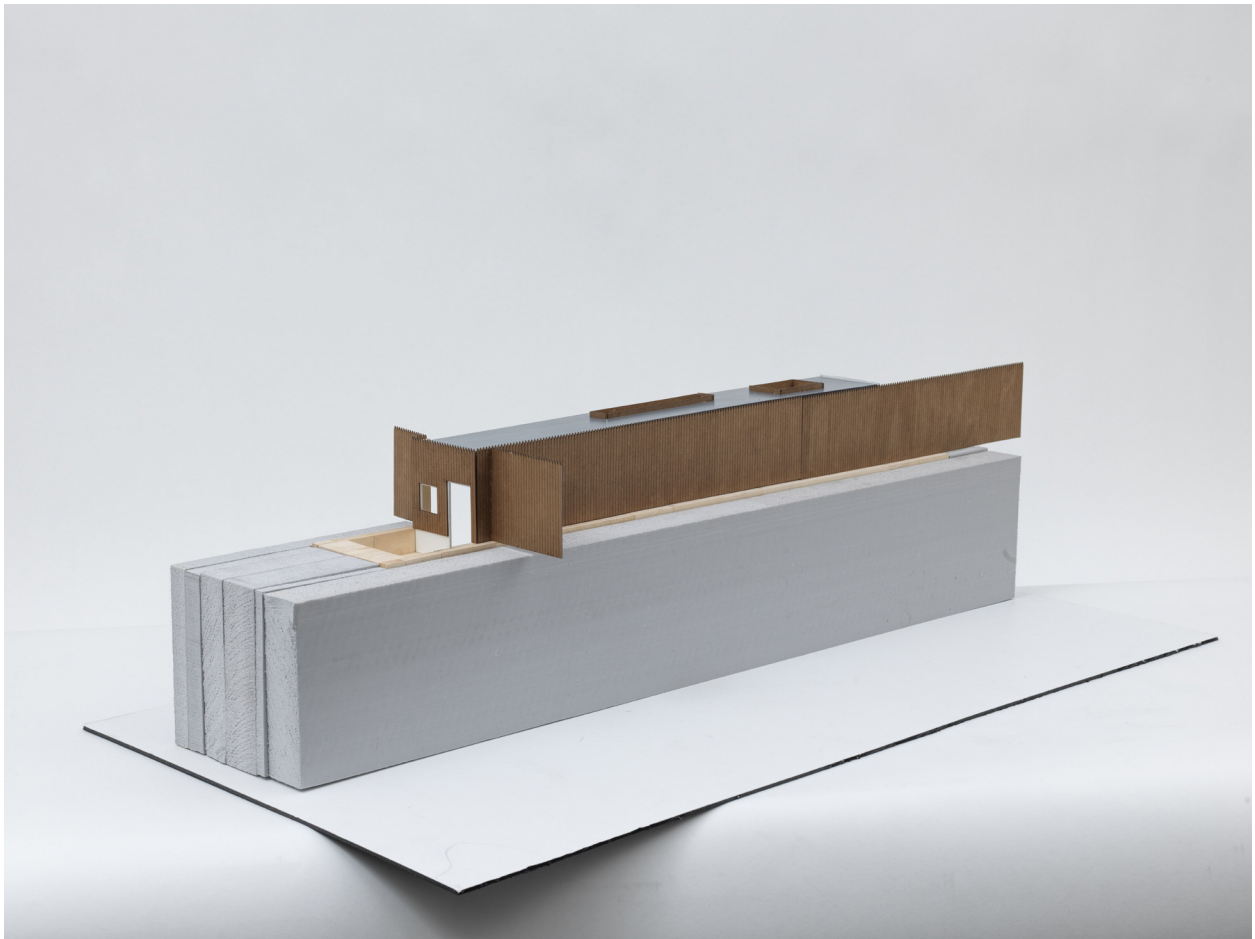










FIGURE 041  
(Page 81)  
Fence House Side  
Elevation, Photograph  
by Andy Ryan.

FIGURE 042  
(Page 82)  
Fence House View  
from Above, Photo-  
graph by Andy Ryan.

FIGURE 043  
(Page 83)  
Fence House Section-  
al Elevation, Photo-  
graph by Andy Ryan.

FIGURE 044  
(Page 84)  
Fence House Interior,  
Photograph by Tristan  
Searight.

FIGURE 045  
(Page 85)  
Fence House Interior,  
Photograph by Tristan  
Searight.

FIGURE 046  
(Page 86)  
Fence House Interior,  
Photograph by Tristan  
Searight.



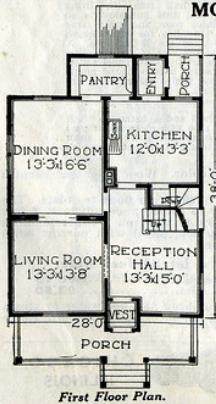
Model No. 2

## Non-Denominational Dance Hall

The *foursquare* house emerged as a typology with the first streetcar and early automobile suburbs.<sup>1</sup> These neighborhoods were often referred to as bedroom communities because of their make-up of exclusively residential buildings. This project speculates on the introduction of a different kind of room into the bedroom community.



MODERN HOME No. 264P111

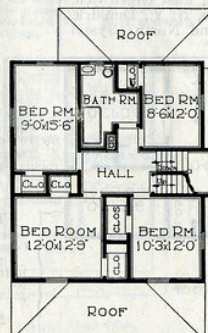


First Floor Plan.

Built at Hudson Falls, N. Y., Waukesha, Wis., Edington, S. Dak., Youngstown, Penn., Solon, Iowa, Columbus, Ohio, and several other cities.

SAVED 25 PER CENT ON MODERN HOME No. 264P111. 1503 Holcomb Ave., Detroit, Mich. Sears, Roebuck and Co., Chicago, Ill.

Gentlemen—We are fully satisfied and find we saved 25 per cent on all building material we bought of you. If we build again we shall send for a full catalog and especially mill work. Everything bought of you is up to your claim in every way. We will gladly answer any inquiries that may come to us. Yes, we are living in our house and the cypress doors are dandy finished. We shall finish our next house in cypress all through. We are sending a photograph of the house. Accept our thanks for your cordial treatment. Respectfully yours, W. A. TURK.



Second Floor Plan.

—70—

**\$1,185<sup>00</sup>**

For \$1,185.00 we will furnish all the material to build this Eight-Room House, consisting of Mill Work, Ceiling, Siding, Flooring, Finishing Lumber, Building Paper, Pipe, Gutter, Sash Weights, Hardware, Painting Material, Lumber, Lath and Shingles. NO EXTRAS, as we guarantee enough material at the above price to build this house according to our plans.

First story inside floors, trim, doors, etc., furnished in clear red oak for \$86.00 extra.

By allowing a fair price for labor, cement, brick and plaster, which we do not furnish, this house can be built for about \$2,415.00, including all material and labor.

For Our Offer of Free Plans See Page 6.

**T**HIS is a conveniently arranged house of eight rooms at a very low cost compared with the accommodations it offers. A large front porch, 24 feet long and 6 feet wide, extends almost across the front of the house.

**First Floor.**

All interior doors on this floor are five-cross panel clear yellow pine, with clear yellow pine trim. Front door opens into a vestibule which leads to a large reception hall in which there is an open stairway to the second floor. Under the main stairway cellar stairs lead to the side entrance and continue down into the basement. All rooms are well lighted by windows on two sides and are 9 feet high from floor to ceiling.

**Second Floor.**

A stairway from the first floor leads to a hall from which all bedrooms and bathroom can be easily reached. The doors on this floor are five-cross panel solid yellow pine, with clear yellow pine trim. All rooms are well lighted, have good size closets and are 8 feet 6 inches high from floor to ceiling.

**Basement.**

An excavated basement under the entire house, 7 feet from floor to joists. Lighted with basement sash.

Paint for two coats on exterior work, your choice of color; varnish and wood filler for two coats for interior finish.

Clear yellow pine floors throughout. Built on a concrete block foundation. We furnish No. 1 yellow pine framing lumber. The first story is sided with stonekote or cement plaster. The second story is sided with clear narrow bevel cypress siding. Cedar shingle roof.

**This house is 28 feet wide by 38 feet long and can be built on a lot 35 feet wide.**

Complete Warm Air Heating Plant, for soft coal, extra.....\$97.43

Complete Warm Air Heating Plant, for hard coal, extra.....\$99.59

If estimates and specifications for plumbing and hot water or steam heating systems are desired write for them, mentioning Modern Home No. 264P111 in your request.

SEARS, ROEBUCK AND CO.



CHICAGO, ILLINOIS

FIGURE 047 (Page 88) Dance Hall Interior, Photograph by author.

FIGURE 048 Sears, Roebuck & Co., Sears Chelsea Model, Sears Modern Homes, 1916. (Sears, Roebuck & Co.)

In the year 2000, the Clinton administration passed a bill known as the Religious Land Use and Institutionalized Persons Act.<sup>2</sup> Among other things, this bill protected religious institution from the burdens of local land-use policy, permitting religious practice in a range of otherwise restricted neighborhoods.<sup>3</sup> Even prior to this act, many residential neighborhoods made allowances for religious structures within their boundaries.

As a simple rectangular mass, the foursquare type house maintains a basic resemblance to a number of religious structures in American history. The Touro Synagogue in Newport, Rhode Island, is the oldest synagogue in the present-day United States.<sup>4</sup> In its hipped-roof, double-height volume, it has close similarities in both size and proportion to foursquare houses. In Shaker villages, meeting halls were large, boxy buildings where community members could come together in song and dance within its main volume.

Pegs could be arranged in different patterns on the meeting halls open dancefloor, showing the importance of the architectural space as an instrument in choreographing the ritual proceedings of the Shaker community.<sup>5</sup> In Houston and other parts of the deep south after the Civil War, black churches utilized collective land holding patterns as a way of upending the individualistic ownership practices that still dominate neighborhoods of single-family housing to this day.<sup>6</sup>

The proposal begins with Sears, Roebuck & Co.'s Modern Home No. 264 P111, also known as The Sears Chelsea.<sup>7</sup> The interior walls of this house partition the domestic spaces of suburban life. These interior partitions, in many cases, also serve as structural supports, resisting the gravity and lateral loads and holding up the house. This proposal removes these partitions and relocates the studs from them, along with additional lumber, to buttress a newly double-heightened, open interior volume, and produce a roof system that is able to span an open interior space. This rearrangement of studs and joists converts many rooms into one to form an open space for the possibilities of community action, self-determinacy, song and dance.

## **Musical Notes**

By James Wyatt Woodall

### “Dance Hall”

When I think dancing, I think of a two-step. Since this was a non-denominational religious space and community center. We chose to create a tune that was rhythmically, harmonically, and melodically akin to Hank Williams' “I Saw the Light.” That tune is not quite a hymn and not quite a honky tonk number, but one that is often sung by many people at one time.

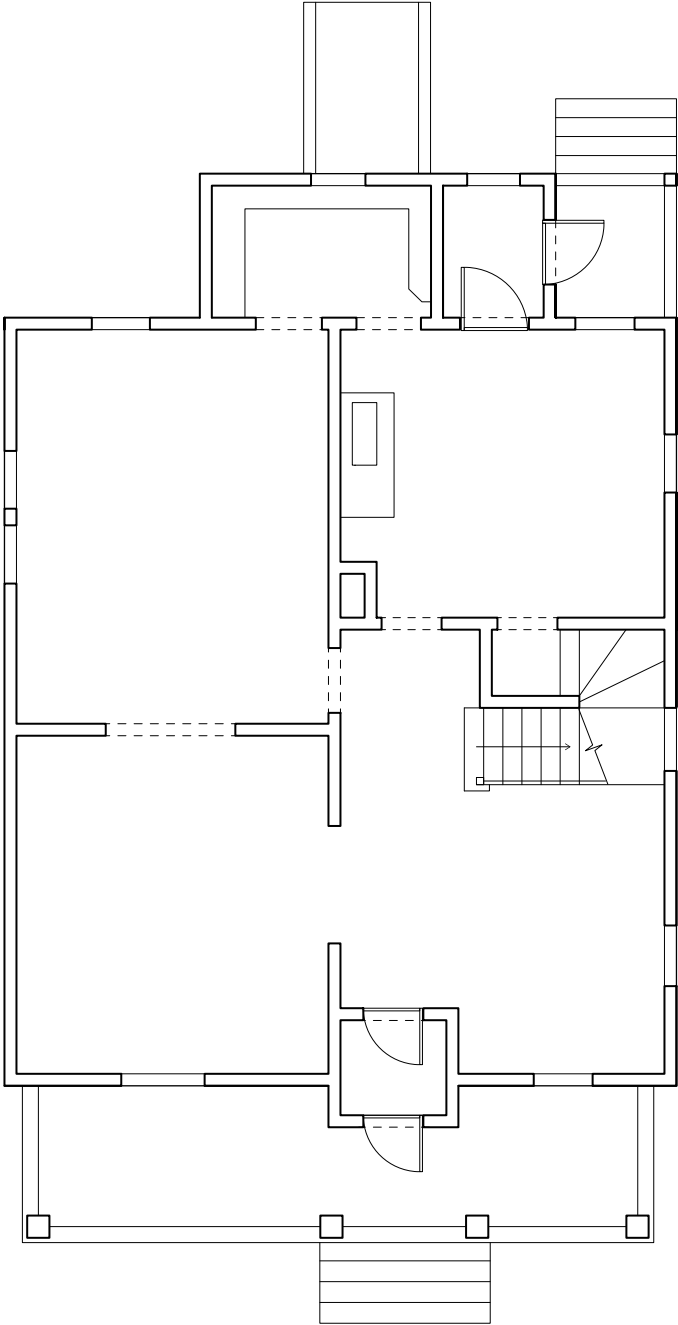
## Endnotes

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- 1 Thomas Walter Hanchett, *The Four Square House in the United States*, (Chicago: The University of Chicago, 1986).
- 2 Congress.gov, “S.2869 - 106th Congress (1999–2000): Religious Land Use and Institutionalized Persons Act of 2000,” September 22, 2000, <https://www.congress.gov/bill/106th-congress/senate-bill/2869>.
- 3 Ibid.
- 4 “Touro Synagogue National Historic Site The Touro Synagogue, 85 Touro Street, Newport, Rhode Island,” National Register of Historic Places Nomination Form (Washington, DC: U.S. Department of the Interior, National Park Service.
- 5 Arthur E. Mclendon, “‘Leap and Shout, Ye Living Building!’: Ritual Performance and Architectural Collaboration in Early Shaker Meetinghouses,” *Buildings & Landscapes: Journal of the Vernacular Architecture Forum*, Vol. 20, No. 2 (Fall 2013), pp. 48–76, 58.
- 6 Gabriel Cuéllar, “Property as Practice: The Collective Land Holding Patterns of Black Churches,” *Unsettled Urban Space: Routines, Temporalities and Contestations*, 1st ed, (Routledge, 2022).
- 7 *Modern Homes*, Sears, Roebuck & Co., (Chicago, Illinois, 1916),, 76.

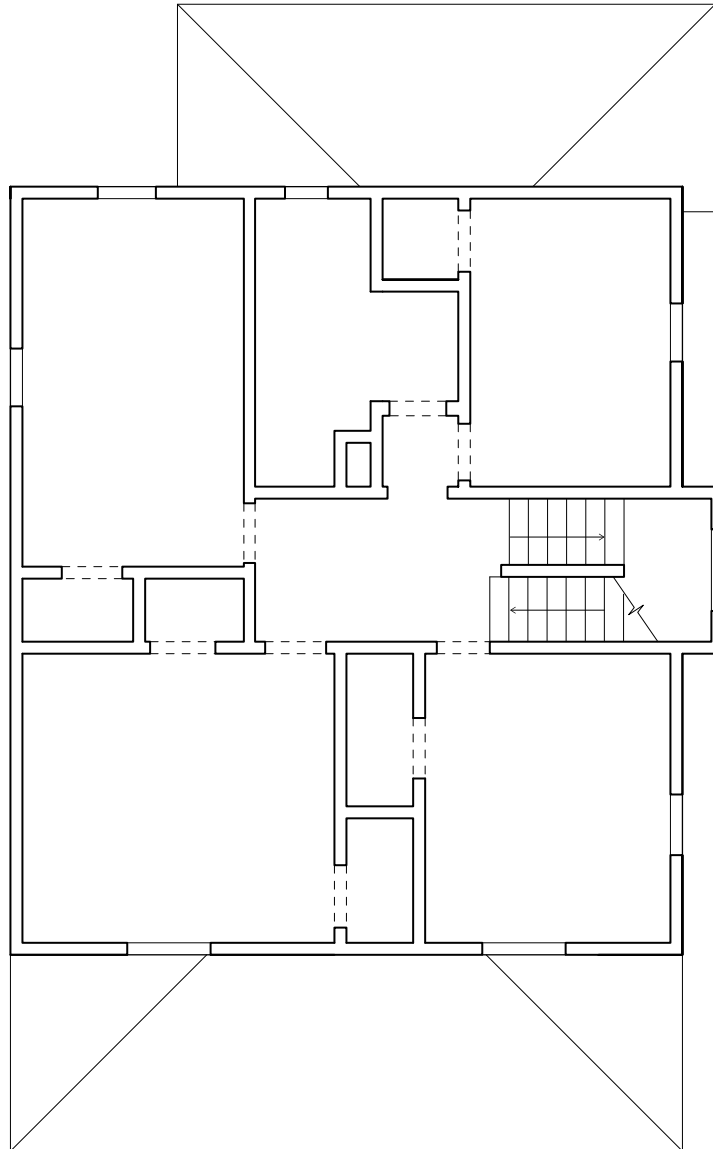


FIGURE 049  
Existing Plan - Level  
1, Sears Chelsea, by  
author.



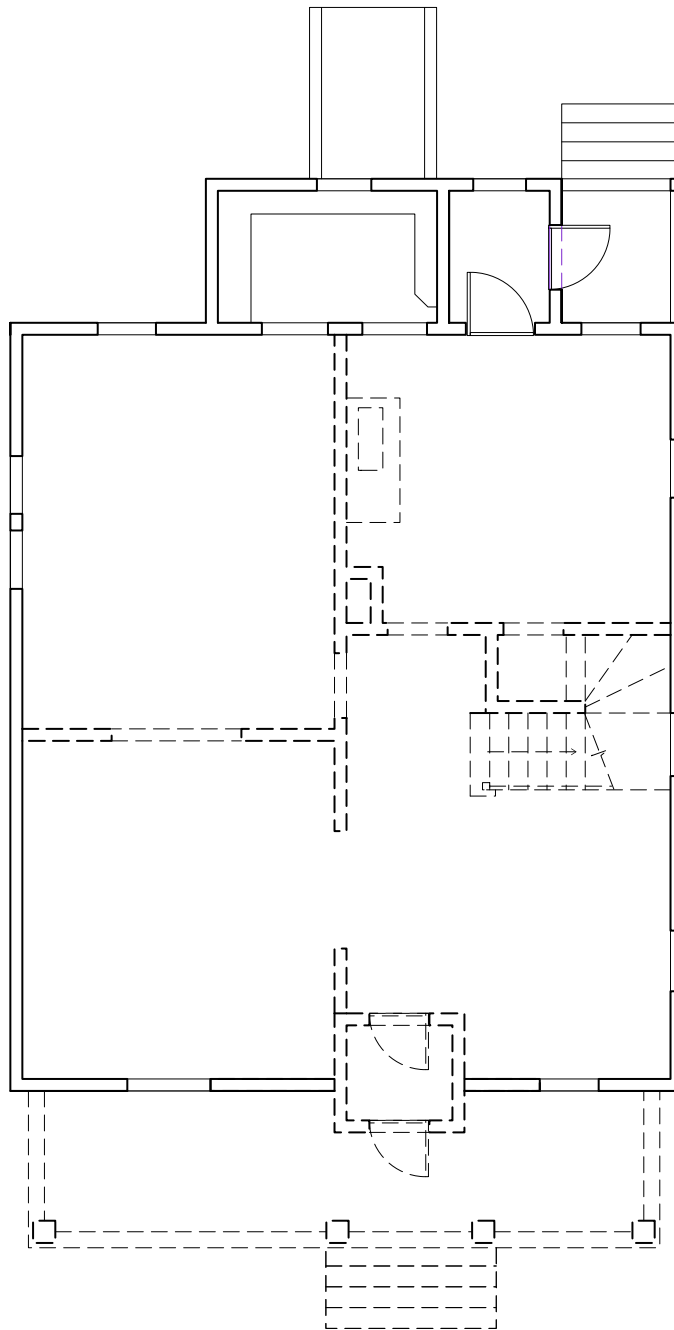
EXISTING PLAN - LEVEL 1

FIGURE 050  
Existing Plan - Level  
2, Sears Chelsea, by  
author.



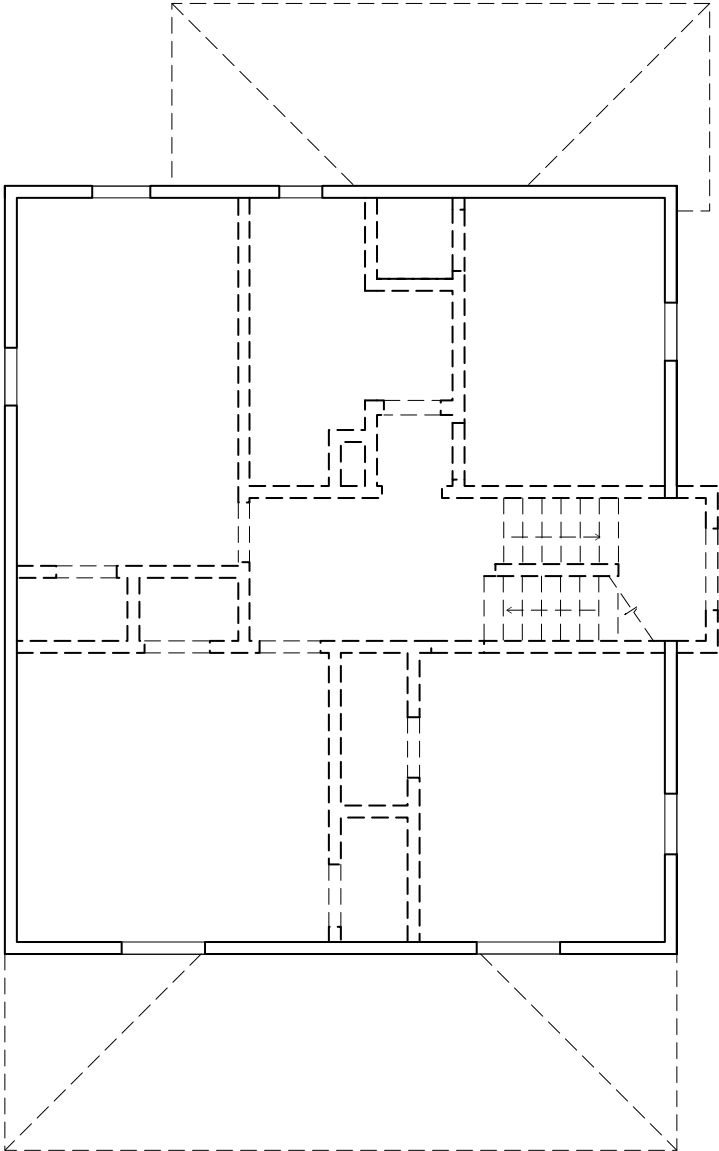
EXISTING PLAN - LEVEL 2

FIGURE 051  
Demolition Plan - Level 1,  
Sears Chelsea,  
by author.



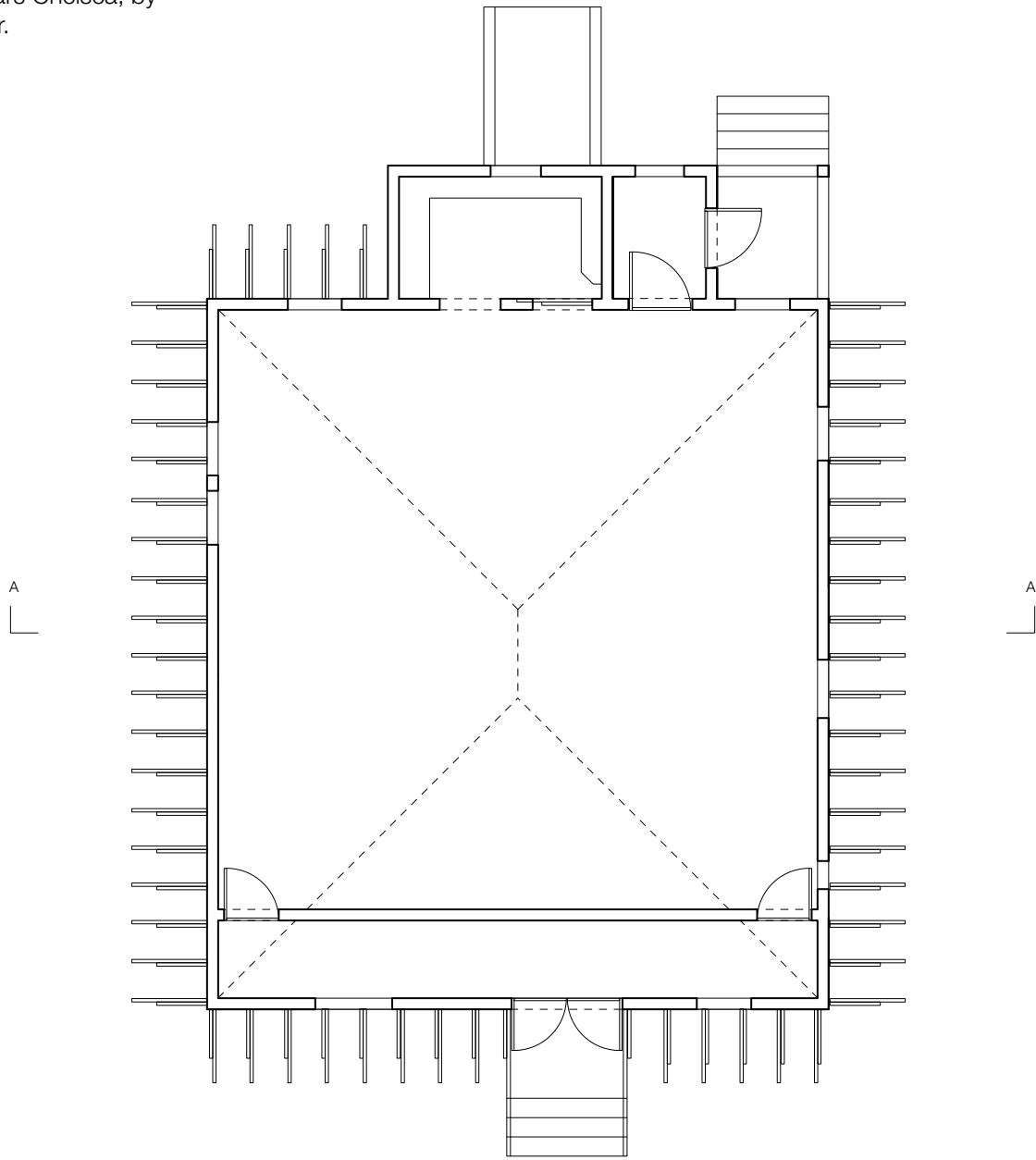
DEMOLITION PLAN - LEVEL 1

FIGURE 052  
Demolition Plan - Level 2,  
Sears Chelsea,  
by author.



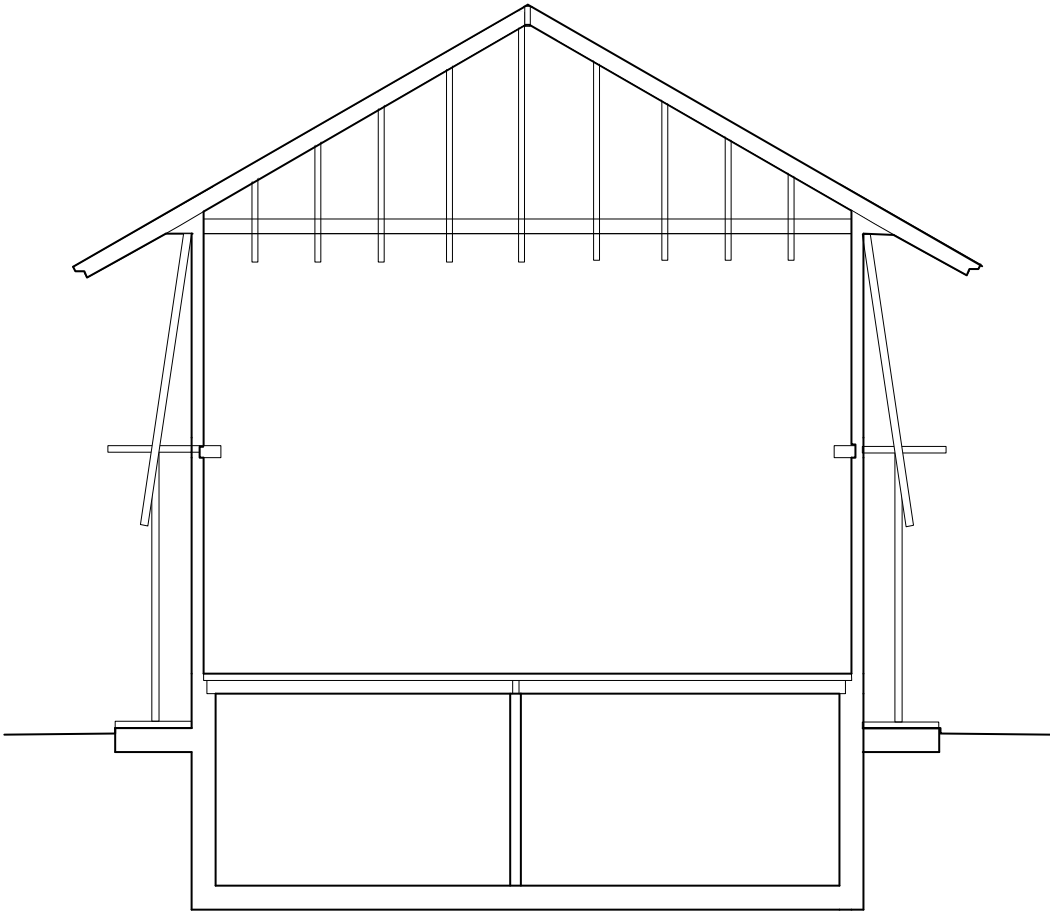
DEMOLITION PLAN - LEVEL 2

FIGURE 053  
Proposed Plan - Level  
1, Sears Chelsea, by  
author.



PROPOSED PLAN - LEVEL 1

FIGURE 054  
Proposed Section  
A-A, Sears Chelsea,  
by author.

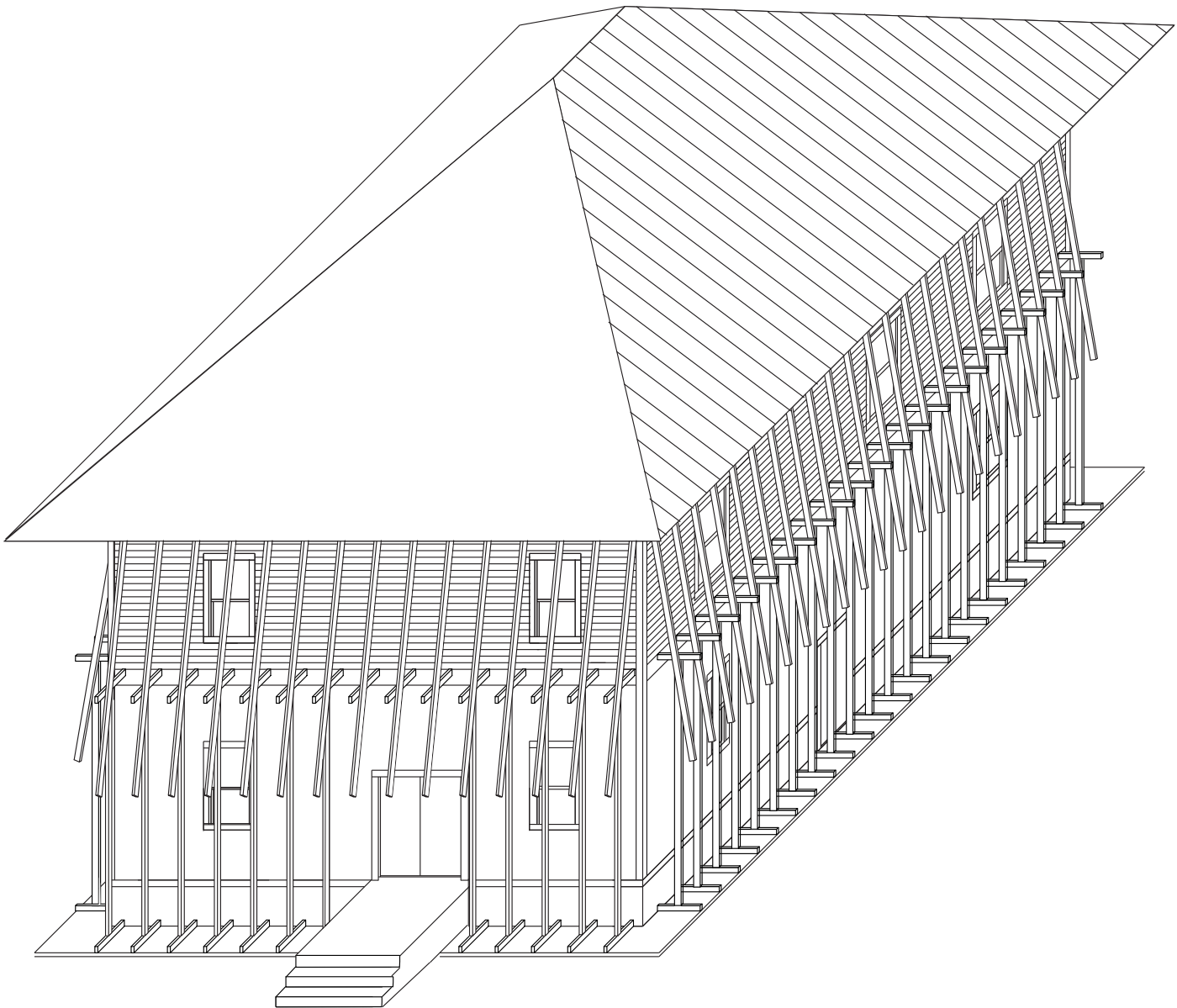


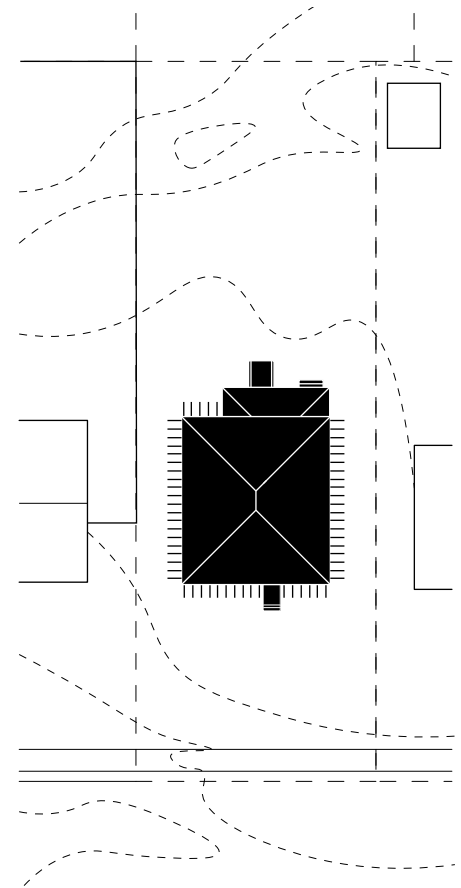
SECTION A-A



FIGURE 055  
Oblique View -  
Proposed, by author.

FIGURE 056  
Site Plan, Proposed,  
by author.





SITE PLAN















FIGURE 057  
(Page 101)  
Dance Hall Frontal  
Elevation, Photograph  
by Andy Ryan

FIGURE 058  
(Page 102)  
Dance Hall Interior  
Elevation, Photograph  
by Andy Ryan

FIGURE 059  
(Page 103)  
Dance Hall Exterior  
Perspective, Photo-  
graph by Andy Ryan

FIGURE 060  
(Page 104)  
Dance Hall Interior  
Perspective, Photo-  
graph by Andy Ryan

FIGURE 061  
(Page 105)  
Dance Hall Interior  
View, Photograph by  
Tristan Searight

FIGURE 062  
(Page 106)  
Dance Hall Interior  
View, Photograph by  
Tristan Searight



Model No. 3

## Ranch House

After a disappointing stint in Hollywood, Johnny Mercer returned to his home in Savannah, Georgia and wrote “I’m an Old Cowhand.”<sup>1</sup> The song was a satire of Hollywood cowboys who dressed the part but knew little about the practice of ranching: “I’m a cowboy who never saw a cow / Never roped a steer cause I don’t know how / Sure ain’t a fixin’ to start in now.”<sup>2</sup> Like Porter’s “Don’t Fence Me In”, it was a rare example of a jazz composer taking on the themes

FIGURE 063  
(Page 108)  
Ranch House Side  
Elevation, Photograph  
by Andy Ryan.

FIGURE 064  
Sonny Rollins, *Way  
Out West*, Album  
Art. (Contemporary  
Records)

of country-western swing, if only for satiric purposes.<sup>3</sup>

Many years after the song's initial success, another jazz great, Sonny Rollins, would travel out to Los Angeles for the first time to record an album with Max Roach.<sup>4</sup> Inspired by his visit to Los Angeles, and an upbringing on old cowboy films, Rollins developed a concept album called *Way Out West*, appropriating Mercer's "I'm an Old Cowhand" and converting it from a comic tune into an exhibition of saxophone virtuosity.<sup>5</sup> In this recording Rollins succeeds in what Jazz musicians do so well: turning one thing into another while somehow maintaining its name and structure.

How might the same transformation unfold through a house? This proposal speculates on that question, converting a *ranch house* into a *ranch house*.

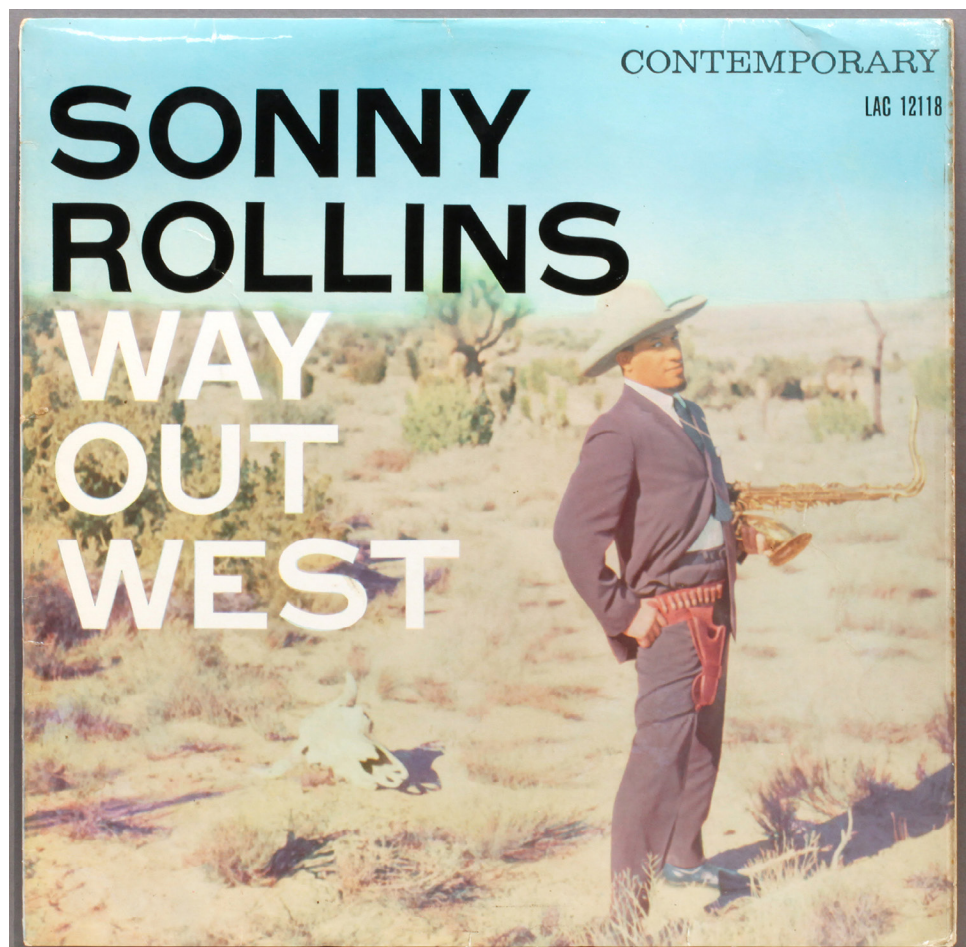


FIGURE 065  
 "Model No. 5898,"  
 Garlinghouse Ranch  
 and Suburban  
 Homes, Seventh  
 Edition. (L.F. Garling-  
 house Company, Inc.)

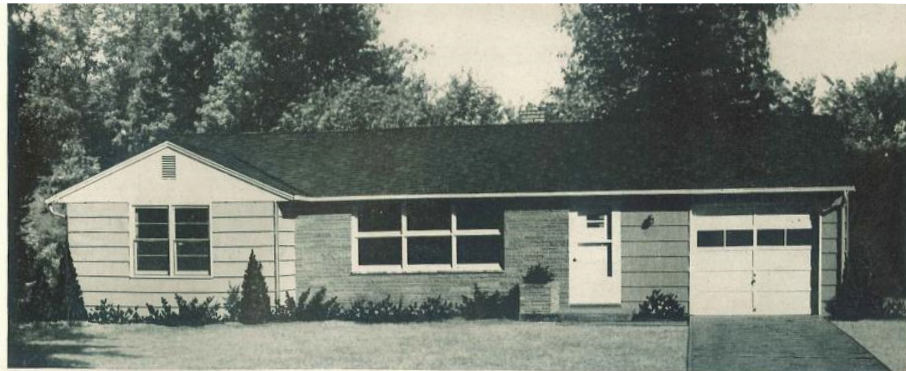
*Garlinghouse*  
**Ranch and Suburban Homes**  
 SEVENTH EDITION  
 PRICE 50 CENTS

*Published by* THE L. F. GARLINGHOUSE COMPANY, INC. *Topeka, Kansas*

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Printed in U. S. A. DESIGNERS—L. G. Lieurance, R. J. Arthur, T. G. Branham

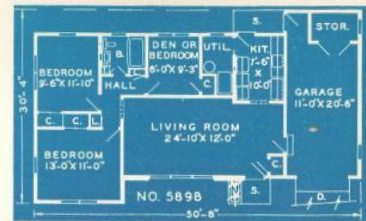
Select the design for your new home from a Garlinghouse Plan Book and send for the complete plans, specifications, lumber and mill lists. Secure them from your dealer, Loan Company, or The L. F. Garlinghouse Company, Inc., Topeka, Kansas. Plans for every design in this book and all the books listed on the back cover are available for prompt shipment on receipt of order.



No. 5898—Here is another efficiency ranch-type home that is suitable for the family that requires a minimum of three bedrooms but does not want a large home. The combination living-dining room permits the utilization of the space to the greatest advantage.

Complete plans as shown or reversed, specifications, lumber and mill list . . . . . \$20.00  
 Duplicate sets with original order . . . . . Per set 5.00

Sq. Ft.		Cu. Ft.
947	First floor	8,286
305	Garage and storage	2,740
	Attic	3,130



Mid-century ranch-style homes are low, single-story suburban houses, ripe for conversion into agricultural structures, assuming the introduction of adequate natural ventilation. While most suburban lots are far too small to provide the grazing lands necessary for cattle, goats and chickens require significantly less space.<sup>6</sup> Both of these species can be legally raised in many major municipalities around the country.<sup>7</sup>

A simple reconfiguration of interior doors and partitions, along with modifications to floor, wall and roof assembly at strategic points can turn a home fit for a family of four humans into an active chicken coop and goat barn.

## Musical Notes

By James Wyatt Woodall

“I’m an Old Cowhand” is one of those peculiar songs that has crossed the seemingly insurmountable gulf between jazz and country. This is an arbitrary distinction – both musics have rather similar roots. One could argue that honky tonk and outlaw country largely stem from the western swing of Bob Wills and Spade Cooley; while bebop, hard bop, and other modern jazz genres find their origins in swing music. Either way, swing is the thing.

This tune was part of the repertoire of everyone from Tex Ritter and Patsy Montana to Frank Sinatra and Sonny Rollins, as well as workaday crooners like Bing Crosby. With this arrangement, I tried to stay true to Rollins’s rather untraditional arrangement of the tune. Bassist Jack Aylor executes an original (yet decidedly a jazz bassline influenced by Israel Crosby) over country instrumentation – banjo, acoustic guitar, dobro, and pedal steel. The point is to blend forms to make something that is classic and traditional, yet novel. I had the idea to create a sound collage at the end of the piece comprised of farm sounds (i.e. cows mooing) and the urban sounds of Astoria, Queens – sirens, motorcycles, and all.

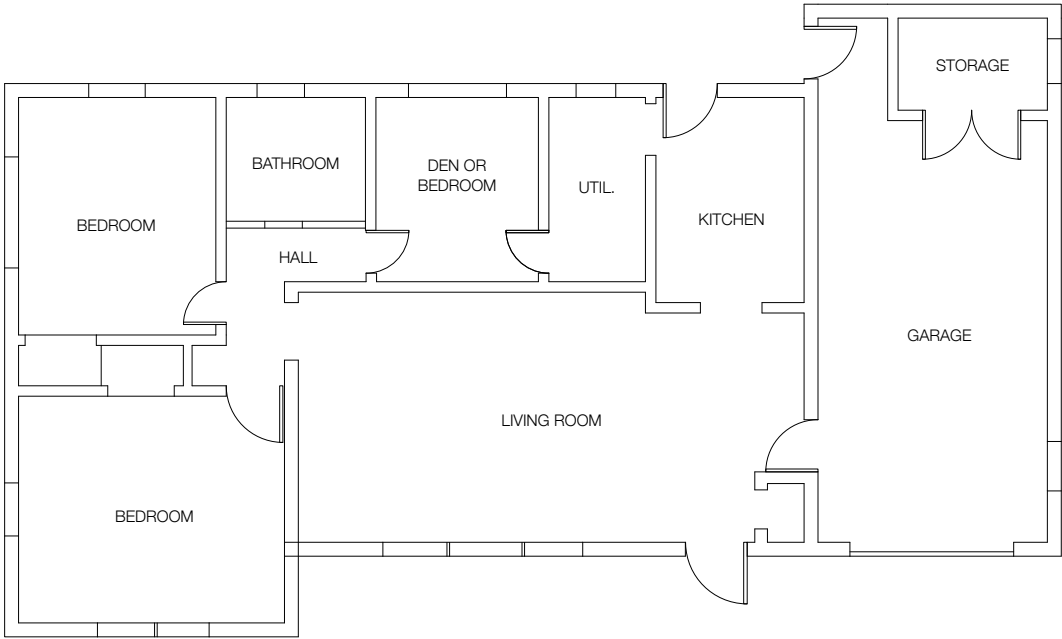
While creating a sound sample from my balcony, Willie Nelson and Leon Russell’s version of “Don’t Fence Me In” started playing during the WKCR’s Sunday morning broadcast. It was perfect. The sounds of the city and the farm seemed to cohabitate on that Sunday morning in December.

## Endnotes

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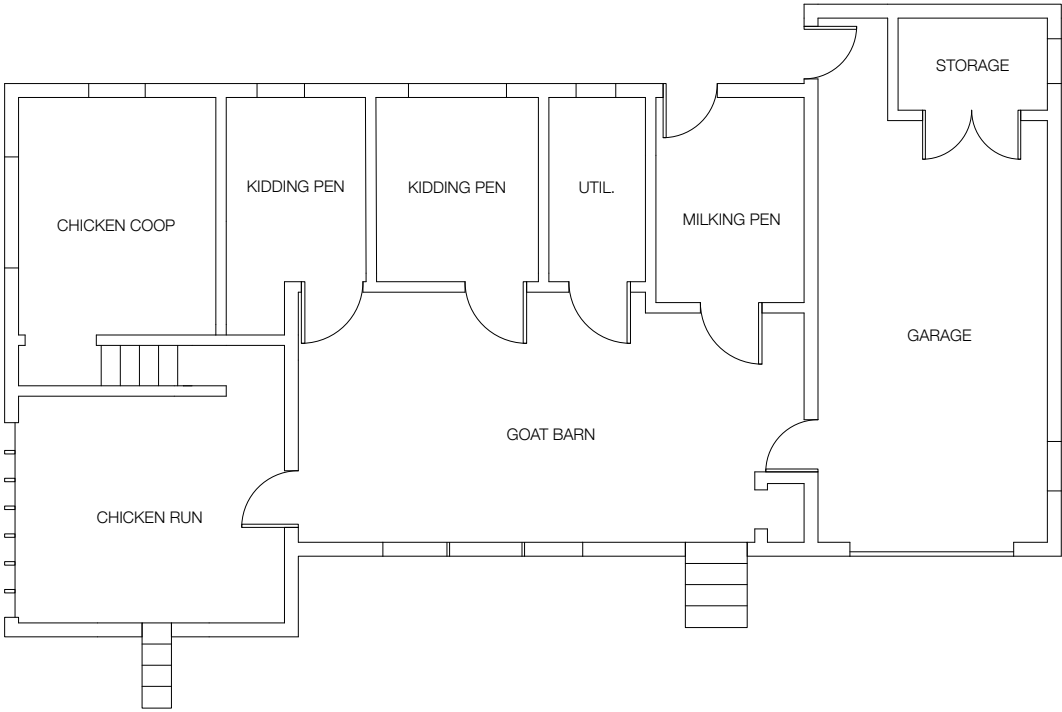
- 1 Philip Furia, *Skylark: The Life and Times of Johnny Mercer*, (New York: St. Martin's Press, 2003), 85.
- 2 Ibid.
- 3 Ibid.
- 4 Lester Koenig, "Liner Notes", Sonny Rollins, *Way Out West*, (Contemporary Records, 1957).
- 5 Ibid.
- 6 *Housing and Space Guidelines for Livestock*, University of New Hampshire Cooperative Extension, (Durham, New Hampshire, 2017), 3.
- 7 Amanda Kolson Hurley, "Detroit Is Designing a City With Space for Everyone, Including Goats," *NextCity*, June 6, 2016.

FIGURE 066  
Existing Plan, Level  
1, Ranch House, by  
author.



PLAN - EXISTING RANCH HOUSE 0 1 5ft

FIGURE 067  
Proposed Plan, Level  
1, Ranch House, by  
author.



PLAN - PROPOSED RANCH HOUSE 0 1 5ft









FIGURE 068  
(Page 115)  
Ranch House Frontal  
Elevation, Photograph  
by Andy Ryan.

FIGURE 069  
(Page 116)  
Ranch House Side  
Elevation, Photograph  
by Andy Ryan.

FIGURE 070  
(Page 117)  
Ranch House  
Perspective View,  
Photograph by Tristan  
Seairight.

FIGURE 071  
(Page 118)  
Ranch House  
Perspective View,  
Photograph by Tristan  
Seairight.



Model No. 4

## Life Stage House

John Prine's 1971 song, "Hello In There" tells the story of an aging couple left to mourn the death of one son as their other children have left the house and moved away.<sup>1</sup> They have few friends to speak to and little to speak about. Prine pleads to the listener to stop in and say, "hello in there" to the old folks left to dwell alone.

What makes the emotive power this song carries so

FIGURE 072  
(Page 120)  
Life Stage House Side  
Elevation, Photograph  
by Andy Ryan.

FIGURE 073  
John Prine, John  
Prine, Album Art (At-  
lantic Records)



remarkable is that John Prine was only twenty-two years old when he wrote it.<sup>2</sup> At this age, he would have known nothing of what it felt like to grow old, but seems to have known a great deal about the feeling of loneliness.

As demographics change within the United States, more people, both old and young, are living alone by choice or necessity.<sup>3</sup> Single-family housing districts are regulated to house nuclear families. This existing housing stock poses particular challenges to the elderly and disabled, with most houses containing multiple stories and staircases.

This proposal adapts a two-story colonial house into a place where old and young adults can cohabitate in a state of mutual aid between life stages.

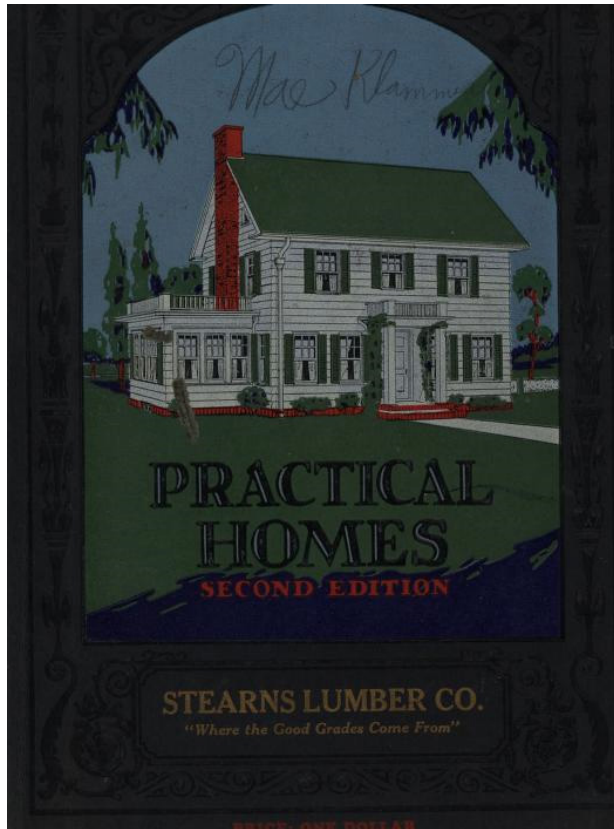
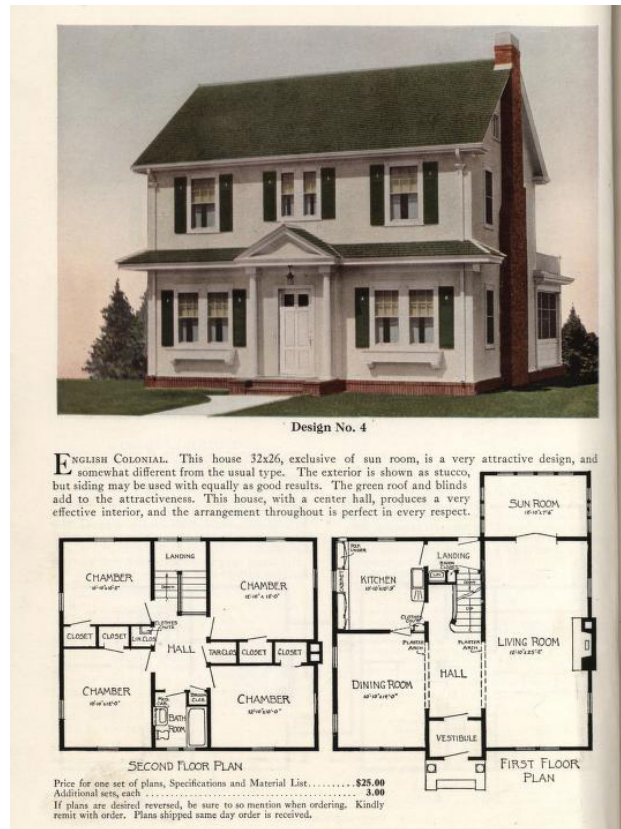


FIGURE 074  
Practical Homes -  
Second Edition, Stearns Lumber Company.  
(Public Domain)



A laminated timber plate cuts through the second floor datum, converting the first floor into an open and flexible space and extending it into the rear yard of the lot. To make up for this increase in impervious surface, the new roof area channels water into a central raingarden that anchors the central space.

The new plate of timber supports the existing second floor and roof, which, as a storage space, becomes the stage fly to activity below. It is complete with a gantry where younger residents can hoist living materials and memories in and out of storage. The central space is enclosed on either side by wings that house bedrooms, bathrooms, and vertical circulation. On either end, the space is enclosed by a large wall of storefront glass, encouraging passersby to stop in and say, "hello in there!"

## **Musical Notes**

By James Wyatt Woodall

### **“Nobody Said It Was Gonna Be Easy”**

Any home in which those advanced in age live is going to be a place of both joy and sadness, life and death. I'd imagine a lot of nostalgia and storytelling. I wrote the main motif of this tune in 2017 a couple years after my grandfather had passed. He was a linthead from the hills of north Georgia and didn't like to tell stories, until he did. One of his favorite sayings was, “nobody said it was gonna be easy.” It's a quote I often think about. I wrote this tune with him in mind. Jack and I expanded on this musical motif to flesh it out into a full piece. The piece is rather ambiguous tonally and emotionally – it veers from major to minor keys and from uplift to despondency. Perhaps much like the day-to-day experience at the “Life Stage House.”

## Endnotes

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- 1 John Prine, “Hello In There,” *John Prine*, (Atlantic Records, 1971).
- 2 Erin Osmon, “Ten Miles West,” In *John Prine’s John Prine*, 1–16. (New York: Bloomsbury Publishing Inc, 2021), 7.
- 3 Alice Bucknell, “Aging in Place: For America’s older adults, access to housing is a question of race and class,” Harvard University Graduate School of Design, October 24, 2019, Accessed 2023, <https://www.gsd.harvard.edu/2019/10/aging-in-place-for-americas-older-adults-access-to-housing-is-a-question-of-race-and-class/>









FIGURE 075  
(Page 125)  
Life Stage House  
Perspective View,  
Photograph by Andy  
Ryan

FIGURE 076  
(Page 126)  
Life Stage House  
Perspective View,  
Photograph by Andy  
Ryan

FIGURE 077  
(Page 127)  
Life Stage House  
Rear Elevation,  
Photograph by Andy  
Ryan

FIGURE 078  
(Page 128)  
Life Stage House  
Interior View,  
Photograph by Tristan  
Searight





FIGURE 079  
View of Thesis  
Defense (MIT  
Department of  
Architecture)



FIGURE 080  
View of Thesis  
Defense (MIT  
Department of  
Architecture)

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