

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

Michael R. H. Swanson, Ph. D.
Office: GHH 215 Phone: ext. 3230
Hours: M, T, Th, F 9:00-10:30
or by Appointment
mswanson@rwu.edu

Week of March 19

For Monday, March 19

Welcome Back! Not too sunburned, I hope.

No new readings for today. I'll be showing another DVD from the series "Dream Houses" Which of these might be Your Dream House? Do any of them more resemble the house of your nightmares?

"Generations of Americans have seen their freestanding houses as family temples. Men and women of great vision poured their energies into building houses that are complex self-portraits. [Dream Houses] examines the American home as a reflection of its owner's self-image" Robert A.M. Stern

For Thursday, March 22

Houses for the Rest of Us

Read, in Jackson,

The rest of Chapter 7, Affordable Houses for the Common Man, 124 - 137
(The sections on Balloon Framing, Cheap Land, High wages, The Provision of Urban Services, Individual Effort and Home ownership, and The Process of Suburban Land Conversion.)
8, Suburbs into Neighborhoods, 138 - 156

Notes on the Readings:

Chapter 7.

- Don't lose sight of the forest for the trees. The most important thing to understand is that it was a combination of factors which made suburbia affordable for middle class persons. We've already seen that cheaper transportation opened opportunities unavailable before. If one thinks about the slow and laborious process of making houses prior to the invention of the 2x4 and the machine-made nail (you saw some of this in the video from the

Weald and Downland Museum), one realizes that there was no way to house large numbers of people in individual houses on individual plots of land without technological innovation intervening. Imagine how much it would cost to build Mr. Blandings Dream House if all the nails were individually made by blacksmiths.

- To find out what balloon framing is, Click on [Engines of our Ingenuity](#). I may show you a video which will illustrate this, together with other Engines of Ingenuity.

Chapter 8.

- Here, the important thing to recognize is that there are multiple ways to measure size of communities. Perhaps the one we think of most often is population, which we can determine by simple count. But area is another measure... the number of square units (miles, kilometers, etc.) included in the political unit in question. A third is density of population (population divided by area). Be aware that it is the second which is being explained in this chapter. The process is annexation. The reasons for it and the reasons against it are the subject of this chapter. The last paragraph is rather ominous:
- Resistance to annexation is symptomatic of the view that metropolitan problems are unsolvable and that the only sensible solution is isolation. Elite suburbs are communities encapsulated from the crises of urban capitalism, yet able to benefit and enjoy the system's largesse.
- We'll be seeing that some of the "flight to the suburbs" is just that: flight. What were people fleeing from?