

B

UILDING
THE
DREAM

A SOCIAL
HISTORY
OF HOUSING
IN AMERICA

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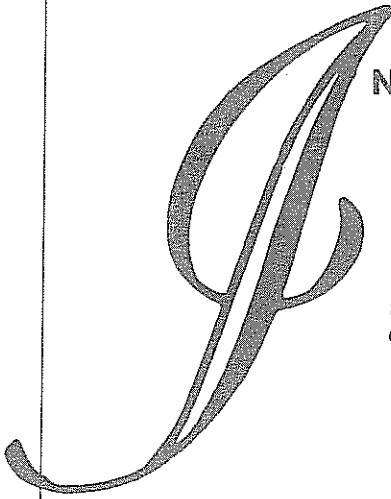
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French-Canadian workers, whom they could pay even less than the native-born farm girls, and they now dropped their program of moral and environmental reform.

Even at the earliest and most idealized stage of the model industrial town, the Lowell Associates had not provided any accommodations for the immigrant laborers, mostly Irish, who had dug the canals and built the mills and the housing. Cast off to the outskirts of the city, these men, many with their families, had lived in tents and then in makeshift wooden huts of unfinished lumber, piling up sod on the sides for insulation. Conditions worsened with the increased immigration resulting from the Irish potato famine of the late 1840s; other "ideal" industrial towns, such as Lawrence, Fall River, and Amoskeag, also found themselves surrounded by shantytowns and impoverished immigrants. The "underground mud huts of the 'City of Cork,'" as a Lawrence newspaper editor called these areas, were wretched places.¹⁹ Yet the men who planned the company towns, reluctant to admit that they fostered this class of worker, therefore averted their attention. When the immigrants were brought into the factories in the 1840s, the huts remained on the outskirts, and privately built tenements supplemented the large company-owned boardinghouses, most of which were sold to become more privately owned tenements. An 1849 observer found in Lowell 254 tenement buildings inhabited by 1,054 individuals, the vast majority of whom were immigrants who now worked in the mills.²⁰

The illusion of a pure, moral environment in boardinghouses and textile mills was no longer an issue for industrialists or for the public. In fact, by 1850, the ideal of a rewarding factory environment seemed naïve. The depression of 1857 assured the end of this experiment in industrial and environmental control. By this time, too, the country had come to accept industrial growth as indisputably necessary. The same moral rationales were no longer needed. The quality of the products rather than the effect of the home environment on workers was the pride of American industry. Factories became larger and noisier, machinery faster and more dangerous. Few people took much notice. The ideology of industrialism no longer had to celebrate the image of an ideal community, preparing healthy young people for their futures as dutiful farmers and housewives. Industry existed to produce goods for the middle-class American home and to assure the continued prosperity of the national economy.

CHAPTER FIVE



INDEPENDENCE AND THE RURAL COTTAGE

We believe that every improvement in the abodes of men which renders them more neat, comfortable, and pleasing, contributes not only to physical enjoyment, but to mental and moral advancement.

—Henry William Cleaveland, *Village and Farm Cottages* (1854)

TO THE MAJORITY OF CITIZENS IN THE EARLY republic, the ideal American home was an independent homestead, attractive enough to encourage family pride yet unpretentious and economical. Itinerant artists, traveling across the countryside on horseback, specialized in paintings that portrayed these very qualities. Such artists decorated the interiors of homes with bright geometric patterns and naïve murals, and often did a painting of the family dwelling or a portrait of the family members. Rural women and young schoolgirls took the home as a favorite subject for their needlework samplers, surrounding the image of the simple, productive house and garden with virtuous proverbs or biblical quotations.

The country's leaders were surprisingly attentive to American predilections in domestic architecture. A few, such as Thomas Jefferson, were distressed about the aesthetic disarray that could result from thousands of quickly built, untutored dwellings, occupied for only a short time by restless homesteaders. For those who feared attacks on private property, even the forms seemed an invitation to anarchy. Jefferson was troubled by the impermanent look of most of the simple wooden houses in his native state of Virginia.

He wanted to see an end to these “ugly, uncomfortable, and—happily—more perishable” dwellings.¹ A stable agrarian citizenry in substantial brick or stone houses would form a solid basis for the young nation’s strength.

For Jefferson, and for many other civic leaders, there was a problem of guiding, but not regulating, domestic settings. How could Americans create an environment that protected the respect for order,

The ideal home was a favorite subject for needlework samplers. This 1808 embroidery by Mary Richards of Portland, Massachusetts, evokes many of the qualities ante-bellum American culture associated with the home: family self-sufficiency, Christian virtue, diligent work, and small-town community.



self-sufficiency, and spirituality they held in common, without imposing on the freedom of each individual and each family to live as they pleased? The answer was the concept of the model home. Some prototypes could be small and inexpensive; each would be ornamented, so that the family would recognize their home as a place of beauty, repose, and Christian virtue. There was also a mechanical image at work here, a notion of continuous improvements on a templet to make the product better and cheaper. Optimistic belief in inevitable progress encouraged the assumption that aesthetic, technological, and social breakthroughs would keep occurring. This would not be a legislated model, based on regulations or laws everyone had to follow. Instead, it would be a guide, an inspiration that each builder and each family would adapt to the circumstances at hand. Several kinds of dwellings were publicized as model homes during these years, but the greatest attention was bestowed on the detached cottage for the independent farmer and his family. This rural home, like the family for whom it was designed, was considered the basis for America’s strength and progress.

By 1830, ministers, schoolteachers, physicians, poets, and jurists all over the country were instructing their fellow citizens about good homes. Writers noted the trappings of an interior and the style of a façade as indications of the character of residents. The popular lady novelists Lydia Sigourney and “Fanny Fern” often relied on architectural description to enliven their stories and their moral advice to readers. So, too, did Henry David Thoreau, Washington Irving, and James Fenimore Cooper, who was especially vehement against the “mushroom” appearance of Greek Revival cottages, which seemed to spring up out of nowhere, unplanned, like an infestation.² Soon Henry Ward Beecher and Horace Bushnell were preaching to their congregations about an ideal home on earth, for which they gave occasional detailed specifications. Beecher even advertised household products and later wrote a sentimental novel, *Norwood* (1867). Bushnell’s *Christian Nurture* (1847) described how the home and family life could foster virtuous “habits,” thereby encouraging the development of gentle Christian children. Regulation and love would build “domesticity of character.”³ The right home environments could help assure the blessed eternal peace of “home comforts” in heaven. These writers all wanted Americans to become more aware of the power of “influence” they attributed to the domestic setting. They hoped families would create better homes and thereby strengthen the bonds of family life.

The task of defining the American home was a national mission. The

goal was a general idea of the optimum setting for “the typical American family”—still depicted as an independent yeoman farmer and his hard-working immediate kin. This representative national home would not be the stately mansion of the wealthy, as if the grandest structure stood for the aspirations of the entire population. It was an average house for a family “of the middling sort.”

There was, as yet, relatively little emphasis on the home as a unique statement, an individualized setting for a particular family. Increasingly, though, home and “outside world” came to be posed as separate spheres. True, the familiar communal festivities of the barn-raising, the quilting bee, and other less formal gatherings took place in the homes of any small village. At the same time, the private home was becoming the locus of a sentimental search for meaning and security. Authors of domestic guides spread this concept. According to Lydia Sigourney, one of the best-known writers of the early nineteenth century, the woman was responsible for perfecting an alternative to the commercial world where her husband and sons had to work:

For she, with harmonizing will,
Her pleasures in her duties found,
And strove, with still advancing skill
To make her home's secluded bound
An Eden refuge, sweet and blest,
When weary, he returned for rest.⁴

Duty to husband involved adorning the home in the image of a private haven, rich in simple beauty and her own homemade ornament.

Even more consummate was the woman's power as a mother. Around 1820, childhood suddenly became the focus of numerous books, sermons, and meetings. It was presented as a distinct period of development, quite separate from adult life yet critically determinant of later adult character. The Calvinist doctrine of the infant's inherent sinfulness gave way to a focus on the child's social nature and individual conscience, both of which were supposedly molded during the first few years of life. The family, in effect, created the child's personality and character. By 1830 child-rearing was seen as indisputably a female task, though not an innate skill. If a woman lived in a city, she might attend a maternal association, where women exchanged information. But for the most part, she had to rely on recently published books and magazines for advice. These described the awesome power of the mother and the

home, and then intimated the course the mother should pursue in teaching her children values.

Increased attention to the individual, especially the individual child, and to the home as a place for moral education, encouraged a focus on private spaces within the home. Children who had misbehaved had to be isolated from their siblings for self-examination, Bushnell and other ministers explained. They should not be forced into a dark closet but into a small room for solitary reflection. A vigorous campaign against corporal punishment stressed the superior effect of the good home environment in the development of a strong personal conscience. While there was no thought given to the idea of private bedrooms for every child, the emphasis on increased privacy and greater specialization of rooms was evident.

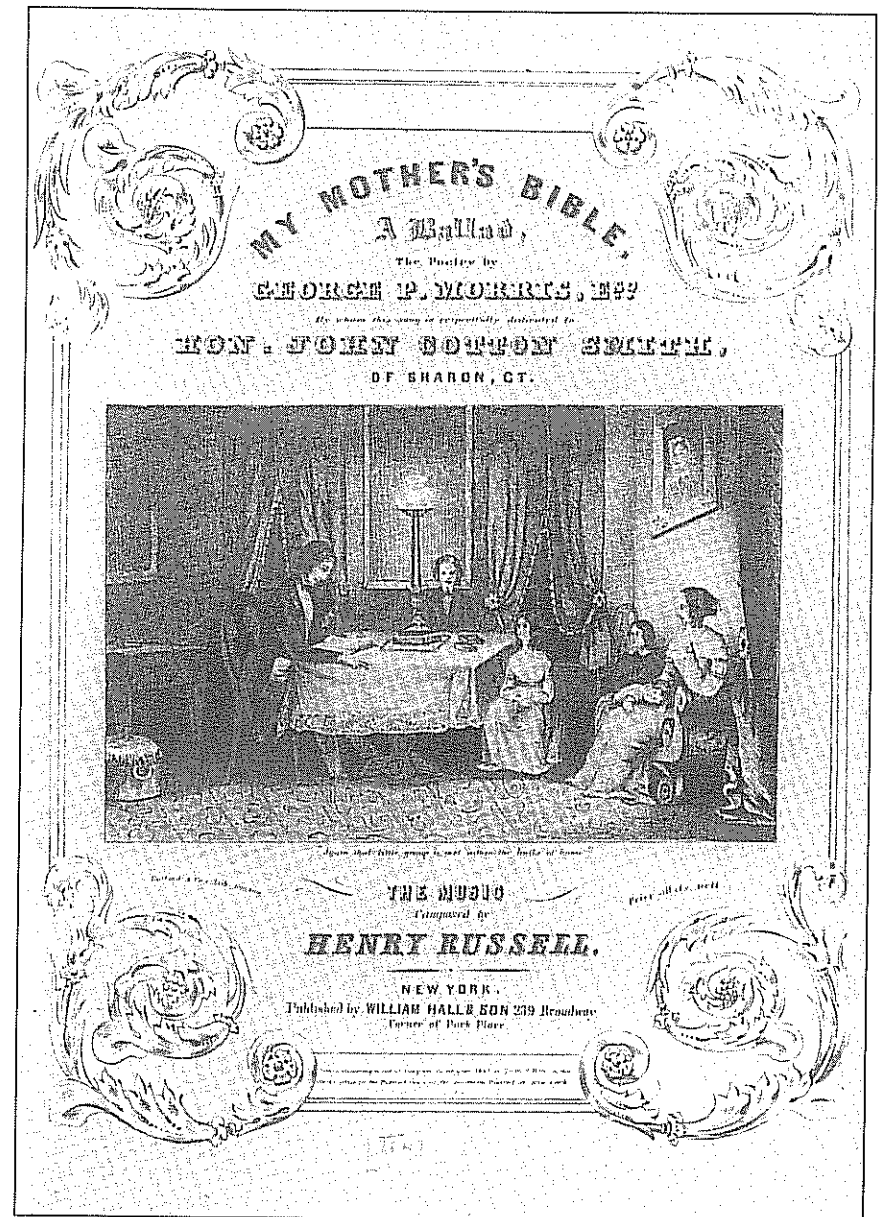
Both Lydia Sigourney and Catharine Beecher, author of a *Treatise on Domestic Economy* (1843), insisted that each house needed separate areas for family social life, personal privacy, and household production. The kitchen and pantry were usually set off from the main body of the house in a rear wing. The frequent use of the phrase “work room” in guides and floor plans indicates that in most rural families, the wife and daughters spent much of their time here, making butter churns and curtains, soap and brooms, as well as preserving food, cooking, and washing clothes. In *Walden*, Thoreau lamented the tendency to isolate these activities architecturally, complaining that “there is as much secrecy about the cooking as if he [the host] had a desire to poison you”; but his protest went against the grain.⁵

Nomenclature announced the higher level of specialization in other areas as well. The “parlor” was the room where the family entertained visitors. The “sitting room” was for more intimate family gatherings in the evenings. A few larger houses contained both, but most designers had to choose the appropriate word, and they stressed its connection to a sociable or a family-centered domesticity.

Whichever word was used, the formal front room contained a great variety of pieces and styles, creating a rather festive air. In rural areas, it was common to paint stenciled decorations on the walls and to marbleize furniture in imitation of exotic woods. Machine-made rugs, geometric floor mosaics, and carefully swept arrangements of sand created a variety of patterns underfoot. Birdcages were common. With relatively little space allocated to storage in most houses, the walls were covered with hooks bearing hats, coats, framed pictures, farming and cooking utensils, and high shelves, where plates and platters were kept. By 1840,

almost all New England women could read, and interest in education abounded throughout the country. Consequently, a bookshelf stood in most parlors. Since this room was the repository for “art,” it usually contained family-made paper lace, landscape paintings, embroidery, and shadow boxes, together with the revered activity of such work in progress. This was the room for social events and daily family gatherings. The cover for the sheet music of an 1841 ballad entitled “My Mother’s Bible” depicted a family gathered around the parlor table, while the father read by a kerosene light. A line from the song brought the setting and the sentiments together: “Again that little group is met within the

John Lewis Krimmel’s painting of a quilting party in 1813 shows the typical interior and the highly valued social life of an early-nineteenth-century farmhouse. The Chippendale clock, birdcage, books, and pictures suggest that many households paid careful attention to their domestic surroundings.



The idealized parlor on the sheet-music cover for a popular 1841 ballad entitled “My Mother’s Bible” presents a more urbane and reserved household than Krimmel’s painting. In a room with stylish Empire furniture, the family has gathered together to hear the father read the nightly Scripture.

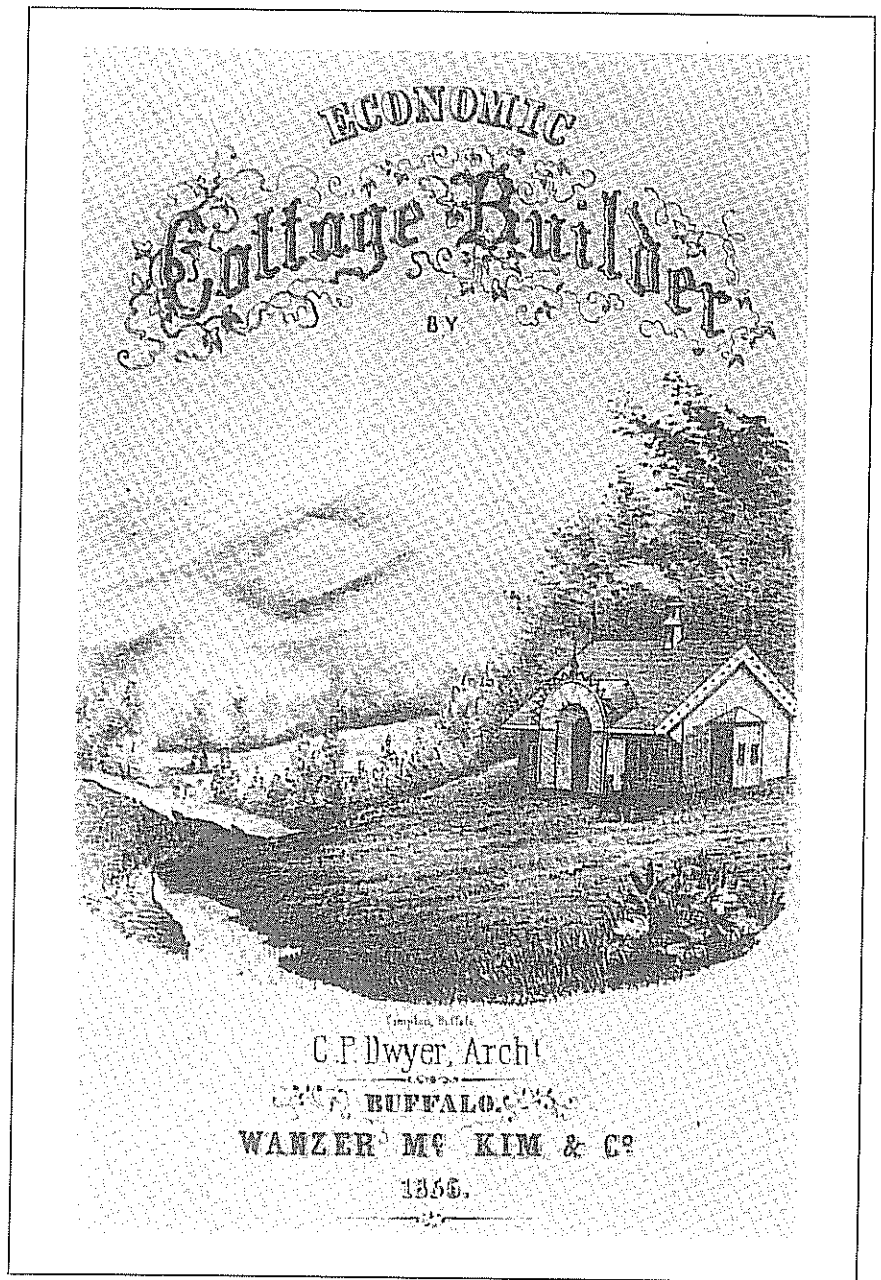
halls of home." However, the idealized image has done away with the disarray and flamboyant decoration that would have been found in most homes.

In the 1840s, builders began to publish architectural books that brought together floor plans, details, perspective drawings, and impassioned texts, assuring readers that these house plans would enable them to create perfect homes. Many such "pattern books" contained specifications for all the buildings needed for a small town: a church, a school, a store, and a variety of houses, ranging from estimates of \$200 to \$20,000. In the titles of the books—Edward Shaw's *Rural Architecture* (1843), Alexander Jackson Davis's *Rural Residences* (1842), Andrew Jackson Downing's *Cottage Residences* (1842), or Calvert Vaux's *Villas and Cottages* (1854)—authors emphasized their variations of the authentic American rural cottage or farmhouse.

A typical proposal for a farmer's cottage showed four rooms—a parlor, family sitting room, workroom, and bedroom—as well as a hall, a porch, a pantry, and two closets, all squeezed into 525 square feet. In such a small area, rooms had to serve several functions. The sitting room doubled as a dining room and a children's bedroom. For larger houses, some designers included explanations of the newly defined spaces, proposing that an extra downstairs room could be used for an elderly relative's bedroom or for a sick child. Others suggested that a separate dining room would enhance domesticity. With this attention to use, the symmetrical placing of rooms was abandoned, even in the smallest cottage. The dwelling was evolving into a more intricate, specialized setting, with each room having a distinct shape.

Within the national prototype, builders presented ingenious variations of their model cottages. In *The Immigrant Builder* (1859), Charles Dwyer described inexpensive dwellings of sod blocks, rammed earth, adobe, and lightweight wood frame, so that a homesteader could use the cheapest materials of the region where he settled. Other authors showed more artistic variations, with the façades based on the myriad revival styles of nineteenth-century Europe. Each style corresponded to a particular terrain: a wooded hillside, a rocky seacoast, a plain, a town. There were still a number of Greek-style dwellings in these pattern books, but they seemed controlled and severe alongside the florid examples of Byzantine, Italianate, Gothic, Norman, Lombard, and Tudor styles. Davis boasted fourteen distinct styles in his book of house designs. Diversity had become fashionable.

Nineteenth-century builders actually spoke of "styles," not revivals,



The frontispiece from Charles P. Dwyer's *The Economical Cottage Builder* (1856) shows a decorated dwelling in the frontier wilderness. The cottage combined the builder's concern for original American styles, symbolic architecture, and practicality.

the term we use today for historical references in architecture. They were interested in evoking a mood, using certain architectural motifs to set the stage, rather than in presenting a clear portrait of a particular historical period. The effect of the new range of styles was an informality, a license to play with composition and ornament. The box shape of the house was broken; bay windows and porches formed a more complex outline. Medieval-inspired ornament and a pointed gable roof were evidence of the Gothic style; square bays, a heavy extending roof supported by brackets, and a campanile-like tower were the basis of the Italianate. Soon the creative possibilities open to the carpenter expanded these definitions. The rich, flat carving under roof barge boards, over doors and windows, dripping from shutters and porch supports—described then and now as “gingerbread”—was, in general, impossible to classify.

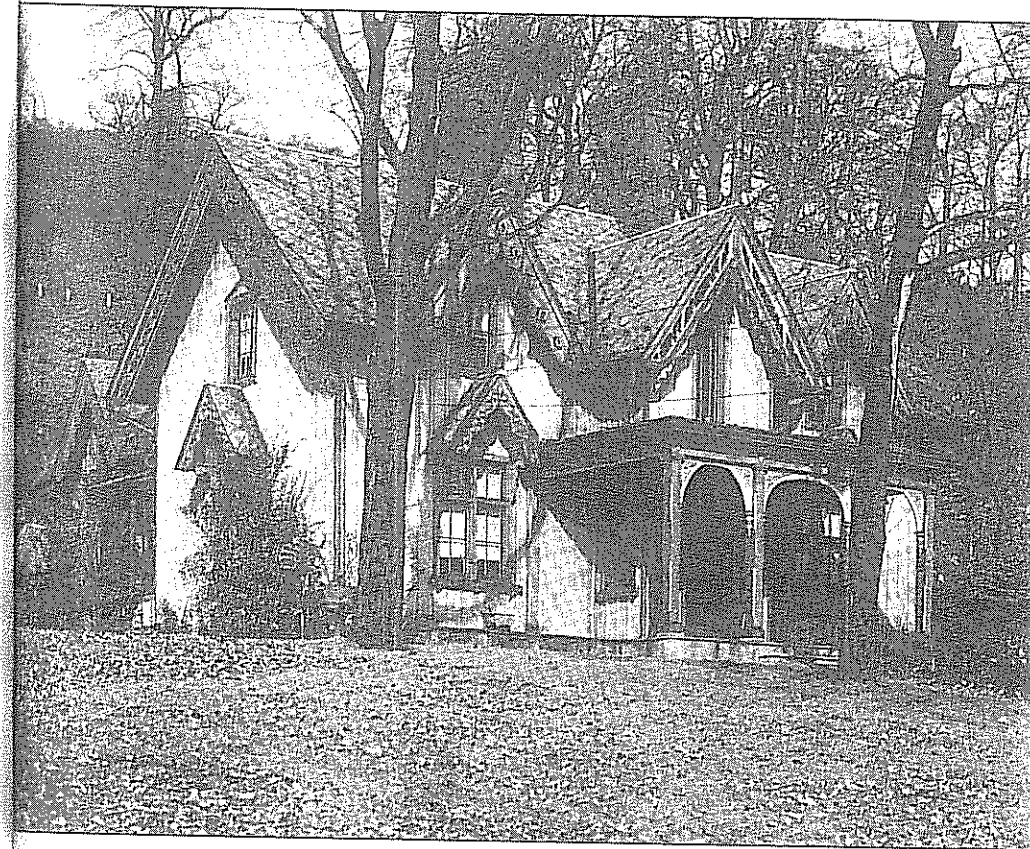
As pattern-book images germinated, they spread to other forms of literature. A Philadelphia publisher, Louis Antoine Godey, and his editor, Sarah Josepha Hale, decided to promote an “own-your-own-home” movement by featuring American villa and cottage designs in their monthly women’s fashion journal. Between 1846 and 1898, *Godey’s Lady’s Book* published some 450 model house designs—the basis, according to one report, for over four thousand houses built in a single decade.⁶ Readers who wrote to the journal’s office received a complete set of drawings for any model house. The marriage in *Godey’s* of sentimental poetry and prose, delicate feminine fashions, and idealized American homes brought together several kinds of specialized literature into a new discourse on domesticity.

The pattern books of Andrew Jackson Downing, a widely respected Hudson River Valley landscape gardener, offer a systematic presentation of this period’s code of domesticity. Like other ante-bellum home designers, Downing foresaw a far-reaching, pastoral landscape, dotted with pleasant houses, varied but always orderly, each one set in its own extensive, well-tended garden. In his books on rural and suburban residential design, and in his editorials for *The Horticulturist*, Downing outlined his rules and categories for all American homes. First, houses should fit with their surroundings, for only certain styles appeared appropriate in particular settings. Second, houses should look like houses and not like other structures. Here Downing relied on the theory of associations developed by eighteenth-century English aesthetic philosophers. The value of an object or a view depended on deeply rooted symbolic associations it evoked. However, Downing and other American pattern-book writers challenged the idea that all associations were based on

highly educated perceptions, for this had decidedly elitist overtones; instead, they asserted that many architectural forms—and particularly those of domestic buildings—elicited universal responses. Therefore, all houses needed certain domestic symbols to articulate the feelings Anglo-American culture connected with the home. Downing called this “expression of purpose.” Chimneys and overhanging roofs with high gables and deep eaves evoked home, as did the welcoming entry porch and the comfortable side piazza. Delicate ornament, such as Gothic trefoil tracery over a window or a carved Italianate bracket under the roof, reminded a viewer of the elegance and handiwork within. Gothic details also reinforced the religious ties of a Christian home.

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A Gothic-style cottage built at Easton, Pennsylvania, ca. 1840, followed pattern-book guidelines in every detail, providing a diminutive entry porch, a prominent chimney, and abundant architectural ornament.



According to Downing, who cited the English art critic John Ruskin, domestic architecture should express the owner's "condition" or class, his occupation and background. (The man of the household was specifically the reference in this iconography.) Downing catalogued three kinds of houses for three groups in the society: villas for "persons of competence," cottages for mechanics or working men, and farmhouses for farmers. He felt that distinctions were necessary and that no one should try to present a grander image than was appropriate. "But *unless there is something of the castle in the man,*" he wrote, "it is very likely, if it be like a real castle, to dwarf him to the stature of a mouse."⁷ Every American deserved a good house, from the working man's undecorated cottage of rough wood to the wealthy man's Italian campanile tower. All the same, since no pattern-book designer could believe that anyone in America would remain either poor, a worker, or a servant for very long, they paid relatively little attention to the quality of housing for these classes.

Pattern-book designers considered themselves a critical component in the creation of a democratic republic. Their publications, which explained how to build good homes in the country, supposedly provided every citizen with the opportunity for independence. If all Americans had access to plans for orderly dwellings, adapted to every budget and region, then those who continued to live in rural hovels or crowded into unkempt urban tenements did so because they were less civilized, instinctively less drawn to the good models than were their neighbors. Henry Cleaveland, Charles Dwyer, and others considered this argument in some detail, positing a hierarchy that ran from animals to less-than-human savages (including poor whites) to a pinnacle of a virtuous, average American family living by Christian values in their own small cottage. Each included in his argument several examples of one-room and two-room cottages in rammed earth or rough logs to support the claim that a decent home was available to any American at almost no expense. There was no excuse for poverty.

Morality was central to Downing's vision and to that of most antebellum domestic designers. He called for "republican homes," comfortable and beautiful yet never so ostentatious as to belittle the neighbors or aggrandize the children's manners. Every American dwelling, he insisted, could be "a home of the virtuous citizen," if it were thoughtfully planned.⁸ Downing posed domestic architecture as a counterforce to the "spirit of unrest" and the feverish pace of American life.⁹ Yale theologian Timothy Dwight, writing of his travels through New En-

gland, had also worried about the power of the disorderly, unpleasant setting. "The habitation has not a little influence on the mode of living," he wrote, "and the mode of living sensibly affects the taste, manners, and even the morals, of the inhabitants. If a poor man builds a poor house, without any design or hope of possessing better, he will . . . conform his aims and expectations to the style of his house. His dress, his food, his manners, his taste, his sentiments, his education of his children, and their character as well as his own, will all be seriously affected by this ugly circumstance."¹⁰ Downing's friend Nathaniel Willis (the brother of the novelist "Fanny Fern") wrote about the powerful symbolism of domesticity in his magazine, the *Home Monthly*. For Willis, too, morality was closely tied to control. He looked to "home associations" in architecture, landscaping, and literature to balance the franticness of "our plastic and rapidly maturing country."¹¹

The cottages in pattern books were meant as family farmhouses, although many were erected in the small frontier towns that speculators built in promising locations. Despite the growing urban population, the nation was still overwhelmingly rural. Every writer on domestic life and architecture and every communitarian "social architect" insisted that true men and women could be raised only in the country. Nathaniel Willis was one of many who connected rural virtues to republican values: "[W]hile a family *in town* may be governed and held together mainly by money, there is a republic within the ring fence of a *country residence*."¹² Anti-urban sentiment was widespread, and it extended beyond a fear of the poor. A book describing the homes of famous national authors captured the mood with its passing references to urban habitations, with their "dreary monotony of front, . . . houses which are mere parallelograms of air."¹³ Rural Americans wanted diversity and symbolism, an Eden of interest and delights away from the city.

Given these sentiments, builders were quick to play up natural materials in domestic construction. Pattern books praised unpainted wood siding. Vertical board-and-batten was favored because it represented the simple wood studs of the structure beneath the sheathing. If paint were used, it was to be of a hue that would harmonize with the natural surroundings: russets, lichen greens, and grays replaced the white of Greek temples. Every pattern-book writer agreed that a house looked best when it was made of timber, stone, or clay found in the surrounding area rather than more expensive, fashionable materials transported from afar.

Insistence on local materials often translated into an attack on aristo-

cratic luxury and a sentimental celebration of the homes of the rural poor. Writers warbled that the most beautiful paintings, which evoked the noblest sentiments in the observer, portrayed the humble farm rather than the mansion. In *Walden*, Thoreau called upon all suburbanites to remember this fact when choosing a house design, and to opt for the least pretentious style. (He went so far as to champion the model of the Indian community in which, he claimed, every family had a shelter as good as the best; simplicity was thus the key to equality as well as the mark of goodness and beauty.) Not even the impermanence and coarseness of the crudest frontier house could quell pride in American design. As one pattern-book author claimed: “[W]e are proud of the flimsy, unsubstantial structures, so sneered at by foreigners, which dot the whole face of the country. They are the homes of the people, who will by-and-by build and own better ones.”¹⁴ Homespun rusticity was an admirable aesthetic to these builders, who carefully cultivated the primitive in their drawings and in their rhetoric.

The cult of the ordinary and commonplace—what Emerson exalted in *The American Scholar* as “the common . . . the familiar, the low”—extended to a romance with the log cabin.¹⁵ Such a construction type was actually a Scandinavian model, comparatively rare on the frontier; but by the late 1830s, writers of all national backgrounds claimed the rugged American log cabin as a common cultural heritage. The fad reached new proportions with the studied populism of Jacksonian Democrats. Supporters of Harrison’s 1840 presidential campaign then took it up, passing out pamphlets and hard cider from makeshift log cabins, and proclaiming the cabin as a symbol of solid American frontier vigor. Catching the enthusiasm, pattern-book designers included idealized drawings of log cabins among their model houses, praising the supposedly indigenous forms and the visibly hardy strength of the materials.

Celebration of the natural and the ordinary was not particular to America, of course. Throughout Europe, the rise of romanticism brought a widespread fascination with the natural and the unspoiled, whether magnificent or commonplace. Appeals that the builder take the surrounding landscape into account—a general formula by 1840—cited eighteenth-century English theorists of the picturesque. American styles were also derivative. Even the Greek Revival, the symbol of national independence, took place after a classical revival in England and on the continent. The Gothic Revival, which followed, combined a glorification of the American landscape with architectural reminders of European history.

While acknowledging these influences, American builders, unlike most professionally trained architects, saw it as their duty to introduce originality. The theme of national unity through intense individualism and artistic creation ran through every pattern book. Stylistic inventiveness was lauded as a way to be fashionable and to assert cultural independence. By the 1850s, builders were mixing styles and playing with decorative motifs quite freely. They introduced daring “inventions”—hexagonal or circular dwellings, with rooms cut into unusual elliptical shapes or curious wedges. By far the most popular of these eccentricities was the octagon house. In *A Home for All* (1848), the phrenologist and spiritualist Orson Fowler claimed that the octagon was a 20 percent more efficient use of a given square-foot area, and intimated that it possessed certain mystical powers. For a decade, octagonal dwellings, schoolhouses, and other structures were erected from Natchez to San Francisco.

Fowler’s functionalist argument echoed the self-praise of other builders who claimed that their housing models were “built to live in,” based on “common sense,” while those in rival books were too expensive and elitist, preoccupied with aesthetics at the expense of practicalities. The desire to use science and technology—or sometimes pseudo-science and gadgetry—for the common good of the society was another distinguishing feature of American romanticism.

In building, the most important technological innovation of the antebellum years was the balloon frame. This type of construction, first used in Chicago in 1839, radically transformed the work of building a house. The earlier method had relied on heavy pieces of lumber, connected by hand-cut pegs and mortise-and-tenon joints; an entire frame wall was fitted on the ground and lifted into place by a crew of men. The balloon frame, as its name implies, was based on much lighter, pre-cut pieces of lumber, held together with nails. It required fewer workers, and much less time and expense. The factory production of nails and the mill cutting of standardized sizes of lumber made the balloon frame available to carpenters and self-sufficient individual builders along any well-traveled route.

A keen interest in applied science and innovative home technology spurred the patenting of countless household conveniences at mid-century, including ice cutters, pie sectioners, cherry pitters, and lawn mowers. The word “gadget” (from the French *gachette*, a piece of machinery) entered the national vocabulary. Builders had at least one chapter on domestic technology in their guides, including instructions

for an open wooden drainpipe to carry off waste water from the kitchen, a concrete cesspool, or a fresh-water cistern, with its charcoal and ash filter beneath a false floor. Because almost every household had to rely on its own system of water supply and its own provisions for waste disposal, these were also carefully described. Even in the large cities, except for Philadelphia, the provision of municipal reservoirs and waterworks was relatively recent, and there were no controls over the delivery of services by private companies. Household technology showed the need to ensure health on a private basis, as well as Yankee ingenuity.

Despite the interest in technological innovations and the homogenizing influence of pattern-book designs, the late colonial styles remained the basis for much of the construction that took place west of the Alleghenies throughout the first half of the century. American romanticism in architecture had a distinctly conservative side. Families from England brought with them the knowledge of how to construct a simple foursquare frame dwelling, its façade unadorned, save for symmetrically placed windows and doors. Dutch, Germans, or Scandinavians, who began to immigrate in large numbers after 1830, reproduced approximations of the houses they had known, with high brick or stone corbels on the side, plastered masonry, and small, asymmetrically placed windows. Dwellings of the western cities and rural areas were generally simpler than those in or near the established cities of the eastern seaboard. The nationally popular styles such as the Greek or Gothic appeared much later in the West. This was due in part to the hold of the immigrants' diverse cultural traditions and in part to a shortage of time and skilled labor. Yet Lexington or Cincinnati or Cleveland could boast merchants' houses as fashionable as any in Philadelphia or Boston. Stylistic constraint and simplicity of forms, especially in the early houses of frontier towns, was also an expression of many settlers' belief that they would soon be moving to a better house. A definite pattern was established early on. Seeking to escape the pressures of a limited land supply, Americans tied social mobility, as well as economic security, to property ownership.

The most conspicuous theme in American model cottages, as in actual homes of the mid-nineteenth century, was privatism. Each pattern-book drawing showed a single, isolated dwelling surrounded by a carefully tended garden. Occasional double houses appeared, but designers stressed separate entrances for each family and thick party walls. They also declared that these were transitional dwellings for families who would surely go on to their own private dwelling. As one commentator explained, Americans tended to enjoy associations with others in their

politics but not in their homes.¹⁶ The suspicion of urban row houses, communitarian settlements, and industrial boardinghouses was both political and architectural. In builders' guides and in other forms of popular literature, detached dwellings in the countryside were taken as the symbol of certain key national virtues. On an individual level, they represented personal independence. On a social level, they showed family pride and self-sufficiency. Politically, the architecture seemed an expression of democratic freedom of choice. And economically, it mirrored the pattern of private enterprise, rather than planning for the overall public good, which characterized American society.

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The Colonel G. R. Howard House in Palestine, Texas, built in 1851, is a late example of the Greek style, which had passed out of fashion except in the frontier areas.

