

## "...to produce the highest type of manhood and womanhood": The Ontario Housing Act, 1919, and a New Suburban Ideal

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Résumé de l'article

La recherche s'attarde généralement surtout sur les échecs de la « post-WWI Federal-Provincial housing scheme » du Canada. Nous avançons que le programme a des répercussions considérables dans trois domaines de l'urbanisme : les politiques du logement, la planification urbaine, et l'architecture résidentielle. Notre analyse se basera d'abord sur l'étude des impacts de la « Ontario Housing Act, 1919 », dans une vision contemporaine de ce que devrait être un aménagement résidentiel idéal.

Dans les années 1920, une décisive reconceptualisation de la planification urbaine et de l'architecture a provoqué l'émergence d'une nouvelle idéologie du logement, du foyer et de l'urbanité, idéologie qui vise la reconstruction urbaine et la création de nouvelles agglomérations qui soient plus efficaces et plus équilibrées. La ville idéale comportait des quartiers ouvriers qui bien que géographiquement séparés des quartiers de la classe moyenne leur ressemblaient de plus en plus. Cette homogénéité était présente autant dans l'aménagement urbain que dans la conception des espaces fonctionnels intérieurs des logements. La réglementation étatique de la construction des logements pour la classe ouvrière associée aux plans de planification urbaine représente une tentative de réaliser ces idéaux. Sachant que le développement des banlieues est partie prenante à ces idéaux, nous soutenons que la planification urbaine et l'architecture des années 1920 au Canada a résulté en une nouvelle conception de la banlieue idéale.

# **“...to produce the highest type of manhood and womanhood”: The Ontario Housing Act, 1919, and a New Suburban Ideal**

**Matt Sendbuebler and Jason Gilliland**

## **Abstract:**

**While most scholars generally focus on the failings of the post-WWI Federal-Provincial housing scheme in Canada, we contend that it had far-reaching implications for three major facets of urbanism: housing policy, town planning, and residential architecture. We do so primarily through an examination of the impacts of the Ontario Housing Act, 1919, in the context of contemporary visions of ideal residential environments.**

**In the 1920s, a major reconceptualization of planning and architecture generated a new ideology of house, home and city which intended to remake existing cities and to create new, efficient and healthy settlements. The ideal city featured increasingly similar, but separate, working-and middle-class homes and neighbourhoods, as well as the sharper definition of functionally specific spaces within the home and the city. State-designed and state-sanctioned working-class housing associated with the housing scheme represented a practical attempt to realize these new ideals on the ground. Since a suburban context was integral to these ideals, we maintain that planning and architecture in 1920s Canada amounted to a new suburban ideal.**

## **Résumé:**

**La recherche s'attarde généralement surtout sur les échecs de la «post-WWI Federal-Provincial housing scheme» du Canada. Nous avançons que le programme a des répercussions considérables dans trois domaines de l'urbanisme: les politiques du logement, la planification urbaine, et l'architecture résidentielle. Notre analyse se basera d'abord sur l'étude des impacts de la «Ontario Housing Act, 1919», dans une vision contemporaine de ce que devrait être un aménagement résidentiel idéal.**

**Dans les années 1920, une décisive reconceptualisation de la planification urbaine et de l'architecture a provoqué l'émergence d'une nouvelle idéologie du logement, du foyer et de l'urbanité, idéologie qui vise la reconstruction urbaine et la création de nouvelles agglomérations qui soient plus efficaces et plus équilibrées. La ville idéale comportait des quartiers ouvriers qui bien que géographiquement séparés des quartiers de la classe moyenne leur ressemblaient de plus en plus. Cette homogénéité était présente autant dans l'aménagement urbain que dans la conception des espaces fonctionnels intérieurs des logements. La réglementation étatique de la construction des logements pour la classe ouvrière associée aux plans de planification urbaine représente une tentative de réaliser ces idéaux. Sachant que le développement des banlieues est partie prenante à ces idéaux, nous soutenons que la planification urbaine et l'architecture des années 1920 au Canada a résulté en une nouvelle conception de la banlieue idéale.**

... it has been only during the present conflict that we have completely realized not only the actual military, industrial and moral value of the home to the state, but also the consequent obligation of the State, in sheer self-interest, to ensure to its citizens homes of such a character and in such surroundings as to enable us as a nation to produce the highest type of manhood and of womanhood.<sup>1</sup>

In the 1920s, a major reconceptualization of planning and architecture led to significant changes in visions of ideal residential environments at the scale of the city, neighbourhood, and house. State-designed and state-sanctioned working-class housing associated with a post-WWI housing scheme represented a practical attempt to realize these new ideals on the ground. Although the attempt was not substantial in quantitative terms, amounting to some 6200 houses, we will show that the scheme had far-reaching implications for three major facets of urbanism: housing policy, town planning, and residential architecture. We do so primarily through an examination of the impacts of the Ontario Housing Act, 1919, (OHA), part of the Federal-Provincial Housing Scheme of 1918–23, in the context of contemporary ideals of house, home, and city.

Dominant ideas in town planning and domestic architecture during the 1920s constituted an ideology of house, home, and city intended to remake existing cities and to create new, efficient and healthy settlements. It was predicated on two notions: that efficiency resulted from the separation of functions at all spatial scales, and that individual and social health could be achieved through scientifically designed environments. The ideal city featured increasingly similar, but separate, working-and middle-class homes and neighbourhoods, as well as the sharper definition of functionally specific spaces within the home and the city. Furthermore, a practical priority at this time was to bring greater order to growth at the urban fringe, rather than to deal directly with inner-city problems.<sup>2</sup> For this reason, we maintain that planning and architecture in 1920s Canada can be characterized as amounting to a new suburban ideal.

This paper begins with an overview of the housing scheme in Ontario. Since ideals of house and home were elaborated within a suburban context, we then review the main planning ideas of the 1920s to show that planners were not only envisioning ideal cities, but were responding directly to the Canadian city as it was. The suburban orientation of housing policy, then, is seen here as a response to urban and suburban realities rather than solely as the promotion of an ideological agenda. We then analyze similarities and differences in ideal houses between classes, by comparing designs for working-class houses built in Ontario under the Housing Act, to designs for the 'small house' aimed at the middle-class buyer of the same period, as shown in the Aladdin Homes 1920 catalogue and late-1920s issues of *Canadian Homes and Gardens*.

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### **The Ontario Housing Act, 1919**

In 1919, the Federal Government established the ‘Better Housing Scheme’. It provided \$25 million for 20 years at 5% to the Provinces, which then made loans to municipalities, which in turn lent to individuals, organized housing commissions that acted as developers, or lent to limited-dividend housing companies incorporated under Ontario’s 1913 Housing Accommodation Act. Ontario’s share of the federal funds was \$8 million, to which the Province added \$2 million. From 1919 to 1922, 2,771 houses were built in Ontario under the program: 830 by local commissions and Housing Companies, and 1,941 by contractors hired by individual loan recipients.<sup>3</sup> This total represented at most 15% of the estimated need for new houses.<sup>4</sup> The specific objectives of the scheme were:

- (a) to promote the erection of dwelling houses of modern character to relieve congestion of population in cities and towns;
- (b) to put within the reach of all working men, particularly returning soldiers, the opportunity of acquiring their own homes at actual cost of the building and land acquired at a fair value, thus eliminating the profits of the speculator;
- (c) to contribute to the general health and well-being of the community by encouraging suitable town planning and housing schemes.<sup>5</sup>

The program’s practical features suggest its predominantly suburban character: in order to keep costs within prescribed limits, borrowers usually had to choose a suburban location.<sup>6</sup>

The program is widely regarded as having been a failure, but the judgement is exaggerated. This is not the place to set the record straight; but suffice to say that condemnations by such observers as William Somerville, Percy Nobbs, A.E. Grauer, and, recently, John Bacher, all extrapolate unfairly from the program’s spectacular failings at Ottawa, while ignoring its quiet successes elsewhere.<sup>7</sup> The program was more successful in reaching working-class borrowers than is generally thought. A large sample of borrowers, gathered from the loan records of the Housing Branch, suggests that approximately 46% were members of the industrial working class, 19% held positions as managers, professionals, or owners, and 17% were members of various construction trades (see Table 1). Certainly the program did not reach the unemployed and casually employed working-class families most in need of better housing, but nor was it intended to, and nor did it leave out the working class entirely.<sup>8</sup>

These details of the program’s operation underline the caution necessary in inferring any overarching ideological aims. Most scholars consider the program’s exclusive focus on homeownership as part of an effort to instill values of good citizenship and to stifle social unrest. Evidence for this position is scant. It is true that the program was part of a set of measures designed to tackle twin social problems of great magnitude: unemployment, and unrest among returned soldiers. On its own, however, the housing program cannot be seen as

**Table 1: Occupations of Ontario Housing Act Borrowers**

<i>Occupation</i>	<i>sample n</i>	<i>%</i>
Labourers, operatives, etc.	354	45.8
Managerial, professional, miscellaneous white collar	147	19.0
Construction trades	131	16.9
Skilled & technical workers	63	8.2
Public servants	44	5.7
Self-employed	19	2.5
Other	15	1.9
Total	773	100.0

**Source:** Compiled from loan documents in Archives of Ontario, RG8-41, Housing Branch Correspondence. The sample includes borrowers with a specified occupation and for whom some loan record survives, from a selection of places including Hamilton, Oshawa, Brantford, Ottawa (excluding Lindenlea), York Township, Etobicoke Township, and Guelph.

having been a serious effort to thwart any revolutions that may have been feared. The more emphatically argued justification was that the whole undertaking should involve minimal risk to government treasuries. That meant not only putting as much of the risk as possible onto the borrowers, but also targeting a class of borrowers thought likely to be able to handle the risk easily.<sup>9</sup>

### **Town Planning and the Suburban Orientation of Housing Policy in the 1920s**

Urban planners in early twentieth-century Canada viewed their primary task as creating conditions which would ensure that new housing would be sanitary, durable, and provide a positive social environment. For this reason, understanding the OHA’s ideal homes requires that we situate them within the planning visions held by the program’s framers, administrators, supporters, and contemporaries.

Most studies of early twentieth-century planning in Canada and the U.S. divide it into two distinct movements: the ‘City Beautiful’ and the ‘Garden City’. City Beautiful planners embraced ideas of efficiency and beauty within grand plans for redesigned cities. More efficient circulation, rationalized land use, and sanitary housing, these planners argued, should be founded on an effort to beautify the city in order to promote an enlightened and more civilized mode of urban life than the perceived brutality and chaos of the uncontrolled industrial city.<sup>10</sup> The Garden City movement is seen as having overthrown these concerns for a more practical and socially progressive agenda. This agenda was founded on Ebenezer Howard’s claim that social salvation depended on the creation of communities that combined the best of city life (primarily employment opportunities) and the best of country life (clean air, open spaces, cheap land).<sup>11</sup> During and following the First World War, the as-

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endency of Garden City ideas in Canadian planning was led by Thomas Adams and others within the Federal Government's Commission of Conservation.<sup>12</sup>

Planners' visions grew no less ambitious, but eventually became very different: instead of grand boulevards and monumental buildings, they now sought zoning laws, development controls, varied street width, and improved building codes, all within a comprehensive and compulsory Planning Act. None of these ideas was entirely new, but most planners argued that the comprehensive approach offered a way to rectify and avoid past urban mistakes and to create environments that would improve public health, and thereby enhance industrial efficiency and the national wealth. Together, these measures would bring stability to land values, promote efficiency by keeping like activities together, and promote health by keeping residences separate from industry. Planners rarely argued explicitly for the separation of classes, but this was implied in the idea that property values should be protected by zoning ordinances that would ensure similarity of improvements to adjacent properties.<sup>13</sup> Town planning was no longer “a canon of art, but ... a Super Health Act, ... the Science of Environment, ... a gospel of Social Regeneration ... that obviates the physical slum which breeds the moral one.”<sup>14</sup>

This account tends to overemphasize the distinction between these two schools of planning thought. Canadian planners' ideas were not static, but it is important to recognize the continuities. Planners tended to identify themselves as Town Planners, not as adherents of one school or the other; while they sometimes rejected grand plans forcefully, they continued to hold a few key ideas dear, without having to change their minds. One planner whose ideas often fit the stereotype of City-Beautiful thought noted in 1912 that “people are apt to run to extremes and jump at the catchy points such as civic centres for lack of knowledge of the great fundamental aims of the science which are to improve living conditions and housing and to eliminate conditions of traffic congestion which impede communication and business and cause slums.”<sup>15</sup> The statement of fundamental aims remained consistent throughout the early years of the twentieth century; it was ideals of physical form which underwent the greatest changes.

Despite their differences, planners generally spoke the same language of planning, and worked within existing legal and physical frameworks while their grand ideas remained little more than dreams. All tended to favour extensive legal reforms such as zoning and comprehensive planning, and to favour major changes in the physical layout of cities. And, most importantly, almost all planners viewed better housing as planning's *raison-d'être*.

For planners of all stripes, suburbanization was considered the key to reformed working-class living conditions. The problem of the city was not only its central slums, but the existing processes and physical manifestations of its suburban growth. While we should not underestimate the importance of central-city

crowding and sanitation problems as a spur to new planning ideas, an appreciation of the nature and significance of suburban development prior to substantive planning reforms is necessary to complete the picture. It was partly in response to the suburban problem that reformers prescribed a suburban life modelled on that of the middle class — including revised architectures and family life, redesigned neighbourhoods, and rationalized land use. When C.B. Sissons called for measures to deal with “the breeding-grounds of disease and crime” he was referring both to crowded inner-city neighbourhoods and to “the jerry-built homes of boom days which, if allowed free course, rapidly sink into slums and become a menace to the health of the community.”<sup>16</sup> What was the scope of the problem as it was perceived? How has recent scholarship revised that view? What measures were proposed and taken to make such areas efficient and healthy, and to prevent their further spread?

A significant proportion of working-class suburbs dating from the Laurier Boom years of 1900–1914, as well as from the 1920s, were haphazard developments arising mainly from a conflict between massive waves of immigration and the inadequacies of the existing housing stock. In areas such as East Hamilton, Toronto's Earlscourt, and London's East End, working-class families bought small unserviced lots and built houses on them. Those houses were often rough shacks, but sometimes were more substantial dwellings built from kits, by contractors, or by speculative builders.<sup>17</sup> Often built at very low densities, sometimes years in advance of the installation of water mains and sewers, these neighbourhoods were a persistent concern for the planning profession.

The processes underlying the emergence of these settlements are still a matter of debate, but several features are reasonably well understood. In the case of Ottawa, there was a widespread desire to avoid higher taxes within the city.<sup>18</sup> In other cases, however, to build beyond the city limits — or at least beyond the limits of city services — was more a matter of necessity than choice: Canada's cities experienced such rapid growth between 1900 and 1930 that it was often necessary to go to the urban fringe to find shelter at all.<sup>19</sup> If the lure of lower taxes led some families to go farther beyond the built-up area than they might otherwise have done, the services that came with higher taxes, particularly such basics as water and sewers, usually became preferable to the hardships of life without such amenities. Finally, achieving homeownership, even with a period of potentially severe material hardship, was a major motivation for settlement in such suburbs.<sup>20</sup> In many ways, then, working-class suburbs of the period represented a continuation of well-established city-building processes, but under conditions in which demand for housing far exceeded the construction industry's ability to supply, so that working-class suburbs of this period probably included more owner-building than their predecessors or successors.

Generically, those working-class suburbs in which owner-building predominated were often called *shacktowns*.<sup>21</sup> Their full extent was not well-documented at the time, and is still being

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determined by present-day scholars. Still, a few figures can be cited to give an impression of the extent of the shacktowns of the Laurier Boom and beyond. Across Canada, over 400,000 new houses were built between 1901 and 1911. If Richard Harris' estimate that in Toronto about one-third of new houses during a similar period (1899–1913) were owner-built holds true for the rest of the country, a conservative estimate would put 100,000 units in this category for the earlier period. An even greater number of kit houses, contractor-built, and speculator-built houses would have been erected in unserved workers' suburbs. Not all working-class suburbanization occurred in unserved areas, but if even half of the working-class suburban houses of this period were built in unserved areas, then about a half million Canadians experienced suburban life in the absence of basic urban services at some point during and immediately following the Laurier Boom. Considering that the supply of new urbanites was being constantly replenished by immigration, and that new unserved tracts were still being opened up as old ones were filled and served, the number may be greater still.<sup>22</sup>

The response to shacktown development was mixed, but increasingly negative over time. In 1926, Arthur Dalzell attacked shacktowns in response to an engineer's claim that they were “a form of modern pioneering which is deserving of every encouragement.”<sup>23</sup> Dalzell concluded that “Expensive highway construction, the high cost of public utilities, buses to convey children to consolidated schools, lead to taxation quite as high as that of the cities, without many of the city advantages.”<sup>24</sup> Further, Dalzell and others bemoaned shacktowns' poor sanitation, above-average mortality rates, and poor quality of housing construction. Canada's urban problem was, therefore, not a shortage of working-class suburbanites, but a shortage of the right kind of suburbs.

The main remedy prescribed for this urban ill was known as the Garden Suburb, a form of development whose name calls to mind its origins in Garden City ideas, but which in practice bore little resemblance to its progenitor. While the key feature of Garden City planning was the idea that exurban development offered great opportunities for cost savings and environmental improvement, Garden Suburbs instead represented the adoption of some of the physical characteristics of Britain's first Garden Cities, Letchworth and Welwyn, in much smaller developments on the urban fringe. In Ontario, many were developed within the boundaries of existing cities. It was a concession to the obstacles to building full-scale Garden Cities, a response to complaints about some of the more objectionable aspects of contemporary city-building, without attempting to start over completely.

The most persistently criticized physical characteristic of existing urban settlements was the rectangular grid survey.<sup>25</sup> The main criticisms of the gridiron were that, at the scale of the city, an absence of diagonal arterial streets led to inefficiencies in the movement of traffic; while at the neighbourhood scale, the unadulterated gridiron did not maximize building lots, since all

streets were the same width, whether they needed to carry through traffic or not. Excessive street width occupied land which could have been used for building and engendered extra costs for improvements, with the net effect that lots tended to be so narrow that rear lanes were necessary to provide access to the backs of houses, bringing about what was seen to be an unhealthy closeness of houses, and still higher servicing costs. Aesthetically, straight streets were monotonous and thought to contribute to the dreariness of urban industrial life, particularly when built up with identical houses all having the same set-back. The straight grid was also sometimes associated with excessively high construction and improvement costs, since any irregularities of a site's topography would have to be evened out, failing which individual houses would require expensive measures to adjust their foundations to hills and valleys.<sup>26</sup>

In 1919 and 1920, town planners worked in connection with the OHA to address these same concerns, though the vast majority of houses funded through the Act were built on conventional gridiron lots. In the case of the Sudbury subdivision (Figure 1), the local “Commission ... was able, by a resubdivision of a 43-acre tract, to eliminate unnecessary [rear] lanes and the wastefully shaped lots, caused by the diagonal cutting of a railway through a gridiron plan of subdivision. By this, 90 additional lots and 3.5 acres of park area were made available.”<sup>27</sup> The Sudbury example, as well as other Garden Suburbs planned or built under the OHA, such as Lindenlea in Ottawa, Pinelawn in London, and developments in Oshawa (Figure 2), Ojibway, Brantford, and Hamilton, all incorporated similar design principles founded on notions of functional efficiency and the social benefits of aesthetic improvement.<sup>28</sup> They all implied the benefits of minimizing through traffic on strictly residential streets and making necessary traffic as efficient as possible. Further, these designs reflected a belief that efficiencies were to be realized by organizing the production of housing on the scale of the neighbourhood or larger, and by coordinating development to assure the efficient provision of services.

While the Housing Act developments were all at least nominally for working-class residents, the same principles were applied in private developments intended for members of a variety of classes. Did the use of similar design principles for subdivisions aimed at different classes indicate that places like Lindenlea were “carefully modelled after the current middle-class preferences”?<sup>29</sup> Perhaps so, but the interpretation needs qualification. First, the eventual occupants of the model suburbs built under the OHA, particularly Lindenlea, often were not members of the working class at all, or, if they were, were families of relatively affluent skilled tradesmen whose aspirations already included homeownership; model suburb programs were never intended to embrace the worst-housed, lowest-paid segments of the populace. In the case of Lindenlea, many of the development's features, particularly its houses, can be traced to its middle-class purchasers' desires.<sup>30</sup>

Second, the homogeneity envisioned did not extend to an obliteration of all class differences, but only to the cultural

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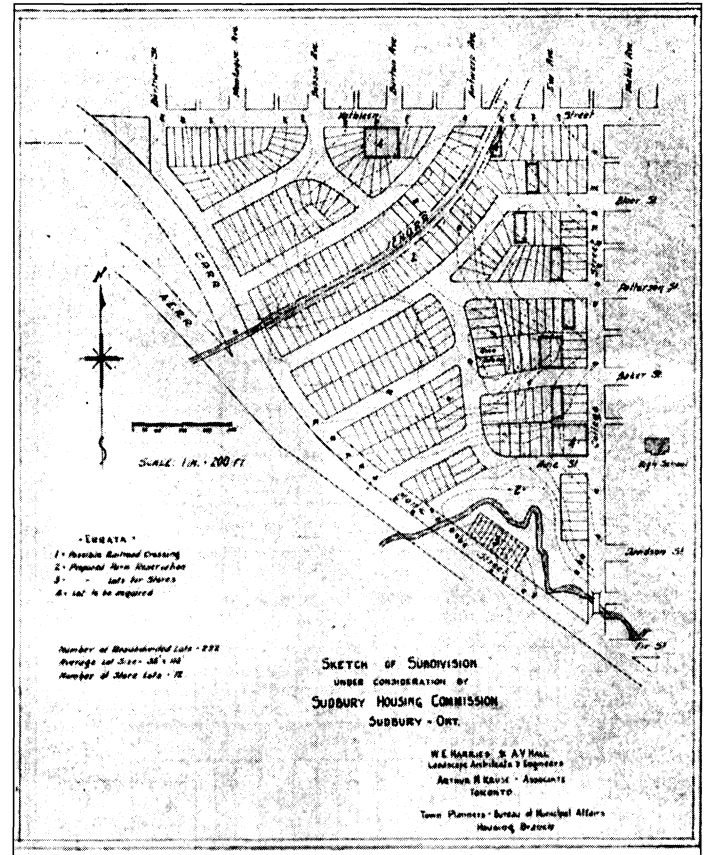
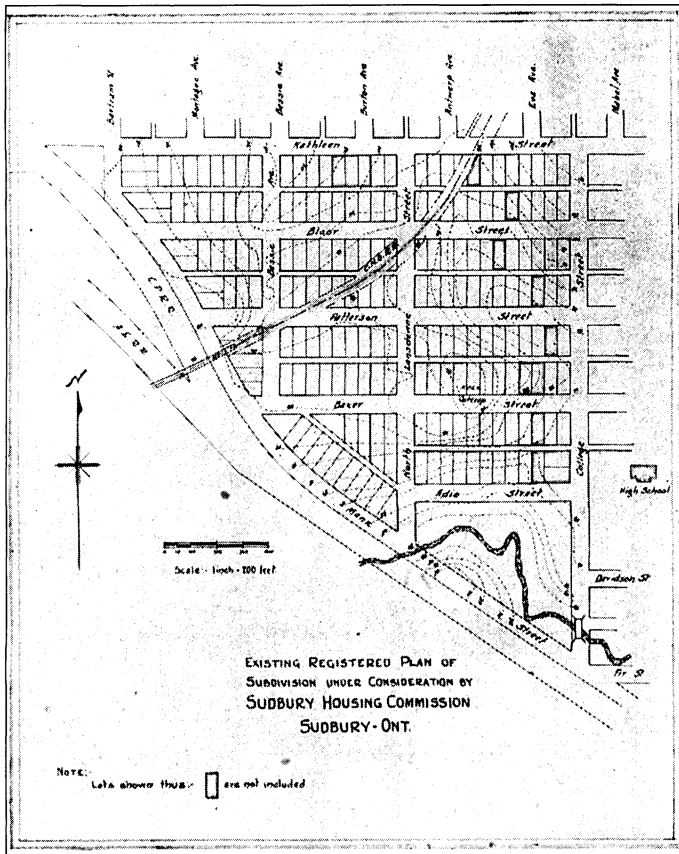


Figure 1a: The original plan of a Sudbury subdivision showed “no consideration for existing grades, rock outcroppings, railway crossings, or economic shape of lots ... [and] ... twenty-foot lanes which are not desirable or necessary in housing developments.” (Source: Bureau of Municipal Affairs, Report re Housing 1919, Ontario Sessional Paper no. 65, p.126).

Figure 1b: Revised plan for Sudbury subdivision. (Source: Bureau of Municipal Affairs, Report re Housing 1919, Ontario Sessional Paper no. 65, p.127).

homogenization of classes. That homogeneity of urban form is not a marker of social homogeneity is well illustrated by nineteenth-century city-building. North American cities were almost invariably built on a gridiron, yet there was ample room within that pattern for the expression of class differences in the urban fabric. Superficial similarities of street layout and house design across classes scarcely masked very real differences in housing quantity and quality available to members of different classes.<sup>31</sup> The twentieth-century use of curvilinear streets and other design innovations across classes expresses a similar ethic: instead of ease of land transaction, the new function to be served was, at the scale of the city, ease of circulation for vehicular traffic and at the scale of the neighbourhood, the promotion of health and happiness through the creation of low-density bucolic environments separated from non-residential uses. At the same time, ease of transaction was enhanced in such plans, as suggested by the elimination of irregular lots in

the Sudbury example. Social harmony was a goal of such urban forms; homogeneity was not.

Did the Garden Suburb reflect middle-class preferences? If similar planning principles can be seen in a variety of class contexts, it is probably not because of buyers' preferences, but because architects with similar training, or even the same architects, were designing a variety of sites. To take one example, W.L. Somerville designed one of the subdivisions shown in the Housing Branch's report for 1919. From 1925 onward, Somerville was an important contributing editor to *Canadian Homes and Gardens*, a magazine aimed at the wealthier segments of the middle class — those wealthy enough to consider employing an architect to design their new house. Somerville was also involved in a number of industrial housing schemes, mainly for private clients. As chairman of the National Construction Council's Housing Committee during the 1930s, part of his job was to convey the industry's ideas for building low-cost housing as efficiently as possible. His house designs published in *CH&G* suggest that those who designed houses for the working class not only drew on the lessons of the pre-war middle-class 'small house', but that their work for middle-class buyers

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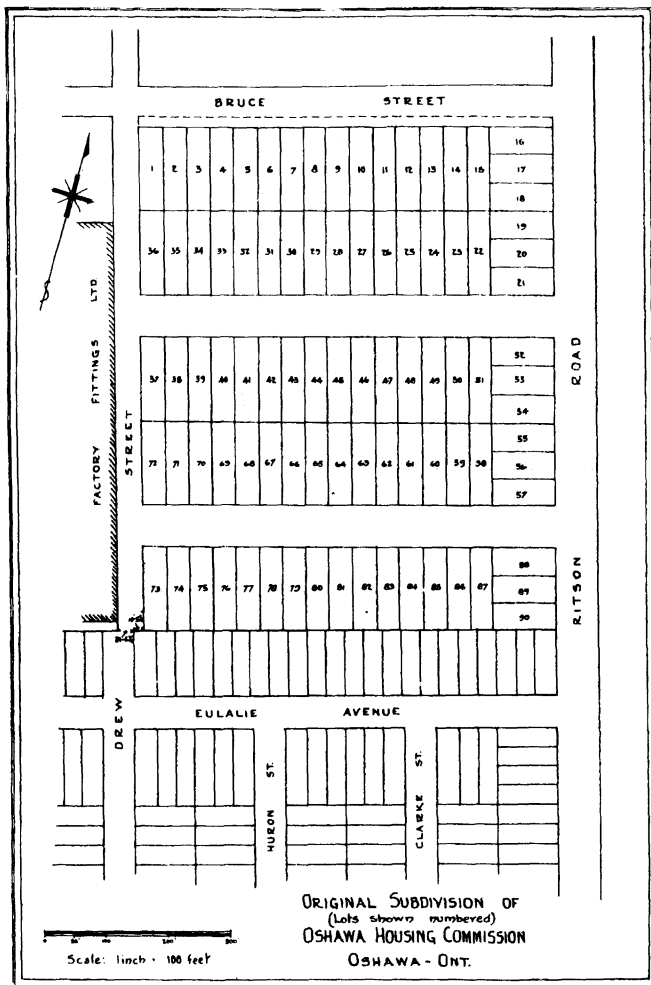


Figure 2a: The original gridiron subdivision plan submitted by the Oshawa Housing Commission was rejected due to its poor handling of traffic and a lack of consideration of what existed beyond the boundaries of the property. (Source: Bureau of Municipal Affairs, Report re Housing 1919, Ontario Sessional Paper no. 65, p.128-29).

incorporated some of the lessons learned from their down-market excursions. The preferences in question, then, are more likely those of designers than those of buyers, particularly as regards street layout.

Planners' emphasis on a suburban solution to Canada's urban problems was not predicated entirely on the notion that suburban life was inherently superior to inner-city life. That notion was widespread, but the predominance of suburban solutions in Canadian housing policy reflected the fact that cities were growing rapidly, and so the cheapest and quickest form of new development was suburban; the inadequacies of the inner-city

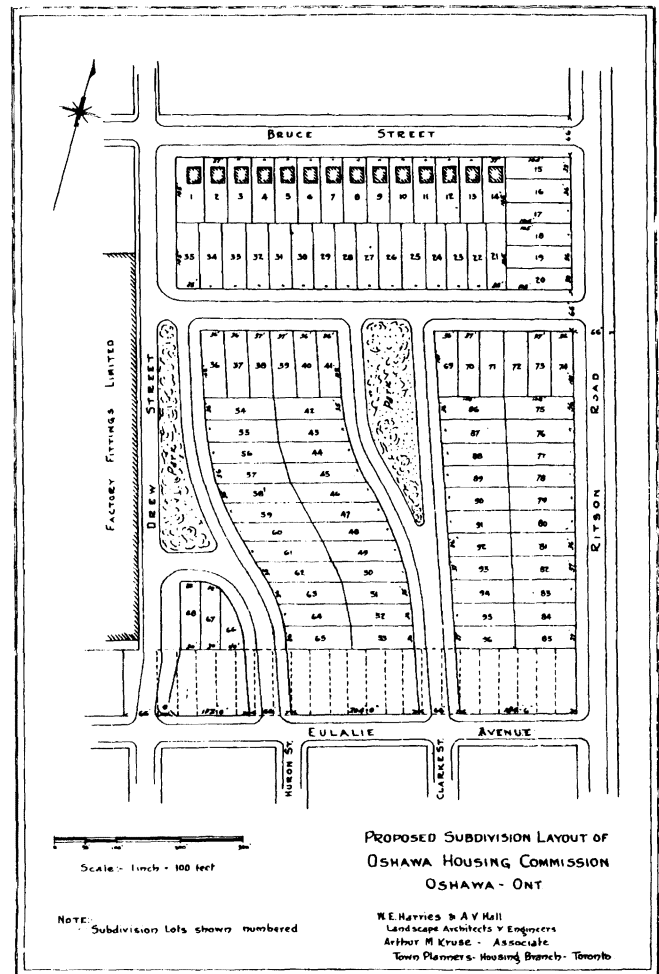


Figure 2b: The revised layout proposed by Housing Branch planners provided improved traffic connection with adjoining subdivisions, a greater number of lots, and more open space. (Source: Bureau of Municipal Affairs, Report re Housing 1919, Ontario Sessional Paper no. 65, p.130-31).

housing stock were widely noted, but it was conceded that its replacement would be too expensive as compared to adding to the total housing stock by suburban development.

As several authors have argued, many working-class urbanites preferred the security of homeownership over tenancy despite the burdens of debt, property taxes, and reduced mobility. That preference, however, was not necessarily a preference for suburban homeownership, as Michael Doucet and John Weaver claim.<sup>32</sup> The primary reason for workers' suburbanization lay in the fact that homeownership was typically affordable to lower-income households only in unserviced subdivisions. The dominance of suburban solutions in post-WWI Canadian hous-

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ing policy should therefore be seen not only as the promotion of an ideological agenda, which it surely was in part, but as a practical response to the Canadian city as it was. Cities would continue to grow by accretion around the edges, no matter what the state did; the challenge was to find means of averting further haphazard development. The resulting suburban solutions envisioned a future city focused on health and efficiency. Similar concerns were embodied in designs for houses that were proposed at the same time, which is not surprising given that many of these planning ideas were developed in the context of *housing* policy: better homes needed better neighbourhoods, or there would be no improvement at all.

***The Era of the Small House: Ideal Homes for Different Classes***

Ideal homes of the 1920s were founded on an ideal of houses “as centres of consumption and labour dependent ... on female energy alone.”<sup>33</sup> This fundamental feature of the ideal home and household was widely believed to be applicable to any household regardless of its social position. How did that belief translate into houses on the ground? This section compares designs for working-class and middle-class suburban houses (Figures 3 to 6). Middle-class ideals are assumed to be well represented by a selection of houses from *Canadian Homes and Gardens*, and from the Alladin Homes 1920 catalogue. The latter source is particularly useful, because it features houses in a wide variety of sizes and prices, and identifies the particular models approved for use under the OHA. Together with plans from the OHA, we are able to draw a picture of a range of commercially available housing, set in a context of prices, and, to a lesser extent, the incomes and occupations of the buyers. Differences in the number, size, location, and characteristics of spaces such as bedrooms, bathrooms, living rooms, and porches suggest that while architects envisioned converging consumption norms across classes, they also expected working-class families to enjoy less privacy, fewer luxuries, and to accommodate changing household structures within their houses for longer periods. Throughout, it should be remembered that the ideals under discussion approximated reality for a minority of the population; they are of interest mainly for the assumptions revealed about what constituted appropriate lifestyles.

It is important to keep in mind that the high-cost environment in which the OHA operated necessarily influences any interpretation of design.<sup>34</sup> Because the post-war inflation was expected to be temporary, administrators were conscious of the need to economize as much as possible. Because they felt they could not compromise on construction quality, administrators focused attempts to economize on the use of space. Thanks largely to inflation, Ontario's housing program administrators gave renewed emphasis to perfecting the “Small House”, an architectural genre dating from earlier efforts among elite builders to create compact, affordable middle-class houses in the context of rising prices, increasing mechanization, and shortages of servants. Under the OHA, this genre was modified and transposed

to the working class, albeit on a limited scale and for a different, though overlapping, set of reasons.

As Gwendolyn Wright has shown, the movement towards smaller houses for the middle class dates to the turn of the twentieth century.<sup>35</sup> But the small house of the pre-1914 period underwent a re-thinking in the 1920s. Whereas in 1914 “small house” ... [did] not mean necessarily the cheap house, but the residence that is planned for comfort and convenience, and not for show; to be operated with few servants, not many,<sup>36</sup> in the 1920s most of the small middle-class houses shown in *CH&G* had no servant quarters; those that did tended to provide not for “few” servants, but just one. In the process of shedding servants' quarters, the commonalities of the ‘small house’ with the working-class house grew. Small houses for both classes were designed for cost containment and efficiency. But the middle-class small house found its need for cost containment in the fact that it had more mechanical amenities than ever before, while the working-class version lacked many of those amenities, at least initially. Instead, it was to be a substantial improvement over the “jerry-built suburban shack” and the urban slum.

A comparison of OHA stock designs with sample ‘small houses’ published in *CH&G* from 1925 to 1930 reinforces the point that ‘small house’ had very different meanings across classes. The amount of floor space was often similar between the two types, but the no-frills OHA designs (Figures 3 and 4) contrasted sharply to the luxurious houses pictured in *CH&G* (Figure 6). The standards adopted by Ontario's contribution to the 1919 scheme both reflected middle-class ideals and fell far short of them. Some features considered essential in middle-class counterparts today were still too expensive to be so designated in 1919 by the OHA: hot and cold running water and clothes closets were among the things listed as “so desirable as to be almost essential,” while electric lighting, separate dining room, cellar, and heating by furnace were only called “desirable.”<sup>37</sup> Instead, candle, kerosene, or gas lighting, combined living and dining rooms, minimal storage space, and heating by coal grate and/or from the wood- or coal-burning cookstove, were to remain acceptable, if undesirable, features of the working-class house — not encouraged by the program, but still recognized as likely realities for borrowers.<sup>38</sup> Similarly, Delaney's claim that the houses were “technologically modern” is belied by the fact that even where borrowers planned to install an electric kitchen stove, administrators in Toronto insisted that the house should have a kitchen flue regardless.

The housing scheme also mandated minimum sizes for rooms. The minimum floor area of a three-bedroom house built under the Act would be about 700 square feet — considerably smaller than the middle-class ‘small house’ of the day. More interesting than these simple functional requirements are the architects' justifications for aspects of their standards. For example, they claimed that “houses ranging from four to six rooms are best suited to the needs of the average workman. ... One of the most important on the list of essential items is the provision of a



“...to produce the highest type of manhood and womanhood”:

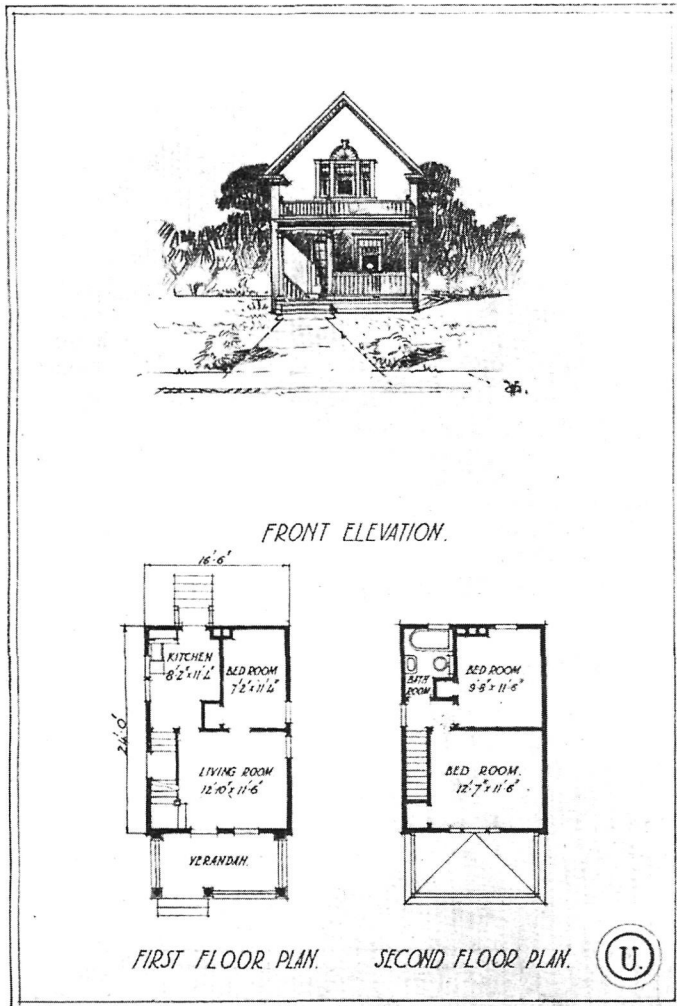


Figure 3: A “small house adaptable to narrow lots”, the OHA-sanctioned plan “U” featured a combined living-dining room which allowed for a third bedroom on the ground floor. (Source: Bureau of Municipal Affairs, Report re Housing 1919, Ontario Sessional Paper no. 65, p. 76)

bedroom for parents, and a separate bedroom for children of each sex. ... If more than six rooms are provided the tendency is to make up the additional expense by subletting to roomers, usually with injurious effect to home life.”<sup>39</sup> This perhaps explains why some models in the Aladdin catalogue were approved for OHA funding, while others of similar price were not approved: several such houses had seven or eight rooms.

While criticism in this instance was directed at professionally built houses that were too large to be affordable to the unsupplemented nuclear family, urban reformers were similarly concerned that owner-built suburban houses were usually too small, and that too few rooms were just as undesirable as too

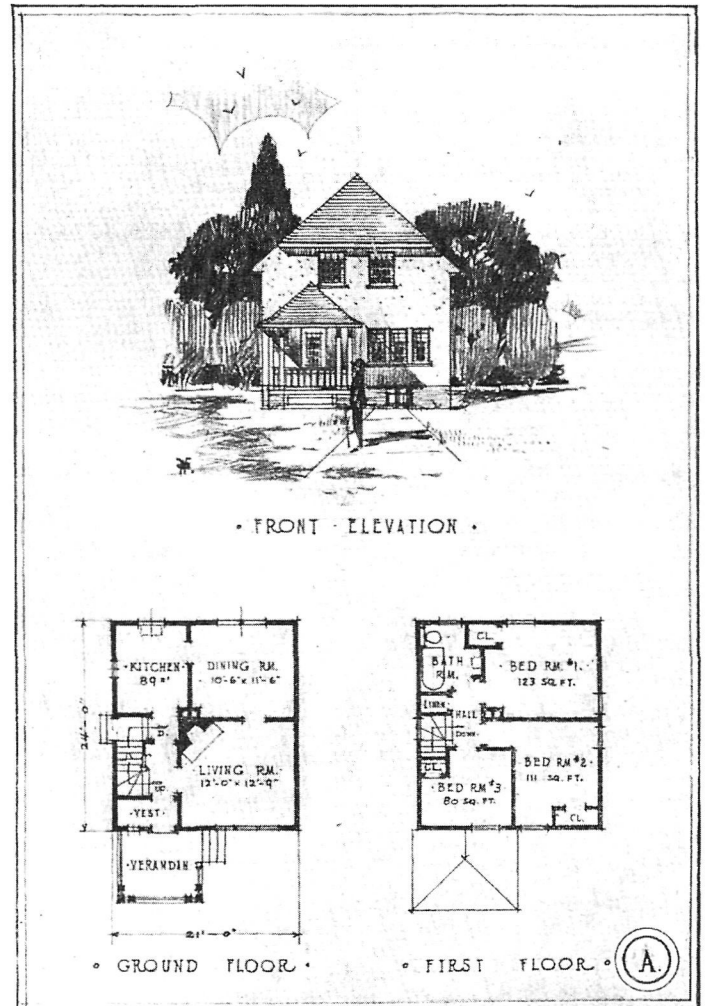



Figure 4: Designed by OHA architects, house plan “A” represented “the approximate minimum size of plan into which six rooms and a bathroom [could] be worked, adhering to the floor areas as set out in the Act.” (Source: Bureau of Municipal Affairs, Report re Housing 1919, Ontario Sessional Paper no. 65, p. 38)

many. For example, Frieda Held, a Toronto social worker, believed in a direct link between housing and morality: a public health nurse had related to her the story of “a newly married Englishman and his family [who around 1913 had] moved into a one-roomed shack on the outskirts of Toronto. They were sickly, dirty, shiftless, incorrigible beggars, and not above using dishonourable means to obtain what they wanted. ... They are now in a modern six-roomed house. They are clean, self-respecting, and much healthier.”<sup>40</sup> The Ontario government’s architects and planners reflected a similar belief in the connection between good citizenship and good housing in their writings. The result was that their designs, like planners’ prescriptions for a functionally efficient and class-divided city, assumed the in-

“...to produce the highest type of manhood and womanhood”:

**ALADDIN HOMES**



**THE BRUNSWICK XVI.**

This design has been approved by the Director of the Ontario Housing Scheme.

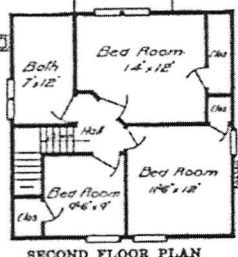
ARE you interested to know just what the average Canadian citizen wants in a home? Well, here it is. The Brunswick is still winner in our popularity contest.

Of the thousands of people with whom we correspond throughout the year in reference to houses, practically all express a preference for some one or other of our catalogue designs; a record of these preferences is very carefully kept, as it is the best possible index to trend of popular taste, and for the past two seasons the Brunswick, of all the designs in our catalogue, was the one in greatest demand. We attribute this principally to the fact that it is a splendid example of the “semi-bungalow”—the storey-and-a-half house with bungalow lines—the art and architecture of California adapted to our northern climate; and in a lesser degree, its wide appeal is due to its excellent floor plan.

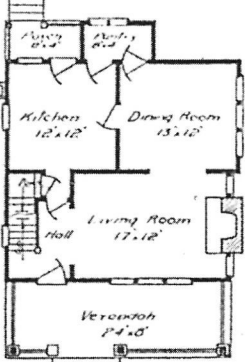
If you have not already studied the floor plan, before you do, take a pencil and paper and make a list of what you consider to be the essential features of a six room house; it will probably read something like this: Large, bright livingroom and diningroom; a kitchen not smaller than 10 ft. x 10 ft.; a pantry, an inside cellar entrance, a front hall for privacy, access from kitchen to front door without going through diningroom; three bedrooms in graduated sizes—a good bedroom, a better bedroom and a best bedroom, all to have closets; a large front verandah and a small rear porch, and a bathroom, preferably over the kitchen.

Now if you will compare these ideal specifications with the floor plan, you will see why we have said it had “an excellent floor plan.”

See terms on page 5 and specifications on pages 11 to 13.



SECOND FLOOR PLAN



FIRST FLOOR PLAN

Sixty-nine -

Figure 5: The popular “Brunswick XVI” model by Aladdin occupied the middle of the price range and was acceptable for funding under the OHA. (Source: Aladdin Homes Catalogue 1920, p.69)

separability of efficiency, health, and morality. Not surprisingly, the resulting houses looked a great deal like the houses that were coming into vogue among the middle class; they were not, however, similar in all respects.

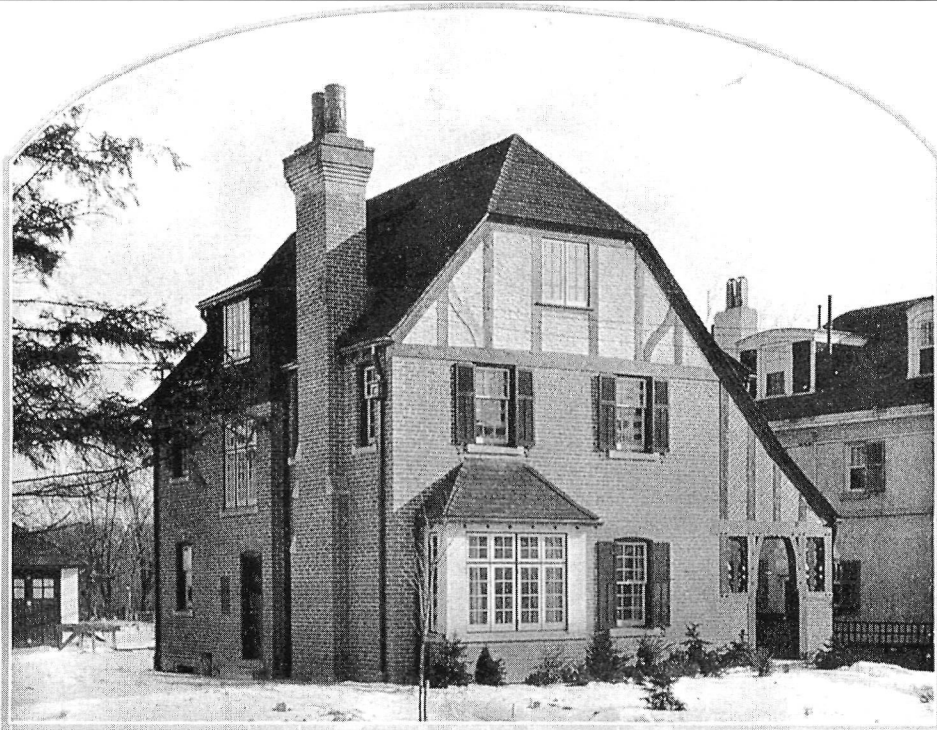
To have given full voice to middle-class ideals would have involved far greater emphasis on personal privacy, rather than

simply family privacy and sex segregation. Individual privacy was reflected in middle-class designs by the frequent inclusion of rooms such as dens and sewing rooms, and by the assumption that each child was to have a bedroom of his or her own. Many three-bedroom designs in *CH&G* labelled the third bedroom a “guest room”, implying that such houses were for families with only one child; the OHA’s supervising architects would not have conceived of such a room for a working-class family because of the under-use implied. Moreover, such an arrangement would have implied that the house was what is today called a “starter home”: a house for an early stage of the family life cycle. The working-class home would have to make do for any stage of the cycle.

Working-class three-bedroom models included neither specialized leisure spaces for men only, nor specialized work spaces for women only, apart from the kitchen. Children were to have the luxury of their own rooms only so long as they were the only child of their sex. In reality, many families would not have upheld the notions of family privacy implicit and explicit in designs for their houses, as many took boarders to help pay the rent or the mortgage.<sup>41</sup> Family privacy was still more thoroughly built into middle-class designs. In some cases, the few houses with servants’ quarters had a separate bathroom for the servant(s) sole use, giving rise to the irony of the servant whose sanitary facilities were probably better than those of her whole family, and whose individual privacy was in one sense greater than that of her employers.<sup>42</sup>

Such architectural features are open to more than one interpretation. Were the notions of privacy built into working-class homes simply reflections of perceived demands, or were they attempts to mould working-class culture in particular ways? The case of the porch is illuminating in this regard. Porches are virtually ubiquitous in Housing Branch-approved designs, and are a notable feature of working-class neighbourhoods of the period. Here, people could sit and chat with neighbours, women might do the household sewing and men might enjoy an after-work beer. It was the only living area of the working-class house open to total public scrutiny; the home’s public face. Most elite houses had no such space — outdoor living areas were in the rear, shielded from the view of strangers. Even the ‘small houses’ shown in *CH&G* tended not to have front porches designed for anything more than passage to the door; likewise, the plans offered by the Aladdin Company shed their front porches as the prices increased.<sup>43</sup> The public face of the middle-class home consisted solely of external design elements. For the working-class home,

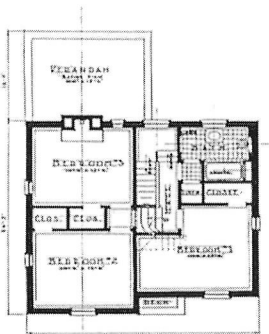
*"...to produce the highest type of manhood and womanhood":*



*The home of Dr. Robert Defries, in Cluny Drive, Toronto, is a small house compactly, but commodiously designed*

## THE WELL-PROPORTIONED SMALL HOUSE

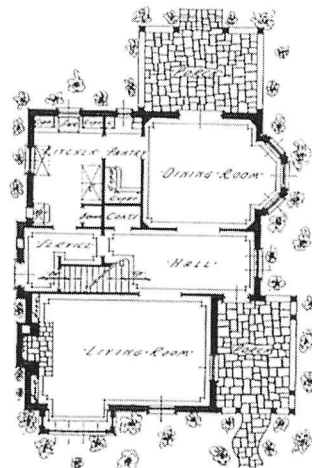
MESSRS. CATTO & CATTO, *Architects*



*Three bedrooms and verandah suitable for sleeping porch, with ample closet room and convenient-sized bath, comprise the second floor. The third floor is finished in service bedrooms.*

**T**HE small dwelling which may be carried out on a fifty-foot frontage providing garage accommodation as well, is one of the most persistent demands upon the modern architect. To provide variety of design and individuality of treatment is its chief problem. This is well met in the accompanying exterior and floor plans.

*Two tiled porticos are a feature of the downstairs plan. The dining room and living room are separately planned, divided by a hallway. The kitchen is well detached from other portions of the ground floor.*



**Figure 6:** *Typical high-cost small house illustrating similarities and differences between expensive and inexpensive takes on the same theme. (Source: Canadian Homes and Gardens, June 1927, p.25)*

***“...to produce the highest type of manhood and womanhood”:***

the public face embodied in the porch was not ‘public’ in the sense that anyone could or would simply go sit down on a total stranger’s porch. It was a ‘liminal space’, a ‘between’: part of the house one could enter without the intimacy of an invitation to sit inside; but also where one could not linger without the host’s permission.<sup>44</sup>

More generally, the differences between the porches of working- and middle-class houses encapsulate the different conceptions of privacy embodied in designs for consumers of different classes. The working-class house emphasized privacy to a greater extent than did its nineteenth-century predecessors, which because of their small size had little space for leisure and so promoted the maintenance of a relatively publicly oriented working-class culture. This type of culture flourished in the shacks of the early twentieth century, but faded quickly in the 1920s. Architecture was one element of a widespread cultural shift towards disengagement from public life and withdrawal into the private.<sup>45</sup>

The front porch was reviled by many Canadian architects. Many of the plans published in the Housing Branch’s report for 1919, which had been approved on the technical grounds of having met the Act’s formal standards for construction, dimensions, and amenities, were criticised for having porches. In one case a boarder’s room supplanted the porch; this undesirable feature became praiseworthy because “the owner has wisely refrained from imagining that his house was being built in California, and has not used the loan for a porch which can only be used for a very short time each year in his district.”<sup>46</sup> The prevalence of porches in approved designs therefore suggests that their presence arose from loan recipients’ preferences, not from the architects’ ideals. We should be careful, therefore, not to conclude that the similarity between plans published in the report and large numbers of houses built privately signals the Act’s strong influence: the direction of influence is likely the reverse, although there is evidence that the Housing Branch’s architects did inspire at least two kit-house companies to make permanent changes to some of their designs.<sup>47</sup>

If the small houses designed for members of different classes differed sharply in their external features and quality of construction, it is nonetheless true that they often shared similar dimensions and layouts. This was particularly true of the kitchen. The Ontario standards specified that kitchens should measure at least 80 square feet; the plans published in 1920 ranged from just under this lower limit to an upper limit of about 160 square feet. (Gross floor areas ranged from 700 to 1400 square feet.) A sampling of plans published in *CH&G* in 1926 and 1927, for houses ranging in size from 1200 to 2000 square feet, shows a similar range of kitchen sizes: 90 to 160 square feet. (Some of these, however, included pantries, which were rare in the Housing Branch-endorsed designs.) Likewise, the smallest models offered by Aladdin had kitchens of at least 80 square feet, while the largest rarely exceeded 160.

For both classes, the kitchen was often referred to as “workshop,” “laboratory,” or “factory.”<sup>48</sup> Similar sizes or a ‘scientific’ orientation should not be read as an indication that the activities to be performed in the kitchen were assumed to be identical. One assumption that applies in both cases is that a certain activity should *not* be carried on there: eating. Another assumption was also shared, but with different implications: maximum efficiency. The implications differ because in the working-class house, the kitchen was the site of more activities, and heavier labour. Whereas the middle-class kitchen was designed to be a self-contained, mechanized unit for preparing meals only, the working-class kitchen was also the space for washing clothes and doing sewing; many middle-class homes had separate spaces for those activities. Efficiency in the working-class kitchen came from reducing the amount of walking that the domestic labourer(s) would have to do in the course of a day’s work; for the middle-class kitchen it came from the mechanization of tasks once or still done by servants.

One aspect of the reformed kitchen was supposed to be the same across classes. “The kitchen is mother’s workshop and factory and laboratory. There she keeps most of her tools and does most of her work, and while she is there, that is the centre of the home.”<sup>49</sup> As the primary workspace of the home, the kitchen, even in the working-class home, was to be the site of individual privacy for the woman of the house. While advised not to do all of their work there — “Do your ‘sitting down’ work on the porch in summer”<sup>50</sup> — MacMurchy advised women to personalize the kitchen in a way that clearly made anyone else’s presence a matter requiring permission. “Mother never looks prettier than when she is presiding over the destinies of the family from her throne in the kitchen.”<sup>51</sup> The kitchen should include a “Kitchen Rest Corner,” itself also a workspace, because here “Mother” would rest physically while planning future labour.<sup>52</sup> The kitchen, then, was the space that for all classes defined the rest of the house as haven from the outside world for all family members except women. For women, it was here that they were supposed to consolidate their position as manager of household production and consumption. That efforts to reshape the kitchen had limited success during the 1920s is suggested by the re-emergence of the same emphasis, accompanied by renovation loans, in the Federal Home Improvement Plan of the late 1930s.<sup>53</sup>

The increased emphasis on privacy, and the emergence of spaces designed for new consumption norms — consumption-oriented living and dining rooms; smaller kitchens designed for reduced levels of domestic production of goods — was, despite the similarities, markedly different across classes. While middle-class housewives were being sold the latest in electrical gadgetry as necessities of the modern servantless home, working-class and farm women were still being given instructions on making soap, doing laundry manually with minimum effort, and organizing housework on a weekly, not daily, schedule.<sup>54</sup> Mechanical aids like washing machines and electric stoves were portrayed to them as goals to be saved for, not as neces-

**“...to produce the highest type of manhood and womanhood”:**

sities to be bought immediately on credit — “beware the instalment plan,” MacMurchy warned.<sup>55</sup> Even by the end of the decade, one private seller of house-building kits still offered designs from which the “bathroom may be omitted if not required,”<sup>56</sup> secure in the knowledge that the absence of indoor plumbing made the provision of such a room superfluous for many Canadians. The same company also published numerous plans that suggest that the ideas about privacy promoted by the state in the early 1920s were not necessarily popular — or universally affordable — a decade later: in addition to houses without bathrooms, kit-sellers such as Halliday and Aladdin offered three-room houses and houses with eat-in kitchens.

### **Conclusion**

Ideals of house, home, and city associated with the OHA and with the ideas of contemporary planners and architects depended for their ultimate achievement on the harmonious interaction of two requirements which implied possible tensions: houses would have to be densely-built enough for the economical provision of collective urban services; but the houses themselves would have to be designed with privacy in mind. Beyond that basic material necessity, the neighbourhoods and homes envisioned suggested that public spaces were not seen to be a high priority for a healthy community life. Any public spaces the community might need could either be small ones within the neighbourhood, or larger ones in the centre of the city. Under the OHA, modest beginnings were made in this direction, though the OHA was certainly not the only source of such changes. The movement was partly successful, in that post-1945 suburban housing design and neighbourhood planning conformed largely to the physical aspects of the 1920s ideal, while most of the social benefits — with the notable exception of better sanitation — failed to emerge.<sup>57</sup>

Newer working-class neighbourhoods and houses provided a setting amenable to insularity, expressed in the high degree of family privacy built into their exterior and interior spaces. That insularity, in turn, has been associated with the eventual rise of consumerism.<sup>58</sup> In many ways the working-class houses promoted through the OHA fit well with arguments suggesting that suburban working-class homeownership is one of the cornerstones of the consumer society.<sup>59</sup> Though their designers did not expect their owners to fill them immediately with all the latest modern conveniences, the houses' functionally differentiated spaces and emphasis on privacy were an ideal setting for future engagement with consumerism. Important groundwork for that encounter was laid in the 1920s, even if few working-class households had access to the latest technology. Even without ‘the latest’, many innovations with profound effects on daily life became widely available: hot and cold running water, electric lighting, ice boxes, gas stoves and new house designs all changed the face of domestic labour for those who experienced them. These items were part of a material convergence between classes that was fitful and partial during the 1920s, but that would gain considerable momentum after WWII, to the extent that few, if any, physical differences would remain

between middle-and working-class neighbourhoods; only elite areas would stand apart.<sup>60</sup> None of this is to suggest, however, that the Canadian working class attached the same meanings to consumerism, or to the home, as did advertisers or members of the middle class. Whether they did or not, many of those who moved into new suburban homes in the 1920s moved into a world that looked and felt a great deal like the contemporary environments of the middle class.

### **Acknowledgements**

We are grateful for the suggestions of Richard Harris and anonymous reviewers, and the financial support provided by a Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation graduate scholarship to Sendbuehler.

### **Notes**

1. Mrs J.E. Wetherell, “The Ontario Housing Problem. An Attempt at its Solution.” Special prize essay, in *Report of the Ontario Housing Committee* [for 1918] Sessional Paper no. 65, 1919, 150. It is important to note the distinction between the *Ontario Housing Committee*, the *Housing Branch*, and the *Ontario Housing Act*. The Committee was an advisory body active in 1918–1919, composed mainly of experts from the Toronto area. It was dissolved shortly before the implementation of the Housing Act, which was administered by a small Housing Branch within the Provincial Secretary’s Department.
2. This is not to argue that planners and reformers did not continue to debate inner-city problems during this era. See Sean Purdy, “Industrial Efficiency, Social Order and Moral Purity: Housing Reform Thought in English Canada, 1900–1950,” *UHR/Rhu* 25, 1997, 30–40. John Bacher, *Keeping to the Marketplace: The Evolution of Canadian Housing Policy* (Montreal: McGill-Queen’s Press 1993), 37–65; Marc Choko, *Crises du logement à Montréal, 1860–1939* (Montréal: Éditions coopératives Albert Saint-Martin 1980); J.S. Woodsworth, *My Neighbor. A Study of City Conditions. A Plea for Social Service* (Toronto: U. of Toronto Press 1972 [1911]); David Ward, “The progressives and the urban question: British and American responses to the inner city slums, 1880–1920,” *Transactions, Institute of British Geographers* 9, 1980.
3. Bureau of Municipal Affairs, *Report re Housing*, Ontario Sessional Paper no. 47, 1923. Several hundred additional houses were built under a successor program, financed by Provincially guaranteed municipal debentures, but similar in all other respects.
4. See, *Report of the Ontario Housing Committee*, Chapter 1: The Need, Ontario Sessional Paper No. 65, 1919. For Toronto alone, Charles Hastings estimated that supply trailed demand by at least 15,000 dwellings (*Social Welfare*, October 1, 1920, 6).
5. Canada, *Housing Project of Federal Government*, (Ottawa: King’s Printer, 1919) 10.
6. See Archives of Ontario (hereafter AO), RG8-41, Housing Branch correspondence; Lawrence N. Isaac, James M. Richtik and H. John Selwood, “Canada’s 1919 Housing Scheme in St. James and Assiniboia.” *Association of North Dakota Geographers* 44, 1994, 60–75; Jill Wade, *Houses for All. The Struggle for Social Housing in Vancouver 1919–1950* (Vancouver: UBC Press 1994).
7. Parliamentary Housing Committee, 1935, Minutes of Evidence, p.101. See also Bacher, *Keeping to the Marketplace*, 58–62; A.E. Jones, *The Beginning of Canadian Government Housing Policy, 1918–1924* (Ottawa: Centre for Social Welfare Studies, Carleton University 1978); and Jill Wade, *Houses for All*. A cursory review of OHA-funded properties in the Hamilton assessment rolls suggests that most original loan recipients remained in their houses at least through the 1920s. Evidence for other places suggests repossessions by 1935 were in the 10–15% range. While substantial, this is hardly the calamitous rate implied by Bacher and others.
8. Furthermore, an examination of the Aladdin 1920 price list — comparing the prices of models approved for use under the OHA with those not approved —

**"...to produce the highest type of manhood and womanhood":**

- suggests that the houses tended to fall into the lower-middle range of commercially available housing. Many lower-cost models offered by Aladdin were judged insufficiently spacious or sturdy for OHA assistance. Aladdin billed one of these cheaper models as "cost[ing] no more than an ugly shack" and having a "snug beauty [that] gives its occupant self-respect and the respect of his neighbours and makes him a contented, useful and happy member of his community," suggesting as did many planners, architects, and social workers that shacks had the opposite effect. Nevertheless, while high construction standards ensured that the OHA houses would cost more than the simpler frame dwellings available, the houses were not palatial by any stretch of the imagination.
9. See AO, MU 1307 and 1308, Hearst Papers correspondence re Housing.
  10. See William H. Wilson, *The City Beautiful Movement* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins 1989); Mary Corbin Sies and Christopher Silver, eds, *Planning the Twentieth-Century American City* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press 1996); M. Christine Boyer, *Dreaming the Rational City: The Myth of American City Planning* (Cambridge: MIT Press 1983). For an account of the City Beautiful movement in Canada, see Walter Van Nus, "The Fate of City Beautiful Thought in Canada, 1893–1930," in Stelter and Artibise, eds, *The Canadian City*, 2nd ed., (Ottawa: Carleton Library 1984).
  11. Ebenezer Howard, *Garden Cities of Tomorrow* (London: Faber & Faber 1965 [1898]). For an international (excluding Canada) survey of the influence of Howard's ideas, see Stephen V. Ward, ed., *The Garden City. Past, Present, and Future* (London: E&FN Spon 1992).
  12. See any issue of the Commission of Conservation's *Conservation of Life* (later titled *Town Planning and Conservation of Life*) to gain an impression of Adams' influence in this regard. During his stay in Canada he was also widely consulted by municipalities and corporations.
  13. A number of essays in A.F.J. Artibise and G.A. Stelter, eds, *The Usable Urban Past* (Ottawa: Carleton Library 1979) are in general agreement on the account given here, though they do vary to some extent; these include Walter Van Nus, "Towards the city efficient: the theory and practice of zoning, 1919–1939"; Thomas I. Gunton, "The ideas and policies of the Canadian planning profession, 1909–1931"; P.J. Smith, "The principle of utility and the origins of planning legislation in Alberta, 1912–1975"; Peter W. Moore, "Zoning and planning: the Toronto experience, 1904–1970." See also Elizabeth Bloomfield, "Reshaping the Urban Landscape? Town Planning Efforts in Kitchener-Waterloo, 1912–1925," in Stelter and Artibise, eds, *Shaping the Urban Landscape* (Ottawa: Carleton Library 1982).
  14. Noulan Cauchon, "Town Planning for Canada," *Social Welfare* 8(5) 1926, 92.
  15. Cauchon to William Pearce, 20 June 1912. National Archives of Canada, Cauchon Papers, MG 30 C 105, vol. 1.
  16. C.B. Sissons, "A housing policy for Ontario," *Canadian Magazine* 53(3), 1919, 244.
  17. Richard Harris has documented suburban owner-building extensively for Toronto. See *Unplanned Suburbs. Toronto's American Tragedy, 1900–1950* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins 1997); its prevalence has also been noted for Hamilton and Winnipeg.
  18. Bruce Elliott, *The City Beyond. A History of Nepean, Birthplace of Canada's Capital 1792–1990* (Nepean: City of Nepean 1991).
  19. John Weaver, *Shaping the Canadian City: Essays on Urban Politics and Policy, 1890–1920* (Toronto: Institute of Public Administration on Canada 1977), 14–15. For a contemporary account, see Bryce Stewart, "The housing of our immigrant workers," in Paul Rutherford, ed., *Saving the Canadian City: the First Phase, 1880–1920* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press 1974 [1913]), 152.
  20. See Harris, *Unplanned Suburbs*. Andrew Wiese, "Places of Our Own: suburban black towns before 1960" *Journal of Urban History* 19(3), 1993, makes a similar point with reference to African-Americans in the cities of the industrial Midwest and Northeast United States.
  21. For example, A.G. Dalzell, "Should shack-towns be encouraged?" *Town Planning – Journal of the Town Planning Institute of Canada* 5(2), April 1926, 23–29. The term "working-class suburb" is a later scholarly invention, though "suburb" was used in the 1920s to refer to any kind of neighbourhood on the outskirts of a city, whether within its political boundaries or not. The shack-towns of the Laurier Boom were probably not the first such settlements in Canada's cities, but because so many of their earlier buildings are temporary by design they leave few traces in the landscape, so that any nineteenth-century examples are even less susceptible to our inquiries than those of the early twentieth century. In any case, nineteenth-century examples would have been far less extensive than those arising from the special conditions of the Laurier Boom years. Moreover, the absence of certain services that set such areas apart in the twentieth century would have been unexceptional in any working-class neighbourhood in the earlier period. There is, too, some evidence that similar settlements appeared briefly on the outskirts of several cities immediately following World War II, but were quickly superseded by regulated subdivisions. On the latter, see Veronica Strong-Boag, "Home Dreams: women and the suburban experiment in Canada, 1945–60," *Canadian Historical Review* 72(4), 1993, 484–5.
  22. Richard Harris, "Self-building and the social geography of Toronto, 1901–1913: a challenge for urban theory." *Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers*. NS 15, 1990, 387–402. Our estimate of 500,000 is admittedly impressionistic, but is nonetheless conservative. It is based on an average of four persons to the household, times 125,000 households (about one-third of 400,000 new houses). Since assessment roll data for Hamilton suggest that the City waited until new neighbourhoods of this type had reached approximately half their ultimate building densities before undertaking annexation and the completion of services, and since builders were generally free to build on any subdivided tract, it is likely that far more than one-third of new houses were built at least several months before the installation of sewer and water services. A specific case is detailed in Richard Harris and Matt Sendbuehler, "The making of a working-class suburb in Hamilton's East End, 1900–1945." *Journal of Urban History* 20(4), August 1994, 486–511.
  23. W.A. McLean, "The influence of the modern highway," paper presented to the Engineering Institute of Canada, Toronto, 1926, quoted in Dalzell, "Should shack-towns be encouraged?" 23.
  24. Dalzell, "Should shack-towns be encouraged?" 29.
  25. See, for example, A.G. Dalzell, "Social Aspects of Housing," *Social Welfare* 11(8), 1929, 175. See also, "The Grip of the Grid (How the Mason's Sieve has Been Used as a Model to Plan the cities of the Continent)." *Contract Record* 43(19), May 8, 1929.
  26. *Report of the Ontario Housing Committee*, Sessional Paper No. 65, 1919, 81–83; Noulan Cauchon, "Town Planning," *Journal of the Royal Architectural Institute of Canada* 3(4), 1926, 165–171.
  27. *Report of the Ontario Housing Committee*, Sessional Paper no. 65, 1919, 34.
  28. Jill Delaney, "The Garden Suburb of Lindenlea, Ottawa: A Model Suburb for the First Federal Housing Policy, 1918–24" *UHR/Rhu* 19(3), 1991, 151–65; John Weaver, "From land assembly to social maturity: the suburban life of Westdale (Hamilton), Ontario, 1911–1951," in Stelter and Artibise, *Shaping the Canadian City*; Anon (likely Thomas Adams) "Planning new towns in Canada: Ojibway." *Conservation of Life* 4(4), October 1918.
  29. Delaney, "Lindenlea", 159.
  30. City of Ottawa Archives, Housing Committee papers.
  31. See, for example, Stuart Blumin, *The Emergence of the Middle Class: Social Experience in the American City, 1790–1900*. (Cambridge: Cambridge U.P. 1989), especially 165–179.
  32. Michael Doucet and John Weaver, *Housing the North American City* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's 1991), Chapter 4; see also Deryck W. Holdsworth, "House and Home in Vancouver: Images of West-Coast Urbanism, 1886–1929" in Stelter and Artibise, *The Canadian City*, 2nd ed, especially 191–2.
  33. Veronica Strong-Boag, *The New Day Recalled. Lives of Girls and Women in English Canada, 1919–1939*. (Toronto: Penguin/Copp Clark 1988), 114. The

**“...to produce the highest type of manhood and womanhood”:**

- reality was probably not so unequal: certain domestic tasks, especially those surrounding the maintenance of the house itself, were the province of men; the ideal, nevertheless, maintained the woman-centredness of the home. See Margaret Marsh, *Suburban Lives* (New Brunswick, N.J.: Rutgers U.P. 1990), 74–82.
34. The average cost of constructing inexpensive housing rose from \$1.00 per square foot in 1905, to \$2.10 in 1915, and to \$5.50 by 1920. See Doucet and Weaver, *Housing the North American City*, 205.
  35. Gwendolyn Wright, *Moralism and the Model Home: Domestic Architecture and Cultural Conflict in Chicago, 1873–1913* (Chicago: U. of Chicago Press 1980).
  36. *The Book of Little Houses* (New York: MacMillan/The Suburban Press 1914), 24.
  37. *Report of the Ontario Housing Committee*, Sessional Paper no. 65, 1919, 88.
  38. It is possible that items such as furnaces were not required so as to provide borrowers with a way to spend more than the limit on their houses. Most borrowers probably bought a coal-fired furnace as an “extra” without waiting or using alternate sources of heat.
  39. *Report of the Ontario Housing Committee*, 1919, 89.
  40. Frieda Held, “Housing in Toronto,” *Social Welfare*, October 1, 1920, 17.
  41. See Richard Harris, “The flexible house: the housing backlog and the persistence of lodging, 1891–1951” *Social Science History* 18 (1994), 31–53. Data on this point specifically for OHA houses are scant, though Hamilton assessment roll data suggest that households in that city’s OHA houses were similar to their neighbours in this respect: about 20% had non-family residents throughout the 1920s and 1930s (counting sons- and daughters-in-law, and other non nuclear-family relatives as “non-family”).
  42. Such features were probably rare, and designed to make a house a more attractive place of employment during a period in which live-in servants were difficult to attract. See Strong-Boag, *The New Day*, 54–5.
  43. Aladdin Homes Catalogue, 1920.
  44. See Robert Mugerauer, “Toward an architectural vocabulary: the porch as a between,” in David Seamon, ed., *Dwelling, Seeing, and Designing: Toward a Phenomenological Ecology* (Albany: SUNY Press 1993); Sue Bridwell Beckham, “The American front porch: women’s liminal space,” in Marilyn Ferris Motz and Pat Browne, eds., *Making the American Home: Middle-Class Women & Domestic Material Culture 1840–1940* (Bowling Green: Bowling Green State U.P. 1988).
  45. See Craig Heron, “Labourism and the Canadian Working Class,” *Labour/Le Travail* 13, Spring 1984, 45–76. For a more general discussion of public and private life in a Toronto ‘shacktown’ see Richard Harris, “‘Canada’s All Right’: The Lives and Loyalties of Immigrant Families in a Toronto Suburb, 1900–1945,” *Canadian Geographer* 36, 1 (1992), 13–30.
  46. Plan “D”. Bureau of Municipal Affairs, Report on Housing, 1919. *Ontario Sessional Paper* No. 65, 1920, 45.
  47. See: AO, RG8-41, Housing Branch correspondence re Hamilton and Midland; Aladdin Homes 1920 catalogue. John Weaver claims that in “Westdale” the “Hamilton A1” was a government plan widely adopted by private builders. It is more likely that the A1 was a popular pattern-book model that happened to meet standards, and happened to have been chosen by one or more Hamilton loan recipients.
  48. For Example, Helen MacMurchy, *How to Make our Canadian Home*, *Little Blue Books Home Series No.3* (Ottawa: Department of Health 1922), 14–15; Eustella Burke, “Lighting the kitchen, workshop and laboratory of the home,” *CH&G* 4(12), December 1927, 48; *CH&G*, 7(2), 1930, 58.
  49. Helen MacMurchy, *How to Make our Canadian Home*, 15.
  50. MacMurchy, *How to Make*, 18.
  51. MacMurchy, *How We Cook in Canada* (Ottawa: Department of Health 1922), 3.
  52. MacMurchy, *How We Cook*, 7.
  53. Margaret Hobbs and Ruth Roach Pierson, “‘A kitchen that wastes no steps...’: gender, class, and the Home Improvement Plan, 1936–40,” *Histoire Sociale – Social History* 21, 9–37.
  54. Helen MacMurchy, *How to Manage Housework in Canada. The Little Blue Books, Home Series No. 7* (Ottawa: Department of Health 1922), 11–13. See also the “women’s pages” in the *Canadian Congress Journal*, organ of the mainstream Canadian labour movement. Articles and recipes generally assumed that few if any of readers’ tasks were mechanized, and that their schedules should — or had to — be organized on a weekly schedule.
  55. MacMurchy, *How to Manage Housework*, 17, 25. MacMurchy also was hopeful that washing machines would promote the sharing of domestic chores between men and women.
  56. Halliday Comfortested Homes (Hamilton), 1929 catalogue, 14.
  57. Strong-Boag, “Home Dreams,” 492–93.
  58. John Belec, John Holmes, and Todd Rutherford, “The rise of Fordism and the transformation of consumption norms: mass consumption and housing in Canada, 1930–1945,” in Richard Harris and Geraldine Pratt, eds. *Housing Tenure and Social Class* (Gavle: National Swedish Institute for Building Research 1987).
  59. Belec et al, “Rise of Fordism;” Richard Walker, “A theory of suburbanization: capitalism and the construction of urban space in the United States,” in Michael Dear and Allen Scott, eds. *Urbanization and Urban Planning in Capitalist Society* (London: Methuen 1981); David Harvey, “Class structure and the theory of residential differentiation”, in *The Urban Experience* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins 1989).
  60. See, for example, Strong-Boag, “Home Dreams.”