

it indicate the poor depended upon another way of organizing their family lives. Rather, the homelessness of this "multitude of half-naked, dirty, and leering children" signified an absence of parental love, a neglect of proper childrearing which was entwined in the habits and values of the laboring classes.

The Children's Aid Society

Although Brace shared the alarm and revulsion of reformers like Matsell at the "homelessness" of the poor, he also brought to the situation an optimistic liberalism, based upon his own curious and ambiguous uses of domesticity. In his memoirs of 1872, looking back on two decades of work with the New York laboring classes, Brace took heart from the observation that the absence of family life so deplored by his contemporaries actually operated to stabilize American society. Immigration and continual mobility disrupted the process by which one generation of laboring people taught the next a cultural identity, "that continuity of influence which bad parents and grandparents exert." Brace wrote this passage with the specter of the Paris Commune before him; shaken, like so many of his peers, by the degree of organization and class consciousness among the Parisian poor, he found consolation on native ground in what others condemned. "The mill of American life, which grinds up so many delicate and fragile things, has its uses, when it is turned on the vicious fragments of the lower strata of society."

It was through the famed placing-out system that the CAS turned the "mill of American life" to the uses of urban reform. The placing-out program sent poor city children to foster homes in rural areas where labor was scarce. With the wages-fund theory, a common Anglo-American liberal reform scheme of midcentury, which proposed to solve the problem of metropolitan unemployment by dispersing the surplus of labor, the society defended itself against critics' charges that "foster parents" were simply farmers in need of cheap help, and placing-out, a cover for the exploitation of child labor. At first, children went to farms in the nearby countryside, as did those the city bound out from the Almshouse, but in 1854 the society conceived the more ambitious scheme of sending parties of children by railroads to the far Midwest: Illinois, Michigan, and Iowa. By 1860, 5,074 children had been placed out.

At its most extreme, the CAS only parenthetically recognized the social and legal claims of working-class parenthood. The organization considered the separation of parents and children a positive good, the liberation of innocent, if tarnished, children from the tyranny of unredeemable adults. Here, as in so many aspects of nineteenth-century reform, the legacy of the Enlightenment was ambiguous: the idea of childhood innocence it had bequeathed, socially liberating in many respects, also provided one element of the ideology of middle-class domination. Since the CAS viewed children as innocents to be rescued and parents as corrupters to be displaced, its methods depended in large measure on convincing children themselves to leave New York, with or without parental knowledge or acquiescence. Street children were malleable innocents in the eyes of the charity, but they were also little consenting adults, capable of breaking all ties to their class milieu and families. To be sure, many parents did bring their children to be placed out, but

was that they were not orphans. The charity visitors of the CAS tackled this problem directly: where orphans were lacking, they manufactured them.

Placing-out was based on the thoroughly middle-class idea of the redeeming influence of the Protestant home in the countryside. There, the morally strengthening effects of labor, mixed with the salutary influences of domesticity and female supervision, could remold the child's character. Thus domestic ideology gave liberals like Brace the theoretical basis for constructing a program to resocialize the poor in which force was unnecessary. Standards of desirable behavior could be internalized by children rather than beaten into them, as had been the eighteenth-century practice. With home influence, not only childrearing but the resocialization of a class could take the form of subliminal persuasion rather than conscious coercion.

Earlier New York reformers had taken a different tack with troublesome children. In 1824, the Society for the Reformation of Juvenile Delinquents had established an asylum, the House of Refuge, to deal with juvenile offenders. As in all the new institutions for deviants, solitary confinement and corporal punishment were used to force the recalcitrant into compliance with the forces of reason. But Brace thought the asylum, so prized by his predecessors, was impractical and ineffectual. Asylums could not possibly hold enough children to remedy the problem of the New York streets in the 1850s; moreover, the crowding together of the children who were incarcerated only reinforced the habits of their class. The foster home, however, with its all-encompassing moral influence, could be a more effective house of refuge. "We have wished to make every kind of religious family, who desired the responsibility, an Asylum or a Reformatory Institution . . . by throwing about the wild, neglected little outcast of the streets, the love and gentleness of home." The home was an asylum, but it was woman's influence rather than an institutional regimen that accomplished its corrections.

The Suburban Home as the Answer to Middle-Class Hopes and Fears

KENNETH T. JACKSON

In 1840 suburbs had not yet developed into a recognizable entity, distinct from either the city or the farm. Peripheral towns were merely lesser versions of small cities. Outlying residents looked upon urban centers as agents of progress and culture. It was in the cities that the latest innovations developed: Philadelphia with a marvelous public waterworks in 1799, Boston with free public education in 1818, New York with public transportation in 1829. The eastern cities imported the elegant style of the Georgian London town house, they provided gas lamps and public health systems, and in every way they offered urban services superior to those of any suburb.

William Dean Howells (1837-1920), America's foremost man of letters after the Civil War, experienced firsthand the relative advantages of city, small town, and suburb. A outlander from Martins Ferry and Hamilton, Ohio, Howells located in Boston as a young adult and rose with spectacular speed to become editor of the

Atlantic Monthly. Moving successively to suburban Cambridge, to the Back Bay near the center of Boston, back to Cambridge, to suburban Belmont, back to an apartment hotel in Cambridge, to the old Beacon Hill neighborhood, and finally and permanently in the 1890s to New York City, Howells knew better than most the problems caused by the lack of urban services in the suburbs. Writing in 1871 of residence just a few miles from Boston, he noted, "We had not before this thought it was a grave disadvantage that our street was unlighted. Our street was not drained nor graded; no municipal cart ever came to carry away our ashes; there was not a waterbutt within half a mile to save us from fire, nor more than a thousandth part of a policeman to protect us from theft."

Peripheral towns patterned themselves after urban models and sought to project an image of dynamic growth; with the right combination of luck, grit, and leadership, any one of them could grow into a really big city. The example of Brooklyn, vigorously competing with mighty New York, was an inspiration. Although known by the sobriquet "City of Churches," the upstart community was not simply an "overgrown village" or a "bedroom" for Gotham. Brooklyn early developed the institutions that enabled it to become a leading metropolis in its own right—colleges, art museums, opera companies, music academies, libraries, and fire, police, and sanitation systems.

Even the nomenclature of outlying communities suggested connections with a metropolis or aspirations to urban greatness. Thus the nineteenth century produced in a single region a South Chicago, North Chicago, South Chicago Heights, and Chicago Heights. Meanwhile, a few miles distant from Detroit, founders of a new community took the name of Birmingham, after a smoky English industrial metropolis, even though in the next century it would become not a center of manufacture but a leafy residential retreat for wealthy executives. This predilection for urbanism led some boosters to incorporate their dreams into town names—as in Oklahoma City, Carson City, and Kansas City—in the hope that the wish might father the fact.

By 1890, however, only half a century later, the suburban image was quite distinct from that of large cities. No longer mini-metropolises, peripheral communities, like Brookline outside of Boston, followed a different path. Moreover, the expectations about residential space shared by most Americans today had become firmly implanted in middle-class culture. This shift had many dimensions and sprang from many causes, but the suburban ideal of a detached dwelling in a semirural setting was related to an emerging distinction between *Gemeinschaft*, the primary, face-to-face relationships of home and family, and *Gesellschaft*, the impersonal and sometimes hostile outside society. In 1840 only New York and Philadelphia had as many as 125,000 residents, and the factory system was in its infancy. The typical urban worker toiled in an establishment employing fewer than a dozen persons. By 1890, when the Bureau of the Census announced that the Western frontier no longer existed, the United States had become the world's leading industrial nation. In that year the country was already one-third urban and the population of the Northeast was well over one-half urban (defined by the census as communities of 2,500 or more persons). New York was closing on London as the world's largest city, while Chicago and Philadelphia each contained about one million inhabitants. Minneapolis, Denver, Seattle, San Francisco, and Atlanta, which hardly existed in 1840, had become

sought to protect home life by building private spaces. Conviviality and group interaction, despite the massive growth of fraternal societies in the late nineteenth century, gave way to new ways of thinking about the family, the house, and the yard, and, ultimately, to new ways of building cities.

Family and Home

In both Christian and Jewish culture, the family has always occupied an exalted station. It represents the chosen instrument of God for the reproduction of the species, the nurturing of the young, and the propagation of moral principles. But as the French social historian Philippe Aries has noted, the family as a tightly knit group of parents and children is a development only of the last two hundred years. Prior to the eighteenth century, the community was more important in determining an individual's fate than was his family. In pre-Napoleonic Europe, about 75 percent of the populace lived in squalid hovels, which were shared with unrelated individuals and with farm animals. Another 15 percent lived and worked in the castles and manor houses of the rich and powerful, where any notion of the nuclear family (father, mother, and children in isolation) was impossible. In cities the population was arrayed around production rather than biological units. Each household was a business—a bakery, hotel, livery stable, countinghouse—and apprentices, journeymen, servants, and retainers lived there along with assorted spouses and children. Much of life was inescapably public; privacy hardly existed at all. In every case, the image of the home as the ideal domestic arrangement was missing. Even the word *home* referred to the town or region rather than to a particular dwelling.

In the eighteenth century, however, the zone of private life began to expand, and the family came to be a personal bastion against society, a place of refuge, free from outside control. Aries notes how the arrangement of the house and the development of individual rooms reflected this desire to keep the world at bay and made it possible, in theory at least, for people to eat, sleep, and relax in different spaces. The new social and psychological concept of privacy meant that both families and individuals increased their demand for personal rooms. In the United States, especially in the suburbs, intricate floor plans soon allowed for distinct zones for different activities, with formal social spaces and private sleeping areas.

Although this attitudinal and behavioral shift characterized much of European and Oriental culture, the emerging values of domesticity, privacy, and isolation reached fullest development in the United States, especially in the middle third of the nineteenth century. In part, this was a function of American wealth. In Japan the family, and especially the household, has been the central socioeconomic unit since the fifteenth century, a notion that fits with the Buddhist ideal of suppressing individual desires if they are not in conformity with the best interests of the house. Social and economic conditions in Japan, however, imposed such severe restrictions on residential space that dwellings there were (and continue to be) dwarfishly small in comparison with the West. Houses there are regarded as little more than shells required to keep out the rain, for the focus is the business of living going on within the structure.

safeguard against the moral slide of society as a whole into sinfulness and greed. They made extravagant claims about the virtues of domestic life, insisting that the individual could find a degree of fulfillment, serenity, and satisfaction in the house that was possible nowhere else. As the Reverend William G. Eliot, Jr., told a female audience in 1853: "The foundation of our free institutions is in our love, as a people, for our homes. The strength of our country is found, not in the declaration that all men are free and equal, but in the quiet influence of the fireside, the bonds which unite together in the family circle. The corner-stone of our republic is the hearth-stone."

Such injunctions took place as industrial and commercial capitalism changed the rhythm of daily life. Between 1820 and 1850, work and men left the home. The growth of manufacturing meant that married couples became more isolated from each other during the working day, with the husband employed away from home, and the wife responsible for everything connected with the residence. The family became isolated and feminized, and this "woman's sphere" came to be regarded as superior to the nondomestic institutions of the world. Young ladies especially were encouraged to nurse extravagant hopes for their personal environment and for the tendering of husband and children. For example, Horace Bushnell's *Christian Nurture*, first published in 1847, described how the home and family life could foster "virtuous habits" and thereby help assure the blessed eternal peace of "home comforts" in heaven.

Whether women regarded the family as a training ground for the real world or as an utter retreat from the compromises and unpleasantness of competitive life, they were told that the home ought to be perfect and could be made so. Through the religious training and moral behavior of its inhabitants and the careful design of the physical structure, a simple abode could actually be a heaven on earth. "Home, Sweet Home," a song written by John Howard Payne in 1823, became the most widely sung lyrics of the day, as Americans identified with the restless wanderer yearning for his childhood home.

Although most celebrations of the private dwelling were written by men, if any one person presided over the new "cult of domesticity," it was Sarah Josepha Hale, editor of *Godey's Lady's Book*, a Philadelphia-based periodical intended for middle-class readership. Her verse in praise of the home found its way into many publications and was typical of a broad effort to institutionalize the female as homemaker and queen of the house. Hale's vision, and that of almost everyone else, assumed that man's was the coarser sex; women were softer, more moral and pure. The only respectable occupation for adult females (unless they were governesses) was that of wife and mother. Dependence was not only part of woman's supposed nature, but also of English and American law. Married women had scant legal identity apart from their husbands, whose control over their wives' bodies, property, and children was all but absolute.

Like verse and prose, pictures and prints with domestic themes were published in millions of copies and in considerable variety. At midcentury, the new technology of reproducing pictures encouraged the craft businessmen Currier and Ives to establish a firm producing lithographs for magazines and books. Among the most popular of the early Currier and Ives series was one of four prints on the "seasons of life," which clearly associated happiness and success with home settings and the family.

Although most writers were too sentimental and mawkish to talk about such matters as mortgage financing and structural engineering, at the core of their thought

were new notions about the actual and symbolic value of the house as a physical entity. Yale theologian Timothy Dwight was especially blunt:

The habitation has not a little influence on the mode of living, 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.

The single-family dwelling became the paragon of middle-class housing, the most visible symbol of having arrived at a fixed place in society, the goal to which every decent family aspired. It was an investment that many people hoped would provide a ticket to higher status and wealth. "A man is not a whole and complete man," Walt Whitman wrote, "unless he owns a house and the ground it stands on." Or, as *The American Builder* commented in 1869: "It is strange how contentedly men can go on year after year, living like Arabs a tent life, paying exorbitant rents, with no care or concern for a permanent house." The purchase of one's home became more than a proxy for success; it also conferred moral rectitude. As Russell Conwell would later note in his famed lecture, "Acres of Diamonds," which he repeated thousands of times to audiences across the country:

My friend, you take and drive me—if you furnish the auto—out into the suburbs of Philadelphia, and introduce me to the people who own their homes around this great city, those beautiful homes with gardens and flowers, those magnificent homes so lovely in their art, and I will introduce you to the very best people in character as well as in enterprise in our city, and you know I will. A man is not really a true man until he owns his own home, and they that own their homes are economical and careful, by owning the home.

On the simplest and most basic level, the notion of life in a private house represented stability, a kind of anchor in the heavy seas of urban life. The American population, however, was very transitory. The United States was not only a nation of immigrants, but a nation of migrants. Alexis de Tocqueville observed in 1835, "An American will build a house and sell it before the roof is on," and recently urban historians have demonstrated that in fact residence at the same address for ten years was highly unusual in the nineteenth century. The best long-term data on mobility concerns Muncie, Indiana, site of the classic *Middletown* studies. During the five years between 1893 and 1898, some 35 percent of Muncie families moved; between 1920 and 1924, the proportion rose to 57 percent; during a five-year period in the 1970s, it dropped to 27 percent. Compared to other advanced societies the figures seem to be substantial.

Despite such mobility, permanent residence was considered desirable, and then as now, homeownership was regarded as a counterweight to the rootlessness of an urbanizing population. The individual house was often no more than one in a series of houses, yet it assumed to itself the values once accorded only the ancestral house, establishing itself as the temporary representation of the ideal permanent home. Although a family might buy the structure planning to inhabit it for only a few years, the Cape Cod, Colonial Revival, and other traditional historical stylings politely ignored their transience and provided an architectural symbolism that spoke of stability and permanence.

Business and political leaders were particularly anxious for citizens to own homes, based on the hope, as Friedrich Engels had feared, that mortgages would have the effect of "chaining the workers by this property to the factory in which they work." A big employer like the Pennsylvania Railroad reportedly was unafraid of strikes because its employees "live in Philadelphia and own their homes, and therefore, cannot afford to strike." Or, as the first president of the Provident Institution for Savings in Boston remarked, "Give him hope, give him the chance of providing for his family, of laying up a store for his old age, of commanding some cheap comfort or luxury, upon which he sets his heart; and he will voluntarily and cheerfully submit to privations and hardship."

Marxists and feminists saw this threat because they did not share the vision of tranquil, sexually stratified domesticity in isolated households. In Europe Charles Fourier agreed with Engels that the family was based on the domestic enslavement of women, while in the United States, Charlotte Perkins Gilman, Melusina Fay Peirce, Victoria Woodhull, and a group of "material feminists" proposed a complete transformation of homes and cities to end sexual exploitation. Their formula for a "grand domestic revolution" included kitchenless houses and multi-family dwellings. The idea was that some women would cook all the food or do all the laundry, and that regular salaries would attend such duties. On both sides of the Atlantic Ocean, communitarian socialists conducted hundreds of experiments with alternative lifestyles, and many of the most active spokesmen specifically denounced the ideal of the female as the full-time homemaker and the man as absent breadwinner. As a Fourierist journal remarked in 1844, the semirural cottage "is wasteful in economy, is untrue to the human heart, and is not the design of God, and therefore it must disappear." As Fourier wished, in many areas of the world and among working class and minority populations in the United States, larger groupings would often be more important than the nuclear unit for reproduction, child-raising, and the economic functioning of the individual.

The isolated household became the American middle-class ideal, however, and it even came to represent the individual himself. As Clare Cooper has noted, just as the body is the most obvious manifestation and encloser of a person, so also is the home itself a representation of the individual. Although it is only a box and often the unindividualized result of mass production and design, it is a very particular box and is almost a tangible expression of self. Men and women find in their homes the greatest opportunity to express their personal taste. Gaston Bachelard has gone further and suggested that much as the house and nonhouse are the basic divisions of geographical space, so the self and the nonself represent the basic divisions of psychic space. Not surprisingly, Anglo-Saxon law and tradition regard a man's home as his castle and permit him to slay anyone who breaks and enters his private abode. The violation of the house is almost as serious as the violation of the self.

Real Estate

It is no accident that land is called real estate. For many centuries the ownership of land has been not just the main but often the only sure basis of power. In most primitive societies, where people belonged to the land rather than the reverse, private property was unknown. For example, in the simple agricultural communities of early

modern Europe, the village made an annual and temporary allotment of land to families for cultivation. The farm remained the permanent possession of the village itself. This communal form of landholding continued in Russia until the Revolution and is common today in India and among groups that live primarily by hunting, fishing, or herding.

In most western European societies, civilization brought with it the idea of private property, and emerging divisions between rich and poor were reflected in an unequal distribution of real estate. From roughly 200 B.C. to 200 A.D. in Italy and western Europe, and for centuries before that in Greece, money had little value until it was invested in land. Indeed, the one-third of Roman citizens who did not own land were not even eligible for the military draft.

When the titles and ranks of European nobility became but a reflection of the size and location of ancestral estates, real property became even more prized. In eighteenth-century France, the drive to own land was stronger than any other in the ancien regime. It reached into every level of society, from the Parisian shopkeeper or artisan who dreamed of a vegetable garden, to the duke who wanted yet another forest for the hunt. Of course, wealth could be acquired by other means—by trade, by fighting, by favors to the crown—but wealth had to be protected by power, and power was in land. As Mark Girouard has written: "From the Middle Ages until the nineteenth century anyone who had made money by any means and was ambitious for himself and his family, automatically invested in a country estate."

The tendency was particularly strong in England, where the Dukes of Westminster offer an extreme example of the pattern. In 1677 Sir Thomas Grosvenor married Mary Davies, who inherited the 500-acre Manor of Ebury, an area of marsh and meadow just outside London. As the city spread westward and the manor was populated by the prosperous and aristocratic, the holdings became elegant Mayfair and Belgravia and busy and crowded Pimlico. The dukedom was created in 1874, and as was typical of British nobility, the family invested in such country estates as Eccleston in Cheshire and Enniskillen in Northern Ireland. With much of central London in their portfolio, the Grosvenors became the richest family in the United Kingdom—in 1985 their land is said to be worth more than \$1 billion and includes the United States Embassy on Grosvenor Square and two renowned hotels, Claridge's and the Grosvenor House.

The English love for the land and antipathy for the city were reflected in New York City and Albany. Both communities were originally settled by the Dutch, whose desire to "live and die in a spatially compact domestic and occupational locale" reflected their homeland pattern. In both cities, this was expressed by a preference for town-centered activities and the subdivision of space into thin lots. After the English took over in 1664, Albany was turned into a garrison town with little cosmopolitan life. In their dislike of urban life, the British established large country estates outside the city and centered their lives on the land, as had their forebears. New York City escaped such a fate because its population was the most heterogeneous in the colonies.

The idea that land ownership was a mark of status, as well as a kind of sublime insurance against ill fortune, was brought to the New World as part of the cultural baggage of the European settlers. They established a society on the basis of the private ownership of property, and every attempt to organize settlements along other

lines ultimately failed. The principle of fee-simple tenure enabled families to buy, sell, rent, and bequeath land with great ease and a minimum of interference by government. It became, in Sam Bass Warner's phrase, "the freest land system anywhere in the world."

Whether well-born or an indentured servant, practically everyone set himself quickly to the task of organizing the landscape into private parcels and somehow procuring a share of the division. The American dream was in large part land. A few families, such as the Van Cortlandts, the Morrisises, the Schuylers, and the Livingstons, received truly impressive grants from the Crown, and their senior members were literally known as "lords of the manor" when the colonies were part of the empire. A number of these great estates survive in shadowy form two centuries after the American Revolution, especially on the east bank of the Hudson River, where pillared porticos, gothic gables, and castellated turrets remain as visible signs of the eclectic tastes of the rich and powerful. Elsewhere in the country, large holdings became a prerequisite for social acceptance, and something like grace—a reward for faith in God's land—attached to real estate success. Writing in 1940 of his plantation boyhood in Mississippi, William Alexander Percy recalled, "Training in a profession, though ornamental, was unnecessary for a gentleman, but of course you couldn't be one at all unless you owned land."

The original Americans—called Indians by the Europeans—did not join the rush. Unfamiliar with the concept of permanent land ownership, they believed instead that the soil, like the wind, the rain, and the sun, could be used, but not possessed. The typical Indian assumption was that each human was as much a passer-by on the land as the wild creatures were passers-by to him, and that no person had any more right to a particular habitat than any other person or any other living thing. This notion of land as a social resource was swept aside, however, partly because Indian ways were held in contempt, partly because of the vastness of the national domain, and partly because the harmful effects of individual ownership were not apparent for generations.

Although the European immigrants appropriated Indian lands without many moral or financial niceties, the colonists did agree with the original Americans that meadows and fields should serve a useful rather than an ornamental purpose. In rural areas, this meant that the value of a parcel was a function of the amount of corn or potatoes it would yield or the number and size of farm animals it would nourish. In cities, value was determined by the number and importance of the shops and houses that could be fitted on the lot. In both scenarios, land was thought of primarily as economically productive.

The Yard

Between 1825 and 1875, middle-class Americans adopted a less utilitarian expectation about residential space. They no longer needed herbs and vegetables from gardens, and, thanks to the mowing machine, a smooth lawn replaced the rough meadow cut by scythe or sheep. The suburban dream demanded an enlargement of open areas. In particular, the ideal house came to be viewed as resting in the middle of a manicured lawn or a picturesque garden. First, rural cemeteries, later parks, and then suburban cottages were advocated for the benefit of "aesthetic and moral nature," as well as physical health. During the 1850s, editorials in the New York

periodical, *The Crayon*, written by the painter Asher B. Durand (1796–1886), stressed the need to link "the life contemplative with the life practical."

The revolutionary change in attitude that this represented can best be appreciated by recalling that for the first four thousand years of urban history, congestion had meant security, with the very walls of the city representing safety from invading hordes or rampaging bandits. European-style protective fortifications were never essential for defending the New World, but in colonial America the Puritans did believe that eternal salvation could best be won in a cohesive, tight community, and they regarded the wilderness as the dark and terrifying home of Satan's minions. The earliest settlers almost had to be forced out into the forested interior, and at the first sign of danger they raced immediately to the nearest settlement.

As a result of this hostile view of nature and because public transit was either lacking entirely or uncomfortable and slow, wealthy Americans preferred attached or row houses. This way of building had a long tradition elsewhere. It reached its most intense development along the canals of Amsterdam and the streets of other Dutch cities, but the method was as old as Rome and was common in medieval towns. The row house was adopted in America from the beginning of white settlement; Jamestown built its first half-timbered row of "faire framed houses" in 1610. The famed Philadelphia row house made its first appearance in 1691 and was duplicated with local versions of the same form in other cities, especially after 1794, when Charles Bulfinch built a majestic row in Boston. By 1800 it had become the basic form of residential building in New York, Boston, Philadelphia, Baltimore, Providence, and other large communities on the eastern seaboard. A variation in Montreal in the 1850s led to "a terrace landscape," or the uniting of a homogeneous group of attached houses behind a single monumental facade. On the edges of each big American city, the built landscape consisted of block after block of small houses of one or two stories closely set along narrow streets, although acres of open land lay vacant adjacent to the settlements. A large home on a tiny lot in a densely-settled neighborhood was considered a perfectly appropriate residence for a high-status family prior to 1875.

In all American cities, as elsewhere in the world, front and side yards were almost nonexistent, while the small rear yards were apt to be covered with back-alley dwellings, structures that were notorious not only in the larger metropolises, but even in smaller manufacturing centers like Watertown, Bridgeport, and Paterson. Rear areas were usually less than twenty-five feet deep, and the little space that was not built upon was typically rancid, disreputable, and overrun by rodents. Because regular garbage collection was rare before the Civil War, most families threw their refuse out the doors to scavenging dogs and pigs. Except for regular visits to the privy vault or outhouse, most people avoided the back yard entirely; a social occasion there would have been unthinkable.

House siting, like architecture, followed no clear pattern before 1860. Not only was there no conventional way to determine where on a given lot a house should be placed, but also there was no rule as to how the land between houses, if any, was to be divided; how much open space should be devoted for the grounds, or how important or large the front yard should be relative to the rear yard. The tendency was to have no front yard at all. A glance today at Newport, Rhode Island, or Charleston, South Carolina, or brief strolls through old residential neighborhoods like Benefit Street in Providence (1756–1758); Chestnut Street in Salem (1790–1800), North Water

Street in Edgartown (1810–1840), Society Hill in Philadelphia (1780–1830), or Washington Square (1825–1845) or Gramercy Park (1831–1855) in New York City will indicate how houses nestled up to the street, with a prominently placed front door that invited entrance.

Quite self-consciously, small towns copied the compact arrangements of larger cities. In Bedford, New York; Essex, Connecticut; New Market, Virginia; Emmetsburg, Maryland; and dozens of similar communities, the old homes stand directly on the street. The setting for one of Bayard Taylor's nineteenth-century novels is the fictitious town of Tiberius in the 1850s. Connected to the outside world by a new branch of the New York Central Railroad, Tiberius took special pride in its business district, where "houses were jammed together as compactly as possible, and huge brick blocks, with cornices and window caps of castiron, staring up pompously between one-story buildings of wood, saying to the country people on market: 'Behold, a city!'"

The attraction of "jammed together" houses receded with each passing year after 1840, however, and by 1870 detached housing had clearly emerged as the suburban style, different from the manor house and the farmhouse, both of which involved a lifestyle economically connected to the land, and different from the city row house, which occupied too little real estate. The preferred site became a semirural homestead, and the most conspicuous theme of architectural pattern books was private space. Drawings typically depicted an isolated structure surrounded by a substantial garden. Occasionally, a double house appeared, but it provided separate entrances and thick party walls, and designers emphasized that it was only a transitional structure for families on the way up. The row house did not completely disappear; as late as 1920, some 71 percent of the District of Columbia's population lived in row houses (versus 14 percent in detached houses and 15 percent in apartments), while in New York and Philadelphia developers remained with the attached style until after World War II. Without question, however, grass had become an essential aspect of the suburban dream.

The idea that a large, weed-free lawn was a necessity did not emerge full-blown in any particular decade. To paraphrase Richard Hofstadter, there are no absolute discontinuities in history. In Europe a few eccentrics, such as Rousseau, had always romanticized the countryside and argued that the ills of life were derived from the arid rituals of an overrefined civilization. But most restless and intelligent souls had opted for the city, which offered freedom, independence, and variety. In 1802 even William Wordsworth could look out over London from Westminster Bridge and write: "Earth has not anything to show more fair." In the United States, especially before 1830, when paving was rare and nature was threatening, the city street represented progress and the control of man over his environment.

By 1840, as humankind was removed from the real troubles of nature, an idealized view of the outdoors was emerging. Historians have often focused attention on the new appreciation for grandeur and natural beauty that was fostered by the European romantic movement by the Napoleonic era and by American artists before the Civil War. What the blue mountains of Cadore had been to Titian in the sixteenth century, the New York Catskills were to the Hudson River School in the first half of the nineteenth century. Thomas Cole, and somewhat later John Frederick Kensett, reveled in the landscape—the breathtaking views, the virgin hemlocks, and black

locust trees, the stupendous river—and in so doing offered a more lyrical view of nature than had previously been typical of American artists. Similarly, popular writers like Washington Irving, James Fenimore Cooper (*The Last of the Mohicans* is a good example), and William Cullen Bryant celebrated the hills and lakes, the valleys and rivers, of their still-semiwild continent.

Epidemic disease was another powerful impetus for making one's escape from the crowded city. In Europe, from the thirteenth century onward, the dread of plague emptied inner precincts at every rumor of pestilence. In the United States, periodic outbreaks of smallpox, yellow fever, and cholera took a heavy toll in every community, particularly in the warm summer months. Sometimes it seemed as if the very survival of cities might be at stake. As a Philadelphia citizens group pleaded in 1793: "If the fever shall become an annual visitant, our cities must be abandoned, commerce will desert our coasts, and we, the citizens of this great metropolis, shall all of us, suffer much distress, and a great proportion of us be reduced to absolute ruin." As might be expected, scarcely a single suburban advertisement in the middle decades of the nineteenth century failed to contain the boast that residence among open spaces was more healthy than life in cities.

The lyrical view of nature, supplemented by the dread of epidemics, was transferred to residential experience with the introduction of the villa and the bungalow. Defined by John Claudius Loudon's 1839 *Encyclopaedia of Architecture* as "a country residence, with land attached, a portion of which, surrounding the house, is laid out as a pleasure ground . . . with a view to recreation and enjoyment, more than profit," the villa represented a very different concept of a house—a place with a yard. In 1833 Alexander Jackson Davis published *Rural Residences*, a volume replete with villa designs, and thereafter the notion of a decorative lawn became more popular. The word *bungalow* (from *bangla* meaning of, or belonging to Bengal) originally referred to any Bengali house in India, and it later came to mean a house sitting freely in a garden. Because Calcutta was located very literally in a swamp, Europeans living there adopted the practice of placing residential structures on top of piles of dirt created by digging out the space around the proposed house. In America the term ultimately came to mean a one-story dwelling with a distinctive, very low, wide pitch to the roof that was particularly popular between 1900 and 1930.

By 1870 separateness had become essential to the identity of the suburban house. The yard was expected to be large and private and designed for both active and passive recreation, in direct antithesis to the dense lifestyle from which many families had recently moved. The new ideal was no longer to be part of a close community, but to have a self-contained unit, a private wonderland walled off from the rest of the world. Although visually open to the street, the lawn was a barrier—a kind of verdant moat separating the household from the threats and temptations of the city. It served as a means of transition from the public street to the very private house, as a kind of space that, by the very fact of its having no clearly defined function, mediated between the activities of the outside and the activities of the inside. The sweeping lawn helped civilize the wild vista beyond and provided a carpet for new outdoor activities such as croquet (a lawn game imported from England in the 1860s), tennis, and social gatherings. More importantly, lawns provided a presumably ideal place to nurture children. As Emerson noted in his "Journal" in 1865: "There is no police so effective as a good hill and wide pasture in the neighborhood of a village,

where the boys can run and play and dispose of their superfluous strength and spirits." Thus, if a man wanted to enjoy a cigar outside or join his family for a spirited game, he could do so on his own property.

In New York and other large urban areas, the 25-foot-wide lot remained standard, but even there the small front yards seemed a generous improvement over the old in-town row houses which abutted the sidewalk or street. On the outskirts of the same cities, legal covenants written into property deeds from the 1880s onward required that structures be set back from the street by a minimum number of feet. Real-estate advertisements emphasized these requirements as well as those requiring that houses cost at least a given amount as a guarantee that the neighborhood would remain desirable. The change in the visual appearance of the community has been best expressed by Lewis Mumford: "Rows of buildings no longer served as continuous walls, bounding streets that formed a closed corridor: the building, divorced from its close association with the street, was embosomed in the landscape and deliberately absorbed by it."

Unlike Europeans, jealous of their possessions and of their privacy, Americans did not build walls around their houses. The new suburban yard in the United States followed a naturalistic or romantic approach. It was inspired by the English, with antecedents in the Orient, and seemed well suited to the spaciousness of New World suburbs. The style sought to use the existing terrain, with gently curving paths, irregular groupings of trees and shrubs, and rustic pavilions.

This open American pattern contrasted with the more formal style of French, Italian, Asian, and even English cultures, where the lawn, usually tiny, was used for the display of individual plants along with garden ornaments—statues, vases, or fountains. There the house was enclosed by a wall and the resulting courtyard was hidden from view. Only in the Southwest, and especially California, where dense hedges, white walls, or high fences completely privatize the lawn, does the romantic ideal break down. The basic thrust is similar: to separate the family by real estate from intruders into private space.

The idealization of the home as a kind of Edenic retreat, a place of repose where the family could focus inward upon itself, led naturally to an emphasis on the garden and lawn. Grass of course was not new. Men have hunted over the grasslands, grazed livestock on them, and farmed them for thousands of years. Archeologists have found traces of cereal grasses—corn, wheat, barley, oats, rice—around the remains of Stone Age dwellings. Genghis Khan sent his hard-riding horsemen across Asia and into Europe not only to conquer and rule but also to gain new grazing lands for his nomadic people. And the range wars of the American West set cattlemen against farmers over the question of whether frontier grasslands should be considered public or private property.

As a functionless carpet of green in front of a house, however, the grass lawn is a more recent development. The English lawn had an aristocratic birth inside medieval castle walls, where meadow grasses were kept short by beating and trampling them underfoot. The green was a place for lords and ladies to dance and dally, and no one seemed to mind when wild flowers crept in. Eventually, this small plot with formal boundaries was replaced by the sweeping lawns of what came to be known as the English garden. (In England one still refers to the grounds about a house as a garden, not as a yard.) Full of copses and winding streams, wandering paths and thickets, the English garden was long on sweeping vistas of turf. One of the best known

of the landscape gardeners, Batty Langley, claimed in *New Principles of Gardening* (1728) that the formal gardens of Hampton Court, the palace on the Thames that was Henry VIII's favorite, would look much better if they were stripped of "those trifling plants of Yew, Holly, etc. . . . and made plain with grass."

Although the elaborate lawn would be attainable only by the wealthy in England, in the United States carefully tended grass became the mark of suburban respectability. In 1870 Frank J. Scott published *The Art of Beautifying the Home Grounds* and Jacob Weidenmann issued *Beautifying Country Homes: A Handbook of Landscape Gardening*, the first American books devoted entirely to "the methods by which every landowner may improve and beautify his suburban home effectively and with economy." Explicit in such books was the notion that the only reason for living in the city was to make enough money to retire to the country. The well-manicured yard became an object of great pride and enabled its owner to convey to passers-by an impression of wealth and social standing—what Thorstein Veblen would later label "conspicuous consumption." Such a large parcel of land was not a practical resource in the service of a livelihood, but a luxury in the service of gracious living. As Weidenmann noted in his very first sentence: "The location of the house . . . should be sufficiently back from the public road to afford ample room for an unbroken ornamental lawn."

The propitious development of a reliable and inexpensive lawn-mower made grass cutting, in theory, a good method of weekend relaxation. "Country gentlemen will find in using my machine an amusing, useful and healthful exercise," claimed Edwin Budding of Gloucestershire when he applied to the British Patent Office in 1830 for a patent on the world's first lawn-mower. The heavy early models had to be drawn by two men or by a horse, but by the 1860s inventors had developed machines light enough to be pushed by a woman or boy. Scott was particularly ecstatic about the supposed benefits of such exercise: "Whoever spends the early hours of one summer day, while the dew sparkles in the grass, in pushing these grass cutters over a velvety lawn, breathing the fresh sweetness of the morning air and the perfume of the new mown hay, will never rest contented in the city." Although generations of adolescents would learn to curse such a vision, the yard had assumed a parklike function by the last quarter of the century.

New ideas about the house and the yard did not enter the nation's consciousness through the efforts of any person or group of individuals. Dozens of people, including the park planner Frederick Law Olmsted, the social reformer Charles Loring Brace, and the Transcendentalist thinker Ralph Waldo Emerson, helped create a new suburban vision of community. But three authors whose productive lives spanned the years between 1840 and 1875—Catharine Beecher, Andrew Jackson Downing, and Calvert Vaux—were the most important voices in shaping new American attitudes toward housing and residential space.

Catharine Beecher

The eldest child of Lyman Beecher, a famed Calvinist preacher in the Puritan tradition, Catharine Beecher was born in 1800 into a family in which the missionary fires burned brightly. In addition to her father, her seven brothers were all ministers, including Henry Ward Beecher, the leading Protestant clergyman in the United

States between 1850 and 1887. From his pulpit in Brooklyn's fashionable Plymouth Church (Congregationalist), he preached to an audience of thousands every Sunday. His reputation was so great and his oratory so spellbinding that an alleged adulterous affair with a female parishioner and a sensational trial scarcely reduced his influence. Catharine's sister, Harriet Beecher Stowe, wrote the inflammatory novel, *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, that helped lead to the Civil War. Another sister, Isabella, was one of the leading feminists of her generation. And Catharine herself, who never had her own home and family and was rarely on friendly terms with her closest kin, became the nineteenth century's leading theorist of the virtues and requirements of domesticity.

With the death of Mrs. Beecher when Catharine was sixteen, Harriet was five, and Henry was an infant, Catharine assumed the primary female responsibility in the huge Beecher household. In 1823 her fiancé, a professor at Yale, died in a shipwreck, and the following year she took charge of a Hartford girl's school. Nine years later, Catharine accompanied her famous father and her siblings to the "western wilderness" of Cincinnati, where she almost immediately founded the Western Female Institute. Although the school closed its doors four years later, Catharine remained in the Queen City until her death in 1878.

Throughout her long life, Beecher believed fervently in the moral superiority of women over men, a position outlined in the first of her twenty-five books, the privately printed *Elements of Mental and Moral Philosophy, Founded Upon Experience, Reason, and the Bible* (1831). Catharine was not a feminist, however. She opposed the women's rights movement as soon as it emerged as a national organization, insisting that woman's relation to man should be one of dependence and subservience. "Heaven has appointed to one sex the superior and to the other the subordinate station," Beecher intoned. Unlike Angelina Grimké and other militants who sought immediate female self-realization, Beecher believed that women could best achieve their goals by being so unassuming and gentle that men would yield to them.

Beecher's national influence began with her *Treatise on Domestic Economy, For the Use of Young Ladies at Home and at School*, which first appeared in 1841. An immediate popular success, it was frequently adopted as a textbook and was reprinted dozens of times over the next thirty years. Because the "cult of true womanhood" linked the home with piety and purity, Beecher sought to connect architectural and landscape design with her domestic ideal. Covering such topics as the care of infants and the proper procedure for every household activity, room by room and day by day, the *Treatise* was the first American book to offer plans for the practical dwelling; the recommendation was for a substantial one- or two-story cottage with such amenities as parlors, dining-rooms, sleeping areas, and indoor privies. Although her designs were technically conventional—the houses were boxes with a central core of fireplaces—the book provided a vision of a healthy, happy, well-fed, and pious family living harmoniously in a well-built, well-furnished, well-kept house. Beecher followed inventions closely and by the end of her life suggested that advanced technology in cooking, heating, and lighting be applied to residential building.

Beecher did not specifically refer to suburbia, but she assumed that family life could best thrive in a semirural setting. She believed that "implanted in the heart of every true man, is the desire for a home of his own." Devoting five chapters of the *Treatise* to yards and gardens, she argued in favor of the physical and social separation

of the population into the female-dominated sphere of home life, preferably suburban, and the male-dominated sphere of the business world, usually urban.

In subsequent articles in *Harper's New Monthly Magazine*, in several books on housekeeping and family care that Catharine Beecher published between 1869 and 1873, and especially in a compendious volume she co-authored with sister Harriet Beecher on *The American Woman's Home, or the Principles of Domestic Science* (1869), Catharine Beecher acknowledged that her ideas were "chiefly applicable to the wants and habits of those living either in the country or in suburban vicinities as give space or ground for healthful outdoor occupation in the family service." Throughout all her writings, she expressed her affinity for the picturesque cottage and used her immense influence to popularize the desirability of a bucolic and quiet family life. Even though she never had a husband, children, or a large place of her own, Catharine Beecher imparted common sense and practical counsel to members of her sex throughout a broad and strange land.

Andrew Jackson Downing

In 1841, the same year that Beecher's *Treatise on Domestic Economy* appeared, Andrew Jackson Downing published the first American book to deal with the art of landscape gardening in both a scientific and philosophical way. He explained his purpose as follows: "Hundreds of individuals who wish to ornament their places, are at a lost to proceed, from the want of some leading principle." Borrowing many of his ideas from the English author John Claudius Loudon, whose *Encyclopaedia of Cottage, Farm, and Villa Architecture* appeared in 1839, Downing became the most literate and articulate architectural critic of his generation and the most influential single individual in translating the rural ideal into a suburban ideal.

Born in Newburgh, New York, in 1815, Downing inherited a nursery from his father and soon moved into the more creative and lucrative field of landscape design. His *Treatise*, which was to go through eight editions and sixteen printings before 1879, appeared when he was only twenty-six years of age, but he had already achieved quite a reputation in the Hudson Valley as a horticulturist. His books were notable for making architecture and landscape gardening entertaining and enjoyable for a general audience.

Like Catharine Beecher, Downing raised his voice in support of the private home. "We believe," he wrote in 1850, "above all things under heaven, in the power and virtue of the individual home." To this Hudson River Valley native, the house was less a symbol of status than of character. Well-designed and conceived, it would foster republicanism rather than ostentation. "A house built only with a view to animal wants," he wrote, "will express sensuality instead of hospitality . . . gaudy and garish apartments will express pride and vanity." Downing was a strong proponent of the English cottage, an idea born in the 1820s and brought to America in the 1830s. It was a house form particularly appropriate for the growing middle class, and it was in the United States that it became a national type.

In spite of his humble origins, the failure of his nursery in 1847, and the bankruptcy from which he was saved only by borrowing money from his friends, Downing was a snob and an aloof aesthete. He divided domestic architecture into three classes: the cottage, a servantless small dwelling; the farmhouse, a larger but equally

utilitarian building; and the villa, a substantial structure "requiring the care of at least three or more servants." The villa was his ideal. Only the affluent and the comfortable could afford the spacious grounds and open spaces that he felt would allow one to live in absolute harmony with nature. Modeling his villas on the ideal of the English country gentleman, he recommended grounds of hundreds of acres and regarded plots of fewer than five acres as unduly crowded and apt to introduce city ways to the serenity of the countryside.

Although Downing's cottage plans were in fact more elaborate and expensive than he assumed they would be, and although he did not recommend the inexpensive balloon frame construction method, his lively articles and books popularized simple and functional buildings, offering a suburban ideal to which even working men could aspire. In 1845 he became the editor of a journal of rural art and rural taste known as *The Horticulturist*. Thereafter, his essays on parks, homes, and landscape architecture reached a large and predominantly middle-class audience. His counsel was year-round country living. "In the United States," he wrote in 1848, "nature and domestic life are better than society and the manners of towns. Hence all sensible men gladly escape, earlier or later, and partially or wholly, from the turmoil of cities."

Downing seldom referred directly to suburbia, but he accepted the romantic concept of the inferiority of urban residence and deplored the practice of building cities "as though there was a fearful scarcity of space." For the man who absolutely had to wring a livelihood from "the nervous hand of commerce" in the city, Downing noted approvingly that the new steam railroads "cannot wholly escape doing some duty for the Beautiful, as well as the useful," by opening land for suburban development. The iron horse had "half-annihilated" old notions of time and space by allowing the city worker to go home to a country cottage. Commuting, therefore, would enable him to "breathe freely" and to keep alive his love of nature. Advising Americans to make their homes in the countryside, Downing argued:

The love of country is inseparably connected with love of home. Whatever, therefore, leads men to assemble the comforts and elegancies of life around his habitations, tends to increase local attachments, and render domestic life more delightful; thus not only augmenting his own enjoyment but strengthening his patriotism, and making him a better citizen.

Tract developments would not suffice for this purpose. As David Schuyler has noted, Downing was particularly scornful of the country builder who "covers the ground with narrow cells, and advertises to sell or rent them as charming rural residences." He specifically condemned the new suburban town of Dearman, about twenty miles north of Manhattan on the Hudson River (near Tarrytown). The heavily wooded and hilly site was potentially glorious and offered frequent steamboat, stagecoach, and railroad connections with New York City. With imaginative use of new landscape-gardening concepts such as curvilinear roads and irregular lots shaped according to the contours of the terrain, Dearman might have been a model suburb. But the developers built "mere rows of houses upon streets crossing each other at right angles and bordered with shade trees."

The suburban subdivisions designed only to maximize lucre. Downing offered a

environments. Focusing on a large, commonly owned park at the proposed village center, Downing's ideal suburb would feature single-family cottages on lots with street frontages of at least one hundred feet, or about four times the width of the average plot in nearby New York. Broad avenues leading away from the park would assure adequate circulation, while individual gardens would enable each family to achieve a small measure of independence. Thus, the community-oriented park and the privately oriented houses would foster the union between human culture and nature.

Towards the end of his short life, Downing's *The Architecture of Country Houses* (1850), which was reprinted nine times before 1886, offered one of the earliest discussions of the linkage between home and citizenship. He argued that the nuclear family was "the best social form" and that "the individual home has a great social value for a people." "Place the house in the countryside," he said, and there, "in the little world of the family home . . . truthfulness, beauty and order" would have dominion.

Downing never saw most of his ideas reach fruition. On July 28, 1852, while still a young man, he set out with his wife for Newport to superintend the construction of a villa. Bidding friends farewell at the Newburgh waterfront, they boarded a Hudson River side-wheeler, the *Henry Clay*, for the journey downriver to New York City. As was common at the time, the captain engaged in a race with another steamer to determine which was the better and faster ship. Just a few miles above Manhattan (at 254th Street), the overheated vessel burst into flames. A strong swimmer, Downing could have made his way to shore, but the gentle and well-mannered man perished trying to rescue fellow passengers, at least eighty of whom died.

Messages of condolence came from the President and from across the ocean. *The New York Daily Tribune* called him "a man of genius and high culture," while *The New England Farmer* noted that "the death of no man in the nation could be a greater loss." But his friend and colleague Calvert Vaux said it best:

Andrew Jackson Downing was not only one of the most energetic and unprejudiced artists that have yet appeared in America, but his views and aspirations were so liberal and pure that his artistic perceptions were chiefly valued by him as handmaids to his higher and diviner views of life and beauty. . . .

He was fortunately not a man of promise only, but of rich performance; and although cut off in the very prime of a hearty, active, ever-expanding life, he had already lived and labored to such good purpose that he can scarcely be said to have left his work unfinished. . . .

Calvert Vaux

Taking up where Downing left off, Calvert Vaux became a major influence in the development of an American suburban architecture. Born in England in 1824, Vaux trained in the profession of London. In 1850 he met Downing in Paris and so impressed the noted horticulturist that he returned with him to Newburgh, where the two set up an office. Within twenty years, he had won a reputation as one of the nation's most prominent landscape architects, and he spent much of his career defending and propagating Downing's ideas. Although he was only an average designer, Vaux was personable and persuasive, and his devotion to what he considered good taste was constant. He persuaded Frederick Law Olmsted to undertake with him in 1856 the

Park in Brooklyn, South Park in Chicago, and both the Metropolitan and the Natural History Museums in New York.

Vaux deplored the conventional American homes of his time, with their basement dining-rooms and stuffy sleeping quarters. *Villas and Cottages* (1857), contained thirty-nine designs built in the Hudson Valley in the early 1850s; most were relatively low-priced rural and suburban cottages. Each example was complemented with detailed floor plans and a commentary stressing the importance of landscape, the materials used in construction, and the arrangement of interior spaces. One-third of the book was given over to a lengthy introduction that provided an illuminating insight into the thought of a perceptive observer of the national temper. Comparing his adopted land with Europe, Vaux noted:

One important evidence of a genuine longing for the beautiful may be at once pointed out. Almost every American has an equally unaffected, though not, of course, an equally appreciative, love for "the country." This love appears intuitive, and the possibility of ease and a country place or suburban cottage, large or small, is a vision that gives zest to the labors of industrious thousands. This one simple fact is of marked importance; it shows that there is an innate homage to the natural in contradistinction to the artificial—a preference for the works of God to the works of man. . . .

Although his commissions were often from the well-to-do, Vaux rejected ostentation and pretense. He regarded Italianate and Gothic dwellings as unliveable because of their excessive halls, passages, corridors, vestibules, and staircases, and he told his readers to look to their personal needs rather than to foreign styles for the best guide to comfort and beauty. Addicted to the natural landscape, he was quick to condemn the banality of the gridiron street plan:

One especial disadvantage that rural art labors under in America is, that the plans of country towns and villages are so formal and unpicturesque. They generally consist of square blocks of houses, each facing the other with conventional regularity; and this arrangement is so discordant with the varied outlines characterizing American scenery, that Dame Nature refuses, at the outset, to have anything to do with them, and they never seem afterward to get any better acquainted with her. Except, perhaps, in a very large city, there is no advantage gained by this intense monotony of arrangement, and it is much to be regretted that in many new villages that are being erected the same dull, uninteresting method is still predominant.

The Anti-urban Tradition in American Thought

Beecher, Downing, and Vaux were part of an Anglo-American culture that had never placed a high value on city life. Even before the Industrial Revolution transformed many English cities into gloomy slums, London inspired oppressive horror among such major authors as Daniel Defoe, Henry Fielding, Alexander Pope, and William Wordsworth. The very thought of re-creating Old World conditions filled Thomas Jefferson with dread. During an eighteenth-century epidemic of yellow fever, he derived consolation from the thought that it might discourage the growth of future urban centers. "I view large cities," Jefferson wrote in a famous passage, "as pestilential to the morals, the health, and the liberties of man. True, they nourish some of the elegant arts, but the useful ones can thrive elsewhere, and less per-

Henry David Thoreau was equally abrupt. "A man's health," he wrote in 1862, "requires as many acres of meadow to his prospect as his farm does loads of muck."

In no country was there a single intellectual or popular attitude toward cities. Paris has long been considered among the most desirable of capitals, but when Baudelaire contemplated it late in the nineteenth century, he saw "Hospital, brothel, purgatory, hell, prison, / Where every monstrosity blossoms like a flower." In England, Archibald Alison was the sheriff of Lanarkshire when he excoriated cities on moral as well as demographic grounds in the 1840s: "It is there that vice has spread her temptations, and pleasure her seductions, and folly her allurements: that guilt is encouraged by the hope of impunity, and idleness fostered by the frequency of example." But no one was more cynical than John Ruskin, who denounced "that great foul city of London there—rattling, growling, smoking, stinking,—a ghastly heap of fermenting brickwork, pouring out poison at every pore."

In the United States many talented writers testified to the magnetic quality of the American metropolis, and they celebrated the economic growth and material progress that urbanization helped make possible. Pulp fiction, such as Horatio Alger's *Ragged Dick* (1868), depicted the city as the locus of nearly unlimited opportunity, while more talented writers, such as Walt Whitman, valued New York for the stimulation that could be derived from it. The rich and well-born were especially taken with urban pleasures. Sidney George Fisher, the Philadelphia diarist, lamented that a "man of my education cannot live among farmers in the country. The moment you leave the neighborhood of a city you are in the midst of barbarism, except in a very few spots in America."

On balance, however, the American metropolis was more a symbol of problems and of evil than of hope, love, or generosity. William Dean Howells, Henry George, Edward Bellamy, and Jacob Riis shocked their nineteenth-century readers with city tales of "hopeless-faced women deformed by hardship" and of "the festering mass of human wretchedness," while American politicians gloried in the frontier tradition and told their audiences that tillers of the soil represented the nation's best hope for the future. Such sentiments reached fullest expression at the 1896 Democratic National Convention in Chicago, where the booming voice of a young Populist congressman, William Jennings Bryan, thrilled a massive throng: "Burn down your cities and save our farms, and your cities will spring up again as if by magic. But destroy our farms, and grass will grow in the streets of every city in the land."

The traditional American distrust of population concentrations was heightened in the nineteenth century, when every decennial census revealed that a larger proportion of the citizenry was rejecting agrarian life for the better opportunities of crowded settlements. Especially troublesome was the notion that size itself seemed to confound every temporary solution to periodic crises. As gains were made in public health, fire prevention, water supply, and sanitation, more severe emergencies rose to take their place.

Noise and air pollution, for example, appalled travelers. Unlike the major cities of Europe, South America, and Asia, America's metropolises were centers of manufacture. Industry in the steam era, when railroads offered the best method for shipping, tended to concentrate as close to the distribution points as possible. Smokestacks belched soot into the air of every city, and nearby cottages soon turned to slums. No

industry. Henry James's *The Bostonians* describes such an urban scene as "a few chimneys and steeples, straight, sordid tubes of factories and engine shops . . . loose fences, vacant lots, mounds of refuse, yards bestrewn with iron pipes, telephone poles and bare wooden backs of places."

As cities became larger, noisier, and more fearsome, the specter of danger replaced the earlier notion of the city as refuge. Nineteenth-century health officials in every advanced nation noted that average life expectancy was much higher in rural than in urban areas and that, cut off from a fresh infusion of laborers from without, cities would soon be without inhabitants. For the sick, developers promised that the suburban environment would produce a cure, as in this 1871 Louisville advertisement: "[South Park] is just the place for dozens of families of the city with tendency to consumption, since a home in this pine forest would prolong their life many years." Another speculator boasted, "The atmosphere at WARWICK VILLA is delightful, cool, bracing and invigorating: NO MALARIA, coal soot, smoke, dust or factories."

Almost worse than pestilence was immoral behavior, which shifted from an earlier association with the frontier and the wild West to a clear urban emphasis. Irresolute, unsupervised, and alcoholic men and women too often gave in to wicked temptations. Law enforcement proved so difficult to provide that reformer Josiah Strong proclaimed that "the first city was built by the first murderer, and crime and vice and wretchedness have festered in it ever since."

Suburbia, pure and unfettered and bathed by sunlight and fresh air, offered the exciting prospect that disorder, prostitution, and mayhem could be kept at a distance, far away in the festering metropolis. In 1860, for example, Robert Campbell and Edward Willis purchased eighty acres in what is now the South Bronx (then called South Morrisania) for \$204,000. They subdivided the property into one thousand 20-by-100 foot lots, leveled the hills, and filled the hollows. The development went on sale in 1862, but it was the infamous New York City Draft Riots in July 1863 that gave Campbell's venture its biggest boost. Emphasizing safety and accessibility, advertisements for the building parcels suggested, "Those who wish to secure a quiet home sufficiently remote from the city to be out of its turbulence and yet within a convenient business distance had better seek out North New York."

The changing ethnic composition of the urban population also increased middle-class antipathy to the older neighborhoods, as Poles, Italians, Russians, and assorted eastern and southern Europeans, most of them Jews or Catholics, poured into the industrialized areas after 1880. Although only one-third of all Americans lived in cities in 1890, two-thirds of all immigrants did. By 1910 about 80 percent of all new arrivals at Ellis Island were remaining in cities, as were 72 percent of all of those "foreign born." Toward the end of the nineteenth century, mayors in New York, Chicago, and Boston were being elected by immigrant votes, and the possibility was raised that urban officials might be unwilling to use the police against labor radicals, most of whom came from Europe. To this fear were added specific programs to tax property so as to create public improvements and jobs to benefit working-class voters. The observation of Lord Bryce that municipal government was "the one conspicuous failure of the United States" was often quoted. The import of such projections was not lost on middle-class families, who often took the opportunity that low price and good transportation afforded to move beyond city jurisdictions.

By romanticizing the benefits of private space and by combining the imagery of the New England village with the notion of Thomas Jefferson's gentleman farmer, individuals like Catharine Beecher, Andrew Jackson Downing, and Calvert Vaux created a new image of the city as an urban-rural continuum and spawned a remarkable generation of landscape architects like Charles Eliot, Robert Morris Copeland, and H. W. S. Cleveland, who proposed fundamental changes in the form of the metropolis. By the 1870s the word *suburb* no longer implied inferiority or derision. Maxwell, for example, called Cincinnati's suburbs the city's "crowning glory," and Frank J. Scott published a pretentious volume on *Suburban Home Grounds*. The new suburbs were the precise opposite of the kind of dense human settlement that had characterized the planet for millennia. Formerly, open spaces like the Piazza San Marco in Venice had been scattered behind and between buildings. The open style of the American suburb, in contrast, scattered a few houses in the midst of open spaces.

So great was the process of suburbanization that in 1855 *The Crayon* complained of the absence of walls surrounding American cities: "There is something in a wall which divided the city from the country, and while it shuts man into the former, by a kind of stimulant to contrariness drives him out into the latter. Here city grows into country; we never know when we leave one or enter the other." Lewis Mumford, the self-proclaimed authority on such matters, has described the ideal:

To be your own unique self; to build your unique house, mid a unique landscape; to live in this Domain of Arnheim a self-centered life, in which private fantasy and caprice would have license to express themselves openly, in short, to withdraw like a monk and live like a prince—this was the purpose of the original creators of the suburb. They proposed in effect to create an asylum, in which they could, as individuals, overcome the chronic defects of civilization while still commanding at will the privileges and benefits of urban society.

Although there were many critics of the isolated household, after the Civil War the detached house and the sizeable yard became the symbols of a very distinct type of community—the embodiment of the suburban ideal. The solid and spacious houses that lined the tree-arched avenues and fronted the winding lanes of dozens of suburbs exuded success and security. They seemed immune to the dislocations of an industrializing society and cut off from the toil and turbulence of emerging immigrant ghettos. Pitched roofs, tended lawns, shuttered windows, and separate rooms all spoke of communities that valued the tradition of the family, to the pride of ownership, and the fondness for the rural life. By the 1890s country life periodicals that had nothing to do with farming were devoting their issues to a "simple life" of large, free-standing houses amidst ample acreage and appropriate foliage.

Such residences were attainable only by the middle and upper classes. For most Americans life consisted of unrelenting labor either on farms or in factories, and slight relaxation in decrepit lodgings. But the image had a growing attraction in a society in which urbanization's underside—the slums, the epidemics, the crime, the anomie—was so obvious and persistent a problem. The suburban ideal offered the promise of an environment visibly responsive to personal effort, an environment that would combine the best of both city and rural life and that would provide a permanent home for a restless people. There was irony in this retreat from commercialism and industry because, amid the dense foliage, somewhere below the streets,