

ARCHITECTS AND THE DESIGN OF  
ORDINARY SINGLE-FAMILY HOUSES IN THE UNITED STATES:  
THE AMERICAN INSTITUTE OF ARCHITECTS AND  
THE ARCHITECTS' SMALL HOUSE SERVICE BUREAU

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Doctor of Philosophy

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by

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ARCHITECTS AND THE DESIGN OF  
ORDINARY SINGLE-FAMILY HOUSES IN THE UNITED STATES:  
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ABSTRACT

The development of the design process for ordinary single-family houses has followed a uniquely American pattern. As early as the beginning of the eighteenth century, pattern books appeared in the colonies and were used as sources for the latest design ideas. Local builders and carpenters adapted these patterns to new buildings, especially single-family houses. Alongside builders, some gentlemen fashioned themselves into amateur architects from reading the variety of architectural pattern books available in the colonies.

Trained architects first entered the picture in the United States with Benjamin Henry Latrobe, a British architect. An emphasis on monumental design, begun by Latrobe, has continued to characterize much of the architecture profession since its inception in the United States.

The purpose of this study is to discover why architects in the United States are not involved in the design of ordinary single-family houses for the majority of people and how it got to be this way. Specifically, primary documents of the American Institute of Architects and the Architects Small House Service Bureau were used to identify the challenges architects faced in the early twentieth century with regard to single-family house design.

Architects are continuously looking for ways to expand their market share for design in the United States—often in competition with related professions. Furthermore, architects are trained to provide beauty, innovation, and function in buildings and people would theoretically benefit from their services. They are also charged with representing the client's concerns in the design and building process.

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The undersigned, appointed by the dean of the Graduate School, have examined the dissertation entitled

ARCHITECTS AND THE DESIGN OF  
ORDINARY SINGLE-FAMILY HOUSES IN THE UNITED STATES:  
THE AMERICAN INSTITUTE OF ARCHITECTS AND  
THE ARCHITECTS' SMALL HOUSE SERVICE BUREAU

presented by Lisa Marie Tucker,

a candidate for the degree of doctor of philosophy,

and hereby certify that, in their opinion, it is worthy of acceptance.

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<sup>1</sup> Egon G. Guba, “ERIC/ECTJ Annual Paper Review: Criteria for Assessing the Trustworthiness of Naturalistic Inquiries,” *ECTJ* 29 No. 2 (1981): 75-91.

<sup>2</sup> Based on Table 1: Wood use per lineal foot of eight-foot-high wall area from William G. Sturges’ “An Exploration of the Relationships between Houses and Forests in American History”

## LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

AIA	American Institute of Architects
AIBD	American Institute of Building Designers
ARE	Architectural Registration Exam
ASHSB	Architects' Small House Service Bureau
CEU	Continuing Education Unit
CFBD	Certified Professional Building Designer
NAHB	National Association of Homebuilders
NAR	National Association of Realtors
NCARB	National Council of Architectural Review Boards
NCBDC	National Council of Building Designers Certification

## CHAPTER 1 INTRODUCTION

### Introductory Statement

The single-family house market accounts for \$264 billion dollars of the Gross National Product in the U.S. and as such it is a significant component of the national economy.<sup>3</sup> The way in which single-family houses are built and designed in the U.S. is uniquely American. These houses are mass-produced, designed mostly by untrained designers, and markedly repetitive often based on loose interpretations of Colonial buildings. This work proposes that several factors have shaped how this process now works. These contributing forces include: the architectural profession as it has developed over time in the U.S., the homebuilding industry and how it has developed in the U.S., and how publications, governmental agencies, building codes, construction technology, and the real estate profession have all facilitated and impacted this process. An analysis of American Institute of Architects and the Architects' Small House Service Bureau archival documents reveals in detail the struggles the architecture profession has faced with regard to single-family house design. As the only concerted effort on behalf of the architecture profession to address the design of the house, this early twentieth century effort is examined in detail.

The character of houses across the United States follows a particular set of stylistic tendencies. Most houses are frame construction clad with siding or

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<sup>3</sup> U.S. Census. 2006. Highlights of Annual 2006 Characteristics of New Housing. data retrieved from <http://www.census.gov/const/www/highanncharac2006.html> on 9/17/07.

brick and feature distorted Colonial details. Trained designers lament that a drive through the suburbs anywhere in the United States reveals that houses in this country are the creation and vision of a developer who is not trained in design. The process by which most people acquire a new house in the U.S. is through the use of a real estate agent. Realtors show their clients a variety of houses from which to choose. In the event that the client prefers a new house, suburban tract developments provide the most complete set of options for new home selections. In other words, the majority of people select from a finite number of developer-designed houses in order to choose their new house. With profit as a primary motivation for new development, costly innovation and experimentation in the single-family house design market has not widely taken place in the United States.

The development of the design process for ordinary single-family houses can be traced to several historical influences. Since the beginning of the United States, homeowners were involved in the production of their own houses. The first colonial settlers constructed their own houses with the assistance of neighbors, and in some parts of the country, with the labor of slaves. Design of these houses followed the stylistic and construction traditions of European precedents depending on the country of origin of the settler.

As early as the beginning of the eighteenth century, pattern books appeared in the colonies and were used as sources for the latest design ideas. Local builders and carpenters adapted these patterns to new buildings, especially

single-family houses. Alongside builders, some gentlemen fashioned themselves into amateur architects from reading the variety of architectural pattern books available in the colonies, although this was rare.<sup>4</sup>

Trained architects, also rare, first entered the picture in the United States with Benjamin Henry Latrobe, a British architect. While Latrobe did design a few houses,<sup>5</sup> this was not a successful arena for him financially and the focus of his practice was on monumental structures. This emphasis on monumental design, begun by Latrobe, has continued to characterize much of the architecture profession since its inception in the United States.

Although most architects today focus primarily on public and commercial buildings, over the decades many architects have engaged in some residential design. Architects were at the center of many of the house reform movements of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. The most organized push into the house design market occurred in the early twentieth century when a group of architects formed the Architects' Small House Service Bureau (ASHSB) dedicated to the design of well-designed, small houses. Despite the brief endorsement by the American Institute of Architects (AIA) and the Department of Commerce (DOC), between 1922 and 1934, the members of the ASHSB never claimed a large proportion of single-family house design in the United States.

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<sup>4</sup> Dell Upton, "Pattern Books and Professionalism: Aspects of the Transformation of domestic Architecture in America, 1800-1860," *Winterthur Portfolio*, 19, No. 2/3 (1984):107-150.

<sup>5</sup> Michael Fazio, *The Domestic Architecture of Benjamin Henry Latrobe* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2006).

Despite this it remains the single example of a unified effort by the architectural community to intervene in ordinary single-family house design.

With the exception of the two major efforts mentioned above—the reform movements of the late nineteenth and the ASHSB in the early twentieth century--the traditional role of architects in the design of single-family houses within the United States fits into one of two categories: houses for the wealthy which rise to the level of monumental architecture or utopian visions for bettering the life of everyday people through design.

The purpose of this study is to consider why architects in the United States are not involved in the design of single-family houses for the majority of people and how this phenomenon has evolved over time. Architects are continuously looking for ways to expand their market share for design in the United States—often in competition with related professions. Furthermore, architects are trained to provide beauty, innovation, and function in buildings and people would theoretically benefit from their services. They are also charged with representing the client’s concerns in the design and building process. The American Institute of Architects’ Standard Form of Agreement describes this on their website “Under the AIA standard form contracts, your architect serves as the initial arbiter of disputes between you and your contractor.”<sup>6</sup> Therefore, it seems desirable and important to understand why architects do not design most houses in the United States and why they are not more involved in this market.

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<sup>6</sup> AIA Website: [http://www.aia.org/pub\\_yaya\\_identifyservice&grandCh=yes](http://www.aia.org/pub_yaya_identifyservice&grandCh=yes)  
Retrieved 8/11/08

## Terminology

One of the most important factors to distinguish as a part of this research is the difference between the terms “house” and “home.” The issue is confounded by the use of the terms interchangeably in both the homebuilding and real estate industries. This research focuses on the design of the house building and not the meanings of home specifically. The term “homebuilding” is used throughout this work to refer to the homebuilding industry, although in reality, the term should be “housebuilding.” Since the National Association of Homebuilders (NAHB) has reigned over this industry for more than half a century, the term “homebuilding” is widely used to refer to the construction of single-family houses. To further clarify the issue, the research on house and home is included here.

A wealth of environment and behavioral research addresses the difference between house and home. Literature on the meaning of home has been produced by several disciplines including sociology, psychology and environment and behavior. According to Sommerville, “All types of study have revealed the same recurrent meanings of home: as the center of family life; a place of retreat, safety and relaxation, freedom and independence; of privacy, continuity and permanence; a financial asset; and a support for work and leisure activities.” To this list of potential meanings, he adds “ontological security” as first proposed by Heidegger.<sup>7</sup> People take their homes very seriously, and not all people are the

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<sup>7</sup> P. Sommerville, “The Social Construction of Home,” *Journal of Architectural and Planning Research*, vol. 14, no. 3 (1997): 227-228

same. The home requires individualization to meet all of these needs. “Home” as a psychological concept is not necessarily the same as the physical manifestation “house” as demonstrated by the phrase “home is where the heart is” implying home as a part of a person’s makeup.

Several researchers have addressed the issue of home and individual expression as well. Many others have sought to define “home.” Home is a mental state implying ownership, personalization, kinship, and taking possession.<sup>8</sup> Both conceptual models and interpretive theory testing have been used to provide categories of home interpretations including: home as security and control; home as reflection of one’s ideas and values; home as acting upon and modifying one’s dwelling; home as permanence and continuity; home as relationships with family and friends; home as center of activities; home as refuge from the outside world; home as indicator of personal status; home as material structure; and home as a place to own.<sup>9</sup>

The concept of home can also include the physical building in some way.<sup>10</sup> Dovey describes three primary characteristics of the home: home as order, home as identity, and home as connectedness. The relationship to the home emerges

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<sup>8</sup> Amos Rapoport, “A Critical Look at the Concept of Home” in *The Home: Words, Interpretations, Meanings and Environments* (Brookfield, VT: Averbury 1995).

<sup>9</sup> Carole Depres, “The Meaning of Home: Literature Review and Directions for Future Research and Theoretical Development,” *Journal of Architectural and Planning Research*, 8, no.2 (1991): 96-111.

<sup>10</sup> B. Schwarz, R, Mauksch, and S. Rawls, “Housing in the Environmental Sciences” in R. Brent and B/ Schwarz, (eds.) *Popular American Housing: A Reference Guide* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Publishing Co., 1995).

through a series of spatial and social dialectics.<sup>11</sup> The American home is discussed as a symbol in individuality which can be studied through three pairings of opposites: communal versus non-communal, permanent versus temporary and differentiated versus homogeneous.<sup>12</sup> One scholar emphasizes the individual meanings of home and describes the emotional ties people have to their homes beyond economic and social ones. The home acts as an integral part of the psychological makeup and self-expression of the inhabitants.<sup>13</sup> What all of these works have in common is the description of home as a highly personal and meaningful experience. The physical manifestation house is thus related but not the same as home.

Additional theories from environment and behavior research relate directly to many of the changes that took place in the house plan in the U. S. during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Issues of territoriality and the need for privacy are reflected in the separation of public and private zones within the single-family home that took place as a result of the house reform movements of the nineteenth century. A woman's territory was defined with the help of home economists of the time. Fenced in yards for the new suburban home reflect the property owner's territorial boundaries and date to the rise of the American

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<sup>11</sup> Kimberly Dovey, "Home and Homelessness" in I. Altman and C.M. Werner (eds.) *Home Environments*. (New York: Plenum, 1985).

<sup>12</sup> Altman and Chemers *Culture and Environments*, (Monterey, CA: Brooks/Cole, 1980).

<sup>13</sup> Clare Cooper Marcus *House as the Mirror of Self*, (Berkeley, CA: Conari Press, 1997).

suburb during the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Several researchers have addressed these issues of privacy, personal space and territoriality.<sup>14</sup>

As environment and behavior research demonstrates, people are attached to their homes and assign them a great deal of meaning. The home represents a safe haven, personal identity, continuity, and financial success. This has been documented repeatedly within environment and behavior research. While the notion of home expresses a psychological concept, contained within it is the physical house. Furthermore, American values and ideologies have been tied directly to house ownership since the beginning of the U.S. and this tie was reinforced throughout the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Coupled with the notion of the American Dream, many U.S. residents continue to want houses that demonstrate their place in society.

The concept of the “American Dream” is essential to this research. The American Dream consists of many different things to many different people. The term is credited to James Truslow Adams who first wrote about the idea in 1931.<sup>15</sup> The hope for a better life might be attained through religion, education, home ownership, a better job or simply the chance to start over as represented by the possibility of the United States.<sup>16</sup> One of the most common meanings of

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<sup>14</sup> . Sommers (1969) and Hall (1966) have written about personal space, Newman on defensible space, Altman and Stokols (1987) on privacy and crowding. The issue of territoriality has also been addressed by Brown (1987), Altman (1975), Delaney (2005) and others.

<sup>15</sup> Jim Cullen, *The American Dream: A Short Story of the Idea that Shaped a Nation* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003) 3-4.

<sup>16</sup> Ibid.

the dream is to own a freestanding single-family house and the property on which it is located. In his recent book, *Architecture and Suburbia*, John Archer analyzes the American Dream as it manifests at the beginning of the twenty-first century. According to Archer, there are “deep seated American political and ideological currents” underpinning the American Dream. These include possessive individualism, my private arcadia (a man’s home is his castle), and fragmentation and isolation.<sup>17</sup> The American Dream is predicated on land ownership, personalization and territoriality—themes common to environment and behavioral research about the home.

The American Dream, to which most citizens in the U.S. aspire, consists in large part of house ownership. The Dream reflects the principles of property ownership and the self-made man.<sup>18</sup> According to Archer, “A crucial element of this political element and economic ideology that underpins both democracy in America and capitalism in general is the understanding that private possession of land is fundamental to economic activity, liberty, and political agency. Since these have become three key dimensions of modern identity, it has followed in Western culture and especially America that owning property, and especially land, has become a necessary basis for articulating self-hood.”<sup>19</sup>

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<sup>17</sup> John Archer, *Architecture and Suburbia: From English Villa to American Dream House, 1690-2000* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2005).

<sup>18</sup> Ibid.

<sup>19</sup> Ibid, 293.

To identify the qualities of the mass produced house as the subject of this work, two terms have been used which must also be defined: “the small house” and “ordinary.” In the early twentieth century, architects in the American Institute of Architects, members of the Architects Small House Service Bureau and, eventually, the Department of Commerce, use the terms “the small house” to refer to the type of house being built for the masses. This house type was mass-produced, built largely by merchant builders or speculators, and was in high demand. The specific quantifiable characteristics of the house were that the house contained no more than six major rooms and contained a maximum of 30,000 cubic feet. (Using a 10’ ceiling height this is a 3000 square foot house; an 8’ ceiling height would equate to 3750 square feet.) The use of the term “ordinary” is used to describe this same type of house. Ordinary is used to indicate “standard” or repetitious in design--the types of houses currently being built in mass and including “the small houses” of the past.

### Summary

The history of the single-family house in the United States reflects the citizenry’s belief in attainability of the “American Dream.” House ownership has been an important part of being an American since the beginning; since the colonial period, house ownership has been both accessible and attainable and is characterized by a strong “do it yourself” ideology.

While settlers were first inspired by the traditions of their native Europe, designs for houses eventually became the topic of several pattern books which

were available in the colonies as early as 1750. Homeowners hired builders and carpenters to construct their houses, and the same builders in turn looked to “how to” manuals for inspiration and knowledge.

The story of the single-family house in the United States is unique in that it reflects a completely American viewpoint on how to live. This view includes the hope for a better life and the limitless possibilities of a new world all made possible through hard work. Its history and development have paralleled changes in social structure and morals throughout the last 300 years, and feature a few notably American characteristics: (1) all people can seek home ownership and it is widely available at all socio-economic levels, (2) people, with the help of their builders or through builder-designed developments where they can choose their model and finishes, know best how to design for their own needs, (3) hard work and a “do it yourself” attitude can accomplish the promise of homeownership, and (4) land and wood to build with are plentiful and available to all. Trends towards larger houses, as evidenced by annual Census figures, indicate other and more alarming resulting attitudes towards housing in the U.S.: new is better, more is better, and there are no limits to the resources available. Together these ideas have been a fundamental part of U.S. consumer consciousness for decades.

While in the past the attainment of the American Dream meant house ownership, in America today, one must not only own a house but it should be new and it should be large. As America’s prosperity has grown, Americans’ aspirations for the dream have expanded. Nineteenth century beliefs in limitless

land, resources and opportunities continue to thrive. According to popular consumer culture and American tradition, the newer and bigger the house, the more successful one appears. For most, this act of house-ownership is a direct reflection of one's accomplishment in the world.

### Justification for the Study

Environment behavior research shows that people want a house that reflects their individuality and personal sense of home.<sup>20</sup> Much has been written about levels of satisfaction with single-family houses as well as the meaning the home has for people. A rich and plentiful body of literature addresses these issues of house and home. There is no doubt that our houses are deeply connected to our sense of self and well-being.

Unlike the building professional, the design professional is trained to design for specific people, programs, and sites. People want this type of personalized custom house, yet throughout the history of the U.S. they have turned to builders first. Several authors have cited one common argument from the customer: an architect costs too much. One study of architects in the housing industry claims that an argument from architects is that no money can be made

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<sup>20</sup> See P. Sommerville, "The Social Construction of Home," *Journal of Architectural and Planning Research*, vol. 14, no. 3 (1997): 227-228; Amos Rappaport, "A Critical Look at the Concept of Home" in *The Home: Words, Interpretations, Meanings and Environments* (Brookfield, VT: Averbury 1995), and Clare Cooper Marcus *House and the Mirror of Self* (Berkeley, CA: Conari Press, 1997).

from doing residential work.<sup>21</sup> This complaint is frequently cited by members of the AIA in the early twentieth century as well. Despite this, an enormous amount of money is spent each year on single-family houses in the U.S.

Previous studies examining the role of architects in housing showed that most ordinary single-family houses are designed and built by merchant builders.<sup>22</sup> Current census data proves this claim to be just as true today.<sup>23</sup> While the earlier works identified some of the existing conditions of single-family house design, they did not fully address the complex historical causes that led to these conditions.

As such an important artifact, commonsense would suggest that all people would prefer houses that fit their individual needs and preferences. The plethora of home improvement warehouses and home-improvement television shows as well as the popularity of Home and Garden TV (HGTV) are a measure of the need felt by so many to improve and personalize—or at least dream about doing so--their living experiences. In the past two decades, this do-it-yourself house improvement phenomenon has exploded in the United States. According to HGTV.com:

“HGTV, America's leader in home and lifestyle programming, is distributed to more than 89 million U.S. households and is one of cable's top-rated networks. HGTV.com is the nation's leading online home and

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<sup>21</sup> Robert Gutman, *The Design of American Housing: A Reappraisal of the Architect's Role*, (New York: The Publishing Center for Cultural Resources, 1985).

<sup>22</sup> Ibid.

<sup>23</sup> The “Highlights of Annual 2007 Characteristics of New Housing” indicated that in 2007, 74% of all new single-family houses were completed on a speculative basis.  
[www.census.gov/const/www/highanncharac2007.html](http://www.census.gov/const/www/highanncharac2007.html) retrieved 8/11/08

garden destination that attracts an average of 5.2 million unique visitors per month. HGTV owns 33 percent of HGTV Canada and provides much of the Canadian network's daily programming. The network's branded programming also can be seen in 47 other countries and its selected programming is available to service men and women on board Navy ships and through American Forces Radio & Television Service (AFRTS) which services more than 1,000 outlets in over 175 countries."<sup>24</sup>

### Conceptual Framework

Several avenues were explored in order to identify the causes for this set of circumstances and to address why architects are not involved in the design of ordinary single-family houses. Using an interpretive-historical approach to answer this question provided a rich explanation of how things got to be the way they are today.

Theoretical frameworks provide the context within which a research question can be posed as well as describe the first principles of a discipline. This study occurs at the intersection of the disciplines of architecture and environment-behavior and takes an architectural history approach to answering a research question about a phenomenon that occurs in practice within architecture in the United States. As a result it is important to discuss theory in both the contexts of architecture and architectural history.

The manner in which new knowledge is formed within architectural history falls under the domains of architecture and history. Traditionally, architectural history has been housed within academic departments of architecture or art history in the United States. The first architectural historians were actually

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<sup>24</sup> HGTV website [www.hgtv.com](http://www.hgtv.com) retrieved on 8/5/08

architects or the relatives of architects. As the discipline has become more formalized in the last century, architectural historians have most often been taught art historical methods for research.

Architectural history, like all history, relies on interpretation by the historian and seeks to explain some phenomenon. In this way, the historian theorizes explanations for buildings, events, and circumstances. Taking a holistic view of a particular building, movement, professional body of work, or trend, the historian tells the story from which others can learn.

The purpose of this study is to take a holistic view of the architectural profession in the United States and its involvement in and relationship to domestic, single-family house design in an effort to tell the story of past successes and failures and to generate a theory about how the current relationship of architects to ordinary single-family house design came to be. Specific attention is given to the AIA in the beginning of the twentieth century because this was an extremely crucial turning point for the future of housing in the U.S. The resulting new knowledge may then be used to educate American architects about internal practices and cultural beliefs that may have contributed to the architectural profession's inability to obtain a monopoly over the professional design services market in the United States. By narrating the history of the profession in this way, new knowledge will be added to the existing knowledge of the history of design professions in the United States, American architectural history, and cultural interpretations of the architectural profession.

In their publication *Intersections: Architectural Histories and Critical Theories*, Iain Borden and Jane Rendell (2000) argue against the position held by some historians that theory is not necessary to the writing of history. “The question of whether to use theory or not is an irrelevance. Rather the question must be, first, which theory to use, and second, how to relate it to the ostensible objects of study.”<sup>25</sup> Borden and Rendell outline nine epistemological frameworks through which architectural historical inquiry can be conducted: theory as objects of study, new architectures, framing questions, critical history, interdisciplinary debates, disclosing methodology, self-reflexivity, re-engagement with theory, and praxis. They title the section that describes these nine frameworks the “nine challenges.”

Since some historians do not overtly evoke any epistemological framework in their research, it is important to review each of the nine frameworks that Borden and Rendell discovered in their research prior to proposing one for this work. Each framework takes a different approach to the study of architectural history. “Theory as object” is the architectural history approach that describes the historic use of theories in architecture as a way to organize the architecture itself. “New architectures” employs the understanding of things outside architecture as a way to return to architecture. “Critical history” occurs within the domain of criticism and uses criticism as a tool for interpreting architecture. “Interdisciplinary debates” seek to put architecture in a broader context within which it becomes

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<sup>25</sup> Iain Borden and Jane Rendell, *Intersections: Architectural Histories and Critical Theories* (London: Routledge, 2000), 7.

more meaningful to those who know very little or too much about architecture. In the “disclosing methodology” framework, the historian describes the complete process through which the historical narrative is written and thus reveals the decision making process which led to the ultimate result. “Re-engagement with theory” involves the use of critical theory to look at architecture anew. A “praxis” approach takes into account how history shapes the practice of architecture.

While not all historians agree with the need for theory, Borden and Rendell reinforce the need for theory in history when they summarize the reason for the nine frameworks (or any theoretical framework in history research): “If architectural history ignores the kinds of theoretical explorations undertaken by other disciplines, it runs the risk of doing something that, while perhaps perfectly enjoyable, will be meaningful only as a self-referential exercise and thus irrelevant to anyone else.”<sup>26</sup>

In an effort to create research that will be relevant, a “disclosing methodology” has been adopted for this study. A sociological framework will be invoked to look at the culture of architecture as well as the history of the profession in the United States in order to answer the research question. In some respects, architecture’s relationship to builders, engineers and developers will evoke an “interdisciplinary debate” framework as well. Ultimately, all this work will relate to praxis in an effort to inform the profession of architecture through an understanding of its own history.

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<sup>26</sup> Ibid, 15.

Just as architectural history struggles with theory building, so too does architecture. According to Julia Robinson in her article “Architectural Research: Incorporating Myth and Science” “We do not yet have a unified body of truly architectural research.” Robinson goes on to say, however, that “the considerable body of research about architecture that does exist is taking place in subdisciplines (e.g. history, structures, energy, design methods, human behavior) using research bases, both theoretical and methodological, not developed by and for the study of architecture, but taken from outside disciplines (e.g. history, civil and mechanical engineering, cybernetics, psychology).”<sup>27</sup> Robinson proceeds to discuss the challenges of architectural research and claims “the present divide between the sciences and humanities is especially detrimental to the development of an architectural research.”<sup>28</sup>

Amos Rapoport’s view complements Robinson’s in his call for unified environment-behavior theory. Rapoport seeks to define many of the terms associated with research in architecture in his chapter “Science, explanatory theory, and environment-behavior studies” in *Theoretical Perspectives in Environment-Behavior Research* (2000). Theory is defined as a set of interrelated high-level principles that provide an explanatory framework and which are eventually connected to empirical research. The purpose of explanation is an understanding. In summary, Rapoport claims “My basic

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<sup>27</sup> Julia W. Robinson “Architectural Research: Incorporating Myth and Science” *Journal of Architectural Education* 44. No. 1 (1990) 20.

<sup>28</sup>Ibid, 21.

premise is that although there are other ways of interacting with the world...there is only one workable, and hence, valid way of interacting with the world cognitively i.e. in terms of knowing and explaining and hence understanding it and how it works—and that is science.”<sup>29</sup> He proceeds to list the characteristics of a good theory: Predictive accuracy, Consistency, Breadth of scope, Simplicity, Fertility, Elegance/parsimony, Explanatory power, Public discussibility, Testability, Criticizibility/falsifiability and confirmability, Progress, Smoothness, Responsiveness or adaptability, Inter-theory support, Communicability, Empirical corroboration, and Beauty.<sup>30</sup> The assertion here is science is the only route to new knowledge.

The qualitative/quantitative debate over research is not new. Although historical research is not normally fitted neatly into either category, this study is constructivist by nature, placing it most closely to the realm of qualitative research. It results in a plausible theory about the reasons for the architecture profession’s current relationship to ordinary single-family house design in the United States. Historical research often asks “why” questions looking for cause and effect, yet it does not seek to test a scientific hypothesis. Rather asking a “why” question allows the historian to posit possible answers that are firmly grounded in primary and secondary resources. To the historian, original documents—works of art and architecture, artifacts, letters, diaries, meeting

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<sup>29</sup> Amos Rapoport, “Science, Explanatory Theory, and Environment behavior Studies,” In Wapner, et al. (Eds.) *Theoretical Perspectives in Environment-behavior Research* (New York: Kluwer Academic/Plenum Publishers) 110.

<sup>30</sup> Ibid, 107-140.

notes, and drawings—are considered primary resources. Understanding that archival data was constructed for a specific purpose during a specific time, the historian must explain the artifact within its historic context. An interpretive-historical approach provides the constructivist framework through which the historian explains an historical phenomenon and generates a plausible theoretical explanation that best fits the data.

In architectural historical research, the primary way to demonstrate credibility of the research narrative is through the inclusion of the major sources related to the topic at hand. For this particular study, this research spanned several previously researched domains and one for which no scholarly work had yet been published. The existing domains include: the history of the profession, the history of architectural education, the culture of architecture, the history of published house plan designs, and to a limited degree, the Architects Small House Service Bureau (ASHSB). The content for which no previous research studies existed related to the archival documents from the AIA and the AIA's relationship with the ASHSB. Despite the existence of previous studies about these broad topics, previous research did not specifically address the relationship of these domains to single-family house design or the AIA and the ASHSB.

Samples of a few of the original AIA documents analyzed as a part of this study are included in Appendices 3 and 4. This permits future researchers concerned with related topics to be able to transfer the method of analysis to

future research. The coding used to identify themes are contained within the chapter on the AIA and the ASHSB.

The methods used to acquire information as well as the process of coding and analysis used for this study are stated explicitly. This transparency allows for readers and future researchers to clearly understand the methods used making it theoretically possible to reproduce this research.

As a part of the disclosing methodological approach, epistemological assumptions are revealed in the historic narrative contained herein. I gave particular attention to the use of non-biased language as well as solidly founded claims based on the available body of research and original documents.

#### Statement of the Problem

Although people want personalized residences that reflect attainment of their version of the American Dream, most single-family houses in the U.S. today are markedly similar and very repetitious in plan and form. Furthermore, the lifestyles of most people in the United States have changed radically since the nineteenth century yet the plans of our houses have changed very little (except that they continue to get larger.) Architects are trained to design specific solutions for specific people. They are trained to protect an owner's interests in the building process, and they are trained to innovate. Ordinary single-family house design in the United States requires innovation to meet today's societal and environmental needs.

While the history of single-family houses in the United States, the education of architects in the United States and some studies of architectural practice have been conducted, no comprehensive study of the relationship of architects to the design of the ordinary single-family houses has been completed prior to this work.

This study explores the thesis that a combination of forces has contributed to the reason why architects do not often design single-family houses in the United States. These reasons include the time in which the architecture profession developed in the U.S. and the education of an architect coupled with the culture of architectural practice in the United States, the relationship between architects and builders in the U.S., and characteristics of an American Democratic society which shaped government agencies, building codes, and perceptions of plenty.

Formalized architectural education in the United States began under the influence of several Beaux Arts-trained American architects in the late-nineteenth century following the Civil War and that this educational approach helped to shape the way in which architects structured their design offices, mentored apprentices, and initiated the professional registration movement for architects in the United States. Disagreements between architects from the Midwest and the northeast plagued the profession until well into the twentieth century. The unique conditions of the American approach to single-family house design practice reflect these early educational beginnings and the inherent preferences for

specific building types that are considered to be architecture. These ideas are tested by posing questions about the history of architectural education in the United States, the development of the profession in the United States, and the culture of architecture firms in the United States. Specifically, the way in which all of these shaped how the American Institute of Architects engaged with the Architects Small House Service Bureau reveals the culmination of all these underlying factors in a single instance.

Architects have long been aware of what they have dubbed “the small house problem” in the early twentieth century, referring to the ordinary single-family house in which the majority of Americans reside.<sup>31</sup> While architects have tackled the house as a design problem and have designed one-of-a-kind houses for the wealthy, they have failed to capture a significant portion of the single-family house design market in the U.S.

Architects are trained to design for individuals and could provide this service. Moreover, architects provide a service to consumers as their representative in the building process--yet they do are not doing this. Why? Answering this question is the first step to a possible solution. A study of the historical factors that have contributed to this phenomenon helps to construct a viable explanation of the forces that have created the existing conditions and thus relates an understanding of history that allows for progress to be made. Understanding this problem serves both clients and the architecture profession.

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<sup>31</sup> Letter from W.A. Etherton, 16 September 1914, AIA Archival Document, AIA Headquarters.

## Methods

This research uses an interpretive historical model of inquiry to provide an answer to the research question based on primary and secondary sources.

Existing books, articles, and other scholarly publications and historical archival documents were consulted for background information as a part of this study.

Within this overall model, the actual methodology will be a “disclosing methodology.” The purpose is to disclose the constructed nature of the historical narrative and reveal any underlying assumptions.

As mentioned previously, not all historians agree with the need for theory. During the past twenty years, architectural historians have begun to examine the interpretive nature of history. Recent authors have called for a transparency that reveals the theoretical underpinnings of these interpretations.

To compile a complete history of the relationship between ordinary single-family house designs and the architecture profession in the United States, several steps have been taken to allow for the triangulation of multiple sources:

1. Visited the archives of the American Institute of Architects located in Washington D.C. to view original documents related to the architectural profession and the single-family house issue. Multiple types of primary documents were analyzed including letters, meeting notes, conference transcripts, unpublished papers by architects on house design, records gathered from members of the Architects Small House Service Bureau

across the United States, and other documents. A complete listing of these can be found in the Appendices. (visited in December 2006).

2. Conducted a search of existing histories of the architectural profession in the United States The studies consulted included all major works on the history of the profession in the United States.
3. Conducted a search of studies of the culture of architecture firms in the United States. Studies have been conducted by sociologists and psychologists as well as ethnographic studies by architectural researchers.
4. Conducted a search on studies of the history of Architectural Education in the United States as well as looked at original publications for various architecture programs established in the 1860s and later. Primary documents published in the *American Architect and Building News* during the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries and papers written by Arthur Classon Weatherhead and the American Institute of Architects up to 1940 were supplemented with secondary resources on the subject.
5. Conducted a search for histories of the single-family house in the United States Multiple books and papers have been published on the evolution of the house. In many instances, the designers are mentioned.
6. Researched the National Association of Homebuilders (NAHB), the American Institute of Building Designers (AIBD) and the National

Association of Realtors (NAR) and compared them to the American Institute of Architects and licensing procedures for an architect in the U.S.

7. Compared and analyzed each of the above materials to identify points of conflict or disagreement as well as similarities and complete gaps in the literature. The relationship of architects and single-family house design created the primary gap in the literature that resulted in this study.

A significant part of this research relies heavily on archival documents located in the archives of the AIA. The majority of these documents have not been examined beyond very basic cataloguing of the boxes. Several types of documents are included in the AIA archives. All documents viewed were contained within 11 x 17 file boxes that had been generally numbered and catalogued. Archivist assistant Avigail Sachs performed the inventory of the boxes in the archives in the summer of 2006. Each descriptor includes the year of the materials, an assigned number and a general title such as "Housing Committee."

Following five eight-hour days of extensive file review, a selection of documents was chosen from which to make copies for a more thorough document analysis. These documents were chosen based on their content after a quick scan of thousands of documents while at the archives. Approximately three hundred pages of documents addressing ordinary single-family house design by the architectural community and in response to a tremendous housing shortage following World War I were selected and photocopied for later analysis. In

addition to those documents that were photocopied, other document analysis was conducted on site. In some cases, some of the older documents (pre-1934) could not be photocopied because of their fragile condition. These documents span the time frame between 1914 and 1951.

The data was first sorted into broad topics. Preliminary organizational categories for the AIA documents include: archives box lists, Housing Committee of the AIA reports, AIA organ publications, memos sent to all AIA chapter leaders, information from and about Federal Housing programs, a letter from the White House, Small House Service Bureau information, papers written by outside consultants on house design, and miscellaneous related documents. Within each category the documents were then placed chronologically for analysis and memo writing. All three hundred pages were reviewed for predominant themes. Each document was first coded line-by-line. Initial codes emerged from the documents. Focused coding resulted from the line-by-line codes, as did multiple interpretive memos.

The majority of the documents analyzed were AIA annual meeting minutes and notes. The documents spanned from December 1914 until April 1939. These documents reflected the official resolutions and actions made on behalf of the members of the AIA during this time. Twenty-five multi-page annual reports were included in this category.<sup>32</sup>

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<sup>32</sup> No annual conference was held in 1933 due to the Great Depression.

Other documents included were reprints of individual articles related to single-family houses from the *AIA Octagon*, *A Journal of the AIA*, *the AIA Bulletin* and *the Blue Print*. The AIA published all of these periodicals. They range in date from January 1936 through November 1948.

Occasionally throughout the tenure of the small house committee, memoranda were sent on behalf of the AIA Board Members to all state presidents and leaders. These documents spanned the time period between May 1936 and December 1937. In one instance, a member survey about small houses was included.

The AIA closely followed developments in public regulations of single-family house design. The AIA members viewed the government relationship as one possible entry-point into this line of work. As a result, members frequently covered new legislation and summarized it in *the Octagon*. Copies of multiple documents related to Federal Regulation of housing beginning in 1935 and continuing through 1938 were contained within the AIA archival files.

Many of the documents examined related to the Architects Small House Service Bureau (ASHSB) and the small house committee as a representative voice of the AIA. Surrounding the time when the AIA began to consider revoking its endorsement of the Architects Small House Service Bureau, the AIA small house committee sought to develop its own version of a small house plan service. Information about this effort are contained within documents that span

the time period between 1936 and 1945. This includes a survey of the membership that provides a sense of the AIA membership on the issue.

Throughout the AIA files various reports written by outside experts and consultants are also included. These span the time frame beginning in 1934 all the way through 1951. It is unclear from the records which of these, if any, were solicited by the AIA.

The AIA files also include miscellaneous items related to single-family house design. These include advertisements announcing various single-family home initiatives by industry and builders, advertisements by companies showcasing the value of the architect, as well as meeting minutes from the National Association of Homebuilders conferences found in AIA files.

This retrospective document review provided an important view into the historical background for the current state of single-family house design today. It offered insight into a moment in time during which architects fully embraced the question of single-family house design as a discipline in the United States. As the chief voice of the architectural profession since the mid-nineteenth century, the AIA has served as the repository for trends and positions reflected within the architectural community. The documents span from 1914 through 1954, with the majority dating to the 1920s and 1930s, when single-family house design was a prominent topic among architects and discussed at each annual convention. These documents have not previously been analyzed in any systematic manner. The date range for the documents was chosen to reflect the period during which

the AIA membership openly discussed single-family house design as a part of its annual conferences.

According to Marshall and Rossman, document analysis generally falls into seven stages. First, the data is organized. Then, the researcher becomes immersed in the data until categories and themes are generated. Coding the data and then offering interpretations through the use of analytic memos follows this step. Subsequently, the researcher will look for alternative understandings and finally will write the report on the research findings.<sup>33</sup> Based on this general approach, the documents were coded line-by-line the first time with a pencil and sticky note system to mark the documents for the emergence of any potential themes. A second reading was done to highlight specific individual passages that reinforced the identified categories and themes. Analytic memos recorded insights and connections throughout this process. According to Charmaz , “Memo-writing encourages you to dig into implicit, unstated, and condensed meanings.”<sup>34</sup> Careful attention was given to the notations in the memos. For example, factual information was distinguished from researcher interpretations.

Memo writing resulted in an emergent process through which ideas came directly from the documents. Reflective thinking was used during the collection of data and expressed within the analytic memos.

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<sup>33</sup> Catherine Marshall and Gretchen Rossman, *Designing Qualitative Research*, 4<sup>th</sup> edition (New Delhi: Sage Publications, 2006).

<sup>34</sup> Kathy Charmaz, *Constructing Grounded Theory: A Practical Guide through Qualitative Analysis* (London: Sage Publications, 2006), 83.

This work, as with any type of document review process, was subject to certain limitations. In the case of archival documents, it is possible that not all documents still exist or can be located. This particular set of documents represented entire file sets from various employees of the AIA over the time period of analysis. Multiple copies existed for some documents suggesting that the document sets had never been sorted through and culled. As a result, there is a high likelihood that the records are relatively complete in their current form.

Several researchers have described the limitations to the use of document analysis in research.<sup>35</sup> According to Marshall and Rossman, “a potential weakness, however, is the span of inferential reasoning” during data interpretation.<sup>36</sup> Creswell provides a list of other possible limitations: the information may be protected, the information may be in hard to find places, the researcher will be required to transcribe or optically scan all documents to use computer data analysis programs, materials may be incomplete, inauthentic, or inaccurate.<sup>37</sup> To these, this researcher would add that the materials might be in poor condition, hard to read, incomplete--in that sections have been torn or smeared--and in other states of decay that may result in gaps in the record.

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<sup>35</sup> For various examples of this see John Creswell. *Research Design: Qualitative, Quantitative, and Mixed Methods Approaches.*, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition (London: Sage Publications, 2003) and Benjamin Crabtree and William Miller (ed). *Doing Qualitative Research*, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition (London: Sage Publications, 1999), and Marshall & Rossman, 2006.

<sup>36</sup> Marshall and Rossman, *Designing Qualitative Research*, 108.

<sup>37</sup> Creswell, *Research Design: Qualitative, Quantitative, and Mixed Methods Approaches*.

Document analysis also provides several strengths as a research method. “Probably the greatest strength is that it is unobtrusive and nonreactive: It can be conducted without disturbing the setting in any way.”<sup>38</sup> Creswell enumerates the strengths of this method as follows: enables the researcher to use the actual language of the participants as they have written them, it is unobtrusive, it represents data which is well-thought out, and it can save expense during transcription since they are already written.<sup>39</sup> Furthermore, document analysis may be the only option in an historic study.

Most of these limitations were addressed during this research. First, the records are relatively complete based on their lack of processing by the AIA. Second, the documents have already been located and permission to use them has been granted by the AIA. Finally, no computer analysis was performed; all analysis of the documents was performed by hand. In these ways, the limitations of this research method have been properly addressed.

By addressing the research question from several vantage points, threads were identified that helped answer the question. One thing that has become clear in the review of literature is that each of the texts written to date reflects the personal bias of the author depending on the purpose of and audience for the document. Textual analysis and comparison illuminate the various positions other

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<sup>38</sup> Marshall & Rossman, *Designing Qualitative Research*, 108.

<sup>39</sup> Creswell, *Research Design: Qualitative, Quantitative, and Mixed Methods Approaches*.

historians have taken and also helps identify holes in the literature as it relates to this research study.

Four chapters summarize the findings of this research and examine the combination of forces that have contributed to the reason why architects do not design ordinary single-family houses in the United States. Chapter One explores the sources for single-family house design before the profession of architecture was established in the United States and focuses on pattern books and other architectural treatises. It also explains the blurred boundaries between architects and builders. Chapter Two discusses the history and development of the architecture profession in the United States, the history of architecture education in the United States, and the culture within the profession of architecture. Chapter Three outlines the brief involvement of the American Institute of Architects with single-family house design under the auspices of the Architects' Small House Service Bureau. As the single effort on behalf of the architecture profession in the U.S. to address the single-family house problem, this chapter analyzes the relationship between the AIA and the ASHSB and why this effort ultimately failed. Chapter Four looks at today's house-building machine in the U.S.

CHAPTER 1:  
PATTERN BOOKS,  
ARCHITECTURAL TREATISES AND OTHER PUBLICATIONS:  
A CONTEXT FOR  
THE ARCHITECTS' SMALL HOUSE SERVICE BUREAU  
PUBLICATIONS

This chapter addresses the types of published sources for single-family house designs and construction details both before there were professional architects in the United States and after the profession became established. The way in which people designed and built their homes in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries in the U.S. and their reliance on architectural treatises and pattern books helped to shape the current state of single-family house design and construction in the United States.

The first settlers to what would later become the United States arrived from England, France, Germany, the Netherlands, and Spain. They brought with them technologies and the design preferences of their homelands. When faced with new materials such as an abundance of wood, new climatic conditions and other challenges, traditional European house designs were modified to suit the new land. The very first settlements were both quite primitive and temporary and are no longer extant (such as Jamestown, Virginia). Once colonies could be sustained on the North American continent, settlers were quick to adapt what they already knew in readily available materials such as wood, stone, adobe, and

handmade brick. Previous studies demonstrate how similar houses in the colonies were to houses in the colonists' land of origin.<sup>40</sup>

Since colonial times, pattern books and architectural treatises have provided design inspiration to people in the United States. Several scholars have listed, quantified and located these books.<sup>41</sup> In the place of trained architects, local craftsmen and homeowners purchased books and used them as inspiration for single-family house projects. As early as 1830 some of these carpenter builders began to call themselves architects. The term architect was used during this time by a variety of different people including masons, builders, carpenters, and designers.

Scholars have examined early pattern books in the United States and their relationship to the practice of architecture.<sup>42</sup> Upton discusses gentleman amateur architect, Thomas Jefferson's involvement with architectural pattern books.<sup>43</sup> Jefferson taught himself an appreciation for architecture using the available pattern books and architectural treatises of the time, many of which he purchased for his personal library. Jefferson experimented with these

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<sup>40</sup> Daniel Reiff, *Small Georgina Houses in England and Virginia: Origins and Development Through the 1850s* (Delaware: University of Delaware Press, 1986).

<sup>41</sup> See Janice G. Schimmelman's *Architectural Books in Early America: Architectural Treatises and Building Handbooks Available in American Libraries and Bookstores through 1800*, (New Castle Delaware: Oak Knoll Press, 1999); Helen Park's *A List of Architectural Books Available in America Before the Revolution*, (Los Angeles, CA: Adolf K. Placzek, 1973); and Kenneth Hafertepe and James O'Gorman's *American Architects and Their Books to 1848*, (Massachusetts: University of Massachusetts Press, 2001).

<sup>42</sup> Dell Upton, "Pattern Books and Professionalism: Aspects of the Transformation of Domestic Architecture in America, 1800-1860," *Wintherthur Portfolio*, Volume 16, No. 2/3, (1984).

<sup>43</sup> *Ibid*, 107-150.

architectural principles in well-known buildings such as the University of Virginia Rotunda and Pavilions as well as in his own two private residences Poplar Forest and Monticello. A more recent account of architecture books spans the entire history of single-family house design in the United States from the early eighteenth century through the mid-twentieth century and its relationship to the use of printed matter in the design of houses for ordinary people.

Several types of architectural treatises and pattern books have been used in the U.S. These include books of European origin, books for architects, books for builders, books for homeowners, and books for mixed audiences. Like books, magazines have also had a variety of intended audiences.

During the earliest period, the use of pattern books was centered on major towns and port cities and the books were European in origin. By the 1820s builders began to change how they used pattern books and desired more detailed construction information from which to build homes. In response to this need, John Haviland's *The Builders Assistant* (1818-21) and Asher Benjamin's *The American Builder's Companion* (1827) were the first two books designed to reach ordinary carpenters and builders. Like the earlier architectural treatises, these books contained a combination of theoretical ideas about architecture and design plates and were copied in contemporary house designs. While the books of the previous century provided Georgian-style architectural models, the new generation of American-produced builder's manuals leaned towards the Greek Revival style. Added to the first two books was an additional book by Asher

Benjamin— *The Practical House Carpenter: Being a Complete Development of the Grecian Orders of Architecture* (1830)—and two publications by Minard Lefever entitled *The Modern Builder's Guide* (1833) and *The Beauties of Modern Architecture* (1835). These books differ from the earlier architectural treatises as they were written specifically for builders and included practical building information such as how to cut joints, construct stairs, and make a scroll out of a solid piece of wood.<sup>44</sup> While trained as a carpenter, Benjamin began referring to himself as an architect once he began to publish.

By the 1850s another change took place in the architectural treatise as shaped by the Romantic Movement. Alexander Jackson Davis and Andrew Jackson Downing sought to elevate moral character through good Christian house design. Davis's *Rural Residences, etc, Consisting of Designs for Cottages, Farm-Houses, Villas and Village Churches* (1837) and Downing's *Cottage Residences or a Series of Designs for Rural Cottages and Cottage Villas and Their Gardens and Grounds* (1842) advocated healthy living associated with the country in response to the filth created within urban centers as a result of the industrial revolution. These books showed idyllic houses situated in the country. Perspective views were used to demonstrate the beauty of living in the rural setting.

The nineteenth century was a time of great social change as a result of the industrial revolution. Masses of people moved into the urban areas to work in

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<sup>44</sup> Asher Benjamin, *The American Builders Companion*. (New York: Dover Publications 1969 reprint of 6<sup>th</sup> edition 1827).

industry, and housing was unable to keep up with these rising numbers. New immigrants flocked to the United States as the land of opportunity. As living conditions became horrendous, social reformers and house reformers went to work to improve the family home. These reform efforts had at their root a strong moral component and sought to save people from the perceived evils of the city. A renewed emphasis on cleanliness in the home environment was a reaction to both the dirt associated with the now heavily polluted cities as well as the newly developed germ-theory of disease.

Several scholars have chronicled the changes in the American single-family home as a result of the agendas of Romantic revivalists such as A.J. Downing and later of the abolitionists and temperance crusaders. Beginning in 1840, Downing's books promoted three basic house styles thought to promote proper moral living: the Gothic Revival (with its Christian associations), the Italianate style (aspiring to refined living), and the Bracketed style (for its functionality).<sup>45</sup> The work of Downing and others promoted country living in response to the constant relocating and declining city life associated with industrialization. The idea of the home as an island of stability, set within nature, would arm the homeowner against the vices of the city. The newly created suburb was thought to combine the convenience of the city with the truth and beauty of a natural setting. Taste and beauty were thought to evoke morality and

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<sup>45</sup> Clifford E. Clark, Jr., "Domestic Architecture as an Index to Social History" *The Romantic Revival and the Cult of Domesticity in America, 1840-1870*, *Journal of Interdisciplinary History*, Volume 7, No. 1, (1985): 33-56.

house-design reformers focused on private behavior in lieu of public presentation.

Housing reformers quickly adopted a religious component to their argument borrowed from the shift taking place in American Protestantism.<sup>46</sup> Beginning in the 1840's American Protestants began to question the use of religious revivals to "save" people from sin. Eastern churches called for children to grow up in a solid Christian home and this way, no religious conversion would later be necessary. "Housing reformers were quick to take this religious argument and turn it to their own ends...The result was the conception of the house as a church which reached its fullest development in the Gothic style."<sup>47</sup> Combined with this religious zeal, the temperance and abolitionist crusaders saw the family as the conduit to social reform. "The intensive propaganda campaigns waged by the temperance and abolitionist crusaders with their stress on the family served to strengthen the program of housing reformers."<sup>48</sup>

The shift from an agricultural economy to an industry-based one between 1840 and 1920 led to the change in house patterns. The suburban home was the answer to changing needs and was promoted by both A.J. Downing, landscape architect, and Catharine Beecher, educator and home reformer. The primary changes to the American home include both a picturesque landscape for

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<sup>46</sup> Clifford Clark. *The American Family Home, 1890-1960*. (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1986).

<sup>47</sup> Ibid 44.

<sup>48</sup> Ibid, 45.

the suburban house, as described by Downing, and Beecher's vision of a woman's control over the running of the home.<sup>49</sup>

In addition to the use of the proper style on the exterior, improved kitchens and other service quarters were chief among the changes taking place to the single-family house. Rooms befitting the needs of women were incorporated into the house plan. Public-private separation required that service elements such as kitchens and service stairs not be visible to visitors. The parlor provided the primary location for entertaining guests and was used to display one's taste. Taste and beauty were equated with proper moral living. "This continual attempt to separate public from private in all aspects of design of the house reveals important mid-Victorian assumptions about permissible behavior."<sup>50</sup> Fortunately, these rules governing proper behavior were included in many house pattern books of the time as well as manuals of etiquette.

Catharine Beecher was chief among the women advocating for domestic reform during this period. In her books *On Domestic Economy* (1841) and *American Woman's Home* (1869), Beecher proclaimed the importance of a woman's role in running the household and her direct control over the home. While her earlier book describes the "peculiar" responsibilities of American women, her later text, co-written with her sister, Harriet Beecher Stowe, is "a guide to the formation and maintenance of economical, healthful, beautiful and

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<sup>49</sup> Dolores Hayden, *Redesigning the American Dream: Gender, Housing and Family Life*, (New York: W.W. Norton and Company, 2002).

<sup>50</sup> Clark, *The American Family Home, 1890-1960*, 51.

Christian homes.” Beecher provides drawings of a proper Christian home designed in the Gothic Revival style with a cross on the front-facing gable porch roof. According to his introduction to the 1975 reprint of the book, Joseph Van Why claimed “*The American Women’s Home* might be called the Sears and Roebuck catalogue of domestic and moral standards of a century ago.”<sup>51</sup>

According to Beecher, the house needed separate areas for family and social life and for personal privacy and household production. Proper Christian values could be attained through the design of the house.

These thoughts are echoed in the preface to A. J. Downing’s book (1850) *The Architecture of Country Houses*. Downing captured the spirit of house reform and outlined the need for better housing in America.

“There are three excellent reasons why my countrymen should have good houses.

The first is, because a good house (and by this I mean a fitting, tasteful, and significant dwelling) is a powerful means of civilization...

The second reason is, because the individual home has a great social value for a people...

The third reason is, because there is a moral influence in a country home—when, among an educated, truthful and refined people, it is an echo of their character—which is more powerful than any mere oral teachings of virtue and morality.”<sup>52</sup>

Endorsed by many of the social and domestic reformers of the time, the suburbs were booming in America by the 1880s. Many reformers declared women and children closer to nature and insisted they must be protected from

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<sup>51</sup> Catharine Beecher, *The American Women’s Home*, reprint edition of 1869, (Hartford, CT: Stowe-Day Foundation, 1975), first page.

<sup>52</sup> A.J. Downing, *The Architecture of Country Houses*, reprint of 1850, (New York: Dover Publications, 1969), pp. xix-xx.

the city. Ironically, “the suburban expansion of the period depended directly and indirectly on many different forms of technological innovation.”<sup>53</sup> Interestingly, this same technology led to a proliferation of factory details including ornamental urns, moldings, sunbursts, brackets and turned posts to adorn the inside and outside of the home and was ultimately deemed destructive to American values.

The Romantic reform movement led to many changes in the single-family dwelling. People had moved to the suburbs into properly designed Christian homes. Gothic Revival, Italianate, and Bracketed homes were built across America. New floor plans illustrated the separation of public and private, service areas of the home, and the prominence of the parlor.

Downing’s work inspired several additional architectural pattern books written in a similar manner. These treatises were written by architects and for homeowners. In addition to the architectural treatise books and pattern books by architects, other authors directed their attention towards books for craftsmen towards the end of the nineteenth century. The first of these was Charles C. Miller’s *Architecture: Designs for Street Fronts, Suburban Houses, and Cottages, Including Details for both Exterior and Interior* (1868) which had instant success and was subsequently published in eight editions. In his manual, Miller advises builders to get complete drawings from an architect. The book contained only details of features and no plans, marking a departure from earlier pattern books. Miller and his business partner, Marcus Cummings, penned *Modern American*

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<sup>53</sup> Gwendolyn Wright, *Building the Dream: A Social History of Housing in America*, (Massachusetts: The MIT Press, 1981), 103.

*Architecture* (1867) that was also a book of details. Amos J. Bicknell *Bicknell's Village Builder: Elevations and Plans for Cottages, Villas, Suburban Residences, Farm Houses...Also Exterior and Interior Details...with Approved Forms of Contracts and Specifications* (1870)--later published with additional plates in 1872—provided detailed information for builders in a slightly different format and included full designs with plans and sections and the details requested by builders. Palliser and Palliser and company followed a similar format in George Palliser's *Palliser's Model Homes for the People* (1876). These pattern books for carpenters acquired a significant amount of success and led to plan book built houses across the nation and a proliferation of new pattern books.<sup>54</sup>

Following the success of the Romantic house reformers, the new American house flourished. A newly found emphasis on the women's role in running the home resulted in the creation of more functional kitchens based on the concept of the laboratory. Finally, at the end of the nineteenth century, the move to the suburb was in full swing.

In the 1890's women were insisting on change. The home economics movement, known as "domestic science" and "household administration," was flourishing. The National Household Economics Association was founded during the 1893 World's Exposition in Chicago and resulted in "Home-making" departments started at Northwestern, Vassar, Cornell and Stanford.<sup>55</sup> The home

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<sup>54</sup> Reiff, *Houses From Books*, 103-126.

<sup>55</sup> G. Wright, *Moralism and the Modern Home: Domestic Architecture and Cultural Conflict in Chicago*. (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1980).

economists of the time were largely focused on reform within the planning of the home. They sought to improve function and cleanliness, ease housework, provide storage solutions, and promote other ways to improve the operation of the household.

As the turn-of-the-century building industry was now mechanized, the call for housing reform was once again in the air. The new reformers sought the end of excessive ornamentation as made possible through industrialization. Just as the Romantic reformers reacted to earlier houses with their reforms, the Progressive Reformers reacted to the Romantic reformers' ideology. These reformers wanted a change in aesthetics, a house integrating the technology now becoming available, and simplicity.

In addition to books, magazines and architecture periodicals have also provided an extensive source for ordinary single-family house plan designs for the typical American family. Significant contributions to homeowners were made by *Good Housekeeping*, *Ladies Home Journal* and other magazines throughout the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

In her article "the Spirit of Progressive Reform: *The Ladies' Home Journal* House Plans, 1900-1902," Kathryn Dethier describes the reasons for the Progressive Movement and its impact on house design. "Unprecedented problems, including inadequate housing for the poor and middle classes, labour unrest, crime, high interest rates, and municipal misrule, created widespread concern and prompted white, middle class social reformers, including clergy,

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academics and lawyers to advocate social change.”<sup>56</sup> According to Dethier, “four principles of reform, advanced by Progressive reformers, are manifested in the architectural expression of the houses: a new theory of aesthetics, a crusade for a sanitary and healthy home environment, the incorporation of new technology, and efficient planning.”<sup>57</sup>

The Progressive Reform Movement followed the depression of 1893-96 and spanned the time frame until World War I. Dethier describes the backlash against the Victorian era at the beginning of the twentieth century particularly as demonstrated through the work of Edward Bok, editor of the *Ladies' Home Journal*. As indicated towards the end of Clifford Clark's article (mentioned previously) and reiterated by Dethier, the Romantic reform movement had taken on a life of its own. Facilitated through industrialization, brackets, urns, spindles, and other Victorian ornamentation were easily mass-produced and readily available. This set of circumstances ultimately led to excess. Houses had become overly ornamented inside and out, and Bok and others reacted by demanding a return to simplicity.

Dethier notes that while Bok and the *Ladies' Home Journal* were not the only voices for domestic reform, Bok did invite well-known architects to participate by providing house plans for his magazine. Bok acknowledged the resistance of architects to plan book services, yet, over time, he was successful

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<sup>56</sup> Kathryn Dethier, “The Spirit of Progressive Reform: The Ladies' Home Journal House Plans, 1902-1904,” *Journal of Design History*, Vol. 6, No. 4, (1993), 248.

<sup>57</sup> *Ibid*, 247.

in obtaining house plan designs from Bruce Price, Frank Mead, Ralph Adams Cram, William Eyre, Jr. and, most notably, Frank Lloyd Wright. These plans, published between 1900-1902, featured a new aesthetic in residential design. “Bok’s requirements were minimal: the profuse ornament and multiple materials of the nineteenth century were to be eliminated; every home was to have a bathroom; servant’s quarters were to be enlarged and cross-ventilated; and the parlour was to be replaced by a living room or library.”<sup>58</sup>

In addition to Bok’s houses, the bungalow was being touted as a simplified house type. Imported from India, the bungalow was popularized by a variety of people, most notably Gustav Stickley. Stickley, inspired by the Arts and Crafts movement taking place in England, designed houses and furniture which reflected a new aesthetic. In “Male and Female Agendas for Domestic Reform: The Middle-Class Bungalow in Gendered Perspective,” Cheryl Robertson discusses the simplified plan and addition of the kitchen to the main living area of the house. “The kitchen was literally a new room in the bungalow. For the Indian prototype had made no provision for cooking in a dwelling intended to shelter its occupants from the tropical heat. In the American bungalow, the kitchen was redefined as a primary space integral to family life.”<sup>59</sup> Robertson mentions the influence of Home Economist Isabell McDougal, after whom Stickley incorporated

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<sup>58</sup> Dethier, 253.

<sup>59</sup> Cheryl Robertson, “Male and Female Agendas for Domestic Reform: The Middle Class Bungalow in Gendered Perspective,” *Winterthur Portfolio*, Vol. 26, No. 2/3 summer-autumn, (1991), 127.

concrete walls painted white and scored to look like tile into the kitchen to insure its long wear and sanitary appearance.

It was during this period, between 1900 and 1920, that mail order house companies spread across the nation. The Radford Architectural Company, Gustav Stickley's magazine *The Craftsman*, the Chicago House Wrecking Company, Sears Roebuck and Company, and the Aladdin Company dominated the single-family house design market. These companies operated on a simple business model and provided house plan books from which a customer could order a house design and have it shipped to the location of choice. For a small sum, the company provided a set of blueprints, including plans, elevations and some details, for use by a local contractor. House designs ranged from large Victorian residences to small bungalows. Companies such as Sears Roebuck and Company could also supply the house kit for construction.<sup>60</sup>

The quest for better housing continued into the 1920s and 1930s. In "The Cure for Domestic Neglect: Better Homes in America, 1922-1935," Janet Hutchinson describes the culmination of these earlier reform movements in house design following World War I. "In 1922, concerned individuals formulated a unique housing campaign, Better Homes in America. The purpose of this campaign was to cure home neglect through an education program that could combine nineteenth-century republican values of thrift and self-reliance with

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<sup>60</sup> Reiff, *Houses From Books*, 149-206.

twentieth-century household technology.”<sup>61</sup> At issue following World War I were an increase in the divorce rate, greater freedom for women, and more women in the workforce. Like earlier reformers, Marie Meloney, editor of *the Delineator* sought to right these wrongs through improved house design. With the endorsement of President Harding and twenty-eight state governors, Meloney launched the National Advisory Council. In an effort to spread the word, the group constructed a “National Better Home” in Washington D.C. in 1922. Historic imagery was combined with modern convenience in the form of a Colonial Revival house. Although nothing was actually antique, the home was furnished with historic-looking furniture alongside modern equipment. The focus of the design was on the family. “While the living room was designed and described to evoke family unity, the kitchen conveyed efficiency and cleanliness.”<sup>62</sup> Affectionately called “Home Sweet Home,” this house represented a return to nineteenth-century ideology with the woman as the center of the household and included “a new style of architecture, a home built around mother.”<sup>63</sup>

According to Gwendolyn Wright, “The new kinds of housing in the 1920s represented attempts to redress problems in the American housing system without introducing overly radical alternatives. In the process, two conflicting characteristics—personalized design and uniform planning—were hastily welded

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<sup>61</sup> Janet Hutchison, “The Cure for Domestic Neglect: Better Homes in America, 1922-1935,” *Perspectives in Vernacular Architecture*, Volume 2, (1986),168.

<sup>62</sup> *Ibid*, 172-173.

<sup>63</sup> *Ibid*, 173.

together.”<sup>64</sup> This opposition-filled combination has shaped United States housing ever since and provides a context for architectural involvement in single-family house design.

The mail order catalogues of the 1900-1920 period all continued into the 1920-1940 period with the exception of Stickley who went out of business. The Standard Homes Company, Bennet Homes, Home Builders Catalogue Company, and the Plan Service Company were added to the growing list of plan providers.<sup>65</sup> Like their predecessors, these groups provided multiple house plans from which a consumer could order an affordable set of blueprints for use by their local builder.

It is within this context that the works of the Architects Small House Service Bureau (ASHSB) are placed. As the only plan book service ever endorsed by the American Institute of Architects, the ASHSB holds a significant place in the printed house plan history. Between 1919 and 1941, the Bureau published over twenty-five different house plan books as well as a monthly service bulletin flyer for homeowners entitled *the Small Home*. Three of the particularly popular plan books include their first publication *How to Plan, Finance, and Build Your Home* (1921), *Your Future Home* (1923), and *Small Homes of Architectural Distinction: A Book of Suggested Plans Designed by the Architects Small House Service Bureau* (1929) which was later republished by

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<sup>64</sup> G. Wright, *Moralism and the Modern Home: Domestic Architecture and Cultural Conflict in Chicago*, 193

<sup>65</sup> Reiff, *Houses From Books*, 207-255.

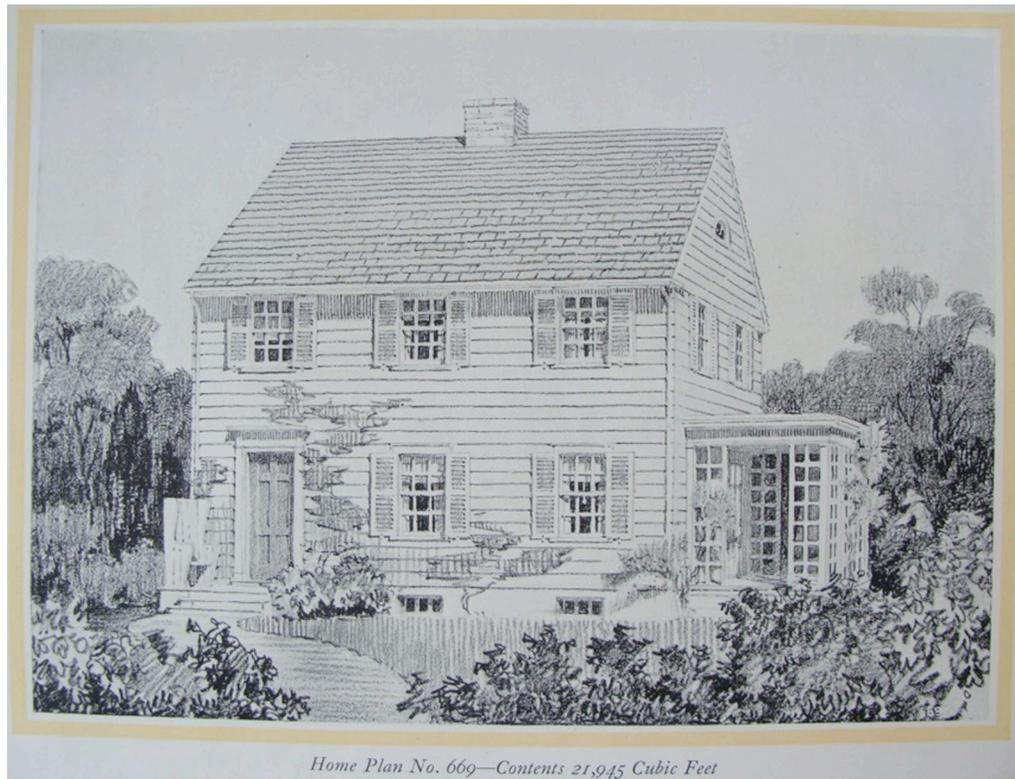
Dover Publications under the title *Authentic Small Houses of the Twenties*. The manner in which these publications differed from the other plan books of the day is in the emphasis on improving small house design and construction.

*How to Plan, Finance and Build Your Home* includes several articles in addition to house plan designs. These range from “Good Taste and Savings; Bad Taste and Waste” to “Your Kitchen Planned to Save Time, Steps and Labor.” The books include endorsements of the AIA and the Department of Commerce (DOC) at the very beginning as well as an explanation of the ASHSB and its goals. The inside cover of the first page includes the ASHSB logo and an explanation of what it stands for. “It stands for co-operative effort and service by a number of practicing architects who, in addition to their regular practice, are able to supply professional service and counsel, well studied, carefully prepared plans, specifications, working drawings, quantity surveys, complete details—at low cost—for the erection of homes up to and including six primary rooms.”<sup>66</sup> The facing page has an article entitled “Let’s Get Acquainted” the sole purpose of which is to explain why architects are needed in the house design and building process. It claims the way houses are done “by rule of thumb” is costly to the homeowner and wasteful of both money and materials. The plans themselves are divided into three-room houses, four-room houses, five room houses and six-room houses.

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<sup>66</sup> The ASHSB, *How to Plan, Finance and Build Your Home* (New Orleans, Louisiana: The Architects Small House Service Bureau and Southern Pine Association: 1921), 6.

The most popular selling model for the ASHSB was included in this first publication, “Home Plan No. 669—contents 21,945 cubic feet,” and was one of the six-room designs. In a description of the design, the ASHSB explains that the plan is square and that is the most economical shape to construct. The narration is entitled “Why the Colonial Style is Popular” and explains that this house has lasting appeal, dignified proportions, and is both practical and economical to build. A significant design feature to note is that the front façade is not symmetrical as expected of a Colonial Revival design.



**Figure 1.1:** “Home Plan No. 669---Contents 21,945 Cubic Feet” from *How to Plan, Finance and Build Your Home*, 142.

As a best seller, this design was repeated—although the perspective was redrawn and the plan was renumbered as 6-A-37—in several other ASHSB

publications including both *Small Homes of Architectural Distinction* and *Your Future Home*.

The format of *Your Future Home* differs from the earlier book in some very specific ways. First, the book contains far less writing than *How to Plan, Finance and Build Your Home*. Articles are restricted to the front pages of the book instead of spread throughout as in the earlier one, and are limited to an explanation of the ASHSB, the endorsement letter by the AIA and DOC, hints on financing, selecting a plan and how to read plans. Like the earlier book, the plans are divided by number of rooms, although they are arranged in reverse order with the biggest plans at the front of the book instead of at the end. Another element that was much changed was the information on each design. Instead of a narrative describing the design features of the house, the information was in a list form divided into exterior features, interior features and special features. Using the best-selling design (669 6-A-37) as an example, the caption below the house now reads "The mellow dignity of this house reminds one of a homestead in New England. It has a tang of the East Coast. Makes an immediate appeal because it is related credibly to houses of past days." The rendering differs from the earlier version in several ways. Ink is used in place of pencil making the lines much more precise, the sidewalk is straightened and the landscaping is more manicured, also making the appearance of the house more formal. Perhaps most interesting is the addition of neighboring houses both adjacent to and behind the

design. A front portico provides shelter for the benches alongside the entry. The remainder of the house design remains unchanged.



**Figure 1.2:** “House Plan No. 6A37” *Your Future Home*, 54.

The latest of the publications, *Small Homes of Architectural Distinction*, reverts back to some of the elements of the first publication including a more narrative description of each design. It differs from the earlier two books in that the entire book is of house plans without any additional articles. The preface pages and endorsements are included, but no other advice to homeowners is provided. Another key change to this book is that it includes actual photos of built designs. For example, for plan 6A37, two exteriors of actual houses in different parts of the country supplement the hand drawn perspective sketch and plans. One built project includes the porch as shown in *Your Future Home* and one

does not, as shown in *How to Plan, Finance and Build Your Home*. The perspective has been redrawn for this book, once again. The drawing style remains more formal, but the neighboring houses and sidewalks have been removed in favor of showing the design in isolation once again. The caption has been taken one step further and now describes the design as “A Home of New England Ancestry.”



**Figure 1.3:** “A Home of New England Ancestry” *Small Homes of Architectural Distinction*, 130

Once the pattern books themselves stopped providing on-going advice to clients, *the Small Home* monthly took their place. The monthly magazine featured built houses and advice on all aspects of the house building process. Topics

ranged from how to work with a builder to how to select the right wood flooring for your house. Design advice was common, particularly as it referred to well-designed features within the ASHSB plan designs. The ASHSB differed from other plan book services in many ways. The members sought to educate the public about architects and design and to provide people with affordable and well-designed houses. The members of the Bureau tried to work with the builder providing what both the client and builder needed, yet always through the use of a trained architect to ensure the best possible end product. The Bureau set up ten satellite offices around the country to assist clients with adapting their plans to specific sites and to make this vision for house building possible. The last publication of the ASHSB was in 1941 and the ASHSB went out of existence in 1942.

### Architecture Periodicals

Research on the history of architecture periodicals in the U.S. consists of some general overall histories supplemented by a few in-depth studies of particular periodicals. The major markets for architectural publications (like architectural books before them) included New York, Philadelphia and Boston. These early publications lasted only a year or two. The first long-running publication was the *American Architect and Building News* that was published in Boston beginning in January 1876. As the earliest titles indicate, architecture was viewed in the context of the allied arts and the profession of building.

Architectural periodicals, like pattern books, flourished at the end of the nineteenth century. While only three or four titles existed in 1870, there were forty-six different architectural magazines in 1890. By 1919, this number had plummeted and the two remaining major architectural publications were the *American Architect and Building News* published in Boston and *Architecture and Building* published in New York.<sup>67</sup> *The Journal of the American Institute of Architects* was considered the official organ of the professional group during this time.

In 1920 another publication directed towards draftsmen began to be published. *Pencil Points: A Journal for the Drafting Room* featured articles on architectural training and drawing and by the 1930s had the largest circulation of all the architecture periodicals. The high number of subscribers to *Pencil Points* was soon surpassed by the number of subscribers to the *Architectural Forum* in 1937.<sup>68</sup> Once *the Architectural Forum* took the lead, the longest-running publication, *the American Architect and Building News* went out of circulation.

With the rise of professionalism at the end of the nineteenth century, architecture periodicals became increasingly specialized. Additionally, the divide between architects and builders became more pronounced. Critiques of architects increasingly showed up in builder magazines and vice-versa.

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<sup>67</sup>Michael Tomlan. "Architectural Press, U.S." In *Encyclopedia of Architecture, Design, Engineering, and Construction*, edited by Joseph A. Wilkes. (New York: John Wiley and Sons, 1988), 266-295

<sup>68</sup> Tomlan, "Architectural Press, U.S." 266-295

Some magazines focused on speculative single-family house designs. One such journal was described by Jennings, “As a provider of complete working drawings, *Carpentry and Building* is an excellent reference to study speculative house types.”<sup>69</sup> The journal spans architectural practice of the “practical architect” and that of the house-building professionals. *Carpentry and Building* magazine focused on distributing house plans to the majority of working Americans. The architects involved in this market segment “...believed that designing cheap homes was a ‘special line,’ ‘a new system,’ or ‘another branch of architecture,’ because the best and most distinguished architects had relinquished this market, or thought it beneath their consideration in favor of large buildings.”<sup>70</sup> Addressing the rising complaints about exorbitant architectural fees, *Carpentry and Building* sought to solve the problem by providing full house plans in their magazine.

*Carpentry and Building’s* publication coincided with increasing specialization and complexity within the home building industry. As a result, builders who were in search of proper construction methods could easily copy the construction drawings that the magazine provided. Unlike the pattern book designs of Downing and others like him, the designs promoted by *Carpentry and Building* were generic with regard to site and landscaping. They could be built anywhere and for anyone. The emphasis was on the interior and the house design itself. “In keeping with its dedication to the near environment of the house,

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<sup>69</sup> Jan Jennings, “Cheap and Tasteful Dwellings in Popular Architecture,” *Perspectives in Vernacular Architecture*, Vol. 5, Gender, Class and Shelter, (1995), 133.

<sup>70</sup> *Ibid*, 133.

*Carpentry and Building* (more than any journal in its class) demonstrated a healthy interest in the custom design of interior architecture.<sup>71</sup> One of the most notable contributions of the magazine to single-family house design was its annual sponsorship of the “designs for cheap houses” competition.

The architects who contributed designs to the magazines were termed “practical architects.” According to Jennings, “the practice of early contributors reveals that these architects practiced two kinds of architecture simultaneously— design for one-of-a-kind buildings and design for replication.”<sup>72</sup> *Carpentry and Building* provided a publication vehicle for at least thirteen different plan-book architects.<sup>73</sup> Several individuals and firms published replicable house designs in the magazine between 1879 and 1930. In addition, the journal was “fairly supportive” of women architects recognizing their experience within the home environment as a contribution. Between 1887 and 1917, the magazine devoted eight articles towards the subject of women in residential architectural practice.<sup>74</sup>

*Carpentry and Building* magazine provided a bridge between architecture and house-building by including architects in the designs of house plans which were distributed in mass to builders around the country. These “practical architects” were challenged to straddle the line between this sort of design and traditional architecture within their own practices. As a result, they were often the

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<sup>71</sup> Jennings, “Cheap and Tasteful Dwellings in Popular Architecture,” 141.

<sup>72</sup> *Ibid*, 145.

<sup>73</sup> *Ibid*.

<sup>74</sup> *Ibid*, 148.

focus of scorn from the mainstream architectural community as will be seen in a later chapter on the American Institute of Architects.

The most popular and long-running architecture periodical of the mid-nineteenth century was the *American Architect and Building News*. Although the magazine was not well-known outside of the architecture community, it was a mainstay for architects during this time. As the first successful architecture journal, the *AABN* provided a much-needed instrument of dissemination to architects and builders in this period.<sup>75</sup> Like the pattern book, the early architecture magazine provided plans, elevations and details of buildings for carpenters in the field. Without a formalized structure for architecture education or a strong professional organization, little distinction was made between the architect and the builder until well into the nineteenth century and it was common for a carpenter to call himself an architect.

William Robert Ware, the first editor of the *AABN*, played a critical role in the development of the *AABN*. He also served a crucial role in the development of architectural education in the U.S. As such, Ware and his colleagues promoted a formalized process for education and training of the architect and consistently presented this position in the *AABN* that will be reviewed in more detail in a later chapter.

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<sup>75</sup> Mary Woods “*The American Architect and Building News, 1876-1907*” Dissertation, New York: Columbia University (1983), 12. It should be noted that Upton has dispelled the idea of these three separate categories of architects.

With the advent of Modernism and changes to methods of construction resulting from the introduction of steel and concrete as building materials, several notable architects in the United States explored single-family house design. Specifically, a series of case study houses was initiated in Los Angeles in 1945. The idea behind the project was to make sure American domestic architecture did not fall into pre-war traditional house design trends. The first houses were designed by Richard Nuetra, J.R. Davidson and William Wurster. These houses were followed by the Eames House, the Entenza House and a house by Rodney Walker.<sup>76</sup> The Case Study House program was popular although it was fraught with delays. While the program continued into the 1960's "by the 60's architects had lost their battle for the tract house to the developers; the involvement of the architect was minimal, confined often to what details the developer could borrow and hand over to Bill Ding to draw up."<sup>77</sup> The case study houses were never mass-produced.

In 2008, the house design customer need only go to the supermarket to find a plethora of house designs from which to choose. The modern day plan book features a soft-cover and can be found on any magazine rack in the country. Multiple companies create these magazines that they publish monthly, quarterly, or bi-annually. Each issue contains as many as 500 or more plans from which a person can select their own house. Coupled with this is the model home

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<sup>76</sup> Esther McCoy, "Art and Architecture Case Study Houses, *Perspecta*, 15 (1975): 55-73.

<sup>77</sup> McCoy, p. 30. "Bill Ding" describes a human like creature made of lumber parts or wood. Images of him first appeared as part of marketing materials in the 1920s.

phenomenon, wherein local developers provide actual house models from which a prospective homebuyer can choose. To provide one's own plan selected from a magazine is considered "custom" design today.

Several publishers are in the house plan book business. A leader among these is Hanley Wood. Hanley Wood distributes a magazine entitled *Big Book of House Plans* and multiple books of the same title. The magazine, published twice a year, includes plans and exterior rendered perspective views of 500 houses. These plans are categorized as follows: Designs by *Southern Living*, new designs, best sellers, homes under 2,000 square feet, homes between 2,000 and 3,000 square feet, and homes over 3,000 square feet. Some of the *Southern Living* plans are designed by architects (four of eleven) and these are located at the front of the magazine. The other 489 plans have no designer identified. For each design, floor plans and a rendered perspective drawing are included. The first page of the magazine includes a full-page advertisement for the American Institute of Building Designers, an organization for the residential designers most of which are not architects. To the house plan selections, the *Big Book of Plans* book also adds landscape designs and luxury homes over 4,000 square feet. Several of the designs in the book include outside photographs of completed houses instead of exterior perspectives.

Another possibility open to the potential home consumer in 2008 is to simply log on to the HGTV website. On the front page, a buyer can select the "plans home" tab and then by answering six simple questions, the website

searches for your matching home plan for you. By entering the style of house (for which exterior perspective drawing examples are given), the square footage range, number of bathrooms and bedrooms, the search engine supplies pages of plans matching your desires. One can then simply call a 1-888 phone number or order the plans online from the same site.

The plan packages which can be purchased can include any of the following options: a reproducible set of drawings and one copy, CAD files, 9 sets of construction drawings, five sets of construction drawings, or a planning set. Each option costs a one-time fee of \$50.00. These drawings can be submitted to the local building inspector's office for a permit. Similar ordering methods are used by the plan books and house plan magazines.

House plan magazines and shelter magazines have had a profound impact on single-family house design in the United States since their initial creation. As a readily available distribution mechanism, architects have sometimes used them to publicize their own work and homeowners have consulted them for new ideas. This constant stream of new ideas has helped shape the American built landscape.

#### A Short Chronology of Changes in Single-Family House Construction Between the Eighteenth Century and the Present

The Industrial Revolution had a profound effect on the way in which single-family houses were constructed in the U.S. and many of the changes were published for builders. The earliest houses used either heavy timber construction

or masonry bearing walls—both of which required a skilled craftsman. Nails had to be hand wrought by a blacksmith and were thus rarely used and highly expensive. Joinery required mortised and tenoned connections which only a skilled builder could do successfully. Trees were felled and hand hewn for construction materials from the house site. Hand-made bricks were fired on site from indigenous clay or local stones were quarried and hauled to the site. Both required a skilled mason to assemble the resulting walls. The need for a skilled craftsman and master builder was eventually eliminated as the use of wood in houses evolved in the U.S.

Scholars have outlined the evolution of wood use in the U.S. from log cabins through current day platform light frame construction. Sturgis relates the reduction in wood use for each progressive method to the diminishing old growth forests in North America.

The log cabin tradition originated with the Scotch-Irish colonists and was centralized in Pennsylvania to the Shenandoah Valley and Appalachian regions of Virginia, Tennessee, and Kentucky. Log cabins required the use of entire trees to create each wall surface and thus used an enormous amount of lumber. The English preferred the heavy timber tradition that they imported from their own homeland. Like the log cabin, the heavy timber framed house required large growth trees for hearty corner posts and long framing spans. Ultimately, these timber intensive methods of construction were replaced by light frame construction.

The first recorded reference to balloon framing in the U.S. dates to a letter written by Carolyn Clarke in 1835. In a letter to her sister, Clarke wrote the following “The buildings are now mostly small, and look as though they have been put up as quickly as possible, many of them are what they call here Balloon houses, that is built of boards entirely—not a stick of timber in them except the sills.”<sup>78</sup> According to some historians, the method was invented two years prior to this in 1833. While some attribute the invention to George Washington Snow of Chicago, others have argued that the method was a folk builder development that evolved from the work of several builders rather than the invention of one. In either case, balloon framing resulted in faster house construction and in some cases led to shoddy construction later bemoaned by architects and government officials alike.

The balloon framing method relied on the invention of dimensional lumber and the circular saw. The first known publication illustrating and describing the balloon framing methods to builders was William E. Bell’s construction manual published in 1858.<sup>79</sup> For the first time, materials were widely available to everyone who could afford them. As the availability of materials rose, the need for a trained craftsman diminished.

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<sup>78</sup> Ted Cavanaugh, “Balloon Houses:” The Original Aspects of Conventional Wood-Frame Construction Re-Examined,” *The Journal of Architectural Education*, Vol. 51, No.1 (1997): 5-15.

<sup>79</sup> Cavanaugh, , 5-15.

The advent of the manufactured nail led to a revolutionary new approach to domestic architecture in America.<sup>80</sup> Until recently, historians relied on an article by Henry Mercer dating to 1923 for their information about the chronology of the nail in the U.S. and its impact on building construction.<sup>81</sup> Recent scholars have re-examined this chronology. The first hand-operated nail-cutting machines were documented in the 1780s in Boston. These early cut nails replaced the need for hand-wrought nails that had to be forged by hand.

Following World War I and as a direct result of the Great Depression, balloon framing was replaced by platform framing that proved to be even more affordable and available on a nationwide scale. Platform framing required shorter pieces of wood that could be harvested from younger trees. This coincided with the rise of tree farms that were developed to serve the house building industry and which made building materials available to anyone wanting to use them.

### Summary

Architects were involved the early house reform movements and the publications which accompanied them—both magazines and pattern books. Some have proposed that architects worked themselves out of a job as a result of their successful involvement in housing reforms of the 1840s and later.<sup>82</sup> Through the use of house plan books that showed everyone how to have a good

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<sup>80</sup> Spiro Kostov, *America by Design*, This is the title of a series shown in 1987 on PBS and a book of the same name published in 1987.

<sup>81</sup> Maureen Phillips, “Mechanic Geniuses and Duckies,’ A Revision of New England’s Cut Nail Chronology before 1820.” *APT Bulletin*, Vol. 25, no. 3.4 (1993), 4-16.

<sup>82</sup> Clarke.

Christian house design, architects effectively convinced people of the need for this new house type and simultaneously made it easy to remove trained designers from the loop. By publishing their house designs in easily obtained books and magazines, architects made it possible for the builder and client to eliminate them from the process. A potential homeowner simply approached a builder with these plans and asked for a house—no architect required.

Coupled with this, changes in the way in which houses were being constructed worked well with the American “do it yourself” mentality. Once dimensional lumber and nails became readily available, the untrained builder could easily learn to construct single-family houses. Building codes in the U.S. were written in such a fashion that any person could design and build his or her own house. In addition, no professional stamp was (or is) required for single-family houses in the majority of cases across the country. As a result, codes made it legally possible and cheap and readily available materials made it easy for any one to enter the homebuilding and design market and merchant builders did in droves. This arrangement meant that no design fees were charged and also led to the perception that architects were “too expensive.” Why pay for a service which others seemed to offer for free?

Simultaneously, with the rise of professionalism in architecture, architects sought to distinguish themselves from builders and house plan book producing services. In 1878, *the American Architect and Building News*, the most prominent architectural publication of the day, stated the revised architectural position on

pattern books. In a series called “American Vernacular Architecture” the editors claimed that architects believed that an unsuspecting public was being led astray by popular designers who provided a so-called original and national style of house design. Wright describes one editor’s view: “this ‘heathen’ condition, that reviewer hoped, would strengthen the determination of professional architects to ‘go forth like missionaries’ and lead the country into the purity of educated ideals.”<sup>83</sup>

Thus, when Bok decided to produce house plans by architects in *The Ladies’ Home Journal* in the early 1900s, he was met with a great deal of resistance from the architectural community. The resistance to plan book services is well documented in the minutes of the American Institute of Architects annual meeting minutes as well as in the architectural periodicals from the time.

Trained to design specific solutions for specific design problems, architects found the mass-produced state of housing in the United States an uncomfortable fit. The majority of architects denounced house-plan services and mass-produced housing as done by builders. One notable exception to this occurred during the period between 1919 and 1934 when the American Institute of Architects endorsed a house plan service comprised of architects designing and selling house plan sets under the auspices of the Architects Small House Service Bureau. During this time period “the architectural profession began a

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<sup>83</sup> Gwendolyn Wright, *Moralism and the Model Home: Domestic Architecture and Cultural Conflict in Chicago, 1873-1913*, (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1980), 49.

campaign to 'recapture' the market."<sup>84</sup> Ironically, architects never successfully controlled this market in the first place nor would they in the future. Despite this, they have repeatedly tried to have an impact on single-family house design.

Home reform movements led to several lasting changes in the single-family home. Stylistic changes to the exterior included a preference for the Gothic Revival, Italianate and Bracketed style in the nineteenth century that was replaced by the simplified bungalow and eventually the Colonial Revival style in the twentieth century. The Colonial Revival allowed a homeowner to borrow an ancestry from a glorified past. This obsession with the Colonial Revival is alive and well in neighborhoods across the U.S. Specialization of rooms and the separation of public and private areas were incorporated into the house plan. A focus on sanitary concerns led to increased focus on kitchen design. Ultimately, all of these reforms led to the incorporation of a woman's needs and point of view into the design of the single-family house.

A secondary set of outcomes as a result of house reform movements was a full-scale endorsement of the suburb as a reflection of American values and the rise of the merchant builder. House reformers successfully convinced the majority of Americans of the need for homeownership and provided the house plans and mechanisms for achieving this dream.

Characteristics of single-family houses unique to the United States include the quest for individual expression, a need to participate in the process and a "do

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<sup>84</sup> Wright, *Building the Dream*, 199.

it yourself” mentality, a frugality and need to save money, and a lack of belief in the need for architectural design services to achieve one’s desires. One way of explaining the historical roots of these notions is to look at the history of house designs in print available in the United States since its beginnings coupled with innovations in wood construction techniques. Potential homeowners and their builders have had unfettered access to sample house plans virtually since the first houses were built in this country. The designs are virtually free except for a minimal fee as compared to architectural services costing up to 10% or more of the construction cost. This plethora of examples coupled with an American belief in economy and entitlement to the American Dream have resulted in a house design market which excludes trained design professionals for the most part. Anyone can build a house with the proper tools. The architecture profession and architects themselves were late to arrive on the single-family house design scene and have never since captured any significant share of this market. As a group, architects have had a difficult time reconciling the need to do one-of-a-kind design with the manner in which single-family houses are built in this country nor have they been needed to solve complex construction details for the simplified method of light frame construction.

## CHAPTER 2: HISTORY OF THE ARCHITECTURE PROFESSION, ARCHITECTURAL EDUCATION, AND THE CULTURE OF ARCHITECTURE IN THE U.S.

This chapter outlines the history of the architecture profession with a focus on four forces which shaped a uniquely American version of the profession: Benjamin Henry Latrobe's impact on professionalism, American democratic capitalism, the influence of the Ecole des Beaux Arts, and the time during which the profession became established. As a result, the architectural profession in the United States--formalized during the nineteenth century--follows a tradition somewhat varied from its European prototype.

This chapter identifies those characteristics that make the profession of architecture in the U.S. unique and discusses how they impacted the relationship between architects and single-family house design. First, people in the U.S. had access to books and builders before there were architects in the U.S. Second, democracy made it difficult for architects to gain a foothold in the U.S. People viewed themselves as equals without a class structure. Architecture was viewed as a luxury and Americans, being practical, could do it themselves. Third, a house was a woman's domain and architecture was a man's profession. Finally, Latrobe set a tone for architecture, and the message was one of superiority, arrogance, and unwillingness to compromise.

Several scholars have studied aspects of the architecture profession in the U.S. All seem to agree that the early roots of the profession

date to Benjamin Henry Latrobe. The traditionally accepted view is that there were three types of early designers--the untutored folk builder, the master builder, and the gentleman architect—although the line between these paths was not so clear.<sup>85</sup> It has already been established that printed sources were available long before the architecture profession became established. This created a fertile environment for confusion about who designed houses.

Some scholars have characterized residential design prior to the Civil War as a predominantly non-architectural activity.<sup>86</sup> As architects began to define their own profession as distinct from builders and house plan book writers, they made some inroads to house design but the longstanding tradition of not using a trained design professional was firmly in place and few saw the need to hire an architect to design their home prior to the Civil War.

Latrobe, the first professionally-trained architect in the U.S., hailed from England in 1795 and became a friend of Thomas Jefferson's. Despite their relationship, Latrobe criticized Jefferson as an architect from books without professional training. Latrobe set up the first professional architecture practice in the U.S. and plotted a course for architects that still impacts the profession today in the U.S. Chief among his contributions to the profession include an emphasis on the monumental project instead of the residential or smaller scale project, an

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<sup>85</sup> Mary Woods, *From Craft to Profession: The Practice of Architecture in Nineteenth Century America*, (Berkeley, California: The University of California Press, 1999). Woods book presents this traditional view while Dell Upton challenges the clear cut distinctions in his work "Pattern Books and Professionalism."

<sup>86</sup> Dell Upton, "Pattern Books and Professionalism."

emphasis on professionalism and charging for one's designs and time, and a disdain for the untrained architect and builder.

Educated in the English system of architecture, Latrobe brought with him some strong and well-developed ideas about the architectural profession. These include a sense of the "superior and comprehensive character of his acquired architectural knowledge, asserting that it was qualitatively and quantitatively distinct from both his client's taste and the practicing builders' experience."<sup>87</sup> In 1806, writing to his pupil Robert Mills, Latrobe outlines what he considered to be the main points of the professions: the marketable skills of an architect are his time and ideas; an architect had a comprehensive knowledge of construction as well as design; management and supervision of a project must be separate from the construction process; an architect should have complete control of a project without interference from a builder or client; an architect must always charge for his time; and drawings belonged to the architect as his intellectual property and not to the client for whom they were drawn. Despite his words, Latrobe did not always charge the fees that he would have liked and his projects inevitably ran over budget, as he had little understanding of the economics of building or the American economic system. Simultaneously, he insisted that architects charge adequately for their services. Latrobe focused on public projects doing work for

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<sup>87</sup> Upton, "Pattern Books and Professionalism: Aspects of the Transformation of Domestic Architecture in America, 1800-1860," 113.

the U.S. Capitol, the Virginia State Penitentiary, the Baltimore Cathedral, and other large public projects.<sup>88</sup>

Latrobe's writings on professionalism and his own mentorship of young American architects have left a lasting stamp on the architectural profession. To this day, many architects vehemently oppose any compromise that might endanger their design vision. Furthermore, AIA documents retain ownership of original drawings by the architect and oftentimes architects will copyright their drawings. Latrobe's early efforts to distinguish the trained architectural professional from the common builder foreshadowed the development of the profession in the post-Civil War period. Latrobe argued for specialized training of architects and for a systematic body of knowledge. He pointed out that an architect's billable skills were his time and knowledge and that he must never give these away for free nor should his views be questioned. Under his tutelage, the next generation of architects including William Strickland and Robert Mills, followed in the tradition of focusing on both public projects and the Latrobe-inspired professionalism of architecture.

Historians describe Latrobe as arrogant, inconsistent, and temperamental. Clients often fired him for going over budget. Ironically, many of the other European transplants to the U.S. seem to have embodied similar difficult personalities. Steven Hallet (ca. 1760-1825) disagreed with William Thornton on the U.S. Capitol, and disobeying orders, was fired. Pierre L'Enfant's (1754-1825)

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<sup>88</sup> Woods, *From Craft to Profession: The Practice of Architecture in Nineteenth Century America*.

legendary “sharp tongue and high fees alienated clients.”<sup>89</sup> George Hadfield (1763-1826), although somewhat more successful, viewed his practice as lacking. According to Mary Woods the “architects found it difficult to accommodate their attitudes and working methods to an American building market dominated at one end by builders and at the other by a few master artisans and gentleman architects.”<sup>90</sup> Despite their somewhat troubled careers, these early architects left an indelible mark on the public’s perception of architects as difficult and on architectural culture that implies that it is more preferable to defend the integrity of one’s idea than to please a client.

William Strickland and Robert Mills, trained within Latrobe’s office, were counted among the twenty-three architects who formed the first iteration of the American Institution of Architects in 1836.<sup>91</sup> While short-lived as an organization, these early efforts eventually led to the development of a formalized system of architectural office training and ultimately architectural licensing. As proponents of public commissions, little attention was given to domestic design, particularly single-family homes.

Saint examines the differences between how professionalism took place in Britain and in the U.S.<sup>92</sup> He attributes the low percentage of architect involvement in buildings in the U.S. to the inherent role of practical skills in the newly formed

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<sup>89</sup> Woods, *From Craft to Profession: The Practice of Architecture in Nineteenth Century America*, 15.

<sup>90</sup> *Ibid*, 15.

<sup>91</sup> *Ibid*.

<sup>92</sup> Andrew Saint. *The Image of the Architect*. (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1993).

country and the lack of the American architect's ability to communicate value to the consumer. It was much harder for a person to succeed as an architect in the U.S. than it was in Britain at the same time. The lack of class structure and the fluid nature of U.S. society have also contributed to the hardship faced by American architects, historically. European architects have thus been far more successful in creating a need for architectural services.

Architects in the U.S. struggled with how to position themselves to the public within a democracy. Some early architects allied themselves with social reform seeing one of the distinctive characteristics of architecture as a symbol of the time with the ability to affect human behavior and the overall good of humanity. Alexander Jackson Downing and Andrew Jackson Davis allied taste with social class (although at the same time opposed a class structure in the U.S.) They believed that using tasteful design in one's property could influence the taste of the neighbors and thus spread good design. "The architects' belief in the social impact of tasteful physical surrounding was shared by other social reformers."<sup>93</sup>

Unlike their counterparts in Europe, American architects had to market their services and convince potential customers why they should be hired when, by all appearances, contractors were providing "design services" at no cost. Motivated by this and the expressed need to "protect the public" from the unqualified, western architects fought for licensing and eventually registration

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<sup>93</sup>Ibid, 127.

laws although architects in the east did not embrace this notion at first. The division between east and west continued to haunt architecture's "unified voice" throughout the nineteenth century and well into the twentieth century, as will be seen in the chapter on the Architects Small House Service Bureau.

Architects in the U.S. have always struggled to educate the public as to why an architect should be used. These efforts have not been overly successful. As professions, in general, become more specialized, architecture continues to be more generalized thus marginalizing the ability of architects to contribute to building design in a meaningful way on a large scale. In order for architecture to truly succeed in the U.S., architects must reinvent themselves as able to provide a needed service and obtain sole ownership of some body of knowledge—perhaps that of building design.

As architects tried to identify their own body of professional knowledge in the nineteenth century, they began to segregate themselves from builders and craftsmen much as Latrobe had sought to do when he first arrived in America. Concurrently, builders and craftsmen developed a rich tradition of builder manuals that instructed up-and-coming builders in the construction of buildings oftentimes focusing on residential construction. Simultaneously, construction cost guidelines were being developed by communities of builders who did not want to share them with the architectural community.<sup>94</sup> As a result of these maneuvers, a large share of the domestic design market fell into the hands

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<sup>94</sup> Dell Upton, "Pattern Books and Professionalism: Aspects of the Transformation of Domestic Architecture in America, 1800-1860," *Winterthur Portfolio*, Vol. 19, No. 2/3.

of builders. This in turn led to a competitive atmosphere between architects and builders. Builders knew how to construct houses using readily available materials such as wood and their own instruction manuals showing framing methods and possible designs to follow. Additionally, architects failed to convince the average consumer of the need for a professionally trained architect. Consequently, architects involvement in domestic design tended to be largely relegated to the design of one-of-a-kind houses for the wealthy.<sup>95</sup>

Despite architects' best efforts, the general public did not often feel the need for architecturally designed houses. Upton summarizes the situation as follows: "Finally, and importantly, clients were unwilling to grant architects control of such an important aspect of everyday life as the design of their houses."<sup>96</sup>

Throughout the nineteenth century, architects in the U.S. sought ways to differentiate themselves from builders and thus raise their own prestige. One of the ways in which this was done was to establish oneself as a gentleman, architect and artist. This approach was first used by Latrobe, who tried to station himself as an equal to his clients. Two architects who used this approach were Ithiel Town and A.J. Davis. Another route was to establish an artistic pedigree such as was done by Richard Upjohn who championed the N.Y. Ecclesiological Society as a venue for positive architectural ideology. Richard Morris Hunt attended the Ecole des Beaux Arts in Paris, as did several other architects after

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<sup>95</sup> Ibid.

<sup>96</sup> Ibid, 114.

him, in an effort to legitimize his training as distinct from a mere builder.<sup>97</sup> By attending the Ecole, architects could easily claim design knowledge not available to an uneducated builder.

In their efforts to legitimize a distinct body of knowledge for architects, many nineteenth century architects chose to attend the Ecole des Beaux Arts in Paris. As a result, they transported the Ecole version of architectural education and training back to the United States at a time when the first architecture programs were being established. Many remnants of this system still dominate architectural education in the United States as will be discussed in a later chapter. The rise of professional organizations also paralleled the individual attempts to legitimize architecture.

As the profession developed, so did building codes and legislation of professions. One of the primary outcomes of the development of legislation and building codes in the U.S. during the early twentieth century was that architects and the profession were not granted a monopoly over design services for buildings. Engineers, and eventually other design professionals, were granted equal rights under the law to provide stamped drawings for new buildings. This lack of established design services monopoly has since allowed for other professions—interior design, residential designers, contractors and developers—to take on a significant market share of the building design industry in the U.S. Today, when referring to who submits drawings for building design, *the*

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<sup>97</sup> Ibid.

*International Building Code* uses the terminology “design professional” which can be interpreted by each jurisdiction.<sup>98</sup>

By the time architects joined together to advocate for licensure, the system of a client working directly with a contractor to build (and design) their single-family home was firmly established. While architects fought for registration, their focus was on those they viewed as competitors--engineers and contractors--within the public building sphere and not on single-family houses. Latrobe’s legacy impacted the original formation of architecture professional associations and the emphasis on public work, an arrogant and inflexible attitude, and an assumed superiority over the trades. The Ecole education of many AIA members then reinforced these notions that were subsequently integrated into the first architecture curricula. Because single-family house design was not really viewed as high-style “architecture,” architects exerted little effort on behalf of the house design market. As a result, by 1938, members of the AIA estimated that architects designed only 2% of the houses being built.<sup>99</sup> The 2007 U.S. Census attributes 83% of homes built in 2005 to merchant builders.<sup>100</sup>

The situation within which architects and builders found themselves in the U.S. led to fertile conditions for the building industry without the expressed need

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<sup>98</sup> International Code Council, *International Building Code*, (Country Club Hill, IL 2002), 5.

<sup>99</sup> DK Este Fisher to Walter McCornack, November 17, 1938, American Institute of Architects Archives, AIA Headquarters, Washington, D.C.

<sup>100</sup> Thomas Mills and Yvan Beliveau, “US Production Homebuilding as a value added customer service through mass customization and design for manufacturing,” XXXV World Congress of Housing Science, September 4-7, 2007.

for design services from an architect. The primary building material for single-family houses in the U.S. was wood. Builders quickly adopted this material and educated one another on how to use it. They offered designs in their own series of books separate from those developed by and for architects. Furthermore, while architects fought to educate the public and establish themselves professionally, builders simply gave people what they wanted: cheap and easily obtainable houses. The builders provided their own designs and methods, had well-worked-out budgeting guidelines and could show a potential homeowner a variety of built houses from which to choose. Anyone who wanted to could pick up a hammer and train himself to build houses. Technical design expertise was not required to work with readily available wood. Architectural design services were not required for actual house designs nor for structural purposes. As building codes became established around the country, they contained footing size and load guidelines, span tables for various species of wood for floors and roofs, and any other material a builder would need to figure out the structural issues on his own. Coupled with the builders' own resources—pattern books, magazines, and other builders—architects were not needed in either the design or building process.

The ways in which architects sought to distinguish their profession ultimately relied on education (both theoretical and technical) and experience. In the mid-nineteenth century the focus was on the science of architecture with a preference towards highlighting the technical aspects of building design. With architects training at the Ecole des Beaux Arts a renewed focus on the art and

design of architecture surfaced. Using these distinct qualities and knowledge—an understanding of history, theory, structures and the precepts of good design--architects attempted to inform the public about the special services architects could offer. In the tradition of Latrobe, these efforts centered on monumental work and public buildings with little expressed interest in single-family house design for the masses.

Some researchers have discussed the complex relationship of architects to the construction industry.<sup>101</sup> The architecture profession in the U.S. has faced heavy competition from other disciplines since it first attempted professionalism. Original boundary disputes between architects and engineers beginning in the 1850s were codified as building codes were written, and both architects and engineers were awarded primary responsibility for protecting the health, safety and welfare of the public. Although architects have additional aesthetic training that engineers do not have, this is not regulated, thus the competition continues to flourish between the two disciplines. Today's competitors with architecture have expanded to include: interior designers, artists, landscape architects, and building professionals including contractors, developers and other building designers.

According to Gutman “the growing competition between architects and other building and design professionals is now matched by growing

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<sup>101</sup> Robert Gutman, *Architectural Practice: A Critical View*. (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton Architectural Press, 1988).

competitiveness among architects and architectural firms themselves.”<sup>102</sup> The impact has been seen in the increased focus on business development within architectural circles.

Of particular interest to the design of houses is the relationship between women, the house, and the architecture profession. Several scholars have written about the role of women and house design. Wright examines the history of women in the profession of architecture and the specific issues they have historically faced. Most pronounced among these was the belief that women were best suited to deal with domestic concerns and landscape architecture but not architecture proper. Wright cites editorials from *the American Architect and Building News* that addressed the “woman issue” as they called it at the time.

According to the editorial

“First, the planning of houses, at least so far as the convenience of their arrangement is concerned, though a very necessary part of an architect’s duty is not architecture at all; and the ability to arrange a house conveniently does not in the least make an architect. There are thousands of people who can adjust plans of houses to their own perfect satisfaction and convenience, and to those of others, and who do it, but who yet are not architects; just as there are millions of people who know their multiplication-table thoroughly, and use it constantly, and yet are not mathematicians.”<sup>103</sup>

Wright explains the “double standard” in architecture that resulted from this type of published statement. “Not only was the division of labor between men and women clearly stated, but there was the implicit dismissal of most domestic

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<sup>102</sup> Gutman, 70.

<sup>103</sup> Gwendolyn Wright, (1977) “Women in Architecture,” in *The Architect*, Spiro Kostof, editor, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition, 282.

architecture as too lowly for professional consideration. The profession would favor theory over practicality, theoretician over user, monument over common building, as well as man over woman.”<sup>104</sup>

### HISTORY OF ARCHITECTURAL EDUCATION IN THE U.S.

The appropriate training of an architect has been the subject of conversation and debate since the first architect appeared in the U.S. Many authors have written about the history of the education of the architect in the U.S. Some historians posit a tri-partite division for architectural design education in the period prior to the Civil War. These three pathways to becoming an architect demonstrate the early paths to an architectural education and include the gentleman architect, the carpenter architect and the trained architect. Three well-known examples of all three of these types include Thomas Jefferson, Asher Benjamin and Benjamin Henry Latrobe. Asher Benjamin came from the carpenter tradition and wrote “how to” pattern books for designer-builders. Benjamin learned his trade on the job and through other pattern books. Thomas Jefferson designed buildings, not as a vocation, but as a side-interest and was self-taught from books. Although the distinction between these three paths was actually far less clear, these three scenarios provide a rudimentary model for the early education of an architect.

Formalized education for those interested in building design and construction began to take place on a regional level. In Philadelphia, like in other

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<sup>104</sup> Gwendolyn Wright, (1977) “Women in Architecture,” in *The Architect*, Spiro Kostof, editor, , 2<sup>nd</sup> edition, 283.

major cities of the day, local builders and architects formed institutions to disseminate current knowledge about building and design. The first two of these in Philadelphia, the Carpenter's Company (proposed 1804-1805) established in 1833 and the Franklin Institute, 1824-1923, offered night classes to working people. The Franklin Institute catered to "mechanics"—the name often used for architects of the day--and stressed mechanical science. Architects William Strickland and John Haviland taught at the Franklin Institute. The Carpenter's Institute, on the other hand, was formed in response to Latrobe's success in Philadelphia in an effort to help builders compete for work. Owen Biddle, a carpenter-builder, taught there to a clientele consisting primarily of carpenters and builders.<sup>105</sup> The lack of distinction between builders and architects began to show up in these early programs and the individual training needs of each led to a proliferation of schools addressing the needs of various constituents.

Other early education efforts for builders and designers in Philadelphia included the Spring Garden Institute that taught drawing classes, the Polytechnic College that graduated far more engineers than architects, and the Wagner Free Institute that had a broad scientific emphasis including the building sciences. According to Cohen, "Philadelphia was not unique in establishing such classes

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<sup>105</sup> Jeffrey Cohen, "Building a Discipline: Early Institutional Settings for Architectural Education in Philadelphia, 1804-1890," *Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians*, Vol 53, No. 2 (June 1994): 139-183.

and lectures, although the extent to which parallels existed in other American cities is not yet fully clear.”<sup>106</sup>

What the Philadelphia example provides is a lens through which the murky boundaries between architecture, engineering and building construction in the nineteenth century can be seen. Additionally, the many programs in Philadelphia demonstrate the desire among architects and builders for knowledge about design and construction, the natural outcome of which was the development of academically-based architecture and engineering programs which arose later in the nineteenth century.

A university-based architecture curriculum became the topic of discussion among many architects in the late nineteenth century. *The American Architect and Building News (AABN)* was a key publication for architects in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries and devoted much of the discussion to architectural education and training. The articles within the *AABN* ranged from a general discussion of the components of an appropriate education to a discussion of the systems in use in France, Germany and England as well as the curricular specifics about the new programs in the U.S.

The system in France was centered on the Ecole des Beaux Arts. Arthur Drexler’s seminal work on the architecture of Ecole des Beaux Arts consists of a collection of essays by various authors that outline the history of the Ecole and its

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<sup>106</sup> Ibid, 182.

primary emphasis on the plan and the monumental building type.<sup>107</sup> In his article for the collection, “The Teaching of Architecture of the Ecole des Beaux Arts,” Richard Chafee outlined the history of the formation of the Ecole. Originally formed in 1617 under the King of France, the purpose of the Academy (the former name for the Ecole) was to increase the King’s glory and to work on the royal buildings. The King appointed the members of the Academy who were then elevated to the level of philosophers from mere craftsmen.<sup>108</sup> The end result was that the making of the physical building was separated from the philosophy and drawing of the building design. The Academy, and later the Ecole, focused on drawing as the preeminent skill of the architect.

The Academy sought to outline the universal principles of architecture under its original leader, Francois Blondel. These principles stressed the rules of proportion, the five orders, Roman antiquities and buildings of the Italian Renaissance.<sup>109</sup> J.F. Blondel added to this list of absolutes, French Classical Architecture.<sup>110</sup> Students were encouraged to study classical pieces as inspiration for contemporary building types. While the original curriculum of the Academy did not emphasize construction, a shift occurred in the latter part of the eighteenth century when the study of Gothic buildings and Greek ruins were

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<sup>107</sup> Drexler, Arthur, ed. *The Architecture of the Ecoles Des Beaux-Arts*. Edited by Museum of Modern Art (New York: The MIT Press, 1977).

<sup>108</sup> Ibid.

<sup>109</sup> Ibid

<sup>110</sup> Ibid

added to the canon of building types.<sup>111</sup> Gothic cathedrals provided a clear understanding of the building structure. This emphasis on a plethora of historic styles characterized the Beaux Arts education later received by many American architects in the nineteenth century.

Of particular impact to the profession of architecture in the United States and to the system of architectural education in the U.S. as it relates to the design of single-family houses in the U.S. are the project types assigned at the Ecole des Beaux Arts. During the first class, students received design assignments for schools, museums, hotels, theaters and large houses (large country houses and manors). The “equisse” problem focused on a small, single space such as the entry to a palatial hall, a boutique or a clock tower. The Grand Prix, or final problem, included projects such as an addition to a grand palace, a façade design “equisse” problem, and a monumental public building assignment for a museum, hospice, an embassy building, or university or other building of higher education.<sup>112</sup> Students were trained solely to work on public buildings particularly those associated with the King and his royal land holdings.

At the Ecole, students attended lectures, received projects and had their work critiqued in design juries by practicing professionals and educators. A master architect did all design work at an off-site atelier. Oftentimes several

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<sup>111</sup> Ibid

<sup>112</sup> Ibid.

students were assigned to a single atelier.<sup>113</sup> Students received individual “desk crits” and presented their final work to a “design jury.” This model of architectural education sounds remarkably similar to the methods still practiced in architecture programs throughout the U.S.

The Ecole des Beaux Arts had a lasting impact on the education of an architect and the practice of architecture in the U.S. First, the project types assigned by the Ecole are the same project types still used in architecture studio classes and preferred by most architects in the U.S. Second, the atelier model parallels that used within the design studio format of education in the U.S. Students are assigned to specific studio groups and are led by a master architect (in this case a design educator) through a project which is then critiqued by a formal jury process involving educators and professionals. Like the Ecole, entry into the architecture profession is highly selective. An emphasis on drawing and theory separates the architect from the craftsman. A history of the development of both the architecture profession as well as architectural education in the U.S. reveals many of these same approaches since the very beginning of the profession.

The German system of educating an architect relied heavily on the technical aspects of building. In the *American Architect and Building News*, one critic described the system as “scientific, hard, barren and formal.”<sup>114</sup> A German

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<sup>113</sup> Ibid.

<sup>114</sup> AABN, “Architectural Education in England and Germany,” *The American Architect and Building News* (April 24, 1880) Volume 7, 226.

architect of the time described the buildings in Germany as meek and poor due to a lack of money not architectural talent. Furthermore, he claimed that government officials required restraint and formality in the public architecture. The educational system in Germany was state sponsored and thus under government control.<sup>115</sup> Under the German system, no one was permitted to be a full time teacher because of “the tendencies to pedagogic degeneracy, often said to characterize men who give all their time to teaching, is justly feared.”<sup>116</sup> Thus, all teachers of architecture were also practicing architects.

By contrast the English system was a great deal looser. Individual masters set up their own training offices and acquired apprentices. The training varied greatly from one person to the next with no consistent way of becoming educated as an architect. During the late nineteenth century, many English architects called for a formalized system of education. While the Royal Academy began offering some courses in 1808, the first full time program was formed at Kings College under Sir Bannister Fletcher in 1892.<sup>117</sup>

Of the three European models—the Ecole de Beaux Arts, the English system and the German system—the American educational system most closely aligned itself with the Beaux Arts structurally. The writers of the *AABN*

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<sup>115</sup> Ibid.

<sup>116</sup> AABN. “Art School of Germany I,” *The American Architect and Building News* (September 14, 1878) Vol. 4, 142.

<sup>117</sup> Jonathan Foyle, “Architect: Other titles are Remarkably More Flexible,” *the Architects Journal* (2008) 39-41. This conflicts with Weatherhead who attributes the first program to the University of Liverpool in 1894.

disparaged the English system stating in 1879 “There is no such thing as an English architectural curriculum. There has never been even a serious attempt in England to establish an architectural school of any importance, we believe; certainly no such school exists.”<sup>118</sup> A later article written to compare the German system with the English once, found both systems lacking. “It is contended that it is precisely those features of the German training that critic (Herr Reichenspberger) most disparages, that the English architects feel they are most in need of.”<sup>119</sup> The German system was criticized by the writer as overly technical and focused on teaching one historic style while the English system was praised for fostering creativity and freedom. While critics and writers occasionally referred to the other two countries’ approaches to training architects, the main focus of discussion centered on the Ecole des Beaux Arts. Despite its popularity and overall acceptance as a model for academic programs in the U.S., some critics did complain about Ecole methods of training. “Here is another criticism in a different line. In nearly all the schools which ape the Ecole, a vast amount of time is given to the matter of academic rendering, I wish I knew just what this training is supposed to accomplish.”<sup>120</sup>

Despite the occasional complaint, however, the Ecole methods informed most of what eventually took place in early academic programs. Furthermore, the editors and writers for the *AABN* tended to agree with the focus on drawing and

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<sup>118</sup> *The American Architect and Building News* (1876-1908): March 8, 1879, 74; APS Online.

<sup>119</sup> *The American Architect and Building News*; April 24, 1880; 7, 226; APS Online

<sup>120</sup> *The American Architect and Building News*; December 26, 1896, 1096; APS Online

historic stylistic prototypes promoted by advocates of the Beaux Arts. In the initial article for the series on architectural education launched in 1879, the author indicated the following: "The pencil (or the brush) is the architect's chief educational reliance..."<sup>121</sup> Throughout the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, the *AABN* continued to present contemporary opinions and information about architectural education.

The call for formalized education of architects paralleled the rise of professionalism in the nineteenth century and led to the first architectural programs in the U.S. Clason Weatherhead divided architectural education prior to 1941 into three distinct periods: formation of early schools and first attempts, "demonization" of the principles of the Ecole des Beaux Arts, and the present "Modern" style.<sup>122</sup> The first actual architectural programs established in institutions of higher learning dated to the period shortly after the Civil War: Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT) first took students in 1868, Cornell in 1871, and the University of Illinois in 1873.<sup>123</sup> According to Weatherhead, prior to Modernism, architectural education in the U.S. was modeled after two primary influences: The Ecole des Beaux Arts and the educational systems in place for architects in Germany and England, although the Ecole influence was much

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<sup>121</sup> *The American Architect and Building News*; March 8, 1879, 74; APS Online.

<sup>122</sup> Clason Weatherhead. . "The History of Collegiate Education in Architecture in the United States." Dissertation (New York: Columbia University, 1941).

<sup>123</sup> *Ibid.*

stronger.<sup>124</sup> As mentioned in Weatherhead's dissertation, the history of architectural education in the United States and hence the theoretical roots of practice in the U.S. owe a substantial debt to the French system.<sup>125</sup>

Both Weatherhead's dissertation and articles printed in the *AABN* contained descriptions of the first architecture programs in the U.S. The *AABN* published descriptions and plans of study for Columbia College in New York (1888), the University of Pennsylvania (1894), and Cornell University (1881). Weatherhead provides detailed information on the programs at MIT, Cornell, the University of Illinois, Syracuse University, Columbia University, the University of Pennsylvania, Armour Institute of Technology, Harvard University and several other more recent programs.

According to Weatherhead, the AIA was the first to propose the development of a school of architecture in 1867. Managed by the AIA, the proposed school consisted of three components: the preparatory (general studies), the polytechnic (scientific studies), and the academic (history).<sup>126</sup> Although this school never came to fruition, its promoters became leading members of the AIA's Committee on Education and advocated for local schools of architecture around the country.

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<sup>124</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>125</sup> One thing which Weatherhead does not address is the lack of text books in English for teaching architecture. Mary N. Woods PhD dissertation completed at Columbia University addresses how the *American Architect and Building News* periodical served this purpose until text books were developed.

<sup>126</sup> Weatherhead, "The History of Collegiate Education in Architecture in the United States," 14-15.

The program at MIT is presented below in more detail to demonstrate how the methods of the Ecole des Beaux Arts were integrated into the education of an architect in the U.S. during this period. MIT led the way in establishing an architectural curriculum when it hired Robert William Ware in 1865. Ware, one of the founders of the program, outlined his principles for the school that first matriculated students in 1868:

1. Details of a practical nature that can be learned in the office should be postponed until that time. Fundamental considerations relating to such details, however, should be brought to the attention of the student in school.
2. The courses in construction and history of architecture can best be taught by the method of cooperative student investigation and class report.
3. Architectural design should be conducted by a competitive method, the student's work being exhibited and judged by a jury composed of members other than the instructors.
4. The study of design should be continuous throughout the four-year period as it was throughout the period of study at the Ecole des Beaux-Arts.
5. Design should be conducted by regularly appointed instructors in the school.
6. In the study of design the problems should not be of too practical a nature.
7. The study of construction should be emphasized.
8. Students in architecture should be given some contact with the closely allied industrial arts.
9. There should be included in the architecture curriculum as broad a cultural study as a professional course will permit.<sup>127</sup>

Like the Ecole, the emphasis of the curriculum at MIT was on theoretical issues and not practical building information. It was believed, that these matters could be addressed once a student graduated and went to work in an office, in

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<sup>127</sup> Weatherhead, 27-29

other words, through an apprenticeship. History and construction were supplemental lecture courses where information was best-learned using tests and papers. Thus, these subjects need not be directly integrated into the studio. Outside critics came to review student projects in a competitive process, separating out the best work. At the center of the curriculum was the studio sequence that a student was required to take every year in an ever-increasing level of complexity and difficulty. While construction was to be emphasized, the design problems were not to be too practical in nature and the architecture education was within an overall liberal education context. Thus, the Ecole model was adapted nearly verbatim into the liberal arts educational system in the U.S.

A variation on this model was used at all other early programs with the exception of the new program at Illinois that followed the German model and placed a much greater emphasis on integrating a knowledge of construction.<sup>128</sup> Of the first programs teaching architecture in the U.S., all but one had ties to the Ecole des Beaux Arts and used this method of teaching architecture as the base for educating an architect in the U.S. Ware's method of education stressed drawing skills, an understanding of proportions and the study of ancient buildings as examples for contemporary designs as was done at the Ecole. Furthermore, the emphasis was on the artistic and theoretical nature of architecture with little emphasis on practical problems confronting the architect such as building

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<sup>128</sup> Ibid.

construction or business. According to the Boyer and Mitgang report, “Ware’s curricular precepts remain influential to this day.”<sup>129</sup>

In his summary of the early period, Weatherhead points to wide variation among the earliest schools, although each was impacted profoundly by the Ecole des Beaux Arts. The individual schools adapted the Ecole model to their individual institution by the end of the nineteenth century. The key courses of the curricula included courses on design, construction (albeit cursory), the history of architecture, drawing, and other academic subjects with an emphasis on the design studio as the central experience.

The second period of architectural education identified in Weatherhead’s work is the period of eclecticism. He summarized the period with eight predominant characteristics: (1) dominance of eclecticism and the Beaux Arts, (2) emphasis upon theory and unreality, (3) little encouragement of creative ability, (4) lack of integration among the subject groups, (5) design the important subject, (6) professional ethics stressed, (7) lack of instruction in the business phases of architecture, and (8) and lack of transition between the school and the office.<sup>130</sup> It was during this period that schools of architecture were formed across the U.S. Firmly rooted in the Beaux Arts methods and tradition, these schools educated the next generation of American architects.

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<sup>129</sup> Ernest L. Boyer and Lee D. Mitgang, *Building Community: A New Future for Architecture Education and Practice* (New Jersey: The Carnegie Foundation, 1996), 15.

<sup>130</sup> Weatherhead, 171-173.

By 1894, the Society of Beaux Arts Architects had been formed in the U.S. with seventy-two members. Alumni of the Ecole were added to the staffs at MIT, Pennsylvania, Cornell, and Columbia all of which were subsequently reorganized incorporating internal atelier style studios. The majority of early programs were located in the northeast (seven) with two others in the Mid-west. By 1911, eleven additional programs had been established. Forty-seven programs were in existence by 1947. “The Society of Beaux Arts Architects failed to secure the establishment of a national school, but it won an even greater influence on American architectural education as the use of its design competitions reached national scope.”<sup>131</sup>

In the Modern period, during which he was writing (1941), Weatherhead identified nine changes taking place in architecture programs across the U.S. These changes centered on a more unified curriculum with stiffer requirements. The study of economics was to be added as was a greater understanding of present-day civilization. The Beaux Arts and eclecticism in general were being suppressed and were being replaced by realism and an understanding of human needs. Weatherhead refers to a nationwide coordination of architectural education under development at the time.<sup>132</sup> Later reports on architecture education suggest that some of these objectives were not met.

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<sup>131</sup> Ibid, 101.

<sup>132</sup> Ibid, 244-245.

A slightly different view of the history of architectural education in the U.S. is provided by “Patterns of Education for the Practice of Architecture” as included in the 1954 report conducted by the American Institute of Architects entitled *The Architect at Mid-Century: Evolution and Achievement*.<sup>133</sup> According to this report, “the provision of architecture at MIT, Illinois, and Cornell stemmed primarily from German polytechnics,” although the founders of each school represented a different background of experiences.<sup>134</sup> This view is not surprising given the AIA’s emphasis on the science of architecture over the art of architecture at the time and the prominence of Bauhaus-Modernism at mid-century. The primary exception this report takes with the direct legacy of the Ecole model was that studios and lectures were divided. In the Ecole, project design occurred within the design studio atelier under the supervision of a practicing architect while lectures took place at the school itself. The AIA argument contended that from the beginning, design studios took place as a part of the academic program in the U.S. In other words, both types of education took place within the same physical location. The report fails to acknowledge that these courses were separate and often the content lectures were not integrated into the design studio.

Interestingly, the AIA report then proceeds to provide the number of American architects who attended the Ecole in seeming contradiction to the claims of Germanic descent. Ten attended in the 1860s, twenty-six in the 1870s,

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<sup>133</sup> American Institute of Architects. "The Architect at Mid-Century: Evolution and Achievement." Volume 1, edited by Turpin C. Bannister (New York: Reinhold Publishing Corporation, 1954).

<sup>134</sup> AIA, “The Architect and Mid-Century,” 97.

twenty-five in the 1880s and a record 110 in the 1890s. “A few, like Louis Sullivan, did not cherish their experience, but most—both those who had persisted through the whole program and those who had only taken design problems in an atelier—returned home fired with a missionary zeal to recreate the Ecole atelier system in the United States.”<sup>135</sup>

The AIA report differentiates architectural education in the U. S. from its European counterparts. As a part of the American university education system, the education of an architect incorporated all aspects of education. From the very beginning, educators sought to provide a well-rounded liberal arts education that surpassed that of a technical school. One of the legacies of this approach has been a separation between education and practice that has made the transition from one to the other notoriously difficult for new graduates.

The AIA report presents an overview of the first decade following Weatherhead’s dissertation work, the post-1941 period of architectural education. Early interest in the “International Style” and the work of the Bauhaus increased substantially with the hiring of Walter Gropius at Harvard University in 1936. “Although the Bauhaus point of view naturally prevailed, the result was nevertheless a new phenomenon, for it operated within the American collegiate system.”<sup>136</sup> Two years later, Mies van der Rohe was appointed to head the school of architecture at Illinois Institute of Technology, thus expanding the

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<sup>135</sup> Ibid, 99.

<sup>136</sup> Ibid, 106-107.

Bauhaus influence on architectural education in the U.S.<sup>137</sup> The Bauhaus tradition of the workshop within which both teacher and student work together was integrated into the established studio system and liberal education model of the U.S. This Americanized-Bauhaus approach continues to have influence over the structure of architectural education in the twenty-first century at many schools although it has been adapted within the higher education paradigm of the U.S. Many programs have established shops where students and faculty can participate in the “making” of architecture.

Several subsequent studies of the profession have been conducted. Many of the issues which first plagued the profession—an emphasis on theory versus practical matters, disagreement over the art or science of architecture, alienation with other disciplines and territorial disputes, and studio versus lecture classes—continued to be identified. At the heart of these dualities lies the question is architecture an art or a science? According to some researchers, the focus of design programs has gone back and forth between these dualities since the beginning while other critics see education as art and theory based and practice as science based.<sup>138</sup>

Several scholars have examined the architecture profession in the U.S. and have prepared suggestions for improvement. These include “A Study of Architectural Schools 1929-1932” conducted by the Association of Collegiate

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<sup>137</sup> Ibid.

<sup>138</sup> Robert Gutman, “Educating Architects: Pedagogy and the Pendulum” in *The Public Face of Architecture: Civic Culture and Public Spaces* edited by Nathan Glazer and Mark Lilla (New York: The Free Press, 1987).

Schools of Architecture (ACSA), the AIA report on the Architect at Mid-Century, the “Architecture Education Study” also known as the Princeton Report, the 1967 “Study of Education for Environmental Design” also known as the MIT Report, Robert Gutman’s work on the profession from the mid-1980s, and Mitgang and Boyer’s 1996 report.

These studies have pointed to several problems inherent in the profession and education in the U.S. and have made a variety of suggestions over time. The ACSA study (1929-1932) criticized architecture education for its emphasis on “paper architecture” and lack of faculty who specialized in construction. The “Architect at Mid-Century” report called for more research in architecture. The “Princeton Report” called for an end of isolation for the architect during his education. The MIT Study referenced a concern about negative student attitudes toward potential clients. The student’s expressed need to “educate” an ignorant client was noted with dismay by the committee. Gutman’s thorough studies of the profession echo most of the above concerns which were all subsequently included as ongoing issues within the Mitgang and Boyer Report *Building Community: A New Future for Architecture Education and Practice* suggesting that in 1996 these concerns were yet unresolved.<sup>139</sup>

Other critics have focused on the studio-based system as a source of many of the problems in architecture education. Gutman proposed that architecture programs’ focus on studio as the main part of education needed to

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<sup>139</sup> Ernest L. Boyer and Lee D. Mitgang, *Building Community: A New Future for Architecture Education and Practice*.

be supplemented. “In the years ahead there is a good chance that the architecture schools of this country will alter the theoretical content of their curricula and even adopt new teaching methods to supplement the traditional studio system.<sup>140</sup> As of 2008, such changes are not evident in schools with architecture programs. Most schools continue to have a studio-based curricular structure and lecture courses to provide technical information.

One thing professionals and educators of architecture in the U.S. may have not examined fully are the original roots of the Ecole system and its transferability to America. The Ecole consisted of a group of architects who were provided training specifically to work on buildings for the King of France. As a democracy, patronage by royalty is not usually a possibility for architects in the U.S. The French system of training architects within the Ecole did not address buildings for people other than those in the royal circle or those used to reflect the power of the monarchy. This as the basis for a profession in the U.S. is flawed on several counts and helps to explain why architects have failed to engage the design of large segments of the market in the U.S. It further explains the plight of the architect with regard to educating potential clients and the client-designer relationship problems often cited in studies of the architecture profession.

Within the past twenty years another critique of the profession has surfaced. A group of female architecture educators have tackled the questions of

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<sup>140</sup> Ibid.

diversity and gendered practices within architecture education. Linda Groat, Sherry Ahrentzen and Kathryn Anthony have all published articles in the *Journal of Architectural Education* that examine the teaching of architecture from both a gender and diversity viewpoint. Groat's article "Architecture's Resistance to Diversity: A Matter of Theory as Much as Practice" delves into the basic dilemmas inherent in architectural education and may explain why fundamental changes have not been made. These internal conflicts have resulted in both gender and minority bias. At the root of the problem are two opposing traditions of architecture that have evolved in the U.S.—"architect as technician" and "architect as artist." According to Groat, both have their theoretical roots in nineteenth century thought. The architect as technician relies on scientific method and empiricism. Viewed as a practical profession, architects serve to facilitate a client's vision. Groat aligns this approach with the American Institute of Architects. Contrasted with this, the architect as artist view of the profession is promulgated by educators. In the nineteenth century Romantic Movement and the Beaux Arts vision of creativity and individualism, the architect as a singular genius who must focus on the abstract conceptions about architecture with the studio experience central to this exploration. According to Groat, both positions are inherently powerless in the world and have led to the lack of inclusion of both women and minorities within both architecture education and the profession by perpetuating an unrealistic and unresponsive view of architecture as it should be in the U.S.<sup>141</sup> This same issue also explains the profession's lack of ability to

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<sup>141</sup> Linda Groat, "Architecture's Resistance to Diversity: A Matter of Theory as Much as Practice,"

educate the public about what an architect does. If architects themselves are not clear as to who they are and what they do—art or a science—how can they communicate a clear message to the public about the benefit they provide. This is compounded by the use of jargon as learned within the indoctrination into the field that occurs as a part of architectural education. Using words people do not understand to communicate a confused understanding of the profession does not serve to educate the public about the value of an architect. Furthermore, this puts the onus for communication and understanding on the client who needs to understand and diminishes the architect's need to be clear. Most importantly, the entire premise behind this method of education is to separate architects as better than others and as keepers of some abstract and indefinable truths.

Perhaps the most pressing problem facing architecture in the U.S. at the beginning of the twenty-first century is a question of relevance. Throughout its history, the profession of architecture has evolved from one of master builder versed in the design and construction of buildings to the person who is responsible only for “design intent” on a miniscule percentage of buildings constructed in the U.S. according to current wording within AIA contracts. What do architects hope to provide? And what are they willing to do to provide it?

Several authors have described the progressive loss of control of the architecture profession over time some going as far to say that this process dates

back to the time of Vitruvius.<sup>142</sup> The conditions that permitted architecture to develop in the first place required large-scale projects under state sponsorship. These conditions led to the financial resources and need for an expert, in this case an architect. Within this context architect, as a professional, served a particular need mediating between “telos” (form and function) and “techne” (construction) of buildings.

By the late sixteenth century, the first academies of architecture were established and architects began writing about practice for other architects. Passage into the profession became increasingly difficult to achieve. As a result, “under royal patronage, in France, a minority of ‘magistrates of the beautiful’ could thus affirm its autonomous control over the symbolic and aesthetic dimension of architecture, and make it routine in the academy.”<sup>143</sup>

By the seventeenth century, with the shift in military tactics in Europe, military engineering became its own specialized profession and with this the separation between techne and telos begun in the Renaissance was finally completed. Architecture abandoned techne for telos.

Thus, the history of the development of the profession up to the time of the Industrial Revolution resulted in a reduction of responsibility coupled with a sense of elitism and need for large public projects most often associated with church or state sponsorship. The profession has proceeded since then to progressively

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<sup>142</sup> Larson, Magali Sarfatti. "Emblem and Exception: The Historical Definition of the Architect's Professional Role." In *Professionals and Urban Form* edited by Judith Blau, Mark E. La Gory and John S. Pipkin (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1983).

<sup>143</sup> Ibid.

allocate additional areas of knowledge to others. Architecture has lost the domain of site design to landscape architects and civil engineers, the design of structural aspects of a building to structural engineers, mechanical, electrical and plumbing scope to mechanical electrical and plumbing engineers, and the design of interiors to interior designers. This has occurred in practice and has been institutionalized through American Institute of Architects' contracts and legislation in the U.S.

Other researchers have questioned loss of clients, loss of territory to allied professions and the loss of professionalism in general. To these they add questions about the validity of the architecture discipline within the academic system in the U.S. "Moreover, the combination of both the diminished role for traditional architecture practice and the decline in enrollment base (experienced by at least some schools) suggests that architecture schools will be in an increasingly weak position in many university contexts."<sup>144</sup>

### THE CULTURE OF ARCHITECTURE

Several researchers have conducted studies of architecture offices and educational settings in architecture programs to identify the underlying culture of architecture in the U.S. Judith Blau examined the professional offices of 152 firms in Manhattan in 1979. This study involved over 400 architects. Blau outlines

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<sup>144</sup> Linda Groat and Sherry Ahrentzen, "Voice for Change in Architectural Education: Seven Facets of Transformation for the Perspectives of Faculty Women," *The Journal of Architectural Education*, Volume 50, no. 4, (May 1997): 272.

some of the internal conflicts inherent in the profession as it has developed in the U.S. as well as how architecture stands up to basic criteria of a profession.

Blau identifies four characteristics of a profession: 1) There is a long and rigorous process of training which leads to some form of licensure or certification; 2) A specific domain of knowledge is identified and then a monopoly to this knowledge is claimed; 3) There is equity among all the professionals; and finally, 4) It is a calling. Blau then presents evidence that architecture, as practiced in the U.S., often fails to meet the first three of these criteria. First, the profession has consistently allowed licensure to people who have no formal education and has fought to maintain this as a possible career track for architects. Similarly, many who obtain the education never practice architecture. Second, and as previously discussed, architects have never successfully created a monopoly for design services in the U.S. although they have tried repeatedly. Rather, they have experienced competition from engineers, builders, interior designers, and others throughout the history of the profession in the U.S. Finally, few architects advocate equality in the profession. Hierarchy and singular genius are paramount within and perhaps necessary to the culture of architecture.

Various works by Garry Stevens reinforce Blau's findings. An article Stevens published in *the Journal of Architectural Education* and then later expanded into a book in 1998, *The Favored Circle: The Social Foundations of Architectural Distinction*, presents a sometimes scathing review of the profession from a sociological perspective. Stevens adopts Pierre Bourdieu's power

structures as a model for viewing the profession. First Stevens presents a sociologist's view of professions and culture formation within them as defined by French philosopher, Bourdieu, Stevens then examines architecture through this lens. In his writings, Bourdieu is primarily concerned with power. Bourdieu has identified four forms of power that occur within groups. These four forms include physical force, economic power, symbolic power, and embodied power. Professions do not generally use physical power as a means of creating culture or of promoting themselves. Economic power can be accumulated and those with more economic power (money) tend to be able to control those with less. Symbolic power covers the ideology and theoretical underpinnings of a profession, including its history and theory base. Bourdieu further explains symbolic power saying it is arbitrary, it leads to misrecognition, and there is naturalness to it. In other words, the social order of the group is not evident to the members of the group. Through the socialization process, members become part of a system that they do not recognize as imbued with power structures and which they are not likely to question if properly assimilated into the group. The system may not make sense to an outsider looking in--hence it may be considered arbitrary. Symbolic power can be taught and a person can be socialized into the group this way. The final type of power takes place at the level of "being." Embodied power is a certain way of being that a person exhibits in his behavior through mannerisms, preferences, speech, clothing, and even the way he walks. This might be modeled but cannot be overtly taught. Embodied

power tends to be the result of a person's personal history and life experiences, or what Stevens calls "habitus."

Stevens, associated with a school of architecture, goes on to apply these forms of power to the process of architectural education and hence the beginning of the culture formation. Of particular importance to the practice of architecture and to "being" an architect are the latter two forms of power: symbolic power and embodied power. During the three, four, or five years an aspiring architect attends a university program for the study of architecture he is learning all the skills, language, history, and theory required to have the symbolic power of architecture. What is less reliable is the ability of architecture programs to imbue all aspiring architects with embodied power. According to Stevens: "anyone who has experienced any form of discrimination—because of race, age, sex, or ethnic origin—is only too aware that failure is not necessarily failure to know something, but failure to be something. More subtle and more powerful is the discrimination unrecognized by all—because it is practiced by all—in which success is denied because one does not have the team spirit, the visceral sense of belonging, of fitting in, of being one of us."<sup>145</sup>

Stevens claims that architecture schools serve two primary functions. The first is to impart an education in order to produce professional architects; although he, like Blau, acknowledges that "it is hardly necessary to attend any

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<sup>145</sup> Garry Stevens "Struggle in the Studio: A Bourdivin Look at Architectural Pedagogy." *Journal of Architectural Education* 49, no. 2 (1995): 110.

sort of higher education institution to become an architect.”<sup>146</sup> The second function is to create consumers of the architectural culture. Stevens summarizes the impact of power on an architectural education as follows: “It is clear that in architecture, the procedures and processes of design are not at all objectified—as the dismal failure of the Design Methods movement attests—and that architecture, unlike medicine, or engineering, or even law, requires not only knowing but being something.”<sup>147</sup>

Stevens proceeds to tie this need to be educated in “being” as well as skills back to the first formalized education for architects in the 1700s under Blondel at the Academy of Architecture (which later became the Ecole des Beaux Arts) in France. He reiterates this position by quoting the AIA Committee on Education in 1906 “An architect is a man of culture, learning and refinement.”<sup>148</sup>

Stevens outlines legacies of the Ecole des Beaux Arts that still reside within architecture programs in the U.S. These include control of the students’ time, a “vague, allusive, and elusive language,” and the encouragement of intense competition among the students.<sup>149</sup> “One of the interesting aspects of architectural education is that it retains at its heart the rather older methods that the Polytechnique abandoned but that were preserved by the Ecole des Beaux

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<sup>146</sup> Ibid, 111.

<sup>147</sup> Ibid, 112.

<sup>148</sup> Ibid, 112.

<sup>149</sup> Ibid, 119.

Arts and passed down to modern America, and to a lesser extent British, schools.”<sup>150</sup>

Dana Cuff’s book *Architecture: the History of Practice* provides a sociological and behavioral study of three firms in the U.S.—one in San Francisco, one in New York and the other in Houston. From the ethnographic methodological approach of observing and interviewing people from these three firms, Cuff gleans a view of the profession including how she thinks it has come to be what it is today.

As a result of her research Cuff views the profession of architecture through a series of dualities. In each case, the profession prefers one side to the other which has created some of the problems inherent in the profession as it is today. These dualities include (with preferences in bold):

1. **individual** versus collective
2. **design/art** versus business/management
3. decision making versus **design as making**
4. design as a mosaic of specialists or **qualified generalists**

According to Cuff, while architects are individuals, “they share a loosely structured ethos presented to them in architecture schools.”<sup>151</sup> Cuff proceeds to define this ethos as the central knowledge provided to the student of architecture while in a school program. “Architecture schools’ emphasis on design prefigures the importance of practitioners’ espoused theory of design as the central element

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<sup>150</sup> Ibid, 119.

<sup>151</sup> Dana Cuff , *Architecture: The Story of Practice* (Cambridge: The MIT Press, 1991), 41.

of architecture. Schools highlight the importance of pure design by removing from its study key aspects of professional practice: the client or patron, the coordinated group process of design, and economic and power relations.”<sup>152</sup>

At the time Cuff wrote her book, there were 114 accredited programs of architecture. One characteristic common to all programs was that the design studio was at the center of the curriculum. Within this scenario, the professor posed a problem to the student including a site and then worked with the students individually towards a solution using desk critiques. This conforms to the model of the ateliers at the Ecole des Beaux Arts (as presented in the history of education in the last chapter). Cuff contrasts the approach used in the Academy with that of the profession wherein to stay solvent an architect must master business and team work as well.

Cuff details the formation of the architecture ethos in the following statement summarizing the five-year first professional degree and the four plus two-year masters degree:

“Either route involves the intense indoctrination characteristic of an initiation rite: a high degree of commitment, a certain amount of isolation from non-group members, cohesion within the group, sacrifices, and rituals marking passage at various stages. Architectural programs share certain elements that have symbolic as well as functional value. These are the studio, the crit, and the charrette.”<sup>153</sup>

The studio critique and charrette methodology and its impact on culture formation have been the subject of many articles within *the Journal of*

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<sup>152</sup> Ibid, 45.

<sup>153</sup> Ibid, 118.

*Architectural Education* and a detailed study of studio culture. Several themes are common to these works: white males are given more attention in design juries, minorities and women are given less critique and attention, those who master the language, mannerisms, and “being” of architecture fair better with design juries, and the single “star” system is firmly in place and encouraged within the studio culture.

Kathryn Anthony’s book *Design Juries on Trial* resulted from a mixed methods study of the design studio. After tracing the roots of the studio and design jury to the Ecole des Beaux Arts, Anthony then talks about some of the lingering legacies still found within schools of architecture. These include: charisma and the star system, authority and paternalism, and the jury as both festival and bloodbath. Anthony compares the views of faculty, practitioners and students on the design studio juries. Findings from interviews indicate that design juries tend to focus primarily on negative comments and are often boring to both students and faculty members. Oftentimes, the level of negativity leads students to question their own abilities, and female students tend to be most affected by the negativity.<sup>154</sup>

In an article co-written with Sherry Ahrentzen in 1993, Anthony continued her exploration into the design studio. According to Ahrentzen and Anthony, the gendered nature of architecture education results in a hostile climate for women. The authors discuss the “Curriculum of Great Men and Great Monuments” and its

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<sup>154</sup> Kathryn Anthony, *Design Juries on Trial* (New York, New York: Van Nostrand Reinhold, 1991).

poorly defined foundations.<sup>155</sup> A survey of 629 architecture students demonstrated that female students are consistently less happy with design juries, the design studio, and design education in general. Juries are seen as antagonistic and in the context of a power relationship. To map Stevens' framework to this study, female students are far less able to acquire the embodied power of architecture. Ahrentzen and Anthony summarize this as follows: "No systematic, empirical evidence demonstrates that this competitive, hierarchical atmosphere is necessary for the training of professionals." They go on to say "The answer runs deeper than simply deterring women from the profession; it also perpetuates the existing sociopolitical structure of our profession and economy."<sup>156</sup> They conclude their article by calling for the following changes in architecture education (and thus its integral culture): reconsider the nature of studio, redefine the curriculum, and take other viewpoints.<sup>157</sup>

As of 2004, Bridget Fowler and Fiona Wilson report that the profession of architecture is still a predominantly white, male venture. They overtly evoke Bourdieu's power structure within professions as the best path towards an explanation. In the findings from their study, the profession was found to be

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<sup>155</sup> Sherry Ahrentzen and Kathryn Anthony, "Sex, Stars and Studios: A Look at Gendered Educational Practice in Architecture" *Journal of Architectural Education* 47, No. 1 (September 1993): 11-29.

<sup>156</sup> *Ibid.*, 17.

<sup>157</sup> *Ibid.*

highly competitive, requiring long hours in the studio, and discussed as a venue for big egos and monuments to self.<sup>158</sup>

### Conclusions

While the majority of new architects today have attended an accredited school of architecture, on-the-job training continues to be a major component of the education process for new architects. In some states, such as New York, it is still possible to become licensed without a formal architecture education. When the AIA report was published in 1954, 23% of American architects had not attended a school of architecture. Another 13% had been grandfathered in under new legislation and did not meet current licensing criteria.<sup>159</sup>

In summary, there are several factors facing architecture, architects, and architecture education for which the profession may not be adequately equipped. Dana Cuff's study about the architecture profession indicates that the training of future architects in no way prepares them for the business challenges they must face upon graduation. Trained in the art of architecture, new graduates are not necessarily prepared to deal with the science or business of architecture. In addition, the "ethos" of architecture conceals the discipline in mystery from the public, making the benefits of choosing an architect over a competitor less than clear. Furthermore, architects are not educated as to how to differentiate this to an uninformed public.

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<sup>158</sup> Bridget Fowler and Fiona Wilson "Women Architects and Their Discontents," *Sociology* 38 , no.1 (2004): 101-119.

<sup>159</sup> AIA, "The Architect at Mid-Century."

Coupled with this are the perpetual issues facing the profession: Is architecture an art or science? What does research in architecture consist of? Is architecture for individual people or culture at large? Does architecture have a social responsibility? The confusion within the profession about what it is and what it does leads to an unclear message to the public. If architects cannot communicate value to the public, then the public sees no need to hire an architect.

Added to this is the lack of diversity in architecture cited by many researchers. Traditionally, the house and home have been relegated to the domain of women in the U.S. Particularly during the Victorian era, a suitable profession for women was the decoration of the home. Those women who pioneered careers in architecture faced this stereotype and were directed towards residential architecture and landscape architecture. It is not surprising that many architects did thus not consider single-family house design architecture. The house was a domain by and for women.

Ultimately, the question of architects and single-family house design falls into the great divide between these dichotomous questions. The single-family house requires architects to work with everyday people on a very real problem. This depends on open and clear communication and a desire to do this sort of work. The opportunity to create monumental architecture or art is interrupted by economy, function and user needs. Furthermore, the tradition within architectural education in the U.S. has been to tackle “bigger” problems in a more abstract

way leading some architects to view house design for ordinary people as mundane building not architecture.

Built into the very curricular structure of an architectural education are several residual components of the Ecole des Beaux Arts—tempered by Modernism in some programs across the country. These features include: a studio-based curriculum, a focus on presentation and abstraction with a secondary (if any) interest in technological issues, lecture courses as secondary to studio courses, the use of desk crits and juries, a competitive and selective environment, a lack of diversity, and most importantly a focus on the need to create important architecture. In other words, only those building types worthy of being called architecture are considered. When house designs are completed they are for specific clients who permit architectural expression without a budget. All of these components of an education coupled with vague language and internal conflicting conceptions of what architecture is fail to provide any firm foundation for an architect interested in or even willing to design ordinary single family houses.

Why has the American system of architectural education maintained these practices which carry into the professional environment? Using Bourdieu's power structure to look at the sociology of the profession would suggest the answer lies in the transmittal of embodied power from professor to worthy student and aspiring architect and then later from worthy principal to apprenticing architect. It seems that the need for embodied power increases as symbolic power

decreases. In other words, the failure of architecture to have a monopoly over the body of knowledge related to design in the U.S. has led to an increased need to create embodied power and the resulting sense of self-importance. As architects have lost ground to others through legislation, building codes, and specialization, the need to be important and convince others of this importance has increased.

The manner in which this takes place is revealed by several themes can be found in common with each of these critiques of the architecture profession. First, all these profiles make reference to the indoctrination into the profession. Indoctrination occurs through long hours, separation from others outside the profession, “all-nighters” to work on projects, a common language, fierce competition, and a shared studio experience. Second, an historic accounting of the profession demonstrates how architecture came to rely on the use of credentials and elitism as central to its mission and future livelihood—its symbolic power. Architects have historically tried to separate themselves from the mere trades by being learned and cultured. Third, several scholars describe in detail the manner through which culture, once established during the process of education, is then carried into practice. And, finally, Bourdieu’s power structures provide a useful theoretical framework through which the architectural culture can be viewed. Interestingly, most critiques of the existing systems of education and practice and the resulting culture come from outside the profession or from

women within the profession. Since the majority of those within the profession seem satisfied with the current culture, change may be slow in coming.

Additional characteristics of the culture of architecture in the U.S. include: exclusivity and selectivity, the bond of survivorship associated with the design studio, the question of art versus science, individual genius versus team work, elitism over related professions (such as builders and interior designers), a sense of great moral purpose, and a need to do important monumental work. As Steven's model points to, the members of the profession are slowly assimilated into a very distinct and often uniform culture through a rigorous and common path of study. During this time, the persona of "architect" is acquired and certain views of what "Architecture" is, are formulated. This process and the resultant culture have profound affects on the relationship of architects to mass design of any sort and to ordinary single-family house design in particular. It is unacceptable for an architect to be ordinary or to do ordinary design.

#### Impact of Architectural Culture on Single-Family House Design

It is undeniable that many architects in the U.S. have been engaged in single-family house design. Furthermore, some members of the profession have thought it is their moral duty to do so. Generally speaking, however, actual single-family house design projects fall into one of two categories: single commission for the wealthy or utopian vision. In the former case, the design is for a specific person with a specific site. The examples of this type are numerous and iconic

and include many projects by Frank Lloyd Wright, the Glass House by Phillip Johnson, the Farnsworth House by Mies Van der Rohe, and many other iconic projects. These house commissions actually did rise to the level of monumental that makes them Architecture in the eyes of architects. In the latter case, the project seeks to improve how people live. An example of this type includes Frank Lloyd Wright's Broad Acre City. As a general rule, however, architects have not been successful in obtaining a large share of the ordinary single-family house market. The culture of architecture has contributed significantly to this.

There are several ways in which the culture of architecture in the U.S. impacts the architect's involvement with the design of single-family houses. First, architects are trained in the academy to design specific design solutions to specific design problems, ideally on specific sites. The single-family house market in the U.S., as it currently exists, relies on the mass-production of standard house plans and this is in direct contradiction to an architect's training. Second, the primary way in which architects can be profitable within the house design market is to work for a developer. This contradicts an architect's training as well. Architects are taught that they run the project and should not jeopardize their own design vision for any reason--including working for someone else for who design is not the first concern. Furthermore, the culture leads them to believe they are better than builders because of their education and theoretical approach to building design. Theory is valued over practical concerns. When architects do work for developers, their peers often marginalize the architects

who do this type of work as a result.<sup>160</sup> This echoes Jan Jennings findings about the “practical architect”. Finally, the history of architecture is strongly linked to the production of monumental designs for royalty and the church as transmitted through the Ecole des Beaux Arts method of educating the architect. The single-family house does not usually rise to this status unless it is for a prominent client and will be a one-of-a-kind commission.

In summary, the culture of architecture requires an architect to produce serious Architecture or risk not being taken seriously by his peers. Single-family house design in the U.S. has developed into a largely a capitalist venture. Mass production leads to repeated designs and little individual expression—it is also less expensive than a one-of-a-kind house design. An architect is trained to design a singular solution for a specific client (who he seems to believe needs to “be educated”) on a specific site. These monumental aspirations are best achieved through public design commissions or designs for the wealthy, both of which can fund real Architecture. An architecture student goes through a serious indoctrination processes that teaches him his own value and the value of his ideas. Long hours, all-nighters, isolation, and intense competition lead to a strong dedication for the cause of Architecture. The serious architect is not willing to reduce himself to doing anonymous designs for an uneducated public. These cultural beliefs and internal struggles are demonstrated in great detail in the correspondence of the American Institute of Architects in the following chapter.

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<sup>160</sup> These themes are found in both of Robert Gutman’s works on the architecture profession.

CHAPTER 3:  
THE AMERICAN INSTITUTE OF ARCHITECTS AND THE ARCHITECTS  
SMALL HOUSE SERVICE BUREAU

Introduction

This chapter focuses on the American Institute of Architects (AIA) and its relationship to single-family house design in the U.S. As the primary organization representing the architecture profession in the U.S. an examination of the historical positions taken by the membership with regard to single-family houses was undertaken. The AIA's single concentrated effort towards improving single-family house design was expressed through its endorsement of the Architect's Small House Service Bureau (ASHSB) between 1922 and 1934, thus this relationship will be discussed in detail as revealed through archival documents.

A careful analysis of documents from the early twentieth century records of the AIA reveals the complexity of the issues facing the architecture profession with regard to the ordinary single-family house. These issues include the relationship of architects to builders, the prevalence of easy to obtain pattern books and house plan designs, the education, training and culture of architects and how this impacted their views about architecture, and the manner in which houses are constructed in the U.S. The AIA dubbed the issue "the small house problem" and first formed a task force to address it 1919. This group focused on the relationship of the architecture profession to the design of single-family

houses until the small house committee was merged with the overall committee on “housing” in the 1940s.

### History of the AIA

The American Institution of Architects was the first iteration of an organization for architects. The Institution first met in 1836 and highlighted the lack of distinction between architects and builders—including both constituents-- and was short-lived as a result of the internal and territorial conflicts. Charter members of the American Institution of Architects included William Strickland and Robert Mills as well as Thomas U. Walter and John Trautwine representing office-trained architects and Asher Benjamin, Minard Lefever, Alexander Parris and Ithiel Town, representing the master builder-turned architect contingent. The tensions between these two groups of men resulted in the organization’s demise the following year. The goals of the Institution were to stress the scientific principles of architecture that made it a viable profession. They encouraged testing of architects in order to become a member.<sup>161</sup>

In 1857, Upjohn’s office hosted a pilot meeting for the second iteration of the professional organization, now renamed the American Institute of Architects (AIA). Most of the early members worked with or were associated with Upjohn’s office. One notable exception, Richard Morris Hunt, received his training at the Ecole des Beaux Arts. The two primary issues upon which the association

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<sup>161</sup> Woods, “Pattern Books and Professionalism: Aspects of the Transformation of Domestic Architecture in America, 1800-1860.”

focused included fees and competitions.<sup>162</sup> Both of these issues related to the realities of practicing architecture within the American capitalist system. Members attempted to create a framework whereby AIA members could receive compensation for competition entries that multiple government agencies solicited for free. In addition, the AIA members worked several years to establish a fee schedule to insure all members charged the same rates. (This was later repealed on the basis that the AIA was violating anti-trust law.)

Restructured in 1866, the AIA membership grew steadily following the Civil War, yet it had dropped in popularity by the 1880's. Many architects viewed the organization as a gentlemen's club and as not very representative of all architects. Western architects such as Louis Sullivan, Dankmar Adler, Daniel Burnham, and John Root created their own association in response to the AIA. The Western Association of Architects, founded in 1884 and centered in Chicago, included 100 architects from fourteen mid-western states.<sup>163</sup> The Chicago-based group focused their attention on architectural design competitions (like the AIA) and, unlike the East coast architects, licensing. After a few years of vigorous conventions, the WAA merged with the AIA in 1889. Architects in the mid-west continued to pursue their licensing cause, however, and by 1897, the first licensing law was established in Illinois. By 1900, fifteen other states followed suit as licensing was replaced by registration laws. Despite this, the AIA resisted

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<sup>162</sup> Ibid.

<sup>163</sup> Ibid.

endorsing licensing for architects voting down measures to do so in both 1904 and 1906.<sup>164</sup>

According to the AIA website, the AIA actually began when Richard Upjohn held a meeting of thirteen architects in his New York City office on February 23, 1857.<sup>165</sup> One of the first actions of the group was to restrict the use of the term “architect” which until this time was used by masons, carpenters, and builders. This move helped to limit membership in a way that the Institution had not done in the 1830s. At the first meeting, the original members created a list of sixteen additional architects to invite to join the Institute with the goal of elevating the profession.<sup>166</sup> By the late 1870s the organization had chapters in Chicago, Baltimore, San Francisco, Washington D.C., Philadelphia, and Boston. The first AIA convention was held in 1867. At this time, the AIA had fifty-seven fellows and sixteen associate members. Annual convention meeting proceedings were published until 1931.<sup>167</sup> Membership grew gradually and with the advent of formalized education for architects in the university system that produced more architects, membership had grown to 11,500 by 1957.<sup>168</sup> The AIA had 1,464 members in 1920.<sup>169</sup>

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<sup>164</sup> Ibid.

<sup>165</sup> AIA webpage “History of the The American Institute of Architects” [www.aia.org/about\\_history](http://www.aia.org/about_history) Retrieved May 2, 2008.

<sup>166</sup> Ibid.

<sup>167</sup> Ibid.

<sup>168</sup> Ibid.

<sup>169</sup> Personal communication from AIA Archivist, Nancy Hadley, August 18, 2008.

The Headquarters of the AIA moved to Washington D.C. in 1898 and operated out of the historic Octagon House.<sup>170</sup> The current headquarters building is located behind the Octagon House, still owned by the Institute. The archives of the AIA are stored in the new headquarters building in Washington D.C.

Initially, the small house issue was referred to simply as “housing.” The first overt use of the terminology “small house problem” appears to occur in 1919 when the AIA voted to endorse the Architects Small House Service Bureau (ASHSB). From this point until well into the late 1930s, ordinary single-family house design became known as “the small house problem.” The terminology evoked the complexity of the situation that stemmed from a pronounced shortage of housing following World War I coupled with the shoddy construction across the nation which resulted from efforts to meet this need.

Shortly after this term was first used, the board of the AIA created the “House Committee” that later became the “Small House Committee” or the “Sub-Committee on the Small House.” The Board of the AIA charged this committee with addressing the “small house problem” and with suggesting solutions. Until 1933, the Small House Committee’s concerns were aligned with and to some degree addressed by the ASHSB. In 1934, however, the AIA voted to revoke its endorsement of the ASHSB. At this time the Small House Committee undertook to create its own group to provide plan services headed by the AIA. Specifically

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<sup>170</sup> Ibid.

they addressed whether architects could and should be involved in single-family house design, and if so, how.

Finally, near the time of the convention of April 1935, the Small House Committee was absorbed into the larger body of the Housing Committee. At first reports were given by the Small House Committee and the General Housing Committee (that focused more on large-scale housing). By the 1940s, the Housing Committee dropped its interest in the small house specifically and became more engaged in the issue of large-scale housing developments, particularly multi-family housing blocks.

For a brief time in the early twentieth century, the AIA chose to outsource the small house problem and aligned itself with a group of residential architects. Between 1919 and 1934 the AIA endorsed the Architects Small House Service Bureau. Although the endorsement was brief, this represents the only time in history when the AIA members voted in favor of a uniform solution to the single-family house design problem, as they perceived it, in the U.S.

The primary reasons many AIA members cited for revoking the AIA endorsement were as follows: (1). The ASHSB was in competition with AIA members and (2). The AIA could not control the quality of the ASHSB drawings and designs. Some members hoped they could recreate their own version of the ASHSB under AIA control and supervision. A leading proponent of small house design was Walter McCornack who chaired the Small House Committee during the 1930s.

## Themes Found within the Documents

The majority of the themes found in the AIA documents focus on the search for solutions to the house design problem, albeit with an underlying pessimism. It becomes apparent from the documents analyzed that architects could never fully agree on the importance of the issue or that the problem could and should be solved by the AIA. Some went as far as to say architects were not even qualified to engage the issue.

Many of the documents revealed several of the same themes or codes. A notable exception to this included the earliest documents mentioning small houses reviewed where some of the early codes changed in later documents. The first mention of small houses and their possible relationship to architecture occurred in 1914 in a letter from W.A. Etherton:

“There has been a great demand for the working drawings and specification of the little four room house published last spring. These are being prepared and will be published. Just how far to go with this kind of work we have yet to decide, and I have hoped to have the assistance of the Institute in this matter.”<sup>171</sup>

The immediate response to small house design was an outpouring of enthusiasm wherein architects viewed small house design as their civic duty as architects in a democracy. Everyone deserved a safe and well-designed house to live in and architects could provide this service.

“The Housing Book, which has now been published is meeting with a steady and increasing sale and the committee looks forward with confidence to the ultimate distribution of thousands of copies of this book and the fast and increasing number of men and women who are now

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<sup>171</sup> W.A. Etherton to AIA Board, , 9/16/1914, AIA Archives, AIA Headquarters, Washington D.C.

ready to cease the superficial methods with philanthropy and charity have approached the problem of the past and adopt, instead, a broad program of constructive character, such as will be in consonance with the ideals of democracy.”<sup>172</sup>

The first resolution with regard to single-family houses made by the American Institute of Architects membership took place in 1918.

“Be it Resolved that the Board of Directors request the proper Committee of the Institute to formulate a plan looking toward the development of a better and more harmonious architectural character in small dwelling houses throughout the country; and to recommend the best means for the education or instruction of the public as to what it should have and may get in inexpensive houses.”<sup>173</sup>

At the time of the resolution, there was no appropriate committee to handle the charge. As a result the issue was left to the new incoming Board, and in 1919, the Small House Committee was formed.

In 1922, Edwin H. Brown of Minnesota addressed the AIA convention with the purpose of requesting the AIA’s recent endorsement for the Architects Small House Service Bureau (ASHSB). In his address, he refers to the resolution of 1918, the committee formation of 1919, and how the ASHSB meets the needs of the AIA. At the time, the ASHSB reached two million readers a week with its

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<sup>172</sup> Report to the AIA, Proceedings of the Fifty-first Convention of the AIA, 1918, AIA Archives, AIA Headquarters, Washington D.C., 20

<sup>173</sup> Report to the AIA, Proceedings of the Fifty-first Convention of the AIA, 1918, AIA Archives, AIA Headquarters, Washington D.C., 22

house plans and questions and answer columns in newspapers around the U.S.<sup>174</sup>

1919-1934: The Endorsement of the ASHSB  
Overview of the ASHSB

The AIA membership did come to an apparent agreement about how to approach the single family house design problem for a few years when they voted to endorse the Architects Small House Service Bureau. To date only two publications have been written about the Architects Small House Service Bureau (ASHSB.) These include a master's thesis completed by Lisa Schrenk at the University of Virginia in 1988 (parts of which were later published as a preface to the AIA reprint of an ASHSB plan book in 1992) and a short article in *Landscape* by Thomas Harvey in 1990. The information that follows comes largely from the original publications of the ASHSB and the meeting minutes of the AIA from the early decades of the twentieth century.

Following World War I, there was a critical shortage of housing in the U.S. In an effort to improve the design of the single-family house and capture a new market share for the professional designer, a group of four architects from Minneapolis, Minnesota started the Architects' Small House Service Bureau. These men presented their idea to Edwin H. Brown of Minnesota, who was the newly appointed Chair of the American Institute of Architects' Small House

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<sup>174</sup> Proceedings of the 55<sup>th</sup> Convention of the AIA, published in 1922 by Gibson Brothers in WDC. AIA Archives, AIA Headquarters, Washington D.C.

Committee.<sup>175</sup> Brown led the campaign to have the AIA endorse the ASHSB in 1919. The constitution of the Bureau indicated its purpose:

“To inform the public by means of social education about the application of principles of good architecture to building.

To advance the present widespread movement to encourage persons of limited means to build and own their own homes; to assist such persons in obtaining, at the lowest possible, cost, desirable and attractive plans therefor[e] which shall conform to correct architectural theories of construction and embody artistic principles of design, and to enable such persons to secure the benefit of the advice and skill of architects of experience and recognized standing in their profession, through the cooperation, to such ends, of all the members of the corporation.”<sup>176</sup>

At the time that the Bureau was formed, 95% of the small houses being built were designed by untrained people, primarily builders.<sup>177</sup> According to the original founders, the Bureau was not intended as a money-making venture but was created to help solve the housing crisis wherein sub-par homes were being built to fill the growing need for housing. The ASHSB sought to protect people from bad design and poor construction.

The parameters of the “small house” used here parallel those used by both the Architects Small House Service Bureau and the Department of Commerce in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century. The small house consists of no more than

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<sup>175</sup> Lisa D. Schrenk, "The Impact of the Architects Small House Service Bureau on Early Twentieth Century Domestic Architecture." Thesis, University of Virginia, 1988. The timeline presented by Schrenk does not completely agree with the AIA original documents that have been described in the previous section.

<sup>176</sup> *Ibid.*, 9.

<sup>177</sup> *Ibid.*

six principle rooms and has an area of no more than 30,000 cubic feet.<sup>178</sup> This house size encapsulated the majority of middle to lower-middle class housing in the U.S. at the time and represented the major user group impacted by the housing shortage follow World War I.

The Minnesota ASHSB group was introduced at the AIA National convention in 1919. Three years later, Edwin H. Brown—who was by then a member of the group—asked for the AIA to officially endorse the ASHSB. A vote was taken and the AIA endorsed a house plan service for the first and only time in its history. The endorsement drew criticism from members of the Institute from the very beginning and following the Great Depression, the endorsement was ultimately revoked on the grounds that it amounted to direct competition with individual architects.<sup>179</sup> The ASHSB itself finally disbanded in 1942 having never recovered from the lack of continued AIA endorsement.

In its heyday, the ASHSB had ten regional offices located all across the U.S. Plans designed by Bureau members were published in 76 different magazines and journals including such popular publications as *Good Housekeeping*, *The Saturday Evening Post* and *House Beautiful*. More than 165 million copies of Bureau plans appeared as newspapers around the country published plans designed by Bureau members. The most popular plan in the

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<sup>178</sup> Kenneth W. Dalzell, "Report of the Sub-Committee of the Small House Problem of Committee on Housing of the American Institute of Architects," 1938, AIA Archives, AIA Headquarters, Washington D.C.

<sup>179</sup> Lisa D. Schrenk, "The Impact of the Architects Small House Service Bureau on Early Twentieth Century Domestic Architecture."

1920s was No. 669, later 6-A-37, which sold 141 copies or 1/7 of all plans sold by the Bureau during this decade.<sup>180</sup> The most popular designs were Colonial Revival and Dutch Colonial Revival designs, although multiple façade types were available to reflect regional styles and preferences as seen in the following figures.

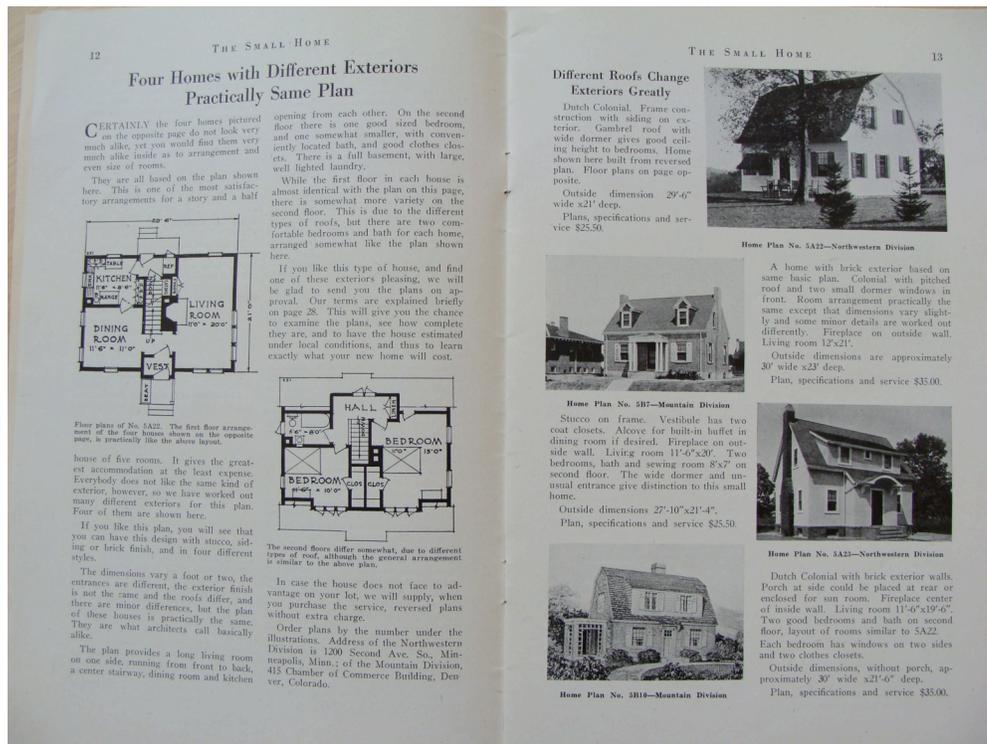
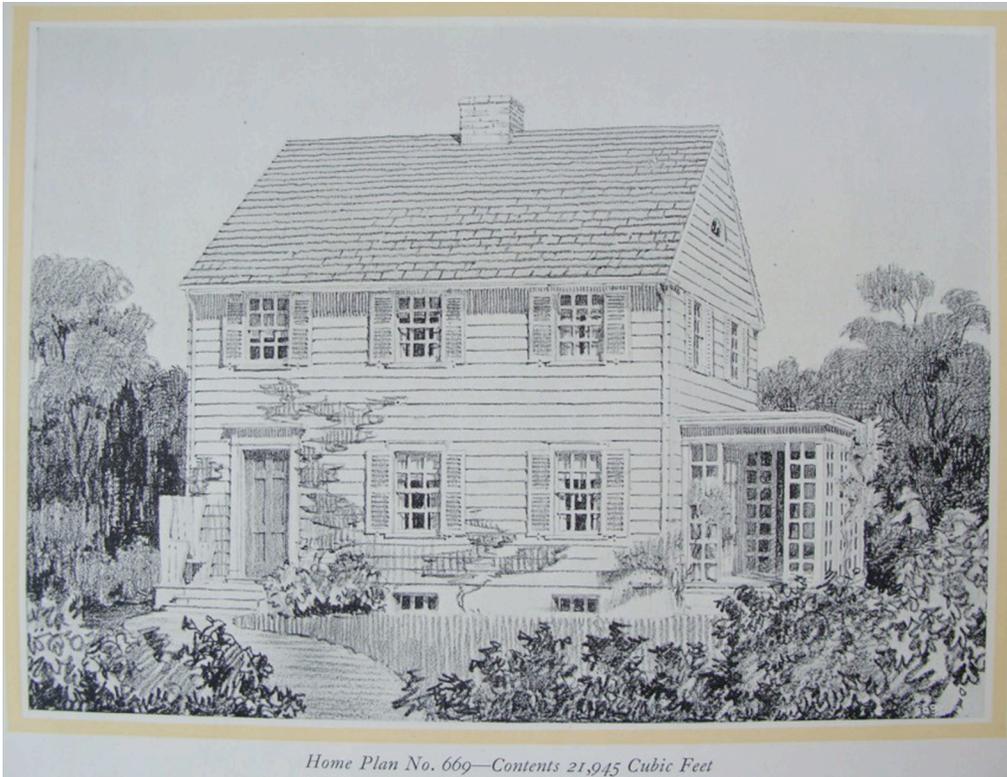


Figure 3.1: One plan with four exteriors, *The Small Home*, March 1923, 12-13.

<sup>180</sup> *Ibid.*



**Figure 3.2:** Plan Number 669 (6-A-37) from *House to Plan, Finance and Build Your Home*, 142.

Plan sales for the Bureau never reached the point where the organization was profitable for any length of time. In 1921, the ASHSB sold 231 plans; in 1924, 772; and 102 in 1930.<sup>181</sup> The peak years for sales were 1924-1925. The dream of making a well-designed home available to all never fully materialized.

The actual number of homes built from the plan sales has not ever been determined, although Schrenk's thesis does list areas where concentrations of homes designed by the ASHSB were constructed. Locations with groupings of these houses include Minneapolis (44 houses), Saint Paul (14 houses), and

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<sup>181</sup> *Ibid.*

Chicago (one street full plus three individual homes).<sup>182</sup> Financial records indicate that plans were sold in thirty-five states, Canada, and the District of Columbia.<sup>183</sup>

The Schrenk thesis provides several useful appendices for beginning to assess the impact of the ASHSB. Appendix V, enumerates the exact number of plans purchased by potential homebuyers in each state in 1921. The states with the highest five number of plan purchases includes: Illinois, 83 plan sets; Minnesota, 76 plan sets; Ohio, 66 plan sets; New York, 62 plan sets; and Pennsylvania, 52 plan sets. Other states with residents who purchased plans included: Alabama, Arkansas, California, Colorado, Connecticut, Florida, Indiana, Iowa, Kansas, Kentucky, Maine, Massachusetts, Michigan, Missouri, Montana, Nebraska, New Jersey, North Carolina, North Dakota, Oklahoma, Rhode Island, South Dakota, Texas, Virginia, Washington, West Virginia, Wisconsin, Wyoming, and the District of Columbia. Eight plan sets were purchased in Canada as well.<sup>184</sup> The number of homes actually constructed from these plans is unknown. Another appendix provides an extensive list of the newspapers that published plans for ASHSB designs.

The ASHSB achieved a high degree of success in publicizing the organizations' efforts. Unfortunately far less impact to the actual homebuilding industry and the education of the public about architectural services seems to

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<sup>182</sup> Ibid, Appendix XII.

<sup>183</sup> Ibid, Appendix V.

<sup>184</sup> Ibid, Appendix V, 80.

have transpired. Just as the ASHSB has often been grouped with the plethora of other groups offering this type of service in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century by historians, the public perception of the agency may have been that they were like all the others as well.

Part of the mission of the ASHSB was to inform the public about good architecture. The way they did this was two-fold: educate the public about the difference between builders and architects and what each provided and explain what made the ASHSB designs good design. The ASHSB publications all included detailed information about the need for an architect and the endorsements of the AIA and the DOC. *Your Future Home*, as well as several other ASHSB publications, included the endorsement letters signed by William Faville, President of the AIA as well as an endorsement statement signed by Herbert Hoover, then representing the Department of Commerce. An explanation of the ASHSB logo follows the table of contents and introduction. At the end of the book, following the plan designs, is an article “What the Architects’ Small House Service Bureau has to Offer: A Real Service at a Moderate Cost.” This supplement describes in detail the benefits of using the ASHSB and having an architect work with you to customize the plan chosen to one’s actual site. The package a customer of the Bureau received included a set of working drawings and details, written specifications, a quantity survey (materials list), and a form of agreement (contract).<sup>185</sup> An actual reduced drawing set for Home Plan number

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<sup>185</sup> ASHSB. *Your Future Home*. St. Paul, Minnesota: The Architects Small House Service Bureau (1923) reprint Washington D.C.: American Institute of Architects, (1992) 154.

6A20 followed showing actual samples of all included documents. *The Small Home* monthly bulletin frequently contained articles about the benefits of using the ASHSB and client testimonials.

The August 1922 issue of *The Small Home* provides a definition of the Architect in the lead story "What is an Architect?" The article seeks to eliminate the misconception that only the wealthy can afford the services of an architect. "An architect is a man hired at small expenses to make cheap mistakes with a one-cent pencil on a two-cent piece of paper and erase them with a five-cent rubber to save his client making a \$50,000 mistake on a \$25,000 lot."<sup>186</sup> The two-page article explains the reason the ASHSB is composed of architects and the work that is being done by the group to make better designed houses and to help builders avoid costly mistakes by providing a more thorough service than other house plan companies.

Two months later, the October 1922 issue included what became one of the better known articles of *the Small Home* on "Carpetechs." The author inquires "why is it that a man who would never think of entrusting the removal of his appendix to the village butcher will nevertheless entrust the designing of his home to the village carpenter?"<sup>187</sup> The "carpetecht" consists of a builder, carpenter, or contractor who offers design services. "The characterless, hit-or-miss appearance of the average American residence section stands as a

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<sup>186</sup> ASHSB. "What is an Architect?" *The Small Home* (August 1922): 3.

<sup>187</sup> ASHSB. "Carpetecht." *The Small Home* (October 1922): 3.

rebuking monument to the efforts of the amateur Carpetecht.”<sup>188</sup> Nearly every issue of *the Small Home* includes an article or letter reinforcing the need for an architect for a successful project. Client endorsements sometimes appeared on the inside cover of the monthly such as the October and November issues of 1922 although this space was normally reserved for full-page advertisements. The testimonials indicated that the plans and specifications made the projects run smoothly, made the houses come in on budget, and helped the home buyers save money in the end. These letters came primarily from people in the midwest although two were from New York residents. Most of the letters praised the designs and one person indicated “it is different from all other houses in this town.” The testimonials were no doubt intended to encourage other home buyers to purchase ASHSB plan books and plan sets and to demonstrate that the ASHSB lived up to its mission.

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<sup>188</sup> ASHSB. "Carpetecht." *The Small Home* (October 1922): 3.

# What Other People Say About Service Bureau Plans and Service

## Quantity Survey Saved Money

We have followed your plans and specifications blindly, and I can now see what mistakes we would have made had we floundered among our own notions, and the conflicting suggestions of friends. The "quantity survey" alone paid for the plans. It saved us so much waste and worry.

A. J. KING,  
421 Wash. Ave. North,  
Minneapolis, Minn.

## Value of Our Bulletin

The Oregon State Library, Salem, Oregon, a subscriber to our monthly bulletin, *The Small Home*, wrote, "This periodical is so useful to us that we use each issue as we would use a book."

## Service is Appreciated

I consider from the correspondence and everything I have learned of you folks that the service you give is very reasonable and very thorough, and a man would be very foolish not to avail himself of it. And I would not give up your plan book for many times its cost.

S. B. HUGHES,  
Lakewood, N. Y.

## Gratified With Results

We are certainly gratified with the results of using your service and wish to do what we can to extend its usefulness.

ARTHUR F. PEINE,  
319 N. 15th St.,  
Manhattan, Kansas.

## A 100% Indorsement

I sincerely appreciate the interest you have shown in my home. I found your plans very complete and carried out to the minutest detail. The specifications were all that one could wish for. You have done your work well and have made it possible for those not able, financially, to employ an architect's services to build architecturally beautiful homes cheaper than they can build the old "eyesore" type of house.

Complete, the house, I believe, will hold its own in any community. I am proud of it as it has worked out for me and I am proud of the fact that I am 100% booster for the ARCHITECTS' SMALL HOUSE SERVICE BUREAU.

A. W. GALLOP,  
Ann Arbor, Mich.

## Differs from Other Homes

We made a few changes in the plan to suit our locality. We are very much pleased with our house, as it is different from all other houses in this town.

LOREN WRISLEY,  
Lake Placid, N. Y.

## Fine Plan Book

Your book, "How to Plan, Finance and Build Your Home," published by the Northwestern Division, arrived in excellent condition. Credit is due those who have devoted the time and study necessary to the compilation of so much valuable data. It should be a great help at this time to thousands contemplating a home of their own.

FRED J. WOODWARD,  
1423 Harvard St.,  
Washington, D. C.

## Praise for His Home

The workmen have just completed work on the exterior of our house today. I can say that we are very much pleased with the house, and find it amply large. We have had no end of praise for the design and general arrangements throughout.

J. D. GILPIN,  
Tracy, Minn.

## Friends Admire Home

I have had many very favorable comments about the design of the house I built after your plans. My house when finished was complete in every detail. Where it was necessary to have the best materials only the best was used. As to my personal opinion about the completed house, I am in love with it, and it was with much reluctance that I sold it.

J. C. HOSTETLER,  
Decatur, Ill.

## Finest Set of House Plans

Enclosed you will find check for \$2.50 for a copy of your book of small house plans. The writer saw a copy of this book, "How to Plan, Finance and Build Your Home," published by the Mountain Division, in the office of Mr. Donald O. Weese, a director in the Mountain Division of your bureau, and thinks it is the finest set of house plans ever gotten together.

L. E. WISE LUMBER & COAL CO.,  
Englewood, Colo.

Figure 3.3: Testimonials Page from *the Small Home* November 1922, inside front cover.

As the only plan book service ever endorsed by any professional design organization and as the only plan book group composed entirely of a group of licensed architects, the Architect's Small House Service Bureau holds a significant place in the history of domestic design in the United States.

The way in which the ASHSB system worked was simple. A person wishing to build a house first selected a plan from one of the ASHSB publications. Once this was done, the customer simply contacted one of the ten bureau offices to order plans. These plan sets included five sheets of working drawings—plans, sections, and details—and specifications of materials. The homeowner would then work with their builder and an ASHSB member to customize the house to a specific site and make any desired changes to the plans. In reality, builders sometimes purchased the plans and built multiple houses from one plan set.

Unfortunately, the original sense of enthusiasm and duty by AIA members on behalf of the single-family house was short lived. By 1924, interest in the ASHSB by AIA members was still minimal. In the meeting minutes from that year, the Small House Committee Report read as follows: "The Board regrets that so few architects have taken a real interest in this valuable movement and that Architectural magazines as well have shown no interest."<sup>189</sup> At this time fewer than 100 architect members were involved in the ASHSB. While the AIA continued its endorsement for another nine years, the fate of the ASHSB was

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<sup>189</sup> Proceedings of the 57<sup>th</sup> Convention, 1924, AIA Archives, AIA Headquarters, Washington D.C.15.

sealed. By the beginning of the 1930s, the issue of the ASHSB became an openly contentious one. Several members spoke in favor of continued endorsement citing several reasons to participate: working with people on a small house may lead to larger commissions, this type of work was fun for architects, and this type of work could educate people about what an architect could provide. Even those speaking on behalf of the ASHSB within the AIA acknowledged however that there was no money to be made in this type of endeavor and that many local chapters had not been able to participate with the ASHSB as a result. Thus, what had once seemed a civic duty of architects did not appear to be a viable option in practice for many individual architects.

As economic times worsened, architects in the AIA opposed to the ASHSB became more verbal. In 1934, several architects spoke out against continued endorsement of the ASHSB. “The main reason it [the ASHSB] has not succeeded is because architects with initiative and ability to design, refuse to become subservient to the stock plan idea.”<sup>190</sup> Another architect speaking on the subject reported the following:

“Most people buy their small houses already built. The Bureau has not been able to control this class of construction to any degree. The individual who thinks enough of his future home to buy a lot and build his own house should be discouraged from purchasing his stock plan from any source whatever.”<sup>191</sup>

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<sup>190</sup> 1934 AIA meeting minutes, AIA Archives, AIA Headquarters, Washington D.C..

<sup>191</sup> 1934 AIA meeting minutes, AIA Archives, AIA Headquarters, Washington D.C..

This discussion ultimately led to the following resolution by the AIA

National Convention attendees:

“RESOLVED That the Institute’s endorsement of the Architects’ Small House Service Bureau be withdrawn as soon as is practicable and fair to do so, but no later than October 1, 1934 and be it further

RESOLVED that the institute continue its efforts to improve the design of the American small house; and that the special committee be continued and urged to make a thorough study of the entire small house problem in all its aspects.”

Following the AIA’s revocation of the endorsement, the AIA membership continued to discuss the “small house problem” for several years. The emergent themes from this time period between 1934 and the 1940s were highly consistent. The document review led to many codes associated with problems and outside forces over which architects seemed concerned that they may not have control. These included the need to educate builders, clients, industry, lenders, and the government about architecture and the value of the architect’s services, the need to make money in the single-family house market, and the need to come up with a plan to get this type of work. The focus codes developed as a part of this document review are as follows: lack of architects’ involvement, warning to architects about their lack of involvement, the pros of working on the small house problem, the need for better small house designs, the solutions found by working with others, the hope for a solution, the need to educate others about architecture, and the analogy to the medical profession.

For the next five years, members of the Small House Committee worked diligently to come up with such a plan. These plans were frequently met with

member suggestions and complaints. Several members felt that the AIA should educate others about what architects do.

AIA members frequently cited education as the single-most important thing that the Institute could do with regard to single-family housing design and architectural involvement. They mentioned the need to educate government officials, the public in general, builders, industry and lending agencies. Through education, those they educated were expected to then hire an architect once they knew what an architect provided. The AIA members viewed their value as self-evident and once appreciated, it would lead to work.

In the 1934 Report of the Special Committee on Small Houses, the members communicated the following to the board of the AIA

“The Committee believes that the best contribution the Institute can make toward the improvement of small house design is the publicizing of the value of architects’ services. Stock plan service offered by commercial agencies is generally incompetent and inadequate. In opposition to such service the Institute should undertake to educate the builders of small houses and those who finance their construction to a realization of the economic value of good design and sound construction; to an understanding that good design involves not only competent planning of the house but also its relation to the lot, to adjacent houses, to the neighborhood, and the landscape treatment.”<sup>192</sup>

The 1938 Report of the Sub-Committee on the Small House Problem recommends: “Let’s spend an equal amount of effort and money to educate the public in appreciation of architecture.” Dalzell, the author and chair of the committee at the time, provides several means by which this can be

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<sup>192</sup> AIA Document, “Report of the Special Committee on Small Houses,” AIA Archives, AIA Headquarters, Washington D.C., 2.

accomplished including Architecture Appreciation Courses in all centers of adult education, architecture appreciation in high school curricula, cooperative advertising with manufacturers, taking a greater interest in architectural education at the college level and increasing licensure requirements for architects.<sup>193</sup>

Interestingly, even when architects were successful at educating others of their value, they did not necessarily gain market share as a result. The May 1935 Report of the Committee on Small Houses, demonstrated this result in the following "...the officials of the Federal Housing Administration are convinced of the value and desirability of architectural advice and service for those who finance home building under the F.H.A. guarantee, but that they cannot require such service."<sup>194</sup> In other words, some AIA members realized that even with education, they were unable to claim a monopoly on design services.

A particularly poignant example of a failure to educate was noted in remarks made by McCornack:

"...the Committee referred to a point this morning regarding the value of service rendered to the American public on the theory that 56% of the laws of this country are written by legislators who are without the benefit—and I might say, without the knowledge of an architect; and I am inclined to think that the continued refusal of the profession to recognize the fact that we have a small house problem in communities where no architects exist, or where they do exist where they have no experience

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<sup>193</sup> AIA Document "Report of the Sub-Committee on the Small House Problem of the Committee on Housing of the American Institute of Architects," April 14, 1938, AIA Archives, AIA Headquarters, Washington D.C., 5.

<sup>194</sup> AIA Document, "Report of the Committee of the Small House," May 21, 1935, AIA Archives, AIA Headquarters, Washington D.C., 1.

with the small house, would be suicide. Whether you believe it or not, we are facing in this country, the profession is, a very dangerous situation.”<sup>195</sup>

While acknowledging the need for architects to take the small house problem seriously, McCornack also points out that the majority of laws being written were composed without a knowledge of an architect’s role in the building process. This failure to educate the legislators had a direct correlation to the ultimate failure of architects to create and maintain a monopoly over building design services. McCornack further warns AIA members “12,000 architects cannot afford to sit idly by and see the great mass of the American people continue without proper service and without knowledge of what the profession can do for them.”<sup>196</sup> He continues with an example of government regulation of the profession:

“We are facing, also, this situation—that government agencies are taking away from the profession the right to supervise, and when you realize the definition of an architect, that he is a ‘master builder’, and when you take away from him the experience of putting his plans into materials, you simply take away the life of architecture.”<sup>197</sup>

As laws and building codes were put in place across the U.S., some architects realized their roles were being controlled through legislation that came without an understanding of what an architect did. Powerful lobbies on behalf of builders, engineers, and corporations argued for their rights to provide design

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<sup>195</sup> AIA Document, “Remarks of Mr. McCornack, Wednesday Morning Session,” AIA Archives, AIA Headquarters, Washington D.C.

<sup>196</sup> *Ibid*, 2.

<sup>197</sup> *Ibid*, 2.

services on par with architects and ultimately succeeded in convincing lawmakers that this was true.

As a relatively new profession, the AIA membership made several references to the medical profession as a model for educating the public and as a profession that was well understood. These AIA members felt that if they followed this model, they too would be a valid profession in the eyes of the general public. An example of such a reference occurs in a letter from W. R. McCornack, the Chairman of the Housing Committee at the time to Albert Mayer of New York City: "I feel that the first duty of the profession is to the building public and that we must solve the problem of extending architectural service to all small home builders in America. The medical profession is finding a way to give medical attention to most of our people today."<sup>198</sup>

Unfortunately for the architecture profession, few codes related to how to accomplish these goals. There were several instances of disagreement and, in some cases, polarization of beliefs as to whether architects should produce plans for ordinary single-family houses. An example of a typical negative comment by a committee member is as follows: "If architects wish to enter the small house field, they should learn something about housing. Nine tenths of the Architects are decidedly ignorant and unqualified."<sup>199</sup> This animosity led, in some instances, to minority reports without full committee support as well as the final dissolution of

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<sup>198</sup> AIA Documents, Letter from W. R. McCornack, Chairman, Housing AIA to Mr. Albert Mayer, September 24, 1936, AIA Archives, AIA Headquarters, Washington D.C..

<sup>199</sup> AIA Document, 1938, AIA Archives, AIA Headquarters, Washington D.C.

the Small House Committee that had attempted to address the issues for nearly thirty years.

Throughout the documents, multiple members of the AIA discussed the lack of architectural involvement in single-family house design. Among the reasons for this were apathy, a lack of money to be made, a preference for larger and more public commissions, and that builders already had most of this market in hand. A typical example can be found in the 1934 Special Committee on Small Houses Report: “The Committee now reports its inability to devise a practical method of distributing the plans of the Bureau [ASHSB] only to and through qualified architects for the following reasons, some of which will be recognized as having been advanced by the former Committee...”<sup>200</sup> The reasons listed included an inability to define what a qualified architect was, not enough members of the Bureau, impossibility of competing with existing stock plan services, and an inability to make any money doing this type of work.

Another example of this occurs in a memorandum for all the members of the committee on housing dated December 9, 1935 from R. H. Shreve, Chairman of the Committee on Housing. “...in other words, failure up to this time to get Architects into the field of the Small House is thought to be due to the Architects themselves rather than to any lack of opportunity.”

It becomes clear that some architects in the AIA were struggling with wanting to change the situation yet not having the means or knowledge of how to

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<sup>200</sup> AIA Document, “Report of the Special Committee on Small Houses,” 1934, AIA Archives, AIA Headquarters, Washington D.C.,2.

go about it. Those vocal members who did not want to participate in the first place further complicated the issue, as demonstrated in dissenting views contained within the April 1939 Sub-Committee Report.

“Frankly, I cannot see what the furor is about. Good small house plans are published in the professional home building magazines. These plans are available from architects who design them. If supervision is required in the localities where there are no architects let it be done by one who would do it under the Home Loan Bank plans.”<sup>201</sup>

A much more blatant sentiment is expressed in an opinion solicited by the Small House Committee for the same report “I am unalterably opposed to our Committee endorsing any stock plan service, or any other half-way service. If it does, I will submit a minority report at the Convention.”<sup>202</sup>

Other members of the AIA went so far as to warn architects about their lack of concern over the small house problem. One such warning was found in a memo to each chapter president dated March 8, 1937. “Unless some action is taken by architects, they will find themselves gradually being eliminated from the home building field and supplanted by plan service departments in government agencies, or by industrial or financial groups organized to supply plans.”<sup>203</sup> This memo continues with a section entitled “Importance to the field” and one enumerating the reasons why architects should be involved in house design. The

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<sup>201</sup> AIA Document “Report of the Sub-Committee on the Small House Problem of the Committee on Housing of the American Institute of Architects,” April 14, 1938, AIA Archives, AIA Headquarters, Washington D.C.4.

<sup>202</sup> *Ibid*, 3.

<sup>203</sup> AIA Document, March 8, 1937, AIA Archives, AIA Headquarters, Washington D.C.1.

memo concludes with a statement which describes the results of ignoring the small house problem.

“If the architects do nothing then the consequences are obvious and disastrous. The trend is towards group housing, and if architects continue to ignore the single house and its owner, who is too often the victim of unregulated agencies operating on a basis of self-interest, the architects will be forgotten when group housing developments come. We spend a lot of time trying to eliminate government architectural agencies after they are created. This affords us an opportunity to prevent the formation of any more.”<sup>204</sup>

This memo highlights the situation at the time where no one was protecting the consumer in the house building market. This was true in 1937 and remains predominantly the case today.

In another instance, Kenneth Dalzell, Chairman of the Sub-Committee on the Small House Problem wrote the following in April 1938: “It is time for the architects of this country to wake up, or we will all be practicing architecture at draughtsmen’s (sic) wages for a lot of illiterate speculators with whom the public seems to prefer to do business.”<sup>205</sup>

The primary benefit that architects in favor of participating in the small house market repeatedly cited for working on single-family house design was that it provided a good opportunity for young architects first entering the field. It was also seen as a way to provide work in offices during slow times, particularly in the early 1930s. This is stated clearly in a report of the Small House Committee:

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<sup>204</sup> AIA Document March 8, 1937, AIA Archives, AIA Headquarters, Washington D.C.3.

<sup>205</sup> AIA Document “Report of the Sub-Committee on the Small House Problem of the Committee on Housing of the American Institute of Architects,” April 14, 1938, AIA Archives, AIA Headquarters, Washington D.C., 6.

“The Committee believes that a plan can be worked out which will start the young architects in this country on their careers and may lead them into smaller communities where there are opportunities for them. The Committee also calls attention to the fact that many architects starting in the small house field gradually broaden their practice into other types of work.”<sup>206</sup>

Architects routinely spoke of the need for better design in single-family house design. In a memorandum for the Members of the Committee of Housing, R. H. Shreve summarizes this perceived need: “Improve the standards of construction which they [the Government] believe will be accomplished by the engagement of competent architectural service...”<sup>207</sup> Architects also equated their own services with the solution to this need. Other specific needs which architects spoke about at annual conventions included the need for plan sets in rural locations where there were no architects, the need for architects to provide drawings because stock plan sets were incomplete, the need in general for architects, the need for an economic solution to the issue by which architects could make money, and the need for better housing.

Less clear from the documents were any solutions that could be provided by architects. In fact, most proposed solutions relied on someone else’s cooperation with architects. For example, working with government officials to make them want to hire architects was seen as the solution for better housing

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<sup>206</sup> Walter McCornack to AIA Executive Committee, “Report of the Committee on Housing,” April 2, 1938, 11.

<sup>207</sup> AIA Document “Memorandum for Members of the Committee on Housing,” December 9, 1935, AIA Archives, AIA Headquarters, Washington D.C., appendix 1.

under government programs. Architects also proposed that they work with lending agencies, again, so that architects would be required for single-family houses designs in order to get a loan. These objectives are included in a draft report of the Committee on Housing of the AIA:

“The first step accomplished in the direction of better service in this field has been to establish cooperation between the Federal Housing Administration, the Federal Home Loan Bank Board, the Owners’ Loan Corporation, and The Institute, in beginning the study for a program or service to the small house owner on a basis satisfactory to the profession and within the scope of sound business procedure and the standards of our practice...It is quite obvious that plans, specifications, and supervision will be provided in some degree for the great mass of prospective house builders in this country by some agency, either in the governmental bureaus or outside of them, or by the architectural profession.”<sup>208</sup>

Ultimately, these efforts proved unsuccessful and the federal programs would not make architectural services a required component of their individual house design and lending programs.

Almost yearly during this period, some architects would express hope that a solution could be discovered to improve single-family house design in the U.S. While there was a great deal of discussion over the need for and the hope of a solution, less discussion focused on actual solutions beyond the ones mentioned above. Combined with the hope for a solution was frustration over disagreements about a solution. McCornack—who had headed the Small House Committee--expressed this in a letter to the Executive Committee of the AIA written in 1939:

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<sup>208</sup> AIA Document, “Draft of Report of Committee on Housing AIA,” April 29, 1937, AIA Archives, AIA Headquarters, Washington D.C., 5.

“It is to be hoped that the program, slowly taking form, will end for all time the controversy over the small houses program.”<sup>209</sup>

Throughout the AIA documents, there is recognition that architects are not designing the majority of single-family houses and that speculative builders were responsible for most houses. A survey conducted by the Executive Committee of the AIA and sent to all State Chapter Presidents in 1938 revealed that perhaps 5% of all houses were designed by architects and that local builders were using stock plans and interpreting them without the benefit of architectural services. Furthermore, it was estimated that 90% of all houses were being built by speculative builders using stock plans.<sup>210</sup>

Thus the major themes identified in the documents demonstrate the complex issues confronting the architecture profession as it related to single-family house design: the need to educate an ignorant public which included clients, the government, lenders, and builders; the polarization between those who believed architects could engage in house plan set design and those who adamantly opposed this as suitable architecture; and finally the recognition that single-family house design was already far outside the reach of architects even in the early twentieth century. Underlying these conflicts was a difference of belief between architects from the northeast and architects from the Midwest about the value of plan books services to the public. Midwestern architects were happy to

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<sup>209</sup> AIA Document, Letter from Walter R. McCornack to the AIA Executive Committee, April 29, 1939, AIA Archives, AIA Headquarters, Washington D.C.

<sup>210</sup> AIA Document, Survey responses, November 17, 1938, AIA Archives, AIA Headquarters, Washington D.C. The survey included several more questions also.

contribute to better designed housing stock through publishing plans which could be distributed in plan books. This idea was opposed by vocal architects from the northeast from the very beginning and ultimately their view won out.

#### The AIA's Relationship to the ASHSB and Single-Family House Design

As the only somewhat unified effort by licensed architects to impact single-family house design in the U.S., the AIA's endorsement of the ASHSB holds an important place in history. The relationship between the AIA and the ASHSB was always a somewhat contentious one. Some members strongly supported the ASHSB while others always saw the endorsement of any plan-book producing group—even one headed by architects--as a problem for architects and the profession. One thing the ASHSB accomplished that the AIA members wanted was to attempt to educate the public about architecture and the services an architect could provide although the degree of success in this venture is unknown and the focus was not on AIA architects but on architects in general.

AIA members were well aware of the single-family house design issues in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century and were split about what to do. Architects from the Mid-West sought to create plans using plan books as a means of distribution; whereas architects from the Northeast adamantly opposed such efforts and viewed them as taking business away from architects. The membership was also torn as to their social duty versus the need to make money from single-family house design. In order to provide plans at a reduced or minimal fee, architects would be going against Latrobe's belief that an architect must be paid for all his

work. Furthermore, the anonymity of creating house plans for sale directly opposed the need for architects to have their name on their individual creations. The level of humility required to make such a plan work was anathema to east coast architects of the day.

The battles that are documented within the archives of the AIA as they relate to the ASHSB underscore the core of the problem that the architectural community in the U.S. has experienced with regard to single-family house design. These can be summarized as follows: architects could not agree whether this was an architectural problem; architects who did think this was architecture could not figure out how to make money at it for the most part without turning to plan books and some members simply would not accept this; the notion of mass distribution of house plans was vehemently opposed by prominent architects in the Northeast; architects in the Midwest were more willing to try to produce plans and be somewhat anonymous in service of the public good but could not allocate the time away from more profitable jobs; and, architects knew they were losing ground to builders and developers and still eventually decided to shelve the single-family house issue as an issue they could not resolve. It should be noted that no one at the time proposed design-build activities as a way of making money at this type of work because at the time, the AIA opposed design-build activities as a conflict of interest for its membership. Thus, the AIA failed to come up with a way in which architects could address the design of the single-family house as a united group.

CHAPTER 4:  
THE AMERICAN HOMEBUILDING MACHINE

Several scholars have looked at the commercialization of the home building industry in the U.S. According to Dovey, “the suburban dream home of North America and Australia is packaged for consumption in the form of ‘model homes’ or ‘display houses’ advertised in the property supplements of weekend newspapers.”<sup>211</sup> Immigrant cultures with high social mobility, as found in the U.S., hinge on the identity of class through the house one owns. “As one climbs this social ladder, the house signifies the social value of the class immediately above the subject.”<sup>212</sup> Not only should the house satisfy the homebuyer, but it should make others envious. Names for house models, streets and neighborhoods are borrowed from aristocratic British names to signify success.<sup>213</sup> This need to express success through one’s house has resulted in the types of suburban neighborhoods that we have today.

Another factor contributing to the popularity of today’s American suburban house is the notion of the American Dream. According to Hayden, “the dream house is a uniquely American form. For the first time in history, a civilization has created a utopian ideal based on the house rather than the city or the nation.”<sup>214</sup>

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<sup>211</sup> Kimberly Dovey, *Framing Places: Mediating Power in Built Form* (London: Routledge, 1999), 139.

<sup>212</sup> *Ibid.*, 146

<sup>213</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>214</sup> Dolores Hayden. *Redesigning the American Dream: Gender, Housing and Family Life* (New York: W.W. Norton and Company, 2002), 34.

To explain how this happened, Hayden looks to Thomas Jefferson. She suggests “Thomas Jefferson, the first mainstream American political theorist to attempt a schematic spatial representation of a national ideal of democracy, favored the model family farm over the model village.”<sup>215</sup> The Declaration of Independence proclaims each man’s right to life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness. In equating happiness and land ownership, the Jeffersonian survey grid stretched west of the Allegheny Mountains and “although tens of thousands of Americans joined their communities, more Americans lived on the Jeffersonian grid” preferring open land ownership to city dwelling.<sup>216</sup>

This trend to move towards the country and away from the city flourished in the nineteenth century. As urban conditions deteriorated in the nineteenth century, utopian suburb solutions appealed to many Americans. “The suburban neighborhood ideal, fostered by Gross and by thousands of other builders and developers, fit well the image of the segmented society that historian Robert Wiebe has described as the central feature of American life in the late nineteenth century. Americans, Wiebe has argued, assumed that their society was so abundant that the only ingredients necessary for success were determination and hard work.”<sup>217</sup> The suburbs equaled success and independence. They were

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<sup>215</sup> Ibid, 35.

<sup>216</sup> Ibid, 36.

<sup>217</sup> Clifford Clarke, *The American Family Home, 1890-1960* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1986), 98-99.

havens of family values and cleanliness according to architects, social reformers, plan book makers and developers.

As mentioned throughout, the current state of the homebuilding industry in the United States is the result of several factors. One significant factor is the role of the merchant builder. In his book *The Merchant Builders*, Ned Eichler—himself a merchant builder--sheds light on the role of the homebuilder in the single-family house market since 1945. According to Eichler, “merchant building is the term commonly, but not exclusively, used to designate a person or a company who purchases a parcel of land and turns it into a group of houses for sale.”<sup>218</sup> A specific set of conditions that make large-scale home-building a possibility. Not only must there be a demand, but there must also be several other conditions in place. First, long-term, low interest financing allows those who do not have cash to purchase a house. Second, the land on which to build the houses must be readily available and affordable with convenient transportation to the site. Third, government and private agencies must be willing to bring utilities to the proposed site including water, sewer, and electricity. Finally, some agency must step forward to construct the actual housing development.<sup>219</sup>

The creation of the Federal Housing Administration (FHA) in 1934 made the first condition possible on a national scale. By insuring loans for individual

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<sup>218</sup> Ned Eichler, *The Merchant Builders* (Cambridge: The MIT Press, 1982), xiii.

<sup>219</sup> *Ibid.*

homeowners and long-term construction loans to builders, the FHA made merchant building on a large-scale possible. In the mid-1940's, land in the U.S. was plentiful and, provided utilities and transportation became available, most places could be settled with subdivisions. The enactment of the Federal Defense Highway Program of 1941, again fertilized conditions for the merchant building industry. This program sought to connect all major cities throughout the U.S. in support of military defense. The final component, a willing company, agency or individual to build the subdivision, was fulfilled in record number by entrepreneurial builders throughout the U.S. and supported by the creation of the National Association of Homebuilders in 1942.<sup>220</sup>

While Eichler focused on the boom periods of home construction following World War II, the conditions for independent merchant homebuilding were informally in place prior to 1945. Land was plentiful, the entrepreneurial spirit was prevalent, and the other conditions could be created along existing transportation routes such as the railroad. Early suburbs relied on their proximity to existing cities for utilities, transportation, and customers. While the FHA stabilized funding sources after 1934, determined homebuyers located funding sources prior to this time as well. For example, housing starts reached over 900,000 in 1925 only to fall to fewer than 100,000 in 1933.<sup>221</sup> What this

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<sup>220</sup> Ibid.

<sup>221</sup> Ibid.

combination of government programs made available was an explosion of the homebuilding phenomenon.

Merchant builders have made the dream of homeownership widely available for decades. In addition to this, they have driven this market segment and created a demand for new and bigger houses. Current media sources such as the *Wall Street Journal's* RealEstateJournal.com and recent U.S. Census data support the claim that houses continue to get bigger in the U. S. The average single-family house built during 2007 had a total of 2,521 square feet, an increase of 801 square feet more than single-family houses thirty years ago.<sup>222</sup> The majority of these houses included three bedrooms although 39% included four or more bedrooms. Twenty-six percent of new houses included three or more bathrooms (triple the rate of only twenty years ago.)<sup>223</sup> Ninety percent of new houses were financed using a conventional loan with the average square foot construction cost of \$91.99 nationwide.

*The Wall Street Journal's* online guide to property, RealEstateJournal.com, reiterates much of this information in its article “the 10 hottest trends in the U.S. Housing Market.” These top ten trends are as follows: 1. Short on space (places to build in desirable areas); 2. Strained budgets; 3. A shrinking forecast (some think houses may start to get smaller, though the data do not support this); 4. Taking a risk; 5. The home as a piggy bank; 6. Foreign frenzy; 7. Reduced-rate

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<sup>222</sup> U.S. Census data Retrieved from <http://www.census.gov/const/www/highanncharac2007.html> on 9/11/07. The average square footage has gone up 32 square feet since I started writing this chapter.

<sup>223</sup> Ibid.

realtors; 8. The big get bigger (larger home building businesses continue to grow with increased market share); 9. Gimme more shelter; and 10. Watching the rankings.<sup>224</sup>

Overall, the “hottest trends” article outlines a situation in which people are investing most of their money into their house. More than 30% of homeowners spend in excess of 30% of their income on housing costs annually with one in eight households spending more than 50% of their income. A recent estimate of affordability in California demonstrates that only 15% of the population can afford the median-priced house in that state. Housing costs are soaring as houses continue to grow in size, far exceeding income level increases annually. Land costs continue to rise in desirable locations where lots are becoming scarce.

<sup>225</sup>Although many Americans still view their houses as a potential source of savings, recent statistics indicate that as much as \$600 billion dollars was borrowed by homeowners in 2005 against the value of their houses. Meanwhile, the biggest homebuilders in the country continue to grow and gain market share.<sup>226</sup>

A builder’s primary business mission is to be successful and stay in business—to make money. The larger the house and the more of them, the

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<sup>224</sup> RealEstateJournal.com retrieved from <http://realestatejournal.com/buysell/markettrends/20051122-hagerty.html> on 9/14/07.

<sup>225</sup> Since this article was written, there has been a home mortgage crisis which has led to a substantial drop in the price of single-family houses and land.

<sup>226</sup> RealEstateJournal.com retrieved from <http://realestatejournal.com/buysell/markettrends/20051122-hagerty.html> on 9/14/07

more money can be made. In other words, homeowners and builders may be at cross-purposes. While the building industry has done and continues to do a lot of research about market trends and customer preferences, builders do not design houses for individuals, they design them for market segments. It is in a builder's interest to work with a realtor to sell his version of what the American Dream should be to the general public and, according to some experts, the building industry has been quite successful at this.

Consumerism is the subject of a 1991 article by John Chase, who wrote "in broad terms, contemporary architectural patronage and practice in the United States can be viewed as a consumerist enterprise."<sup>227</sup> He differentiates consumerist buildings from vernacular ones saying that the consumerist architecture "is rooted in marketing techniques and is consciously plotted to achieve the goal of inducing consumption."<sup>228</sup> The more we buy and the bigger it is, the better.

Architects have been unable to capture any significant share of this market. Of the 264 billion dollars in receipts for single-family houses, estimates indicate that developers are responsible for most. The NAHB claims 80% of the single-family house market goes to its members alone.<sup>229</sup>

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<sup>227</sup> John Chase, "The Role of Consumerism in American Architecture," *Journal of Architectural Education*, 44, no. 4 (August 1991): 212.

<sup>228</sup> *Ibid*, 211.

<sup>229</sup> National Association of Homebuilders, *A Century of Progress: America's Housing 1900-2000* (NAHB: Washington DC, 2003), 2.

For a variety of reasons, many of which have already been explained, the people involved in house design and building in the United States have followed a uniquely American path. Three primary parties are currently responsible for the single-family house market in the U.S. today are the National Association of Homebuilders (representing merchant builders), the National Association of Realtors (representing realtors), and, most recently, the American Institute of Building Designers (representing builder-designers). Each of these organizations—working in tandem with the others—has fine-tuned a successful “homebuilding” machine in the United States. In so doing, they have also made it easy and in most cases preferable not to involve an architect in any part of the process. The sheer financial magnitude of the operation within which these players are involved has insured a substantial lobbying force against which architects and their organization, the American Institute of Architects, cannot possibly hope to compete successfully, even if architects chose to do so.

Most citizens of the U.S. feel entitled to their own house. As a result, houses represent the single biggest market share of buildings in the U.S. This industry has traditionally been lucrative and ever expanding as the population of the U.S. continues to rise albeit with a few recent problems in the housing market. To understand the complexities of homebuilding in the U.S. an overview of each of the three primary parties mentioned above is presented below.

The National Association of Homebuilders (NAHB) is composed of 235,000 members.<sup>230</sup> According to their own website, one of the primary advantages of membership is that “the association represents the industry’s interests on Capitol Hill and strives to ensure that housing remains an national priority when laws are made and policies are established. NAHB also works with federal agencies on regulations affecting the housing industry in areas such as mortgage finance, codes, energy, and the environment.”<sup>231</sup> In other words, they are a large group lobbying on behalf of homebuilders. The organization overtly dispenses design advice and construction information as well as oversees national house design competitions annually. A recent inquiry to the NAHB revealed that of the 235,000 members, a mere 1,792 (.7% or less than 1 percent) are licensed architects.<sup>232</sup> The NAHB offers design training at each of its annual conferences including topics such as designing for the aging baby boomers in the U.S., greening of home design, and remodel design. These topics are similar to ones offered at the AIA annual convention.

The National Association of Homebuilders offers six membership types ranging from builder members to student members. Student memberships are extended to high school students, those at technical schools and community colleges as well as university level students. Of the membership, one third are

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<sup>230</sup> By way of contrast, the American Institute of Architects has only 83,000 members and there are fewer than 235,000 licensed architects in total in the U.S. AIA website. Retrieved July 2, 2008 from [www.aia.org](http://www.aia.org)

<sup>231</sup> National Association of Homebuilders website. Retrieved July 2, 2008 from [www.nahb.org](http://www.nahb.org)

<sup>232</sup> Email correspondence by Lisa Tucker with Jane Amakor of the NAHB on July 16, 2007.

actual homebuilders.<sup>233</sup> The only requirement for membership is involvement in the homebuilding industry in some way. No formal education or minimum years of work experience are required to obtain membership. Interestingly, the NAHB was founded in 1942 near the time that architects in the AIA chose to give up on the problem of single-family house design in the U.S. and the same year that the ASHSB went out of business.

The American Institute of Building Designers was first established in 1950. According to the AIBD website “the AIBD has provided its members professional and educational resources, and has developed nationwide standards and a code of ethics for the building design profession.”<sup>234</sup> The organization has members in 45 states. The AIBD encourages members to become certified designers. Once a person has passed the test, he/she may hold the designation Certified Professional Building Designer (CPBD). The test is administered by the National Council of Building Designers Certification (NCBDC) that claims to be the only certification for residential and light frame construction. The test is composed of fifteen questions, samples of which are contained on the AIBD website with answers. The requirements to sit for the exam are at least five years of professional building design practice (20 hours per week minimum) and industry-relevant education credits (although no specific type education is apparently

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<sup>233</sup> National Association of Homebuilders website. Retrieved July 2, 2008 from [www.nahb.org](http://www.nahb.org)

<sup>234</sup> AIBD website retrieved July 2, 2008 from [www.aibd.org](http://www.aibd.org)

required).<sup>235</sup> For the actual application, one must submit three letters of recommendation, fill out the CEU (Continuing Education Unit) Verification form, and provide three sets of project drawings that meet the NCBDC drawing standards.<sup>236</sup> In other words, it is quite feasible for—and is often the case-- someone with no design education at all to take this exam and become a certified building designer. The primary building type which members of the AIBD design is the single-family house.

By comparison, the process that architects must go through is significantly more stringent and requires a design education and training. They must take a nine-part examination the Architectural Registration Exam (ARE) administered by the National Council of Architectural Registration Boards (NCARB) that takes many days to complete.<sup>237</sup> To sit for this exam, an architectural intern normally needs either a five year bachelors of architecture degree, a four year bachelors of science in architecture plus a two years masters of architecture degree, or a three year masters of architecture degree. In addition, the candidate must also meet the requirements of the Intern Development Program or the equivalent of three years of full-time practice under a licensed architect. This is required to register to take the exam. States can add additional requirements to these as well. Once the exam is taken, many interns must retake sections because it is a

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<sup>235</sup> AIBD website retrieved July 2, 2008 from [www.aibd.org](http://www.aibd.org)

<sup>236</sup> AIBD website retrieved July 2, 2008 from [www.aibd.org](http://www.aibd.org)

<sup>237</sup> I am confident the National Council for Architectural Registration Boards (NCARB) would be surprised to find out that they are not in the business of testing anything related to light frame construction.

relatively hard test to pass all sections the first time.<sup>238</sup> Entry into the profession of architecture is highly selective. By contrast, entry into the American Institute of Building Designers and certification as a building designer appears far easier.

The literature distributed to potential house buyers by the AIBD feature high-end luxury houses. In a recent issue of the *Home Design Journal* published by the AIBD, two architects share their points of view on the organization. Both describe the organization as one focused on luxury custom homes. They see the AIBD as providing the design services to work with builders. “Many residential designers come from a construction background, so they tend to be more ‘hand’s on’ in the building process, and many offer additional services such as construction supervision. There is an advantage of having a design professional guide one through the process of hundreds of decisions.”<sup>239</sup> The design professional being described here is the AIBD member not an architect. Interestingly, the AIA has recently been involved in aggressively going after interior designers for “practicing architecture without a license,” yet this same organization seems to ignore the AIBD and in some cases AIA members even join the AIBD.

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<sup>238</sup> Pass rates for sections of the ARE range from 65% to 79% depending of the section. The most difficult to pass is the building design section of the test. [www.ncarb.org/are/passrates.html](http://www.ncarb.org/are/passrates.html). Retrieved 8/11/08.

<sup>239</sup> AIBD. *Home Design Journal*, (Virginia: AIBD Press, Edition: 2004), 4.



**Figure 4.1:** House featured on webpage of the American Institute of Building Designers at [www.aibd.com](http://www.aibd.com)

In addition to their visible presence as designers of high-end houses, the AIBD is also an avid promoter of house plan books. Their books include starter homes, move-up homes and luxury homes as well as landscaping plans. Contained throughout these plan books are helpful notations to homeowners such as “A predrawn house plan is \$8,000-\$20,000 cheaper than a typical architect’s custom design” and “our design experts will work with you on desired plan changes—no need for expensive modification services.”<sup>240</sup> The message is clear, home designers, like AIBD members provide all the design services you need and for less money than an architect who is trained and educated in design.

Like the NAHB, the AIBD has a substantial lobbying effort. According to their membership flyer, “The AIBD is your STATE and NATIONAL LEGISLATIVE

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<sup>240</sup> AIBD and Home Planners, LLC. *Big Book of House Plans*, Washington D.C.: Hanley Wood Consumer Group, 2008, 88, 122.

policy representative, striving to ensure the continued success of all Building Designers, their profession and their business.”<sup>241</sup> While the focus of the members is on high-end residential, the brochure does claim that work of the AIBD membership varies and may include commercial buildings depending on what is permitted under the architectural statutes of the state. In other words, the members are not opposed to expanding their design services to other markets.

Realtors also support builders. As of April 30, 2008 there were 1,256,557—well over one million--realtors in the U.S. The National Association of Realtors (NAR) was founded in Chicago in 1908. Its sole mission “to help its members become more profitable and successful.”<sup>242</sup> The NAR has been extremely successful in establishing a realtor’s role in the buying and selling of virtually any residential property in the U.S. Like the NAHB, the NAR has a legislative agenda designed to protect its members’ interests. To become a realtor, one must take courses in real estate and sit for an exam.

Developers arrange for realtors to sell the houses they build in new developments. Realtors are paid a commission—a standard 3 percent for listing a property and 3 percent for selling a property based on the sales price—and are thus quite motivated to sell a builder’s houses. The more sales, the more financial gain for both the realtor and the builder. The bigger the house and hence the higher the price, the more profitable the sale is for both parties. Thus,

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<sup>241</sup> From AIBD promotional literature mailed to author on August 1, 2008, no date on materials.

<sup>242</sup> National Association of Realtors. Retrieved July 2, 2008 from [www.realtor.org](http://www.realtor.org)

both realtors and developers are in the business of selling as much house as they can to each buyer.

### Summary

The National Association of Homebuilders has been extremely successful in establishing trends for features that enlarge the house. These include great rooms, multiple bathrooms, large kitchens with high-end appliances and finishes, mother-in-law suites and other accoutrements. It is unheard of to buy a new house that does not have a garage and in most cases this is sized for at least two cars. The NAHB membership is proud to say it uses market research to determine these trends. Unfortunately market research does not compare to individual programming of a house by a design professional for a specific client.

In their special report "A Century of Progress," the NAHB outlines changes to the single-family house over the past century. The profile of a typical new home grew from 700-1200 square feet with two or three bedrooms and one or no bathrooms in 1900 to 2,265 square feet with three or more bedrooms and 2 ½ bathrooms as well as a minimum of a two-car garage in 2000. The projections of the NAHB would indicate that the size would continue to get larger as the Census data in fact demonstrates.<sup>243</sup>

The primary problem with the current homebuilding machine in the United States from a design point of view is that no one is looking out for the interests of the consumer. Driven by market forces and pure economic gain, all of the current players in this arena have an incentive to make houses larger and sell people

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<sup>243</sup> NAHB, *A Century of Progress*, 3.

more than they actually need or can afford in some cases. (Both of which have contributed to the current mortgage crisis in the U.S.) Two things that architects normally provide are eliminated from the current way in which house building occurs in the U.S.: (1) architects act as the liaison between the builder and the owner and are hired to represent the owner's interests and (2) architects are trained in design and in many cases how to optimize both the use of space and materials.

In today's world, waste is becoming an idea of the past. As people begin to realize that there is no "away" to which to throw the old, material reduction, reuse and recycling becomes a primary concern. Architects are trained with a sensitivity and understanding of these issues. They are trained to think expansively and challenge the way things have always been done. Most importantly, it is their professionally-licensed responsibility to protect the health, safety and welfare of the public and their clients.

Today's homebuilding industry is not sustainable. It focuses on building big and on always buying new—neither strategy supports the environment within which people now live. It is incumbent on architects and other trained design professionals to come up with solutions to the built environment which are harmonious with the world upon which we live and are within the available materials and resources which we have available. As more of the world seeks to model itself after the mass consumerism and consumptive patterns of the U.S., the U.S. must lead the world in sustainable building practices. The house building industry is the place to start with the biggest potential impact.

## CONCLUSIONS: TODAY AND TOMORROW

The story of the design of the single-family house in the U.S. is unlike the history of this building type in any other country. The way in which these houses have come to be designed has resulted from many complex and interlocking factors.

As the profession developed in the U.S. under the legacy of Benjamin Henry Latrobe and his protégés, the emphasis for architectural offices focused on public building design. Latrobe also left a legacy that portrayed architects as difficult to work with, as designers of over budget projects, and as inflexible. He modeled a disdain of builders to those he mentored. Coupled with an Ecole des Beaux Arts educational legacy, important monumental commissions continued to be the focus of the architectural profession.

By the time the American Institute of Architects and the Architects Small House Service Bureau made attempts to intervene in the small house design market, it was, perhaps already too late. Added to this, the AIA's final dismissal of the ASHSB in favor of the AIA's own efforts to "solve the problem" led to an ineffective process and constant debate about how to enter this market.

Underlying these debates was the question as to whether this was something the AIA should even want to or could do. In the mind of many architects as informed by their education and culture, mass-produced single-family houses were not architecture. Although many AIA members believed they could make single-family house design better, they did not make doing it a priority. As an annual

topic of concern and debate, the issue of the single-family house was eventually displaced by ones considered far more “architectural” such as multi-family housing units in much large government funded projects.

The design of the ordinary single-family house was not backed by either state or church and did not provide the opportunity for grand gestures by architects. Ultimately, architects could not find a way to make single-family house design economically or philosophically viable. Even when they did consider architectural involvement, some felt this work was best left to young architects as a training ground and that it was not something with which accomplished architects engaged.

Pattern books as a model for single-family houses predated the development of the architecture profession as a formal entity. By the time a formalized educational process was in place and licensing began to regulate the entry into architecture, most people were already turning to plan books and builders directly to fulfill their home building dreams.

When architect members of the AIA tabled the small house issue in favor of multi-family housing in the 1940s, the National Association of Homebuilders and its members had open door to take over the single-family house design and building industry completely in the U.S. The architecture community’s apparent inability to decide if and how architects should be involved in the design of single-family houses allowed competing forces to move in for good. Today architects and their primary lobbying organization the AIA are outnumbered by NAHB

members three to one and by realtors fourteen to one. Combined the NAHB and the NAR form an impenetrable wall surrounding the single-family house market in the U.S.

The state of housing today has reached a critical point. People have borrowed their way into single-family homes well beyond their means. These houses continue to get larger each year as the resources to build them continue to dwindle. If ever there was a time when single-family housing design needed to be revolutionized and informed by solid knowledge and good design decisions it is now. The single-family house design market is currently directed by financial gain. It is in a builder's best interest to build bigger houses and it is in a realtor's best interest to sell houses that cost more. No one is looking out for the interest of the public. Traditionally, this has been the role of the architect; however, architects have virtually removed themselves from the process.

This dissertation has posed that a variety of forces that has led to the current result. First pattern books were readily available as the first houses began to be designed and built and they have been available ever since. One has thousands of free choices from which to choose so why pay an architect? Second, because of the innovations in wood construction and the wide availability of lumber and nails, anyone who wants to build a house can do so. Builders are plentiful in the U.S. and are more than willing to take a house plan from a customer and build it. Third, architects have been educated and indoctrinated to think of large public projects as architecture. They have been

unable to come to any consensus about the role of architects in single-family house design in the U.S. nor how to make money at it. Furthermore, Latrobe's legacy tells architects to keep design and building separate. For many years this was a belief supported and upheld by the AIA. Only recently has this stance been relaxed. The way in which builders make money on single-family houses is from the mass construction of repetitive units, not the design. Architects were not ever able to figure out how to make money by designing ordinary single-family houses and were unable or unwilling to do design-build for many years. Combined, all of these factors have led to the current circumstances surrounding single-family house design in the U.S.

### Summary

Single-family house design in the U.S. comprises a significant percentage of the national economy. The dream of house ownership has long been associated with freedom and self-expression in American society. For a variety of complex reasons as outlined in this dissertation, the design of ordinary single-family houses occurs largely outside of the profession of architecture. This work proposes several possible explanations which explain this phenomenon in the U.S. and finally turns to the words of architects themselves when this issue was hotly debated within the American Institute of Architects during the early twentieth century.

Despite a few calls for change, one thing remains certain--people in the U.S. will not be easily separated from their single-family houses. Thus, while

some backlash may appear to the expanding house size in the media and the housing market is currently depressed, the trend for bigger houses reflecting an improved social position can be seen to be alive and well as evidenced by the latest sub-prime mortgage failures of the past year. The single-family house design market in the U.S. would benefit from a complete overhaul in the way houses are designed. Specifically, the size of houses in the U.S. far exceeds the actual needs people have. These wasteful construction practices have a profound impact on the world's natural resources. Perhaps, the use of trained design professions could help eradicate some of the problems inherent in the design of the single-family house as it currently exists in the U.S.

#### Limitations and Future Research

As with any historical research, this research is limited by several variables. First, only those documents that survive could actually be included in the AIA document review. Second, the people whose views are presented in the AIA documents are no longer alive and thus could not be interviewed to verify the intent of their writings. It should also be noted that only about 50% of registered architects at any given time are members of the AIA. But that the AIA is the only professional organization for architects. Third, people with varying backgrounds and points of view with access to similarly limited historical documents compose the historical narrative. While this researcher selected work from the best

architectural historians in practice, the information is interpreted and human beings are fallible.

This research sought to answer one question: why don't architects design ordinary single-family houses and how did this come to be? This question has been answered using an interpretive historical approach. The research has proposed a theory as to why this is the case by citing historical factors that combined to create the situation and then tested that theory in relationship to the AIA archival documents. As a result, several new questions have emerged which could lead to additional research studies: 1.) Architects are unhappy with the design of ordinary single-family houses, but are the people who buy them and live in them unhappy? 2.) Do architects today think ordinary single-family houses should be designed by architects? If so, why? And if not, why not? 3.) As the house has been a traditionally "female" design domain, to what extent does the addition of more females into the architecture profession change the relationship of architects to single-family house design?

## APPENDICES

### **Appendix 1:** Comparison of Trustworthiness—Scientific Research, Naturalistic Research, Architectural History Research (based on Guba, 1981)<sup>244</sup>

#### Trustworthiness in Architectural History Research

<b>Aspect</b>	<b>Scientific Term</b>	<b>Naturalistic Term</b>	<b><i>Tucker's Proposed Architectural History Term</i></b>
Truth Value	Internal validity	Credibility	<i>Reference adequacy</i>
Applicability	External validity Generalizability	Transferability	<i>Include transcripts for future researchers working on related topics</i>
Consistency	Reliability	Dependability	<i>Step-wise replication "audit" trail</i>
Neutrality	Objectivity	Confirmability	<i>Transparency Reflexivity Revelation of epistemological assumptions</i>

<sup>244</sup> Egon G. Guba, "ERIC/ECTJ Annual Paper Review: Criteria for Assessing the Trustworthiness of Naturalistic Inquiries," *ECTJ* 29 No. 2 (1981): 75-91.

## Appendix 2: Summary of Final Codes Identified from AIA Document Review

Final code	Instances	Initial codes
"L" lack of involvement	5	Little involvement Architects not taking on the problem
"W" Warning to architects	6	Warning to architects
"P" pros of involvement	5	Good opportunity for you architects Money to be made Architects involved=better design
"N" needs in house design	15	Stock plans are incomplete  Architects need work Architects need to do this work (responsibility) It is obvious that architects are needed There are no AIA members in all regions (so plans are needed) Need for better housing Need an economic solution
"S" solutions to problem	18	Endorse the ASHSB Work with the feds Work with the lending agencies Establish and AIA corporation to handle the problem Fixed fee Plan set distribution (Enough!) This is the final solution
"H" Hope for solutions	6	Hope to find a workable solution Architects need to be economical
"E" need to educate public, builders	7	AIA needs to educate people
"R" need for regional solutions	8	Each chapter to solve its own way  Need for regional character
"M" medical analogy	3	Architects as professionals

### Appendix 3: Department of Commerce Endorsement Letter

#### Appendix I

#### Endorsements of the Architects' Small House Service Bureau

DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE  
OFFICE OF THE SECRETARY  
WASHINGTON

October 11, 1921.

Mr. Henry H. Kendall, President,  
American Institute of Architects,  
The Octagon,  
Washington, D. C.

Dear Mr. Kendall:

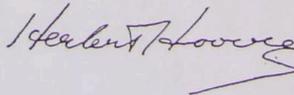
I have looked into the work of the Architects' Small House Service Bureau of the United States, with its divisions and branches, and have examined its organization and incorporation papers.

The complete plans, specifications, documents and bills of materials, with the designs worked out for local conditions and to use stock materials and eliminate waste, materially simplify home-building problems.

The form of control by the American Institute of Architects should guarantee a high standard of service.

It gives me pleasure to endorse this work, and to assure you that the Department of Commerce will do all it can to cooperate with the Institute and the Bureau.

Yours faithfully,



Appendix 4: AIA Endorsement Letter

WILLIAM B. FAVILLE, PRESIDENT, SAN FRANCISCO  
ERNEST J. RUSSELL, 1ST VICE PRESIDENT, ST. LOUIS  
ROBERT D. KOHN, 2ND VICE PRESIDENT, NEW YORK

1857



1922

WILLIAM STANLEY PARKER, SECRETARY, BOSTON  
D. EVERETT WAID, TREASURER, NEW YORK  
EDWARD C. KEMPER, EXECUTIVE SECRETARY, WASHINGTON, D.C.

THE AMERICAN INSTITUTE OF ARCHITECTS  
THE OCTAGON HOUSE, WASHINGTON, D. C.

San Francisco, Calif.  
August 4th, 1922.

Mr. Edwin Brown,  
1200 Second Avenue, South,  
Minneapolis, Minn.

My dear Brown:

The wider field of activity  
and the increased usefulness of the  
Architects Small House Service Bureau  
by the creation of new Regional Bureaus,  
during the last year is most gratifying.

This activity was warmly  
indorsed by the Convention of the  
Institute and the Bureau's activity,  
I am sure, will become more and more  
appreciated by persons who previously  
have felt that Architectural service  
for the Small House was unavailable.

Wishing you unqualified success  
in this field of professional usefulness,  
I am

WBF:W

Very truly yours,

*William B. Fairille*  
PRESIDENT.

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