

AMST 333
House and Home in America
Roger Williams University
M-TH 3:30 - 4:50
GHH 108

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Week of March 5, 2012

For Monday, March 5

Read, in Rybczynski,
Chapter 3, Domesticity, pp. 51 - 76

We've read in Jackson and Stilgoe about the increasing role of women in and around the house in nineteenth century America. But this process began in Europe much earlier. The feminization of the home in seventeenth-century Holland was one of the most important events in the evolution of the domestic interior. This parallels the ideas we encountered in *Borderland*, suggesting the imprinting of feminine ideas on the suburban environment. You'll find in Rybczynski that there is a parallel reason that this happens. This should reinforce the idea that parallel cultural experiences evoke parallel responses.

- Rybczynski suggests that we get our ideas of Privacy and Intimacy from the Scandinavians, who seem among the first to carve up larger spaces into smaller, more private, ones. If we are to believe him, domesticity--those characteristics which tell us that what we see is "home" not "office" other kinds of space, comes from the Dutch. We will see how the family structure in Holland influences both the rise in status of the kitchen and the use of certain specific types of decorative objects throughout the house. At least one of those visual cues or icons of domesticity appears on the Stonewall dormitories for just this reason. Can you guess which one?
- Rybczynski suggests that part of feminizing the house was accomplished by taking the ordinary domestic objects associated with women's roles in the household, and transforming them from useful to decorative objects.
- Associated with the rise of domesticity was the growth in popularity of the still life composition in painting. Still life raised the stuff of ordinary living, such as food and its preparation, or flowers, into high

art. Note how the compositions below glorify things associated with the role of woman as mistress of the house, including such ordinary things as cutlery and china. Click on the images on the website to see larger copies.

For Thursday, March 8

You'll see that I'm taking us back into Jackson (and, soon, Stilgoe, too) after this little sojourn into Rybczynski. There is a reason for this. The concepts of Intimacy and Privacy, and the concept of Domesticity were introduced into American Houses a century and more before the American Revolution, and were parts of the city houses of the walking city as well as the suburban houses which came later. The rest of the innovations Rybczynski introduces arise in conjunction with suburbanization.

Read, in Jackson,

4. Romantic Suburbs, pp. 73 - 86
5. The Main Line, Elite Suburbs and Commuter Railroads, pp. 87 - 102
6. The Time of the Trolley, pp. 103 - 115

From 7. Affordable Homes for the Common Man, pp. 116 - 124
(the beginning and sections The Trolley and Suburbanization, Trolley Tracks and Suburbanization, Oakland, Los Angeles, and Washington DC.)

Much of this reading begins to examine points made in the video, *Suburbs: Arcadia for Everyone*, so the ideas won't be entirely foreign to you. The thesis is simple: each revolution in transportation created a new form of suburb. I won't spend a lot of time on any of this, except as you indicate you need some class discussion.

The most important things you can gather from chapters 5 and 6 are the way that changes in transportation stratify the geography of city/and suburb on economic terms, and, also, the principal difference between trolley and train which assists this stratification. Why does the technology of the streetcar allow a different economic model for the entrepreneurs who sponsor trolley companies, and how does this open suburbia to a new economic class?

The most important thing to get from the first section of chapter 7 (and the reason why I've detached it from the rest of the chapter) is the relationship

between the economics of traction companies (the companies which run the trolleys) and the actual building of the suburbs. Once one thinks about it, the relationship is kind of a no-brainer.

Here's a little treasure hunt for you.

In the nineteenth century, all of these were suburban areas for the very well-to-do. What about today? What can you find out about these places today? As a starter, I've provided you with links to some sort of information about these places. Choose as many as you wish, and go hunting for information about them... pictures, data, histories, whatever. When you find something, post it to the Forum on Bridges I've prepared for this purpose. The one with the most number of unique discoveries wins.*

[Brookline, MA](#)

[Fernwood, PA](#)

[Darby, PA](#)

[Overbrook, PA](#)

[Ardmore, PA](#)

[Haverford, PA](#)

[Bryn Mawr, PA](#)

[Swarthmore, PA](#)

[Villanova, PA](#)

[Radnor, PA](#)

[Stratford, PA](#)

[Chestnut Hill, PA](#)

[Evanston, IL](#)

[Willmette, IL](#)

[Winnetka, IL](#)

*unique = be the first one to turn in that particular discovery

There will be a prize:

Dinner for two (with or without me along) at a Bristol Restaurant.

Deadline: Monday after Spring Break

Some places to go hunting:

Google Earth: (if you haven't downloaded it click on the title to the left)

Google Maps

[Local Newspapers](#)

[Another Source for Newspapers](#)

[City-Data](#)

[Panoramio](#)

[Flickr](#)

If you're more interested in historical data/images, here are some other places where you can look.

[American Memory](#) (Library of Congress)--use the search box on the first page, you'll be surprised what turns up where.