

AMST 373.01
House and Home in America
Roger Williams University
M, W, F 11:-00 - 11:50
GHH 208

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Week of January 25

For *Monday, January 25.*

The Golden Vision of City Life.

Read, in Kenneth T. Jackson, *Crabgrass Frontier*,
Introduction: pp. 3-12

1. Suburbs as Slums, pp.12 - 19
2. The Transportation Revolution and the Erosion of the Walking City pp. 20 - 45

Last week we looked at the communities which we consider our own. We started to get a sense of the institutions which constitute them, and looked at the widely varying types of communities which are part of the American fabric. Today we'll start to develop a theoretical framework for understanding those differences.

The *Introduction* will help us frame a definition of "Suburb". We'll find defining suburb is more difficult than it seems at first. We'll encounter political definitions and socioeconomic definitions, and we'll also see that American residential patterns are very different from those of the European countries from which the founders of most American places sprung.

- Chapter I will take us back to days when Suburbs were anything but desirable places to live. The name suggests this: *sub*-urban areas are beneath or inferior to urban ones, or at least were, from the days of Classical Rome to the early 19th century.
- Chapter II will introduce two very important concepts, first, the walking city and second, the transportation revolution which radically transformed the nature of cities. Two thousand years of urban

history were transformed in little more than a single generation. We still live with the promise (and problems) of that transformation

For *Wednesday, January 27*.

Read, in Kenneth T. Jackson, *Crabgrass Frontier*,
Introduction: pp. 3-12

1. Suburbs as Slums, pp.12 - 19
2. The Transportation Revolution and the Erosion of the Walking City pp. 20 - 45

Yup, we're continuing with what we started last class. On Friday we looked at the communities which we consider our own. We started to get a sense of the institutions which constitute them, and looked at the widely varying types of communities which are part of the American fabric. Today we'll start to develop a theoretical framework for understanding those differences. (Just in case you forgot what is up top at the syllabus, I'm repeating it all here. ☺)

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For *Friday, January 29*

Read, in Stilgoe,

Borderland: Origins of the American Suburb, 1820 - 1939

Introduction, 1- 17

Section I. "Intellectual and Practical Beginnings

"View"" 21

1. "Witch Hazel" 22 - 26

2. "Botanizing" 27 - 37

Borderlands: Origins of the American Suburb introduces a landscape over time, but a landscape that addressed curiously timeless concerns. It makes no attempt to outline the great forces, economic, technological, religious, and otherwise, that comprise the "sociology of suburbia," but deals rather with the theater in which "suburbans" chose to live in the century after 1820. It probes and pokes at visual things, and in a time when urban form receives so much scrutiny, it focuses on a purely marginal place, "commuter country," the borderlands, the suburbs as Americans once knew them.

Borderlands, vii.

Frequently when we come upon a book which is heavily illustrated we sigh with relief because it means we have less to read. We then proceed to pretty much ignore the illustrations. The illustrations in Stilgoe are *very* important, and we lose a lot of value if we don't spend serious time looking at and interpreting them. Stilgoe helps us see why suburbs are important places... perhaps the most politically potent places in America today (soccer moms, SUVs, and all that). **As you read him, notice that the captions to his illustrations are very important. We tend to ignore captions: Don't! It may take you a bit to get used to this book...**

Based on these chapters from section I, I'd like to have you write a short "review" of the chapters and what you expect from the rest of the book following. Consider the things which may be useful in it, and the things which be difficult. **Place this in your Bridges resource folder.**