

The Small House Movement of the 1920s:

Preserving Small “Better” Houses

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## Abstract

*The Small House Movement of the 1920s: Preserving Small "Better" Houses* examines origins and contributors and identifies and analyzes the houses built as a result. The movement began in 1919 when the American Institute of Architects (AIA) founded the Architects' Small House Service Bureau. The non-profit offered a plan service, which allowed prospective homeowners to buy small house blueprints through the mail. The standards they set for small houses were highly influential and led to many other architect plan services springing up in the 1920s. A national program called Better Homes in America used small house design to promote social reform and the beautification of suburbs. They not only partnered with the Architects' Small House Service Bureau but formed their own robust research and educational programs including an annual model house demonstration in cities all over the country.

In order to examine the built assets from the Small House Movement, model houses from the Better Homes in America program were researched. Extant assets were analyzed to determine the possible significance of small 1920s houses and bring attention to an underrepresented typology in the field of historic preservation. Through the research, 1920s house trends and key historical information was identified that will be useful to historians and preservationists researching that decade. A case study of Santa Barbara was conducted to identify extant model houses from the Better Homes in America to provide historians and preservationists with resources and processes for researching Small House Movement assets from the 1920s.



## Acknowledgements

First, I would like to thank my advisor, Andrew Dolkart, who helped me formulate the idea for this thesis and has provided outstanding guidance and support. I would also like to thank my readers, Paul Bentel and Janet Foster for their insightful feedback. Special thanks to Nicole Hernandez who provided vital information about Santa Barbara's preservation efforts and for her help locating "lost" model houses. I would also like to thank Cheri Rae from the Pearl Chase Society for the helpful resources for the Santa Barbara Case Study. Finally, I would like to thank my husband, Donte Smith, who encouraged me to pursue my passion and provided steadfast support.

## Introduction

This thesis focusing on The Small House Movement of the 1920s is situated at the intersection of architectural history and historic preservation. The Small House Movement occurred from 1919 to 1945 and marks a period when “improving the quality of life took on special importance. Alliances were formed among architects, real estate developers, builders, social reformers, manufacturers, and public officials—at both national and local levels to encourage home ownership, standardized home building practices, and neighborhood improvements.”<sup>1</sup> A major contributor to improving the quality of life through small house design was the Better Homes in America Program (1922-1935). The program’s dedication to small houses for the working class and alliance with the Architects’ Small House Service Bureau will be examined in depth in this thesis.

This thesis will answer the question: Can examining model houses from the Better Homes in America program help historians and preservationists contextualize small house architecture from the 1920s? In order to answer this question, this thesis will begin by providing a comprehensive history of key contributors to the Small House Movement with a large focus on the Better Homes in America program (Figure 1). *The Small House Movement of the 1920s: Preserving Small "Better" Houses* will add to the existing body of research on the Better Homes in America program that to date largely focuses on the social aspects of the program. No research has been found that focuses on the architectural design or examines remaining assets from the model house program through the lens of historic preservation. The research from this thesis will show that

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<sup>1</sup> National Park Service U.S. Department of the Interior, *Historic Residential Suburbs*, 2002, 56, [https://shpo.nv.gov/uploads/documents/NR\\_Bulletin\\_Suburbs-compressed.pdf](https://shpo.nv.gov/uploads/documents/NR_Bulletin_Suburbs-compressed.pdf).

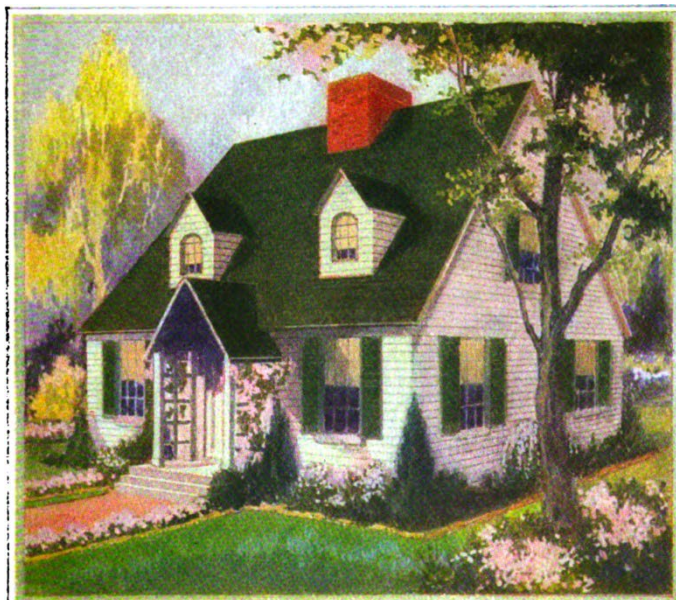


Figure 1 – The cover a Better Homes in America guidebook. The house is the quintessential “Better Home” of the 1920s. *Better Homes in America Guidebook for Campaigns: Better Homes Week, May 10 to 17, 1925, 1924.*

due to a lack of historical written context about the movement, Better Homes in America model houses are long-forgotten, despite being part of a national program and receiving a tremendous amount of publicity at the time that they were built. This thesis will seek to show that if these houses are preserved, they can be “living examples” of small American houses from the 1920s.<sup>2</sup> They were called “living examples” during the program because the houses taught future homeowners and existing homeowners about what made a “Better Home.” The houses are important to research and preserve because they demonstrate the history of the automobile suburbs, small house design principles, 1920s ideologies, key architects, speculative builders, social reform, and the housewife of the 1920s.

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<sup>2</sup> Audra Bellmore, “English Cottage Style Homes in America: Expressions of Architectural, Technological and Social Innovation” (PhD diss., Loyola University Chicago, 2014), 206.

## Providing Historical Context for Preservationists

Examining the history of the Small House Movement is important because to date no comprehensive history has been written. This context is essential for historians and preservationists since the 1920s small houses are often overshadowed by large estates of the 1920s and small houses from the 1930s and 1940s. A more complete history of single-family dwellings in the United States is needed for this “lost” decade. In 2002, a section about the Small House Movement which includes the Architects’ Small House Service Bureau and Better Homes in America was added to the National Parks Service bulletin *Historic Residential Suburbs*.<sup>3</sup> Although only a tiny section is included it provides useful history for the early period of the Small House Movement. The research in this thesis expands on what was introduced by the bulletin and provides built examples that can be evaluated for historic context and possible listing or designation.

1930s and 1940s small houses are given extensive coverage in several other resources, which illustrates the need for information about small houses in the 1920s, the subject of this thesis. For example, *A Field Guide to American Houses* provides detailed information about houses from the 1920s but it does not discuss Better Homes in America or the impact of architect-designed stock plans in that decade. In the *Field Guide*, Better Homes in America is briefly mentioned in a footnote which reveals that Monterey-Revival architect Roland E. Coate won a “prestigious” Better Homes in America award for his work in Santa Barbara.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> National Park Service U.S. Department of the Interior, *Historic Residential Suburbs*, 56.

<sup>4</sup> Virginia Savage McAlester, *A Field Guide to American Houses: The Definitive Guide to Identifying and Understanding America’s Domestic Architecture* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2015), 1483.



Figure 2 – A Minimal Traditional style house in Hamptons, New York (built ca. 1940). This house is part of the Small House Movement post-1920s. Minimal Traditional and other small house styles of the 1930s and 1940s were influenced by the small house designs of the 1920s. Yet, 1920s small houses are often “forgotten” with more historical accounts dedicated to 1930s and 1940s small houses. *A Field Guide to American Houses*, 2015.

The *Field Guide*’s author Virginia Savage McAlester wrote the following about small houses of the 1930s (Figure 2).

“The little house that could.” It was the small house that could be built with FHA-insured loans in the midst of the Great Depression between 1935 and 1940... [The FHA had the goal to] produce small homes the average working American could afford...Architects, desperate for work after 1930, had enthusiastically turned their attention to the design of the small house. Large portions of professional journals were devoted to the subject beginning in the mid-1930s. It was of paramount importance to design the most efficient floor plans, kitchens, and baths since every extra square foot added to the cost...A veritable flood of house plans and pattern books for small houses featuring Minimal Traditionals was published between 1935-1950...The most influential publications were FHA’s own bulletins, *Principles of Planning Small Houses*.<sup>5</sup>

This account leaves out what preceded the “little house that could” in the 1920s, driven by the Architects’ Small House Service Bureau, Better Homes in America and others. The shifting

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<sup>5</sup> McAlester, *A Field Guide to American Houses*.



focus on small house design listed above had already occurred in the 1920s and the inclusion of this information could help preservationists identify the small houses of the 1920s in the field. In some cases, historians have faced the challenging task of telling the story of 1930s small houses without having the proper historic context of what occurred in the 1920s.

Another example is in the efforts of the Historic Preservation Division of the Georgia Department of Natural Resources. Georgia's historic preservation department created a new typology in 2001 called the American Small House since they continually found houses in the field that did not fit into previously defined categories (Figure 3). Creating a new typology is a significant contribution to small house research. Still, their narrative would provide better context to preservationists by including some background about small houses from the 1920s. A presentation given by the Georgia Historic Preservation Division about the American Small House detailed that:

Our office [researched] plan books and design catalogs from the 1930s into the 1960s in which this house type was well represented...All these small houses we had been looking at, from the mid-1930s through the mid-1950s, were part of a larger housing phenomenon characterized by attention to the design, construction, and marketing of "small houses, in Georgia and across the country."<sup>6</sup>



Figure 3- Images from Georgia Historic Preservation Division's presentation on the American Small House. "The American Small House," 2001.

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<sup>6</sup> "The American Small House," Georgia Department of Historic Resources, 2001.

Attention to design, construction, and the widespread marketing of small houses was already a focus of the Small House Movement in the 1920s. The 1921 introduction in *Designs for American Homes* says the book's goal was: "to show the house builder the possibilities of combining good design with economy in construction."<sup>7</sup> This thesis will provide historical background on the Small House Movement of the 1920s that can tell a more complete story of the typology of the small house to aid historians and preservationists.

### Locating and Preserving Small “Better” Houses

A case study of Santa Barbara was done to provide an example of a city that was involved in the Small House Movement throughout the 1920s. The case study provides information to help historians and preservationists research small houses in other locations. The case study illustrates that many model houses from Santa Barbara’s yearly Better Homes Campaigns are “hiding in plain sight,” and the community’s involvement in the national program remains mostly undocumented. Researching model houses in Santa Barbara that were featured in Better Homes in America campaigns also led to important discoveries about the city’s architectural history including about builders, architects, real estate companies, and landscape designers. Over thirty extant model houses used for Better Homes campaigns were located and the houses provide important context to Santa Barbara’s social history and the development of its built fabric (Figure 4).

Small houses have previously proved challenging for preservationists to designate in Santa Barbara. One reason for this is that small houses are sometimes deemed insignificant or

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<sup>7</sup> H.G. Outwater, introduction to *Designs for American Homes* (Dodd Mead, 1921).





Figure 4 – Better Homes in America model house from Santa Barbara’s 1926 local campaign (1926 and 2022). Better Homes in America records, Hoover Institution Library & Archives / Google Maps.

overlooked due to their lack of association with a famous architect or ties to significant local or national history. The case study shows that many small houses were part of local small house competitions or were used during Better Homes Week as a model house which contributed significantly to Santa Barbara’s small house standards and designs around the city. In addition, most of the small houses were built from architect-designed stock plans (some which can be linked to well-known architects).

Historians and preservationists can uncover significant information as well if research is done on small houses from the 1920s in their communities. Many local Better Homes campaigns were well-documented, and the process that was used to research Santa Barbara’s small houses can be replicated in other cities. In the short timeframe for this research, over twenty extant Better Homes model houses were located around the country and many more exist. This research also uncovered extant speculative builder model houses that may be interesting to local historians and preservationists. While many small houses were found to be extant, if no protection in the form of historic designation is made they may be demolished or severely altered (as some examples from this research will show).

The small houses from the Better Homes in America program represent a time when "improving the quality of American domestic life took on special importance" and the small house from the 1920s is important to American architectural history.<sup>8</sup> Model houses from the program are "hiding in plain sight" in cities all over the United States. At the start of the program in 1922, Secretary of Commerce Herbert Hoover said that "A hundred years from now your descendants will still be reaping the harvest of your labor for BETTER HOMES IN AMERICA".<sup>9</sup> It is fitting that this thesis is being written exactly one hundred years from the start of Better Homes in America with an in-depth analysis of the small houses it produced. Better Homes in America model houses and other small houses from the 1920s are extremely important to investigate, document, and consider for historic designation locally and nationally.

"A hundred years from  
now your descendants  
will still be reaping the  
harvest of your labor for  
BETTER HOMES IN  
AMERICA"

A handwritten signature in cursive script, reading "Herbert Hoover". The signature is written in dark ink and is positioned below the printed text of the quote.

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<sup>8</sup> National Park Service U.S. Department of the Interior, *Historic Residential Suburbs*, 59.

<sup>9</sup> *Better Homes in America Plan Book, 1923*, Better Homes in America records, Hoover Institution Library & Archives, Box 27, Folder 2-6.

## Chapter 1: Better Homes in America Philosophies & The Emergence of Automobile Suburbs

## A Brief Introduction to Architect-Designed Stock Plans

Architect-designed stock plans and the Architects' Small House Service Bureau provide important context for understanding Better Homes in America, which aimed to bring well-designed houses to people with modest incomes. Plan books grew out of the tradition of pattern books and architectural treatises that have existed since Roman times. In America, pattern books were popularized in the mid-1800s by the architectural theorist, landscape designer, and horticulturist Andrew Jackson Downing. Downing published two important pattern books, *Cottage Residences* (1842) and *The Architecture of Country Houses* (1852) (Figure 5). After his untimely death, Calvert Vaux continued Downing's work and published the pattern book *Villas and Cottages* in 1857. Other pattern books began to appear in the late nineteenth century including Henry Hudson Holly's *Modern Dwellings in Town and Country, Adapted to American Wants and Climate* in 1878 (Figure 6).<sup>10</sup>

Detailed house plans by mail became available when George and Charles Palliser and others published catalogs such as *Model Homes for the People, A Complete Guide to the Proper and Economical Erection of Buildings* (1876). House plans by architects along with architectural competitions also began to be published in magazines like *Ladies Home Journal* beginning in 1899 and continued into the early twentieth century. Plan books by George F. Barber, Robert W. Shoppel, and William A. Radford became popular in the early twentieth century which led to architect-sponsored small house service bureaus and stock plan companies of the Small House Movement in 1919.<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> National Park Service U.S. Department of the Interior, *Historic Residential Suburbs* (National Parks Service, 2002), 56, [https://shpo.nv.gov/uploads/documents/NR\\_Bulletin\\_Suburbs-compressed.pdf](https://shpo.nv.gov/uploads/documents/NR_Bulletin_Suburbs-compressed.pdf).

<sup>11</sup> National Park Service U.S. Department of the Interior, *Historic Residential Suburbs*, 56.

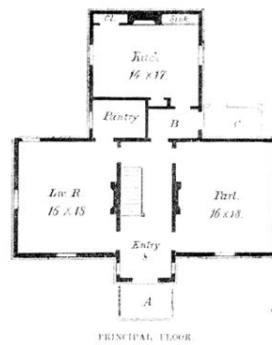


Figure 5 – A symmetrical cottage design from a pattern book by A.J. Downing. *The Architecture of Country Houses*, 1852.



Figure 6 – A Small Cottage, or Lodge from Henry Hudson Holly’s plan book. *Modern Dwellings in Town and Country, Adapted to American Wants and Climate*, 1878.

Access to architect-designed house plans became widespread in the 1920s as architect-sponsored small house service bureaus and stock plan companies began to emerge. One such organization was endorsed by the American Institute of Architects (AIA) and was called the Architects' Small House Service Bureau. The non-profit began in 1919 and it was based in Minneapolis, Minnesota. *Historic Residential Suburbs* credits the Architects' Small House Service Bureau as the founders of what became known as the Small House Movement (which lasted through the 1940s). The Architects' Small House Service Bureau had a team of architects with regional offices across the country and the goal of "providing architect-designed plans and technical specifications to builders of small houses."<sup>12</sup> The Architects' Small House Service Bureau standards were highly influential in the Better Homes in America Program, and later in small house designs of the 1930 and 1940s.

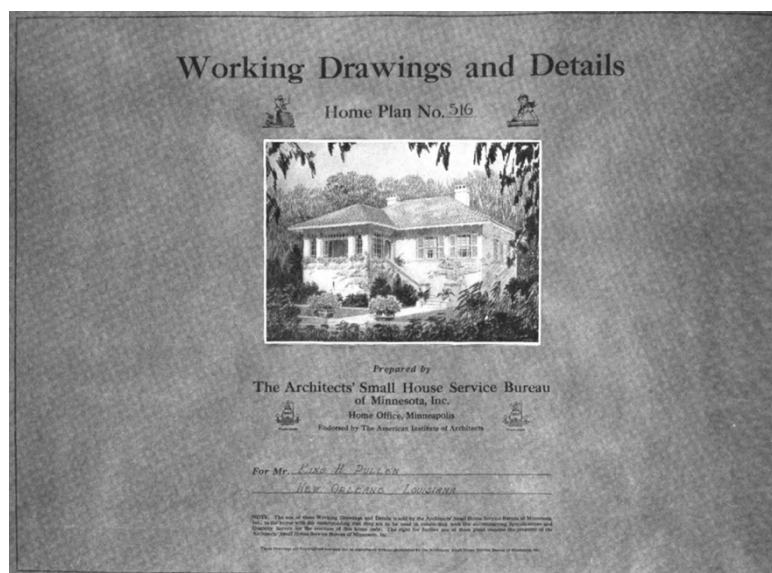


Figure 7 – An example of documents that would be mailed to prospective home builders upon selecting a plan designed by the Architects' Small House Service Bureau. *How to Plan, Finance, and Build Your Home*, 1921.

<sup>12</sup> National Park Service U.S. Department of the Interior, *Historic Residential Suburbs*, 59.

Some 1920s architect plan services like the Architects' Small House Service Bureau went beyond drawing and providing house plans. The plan service offered detailed information on homebuilding including materials, how to choose a lot, how to site the house, financing, and even consultations for prospective homeowners. The plan bureau mailed a full set of building documents with working drawings and other detailed documents to help the contractor and homeowner when requested through the mail (Figure 7). Architect-designed stock plans by the Architects' Small House Service Bureau, and the model house program by Better Homes in America contributed to the popularity of the small house typology found throughout the built environment of 1920s suburbs.

The standards set by the Architects' Small House Service Bureau defined a small house as being "compact" and containing three to six principal rooms (Figure 8). Principal rooms referred to a kitchen, living room, one to four bedrooms, and in some cases a dining room. Architect-designed stock plans meant that well-designed houses could be built for under \$10,000. On average small house architects and Better Homes in America targeted a cost of \$5,000 for small houses which reached a large segment of the housing market. This demographic was "a class of homebuilder and a type of dwelling which ordinarily do not come into the field of practice of the average architect."<sup>13</sup> Although many plan books and services sprang up in the 1920s, none were as civic-minded or consistent about their dedication to the prospective homeowner of moderate means as the Architects' Small House Service Bureau. They never wavered from their goal designing houses with no more than six principal rooms which they felt

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<sup>13</sup> *Report of the Committee on Small Houses*, Better Homes in America records, Hoover Institution Library & Archives, Box 12, Folder 14.



was in the reach of those with a moderate income. More about the philosophy and goals of the Architects' Small House Service Bureau will be discussed in Chapter 2.

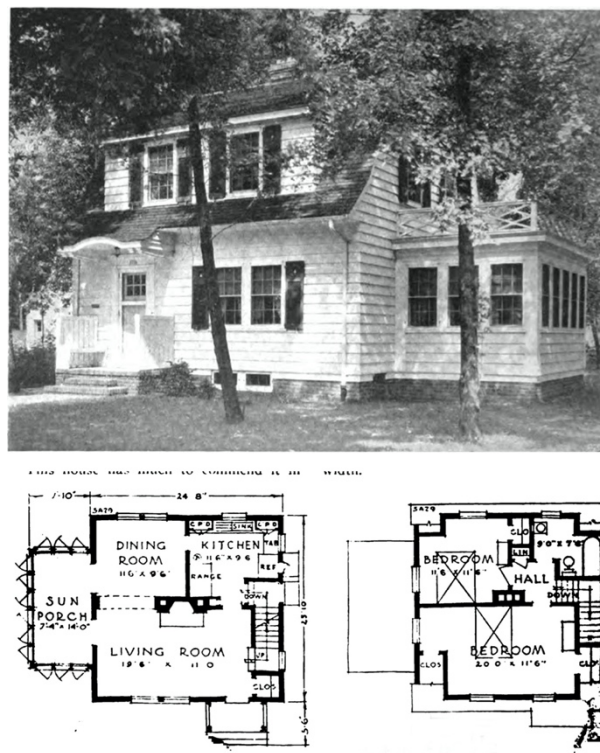


Figure 8 –An “Economical Five Room House” Plan 5-A-29 by the Architects' Small House Service Bureau. *Better Homes in America: Plan Book of Small Homes*, 1924.

Other plan services like the Home Owners' Service Institute were also influential in raising design standards for small houses. However, some of the house plans they published cost well over \$10,000. They were larger than six principal rooms which demonstrates their goals were not focused strictly on homeowners with a modest income. The “small” house designs reached a larger market that included the upper middle-class. Selling house plans was not a very lucrative business unless many were sold, so this could have been a way for them to make their plan service more profitable. Still, they brought affordable houses designed by architects to the public in the 1920s which contributed to the Small House Movement.



## The Founding of Better Homes in America

Better Homes in America began as a private organization in 1922 that "spearheaded a national campaign for domestic reform focused on educating homeowners about quality design and construction."<sup>14</sup> The first goal listed in their publications was to "make accessible to all citizens knowledge of high standards in house building, home furnishing, and home life."<sup>15</sup> They communicated to the masses that convenience and beauty could be in the reach of families of modest means.<sup>16</sup> The plan services of the 1920s like the Architects' Small House Service Bureau had made this possible and Better Homes in America encouraged the use of small house plans designed by architects. The program had a robust research program and focused on educating the public on raising house standards with a moderate budget.

Notably, Better Homes in America was founded by a woman, Marie William Brown Meloney. Meloney's contributions and the leadership and support of women in annual campaigns was crucial to the program's success. An unintended benefit of women's involvement in the program was that it gave women "an ideal avenue of entry...into the city growth game."<sup>17</sup> Women became influential locally as they contributed to model house designs, city planning, and beautification efforts in their cities in the 1920s. When Better Homes in America was founded, Meloney was the editor of the popular women's magazine *The Delineator*. Meloney had a long history in journalism and had worked for over twenty years for various publications such as the *Washington Post*, *Denver Post*, *New York World*, *New York Sun*, and *Woman's*

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<sup>14</sup> National Park Service U.S. Department of the Interior, *Historic Residential Suburbs*, 9.

<sup>15</sup> *Better Homes in America Guidebook for Campaigns: Better Homes Week, April 25 to May 1, 1926*. (Better Homes in America, 1925), 7-8).

<sup>16</sup> *Guidebook for Campaigns: Better Homes Week, April 25 to May 1, 1926*, 7.

<sup>17</sup> Lee M.A. Simpson, "City and County Planning in Santa Barbara," in *Selling the City: Gender, Class, and the California Growth Machine 1880-1940* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2004), 144.

*Magazine*.<sup>18</sup> While working for the *New York Sun*, her interest shifted from politics, to welfare and reform which led to her interest in housing conditions for the working class.<sup>19</sup>

Meloney's idea for Better Homes in America came after a speech by President Warren G. Harding in 1921. Harding spoke about viewing a "model kitchen" in Toledo, Ohio, and how he would like "to see this sort of thing done in every city in the United States."<sup>20</sup> The speech inspired Meloney, and she asked: "Yes, but why stop with improving just the kitchen? Government reports show that our country is short this year one million homes. Why not start a national campaign to make those homes... models of comfort, beauty and convenience--better homes, from which may grow a better home life?"<sup>21</sup> Meloney called the model houses, which would become central to the program, "living examples of what an American home should be."<sup>22</sup>

Meloney organized the first Better Homes week for October 4 to 9, 1922. The following year, Better Homes Week was held June 4 to 10. Meloney had managed to involve governors from practically every state as well as women's groups in her early campaigns. She used *The Delineator* to encourage women's involvement saying it was "the most important public work which women in this country could give their time."<sup>23</sup> Meloney's national campaign in 1923 "aroused widespread interest; committees everywhere found that clubs, chambers of commerce, civic associations, schools, and newspapers were ready to cooperate and enthusiastic

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<sup>18</sup> The Editors of Encyclopedia Britannica, "Marie Mattingly Meloney," accessed April 21, 2022, <https://www.britannica.com/biography/Marie-Mattingly-Meloney>.

<sup>19</sup> Loren Stack Moulds, "The Domestic Standard: American Homeownership and the State, 1917-1950" (PhD diss., University of Virginia, 2014), 56.

<sup>20</sup> Blanche Brace, "Big Lessons from Little Houses: The story of the 1925 Better Homes Campaign," *The Delineator*, November 1925, 2.

<sup>21</sup> Brace, "Big Lessons from Little Houses," *The Delineator*, November 1925, 2.

<sup>22</sup> Audra Bellmore, "English Cottage Style Homes in America: Expressions of Architectural, Technological and Social Innovation" (PhD diss., Loyola University Chicago, 2014), 206.

<sup>23</sup> Janet Hutchison, "The Cure for Domestic Neglect: Better Homes in America, 1922-1935," 173.

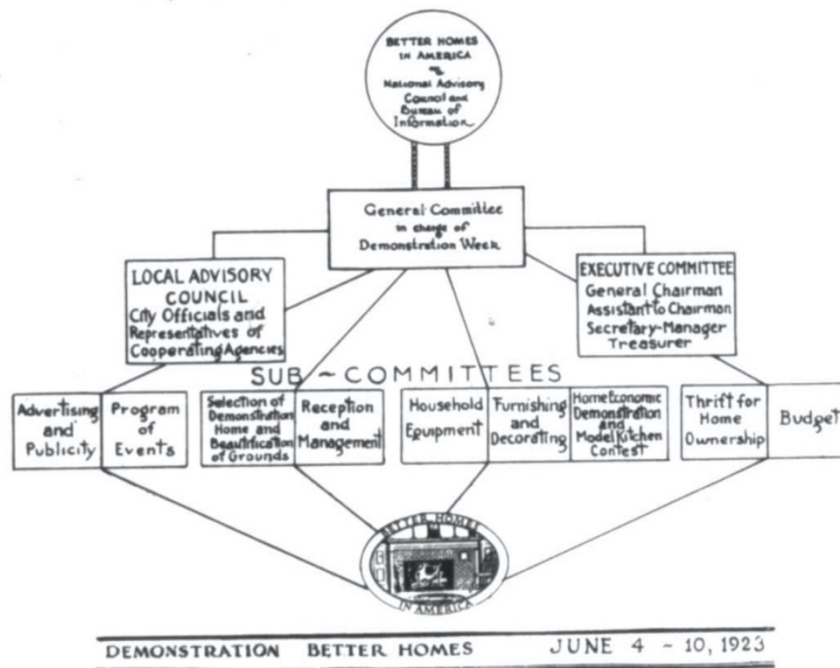


Figure 9 – A chart showing the role of the sub-committees and the involvement of the local advisory council and executive committee. The local committees were advised and supported by the Better Homes in America national advisory council.

in their support."<sup>24</sup> The joint efforts of many community groups continued throughout the program and grew to include realtors, architects, builders, contractors, furniture stores, banks, churches, schools, and the Girl Scouts and Boy Scouts (Figure 9). Better Homes leaders felt local committees were: "best situated to customize campaigns to local needs, assign local members to roles best suited to their interests and abilities, and add distinct local flavor to campaigns, providing the most effective delivery of the information possible to as many people as possible."<sup>25</sup> National headquarters provided local committees direction and resources that "ensured that the local campaigns looked like other campaigns occurring elsewhere across the

<sup>24</sup> *Better Homes in America Guidebook for Better Homes Campaigns in Cities and Towns: Better Homes Week, April 21 to May 1, 1927* (Better Homes in America, 1926), 38.

<sup>25</sup> Moulds, "The Domestic Standard: American Homeownership and the State, 1917-1950," 77.

country and were spreading the correct message. This partnership...was the most effective way to avoid conflict and host a successful campaign..."<sup>26</sup>

The 1923 national Better Homes campaign featured an exceptional model house demonstrated by Port Huron, Michigan that caught the attention of government advocates for housing improvement. President Calvin Coolidge wrote to Elizabeth Carlisle, who had overseen Port Huron's Better Homes Week campaign saying:

I have been very deeply interested in the BETTER HOMES campaign which has found general support throughout the United States, because it seemed to me an especially useful and practical activity. The home is the foundation of society and of our institutions and is the pledge of contentment and satisfaction. It is the conclusive reply to every threat against the fundamental principles upon which our Government is based. To raise the standard of the American home is, therefore, to raise the standard of the American people.<sup>27</sup>

The endorsement by President Coolidge led to Better Homes in America being incorporated as a non-profit with government oversight, and headquarters in Washington D.C. The newly incorporated nonprofit organized a national advisory council including leaders of the Federal Government and others eager to collaborate in small house reform. The board of directors was Grace Abbott (Chief, U.S. Children's Bureau), Donn Barber (fellow AIA), Edwin H. Brown (President, The Architects' Small House Service Bureau), John M. Gries (Chief Division of Building and Housing, U.S. Department of Commerce), Marie Meloney (editor of *The Delineator*), and Mrs. John D. Sherman (Chairman, Department of Applied Education, General Federation of Women's Clubs), and George W. Wilder (owner of *The Delineator*).<sup>28</sup> Secretary of

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<sup>26</sup> Moulds, "The Domestic Standard: American Homeownership and the State, 1917-1950," 77.

<sup>27</sup> Elizabeth Carlisle, Foreword in *Better Homes in America: Why and How to Teach Civic Effectiveness* (Better Homes in America, 1924).

<sup>28</sup> *Better Homes in America Guidebook for Demonstration Week: May 11 to 18, 1924* (Better Homes in America, 1924), 2.

Commerce Herbert Hoover was the President of the Board, and Dr. James Ford was the Executive Director.

Hoover's role as President of Better Homes in America was essential as it legitimized the program. His comments on housing and the way he idealized the single-family house was widely published in newspapers in the 1920s. The program was in line with his goal as the new Secretary of Commerce which was to promote the construction of quality constructed small houses. Hoover felt the availability of quality small houses expanded "the pool of potential buyers and democratized homeownership. Beyond simply boosting the construction industry, it supplied an important avenue for Americanizing the poor and foreign-born, and middle and working-class Americans [with] instructions on how to attain new, modern standards of living, become better citizens, and bolster families."<sup>29</sup>

The program's primary demographic was the middle-class and working-class, including small families, newlyweds, immigrants, farmers, and African Americans. Program leaders communicated to the masses that convenience and beauty could be in the reach of families of modest means. A component of the program was specifically dedicated to the immigrant and African Americans and Better Homes in America published pamphlets to reach those demographics. Various cities that participated featured Better Homes model houses built by African Americans. They had a robust program in their communities with many Black women in the role of agents to lead the campaigns. Further research is needed to learn more about the topic of Black Better Homes as there are likely extant model houses all over the country which should be identified, and their histories recorded.

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<sup>29</sup> Moulds, "The Domestic Standard: American Homeownership and the State, 1917-1950," 62.

James Ford controlled much of the messaging of Better Homes in America writing forewords and articles in Better Homes publications and newspaper articles. Ford got an A.B. in 1905 and an M.A. in 1906 from Harvard University. He studied in France at the College Libre des Sciences Sociales from 1906-1907 and returned to Harvard University to complete a PhD in 1909. That same year he became a professor of Social Ethics at Harvard University. Ford oversaw the Homes Registration and Information Division of the United States Housing Corporation from 1918-1919 and was considered an expert on slum clearance and housing issues.<sup>30</sup> He wrote *Social Problems and Social Policy* in 1923, and in 1936 he collaborated with his wife Katherine Morrow on *Slums and Housing With Special Reference to New York City History, Conditions, Policy*.

The newly formed Better Homes in America non-profit was granted funding from the Laura Spelman Rockefeller Fund. Hoover involved vital government departments such as the United States Department of Agriculture, the United States Department of Labor, the Division of Building and Housing, and the United States Department of Commerce. This gave the program leaders access to resources and allowed for robust research plus the ability to give cash prizes for exceptional local Better Homes campaigns. Grant and resources from government departments permitted Better Homes in America to publish many pamphlets, guidebooks, and an official plan book.

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<sup>30</sup> John Crosse, "Southern California Architectural History: James Ford, Katherine Morrow Ford, Thomas Creighton, Elizabeth Mock and the Modern House Book," Southern California Architectural History (blog), September 26, 2018, <https://socalarchhistory.blogspot.com/2018/09/james-and-katherine-morrow-ford-thomas.html>.

## Better Homes in America and the Development of Automobile Suburbs

The National Park Service's *Historic Residential Suburbs* details that a shift occurred from people living in cities to people living in suburbs beginning in the mid-nineteenth century. "As American cities rapidly industrialized, they became increasingly crowded and congested places perceived to be dangerous and unhealthy" creating a "push factor" as some people left cities for streetcar suburbs.<sup>31</sup> There was a secondary "pull" factor influenced by "domestic reformers such as Catharine Beecher and Andrew Jackson Downing [who] provided a strong antidote for urban living by extolling the moral virtues of country living and domestic economy."<sup>32</sup> By the mid-1800s some upper-middle-class families had established homes away from cities, first in railroad suburbs and later in streetcar suburbs. Like Beecher and Downing, Marie Meloney believed strongly in the ideal that renting, rather than owning a house was a threat to family life.<sup>33</sup> The idea that one's housing and environment could shape character, resulting in good citizens was a core principle for Meloney, Hoover, Ford and other Better Homes in America leaders. The single-family house versus the apartment is a goal in many of their publications:

To encourage the building of sound, beautiful, single-family houses; and to encourage the reconditioning and remodeling of old houses. Although peculiar conditions in certain places, and the circumstances of certain families make it necessary that there shall be apartments and tenements, it is strongly felt that the happiest and most wholesome home life is possible for a family with growing children only in a detached single-family house. Such a house then should be the American ideal and should be made accessible to all American families.<sup>34</sup>

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<sup>31</sup> National Park Service U.S. Department of the Interior, *Historic Residential Suburbs*, 34.

<sup>32</sup> National Park Service U.S. Department of the Interior, *Historic Residential Suburbs*, 34.

<sup>33</sup> Moulds, "The Domestic Standard: American Homeownership and the State, 1917-1950," 61.

<sup>34</sup> *Better Homes in America Guidebook for Campaigns: Better Homes Week, April 25 to May 1, 1926* (Better Homes in America, 1926), 7-8.

Ford's lifetime career was dedicated to the belief that one's dwelling had the power to shape their behavior and wrote that, "The significance of the home is indicated by examination of the effects of environment upon human character and activities...From the very beginning of life... he is subject to influences from his environment, and these influences to a large extent determine his development...[Therefore] the improvement of homes is a primary means to the development of individual character."<sup>35</sup> Hoover's official endorsement of the program, which also idealized the American "home" was widely published:

The American home is the foundation of our national and individual well-being. Its steady improvement is, at the same time, a test of our civilization and of our ideals. The Better Homes in America movement provides a channel through which men and women in each community can encourage the building, ornamenting and owning of private homes...We need attractive, worthy, permanent homes that lighten the burden of housekeeping. We need homes in which home life can reach its finest levels, and in which can be reared happy children and upright citizens.<sup>36</sup>

Better Homes in America literature was intentional with the use of "home" instead of "house."

The concept of the wholesome American home as a path to happiness was not new and early twentieth-century women's magazines and trade catalogs promoted the messaging of "home."

*Building with Assurance*, a trade catalog by Morgan Woodwork advertised their building materials and services with the following introduction:

Home reflects character. More, it molds character. Home is the image of thought, inviting the gaze of the world. As your home is, so are you. Then make your home as you want to be--in good taste, dignified, ennobling, to be admired. But see to it that it is also beautiful, comfortable and durable...Somewhere in these pages is a design which peculiarly expresses your individuality.<sup>37</sup>

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<sup>35</sup> Introduction in *The Better Homes Manual*, edited by Blanche Halbert (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1931).

<sup>36</sup> Introduction in *Better Homes in America Guidebook for Campaigns: Better Homes Week, May 10 to 17, 1925* (Better Homes in America, 1924).

<sup>37</sup> Introduction in *Building with Assurance* (Morgan Woodwork Organization, 1921).



In the 1920s, densely populated cities with crowded conditions motivated some to find "an individual dwelling...on its own lot in a safe, healthy, and parklike setting."<sup>38</sup> Better Homes in America argued that "the one-family house with generous open spaces about it is the best house for a child. Consequently, every effort should be made to promote the erection, to promote the continued existence of such houses" (Figure 10).<sup>39</sup> Reform ideas about multi-family dwellings promoted "fundamental changes in the perception of the ideal family and a revision of what constituted the best suburban home."<sup>40</sup>

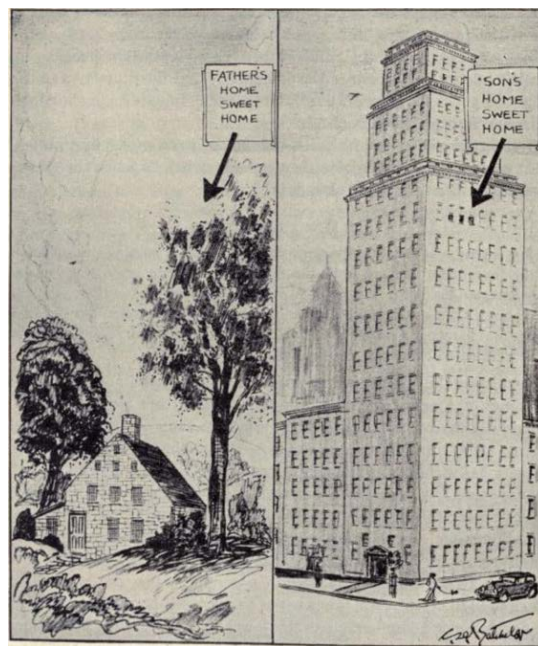


Figure 10 – An image published in the 1931 *The Better Homes Manual* showing the change over the years from rural to city life. This was used to strengthen their argument about single-family houses as the ideal home versus the multi-family apartment house. The image was originally printed in the *New York Evening Post*.

Own Your Own Home was a campaign that began before Better Homes in America and they "presented a litany of negative effects of renting and suggested that homeowners were best

<sup>38</sup> National Park Service U.S. Department of the Interior, *Historic Residential Suburbs*, 52.

<sup>39</sup> John Hilder, "Housing and the regional plan," in *The Better Homes Manual*, 655.

<sup>40</sup> National Park Service U.S. Department of the Interior, *Historic Residential Suburbs*, 56.

suited to weather the difficulties of the modern age."<sup>41</sup> This messaging directly benefitted the real estate industry and helped encourage lot and house sales in developing suburbs. The developers of suburbs also used similar messages to promote new neighborhoods with headings like "The doctor said you must leave the city":

You must leave the congested areas and the cramped quarters of an apartment. You must get away from the nerve-racking noises, the dust, dirt, soot, smoke and disagreeable atmosphere. You must get out where the sun shines, where you can enjoy the nerve-soothing peace and security that comes with a home of your own (Figure 11).<sup>42</sup>



Figure 11- An advertisement that encouraged people to leave the cities for automobile suburbs such as University District in the Detroit Area. *Detroit Free Press*, March 13, 1927.

<sup>41</sup> Moulds, "The Domestic Standard: American Homeownership and the State, 1917-1950," 143.

<sup>42</sup> "The Doctor Said, 'You Must Leave the City,'" advertisement, *Detroit Free Press*, March 13, 1927, 49.

Although Better Homes in America had similar messaging as the Own Your Own Home program, they were separate organizations. The leaders of Better Homes in America felt the efforts by Own Your Own Home were unsuccessful because they were "very limited in the territory which they covered or each dealt with only a few phases of housing or home life instead of treating the problem comprehensively."<sup>43</sup> Better Homes in America had broader goals than just homeownership and hoped to set itself apart from homeownership campaigns. Better Homes messaging stated that "Better Homes is not a back-to-the-land movement or own-your-own-home propaganda. It is a comprehensive treatment of the whole home problem."<sup>44</sup> Better Homes in America was not strictly motivated by developing neighborhoods but improving the quality of small houses along with good design (from architect-designed stock plans).

Land improvement companies and some subdividers were responsible for improving automobile suburbs with sidewalks, sewers, utilities, and paved streets.<sup>45</sup> Developing automobile suburbs helped to meet the housing shortage and lured people from cities with the promise of less-dense conditions. New suburbs offered larger lots than previous streetcar suburbs and additional light, air, and green space. Hoover had already begun a widespread focus on the quality of houses in the 1920s that helped improve construction methods, materials, and cost. These advancements in the building sector caused automobile suburbs to develop quickly with some containing low-cost housing options built en masse. The explosion of low-cost houses sometimes led to houses being built for speed and quick returns rather than quality which Better Homes in America felt was a problem to be addressed. Therefore, they would discourage

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<sup>43</sup> James Ford, "Governmental and other educational organizations," in *The Better Homes Manual*, 741.

<sup>44</sup> "Better Homes Week is Coming" *Detroit Free Press*, March 25, 1923, 6.

<sup>45</sup> *Tract Housing in California, 1945-1973: A Context for National Register Evaluation* (Sacramento, CA, The California Department of Transportation, 2011), 4.

consumers from purchasing houses by builders constructing houses en masse unless the quality of their work could be verified. *Building Age* noted that “whole colonies of homes appear to literally ‘spring up overnight’ like the proverbial mushroom.”<sup>46</sup>



Figure 12 - Standard Oil Homes ordered from a Sears, Roebuck and Company catalog to house workers. *Honor Bilt Modern Homes*, 1921.

Builders were constructing low-cost housing en masse, and industrial worker housing was being built near corporations like Standard Oil Company (Figure 12). *Building Age* described the housing boom of the 1920s saying: “Perhaps never in the history of the world has there been such a titanic demand on any industry as is now heaped upon the shoulders of the building industry.”<sup>47</sup> This important time in the architectural history of small single-family dwellings represents a suburban boom second only to the boom experienced after World War II.<sup>48</sup>

By the early 1920s, more people owned cars allowing them to move to developing automobile suburbs which were further from city centers. It was no longer necessary to live near a railroad or streetcar stop once families acquired an automobile. They could live on larger lots

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<sup>46</sup> “The Place, the Man the Result,” *Building Age and the Builders' Journal* 45 (November 1923), 40.

<sup>47</sup> “The Place,” 47.

<sup>48</sup> Maryland Department of Transportation State Highway Administration, *The Suburbanization Historic Context and Survey Methodology, Volume 1* (Hunt Valley, MD, Prepared by KCI Technologies, Inc., 1999), B-10.

since land was cheaper further away from cities and commute to work in their car (Figure 13).

The mass production of the Model T car in 1908 made automobile suburbs possible as it democratized car ownership by reducing

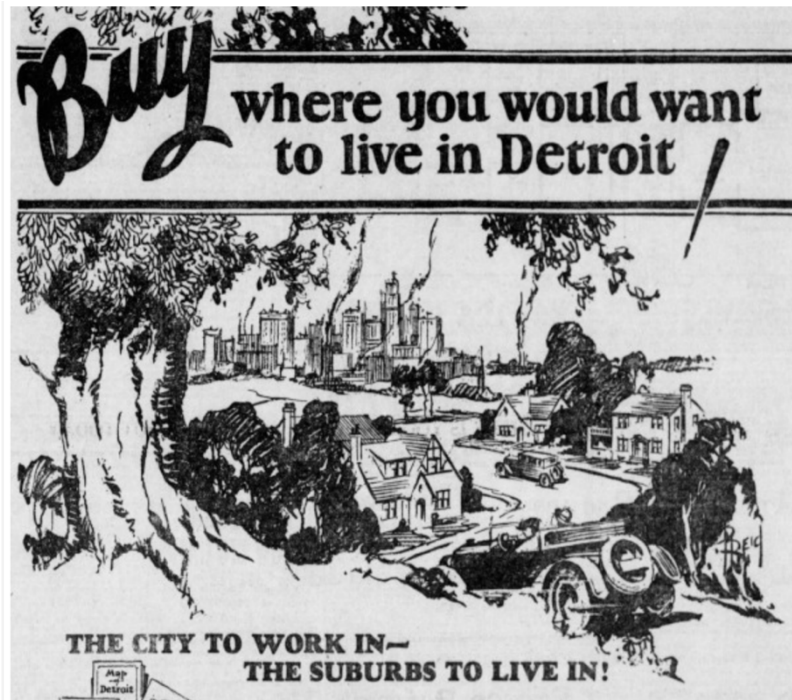


Figure 13 - An advertisement from the 1920s encouraging people to live in suburbs since they could drive to work in the city center and no longer needed to rely strictly on public transportation. Detroit Urbanism (<http://detroiturbanism.blogspot.com/>).

the cost to own a car. *Keith's Magazine on Home-Building* described the importance of the car for people who wanted to live in automobile suburbs<sup>49</sup>:

Are people not availing themselves much more of the advantages of suburban home life because of the automobile, which today is a possibility for every family? ...a few hundred dollars investment will place a new automobile in the home...we are coming to believe that the automobile is a real help to the building industry of homes; that it is

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<sup>49</sup> *Keith's Magazine on Home-Building* was published by the architect Max L. Keith in Minneapolis, MN, beginning around 1899. Photographs and floor plans were published in the monthly magazine as well as articles about home building, interior designs, and landscaping.

becoming almost an essential requirement for the suburbanite, whether he be a businessman or employed in the mill.<sup>50</sup>

Developing automobile suburbs needed connecting roads built and existing roads had to be paved since gravel roads were not suitable for automobiles. Highway departments were formed in the 1920s following the Federal-Aid Highway Act in 1916. Referred to as the “golden age of highway building,” 420,000 miles of roads were built in the United States from 1921-1936.<sup>51</sup> This included significant advancements in roadways such as the Bronx River Parkway in 1925 which was the world’s first limited-access automobile road and connected New York City to its northern suburbs.<sup>52</sup>

Building and Loan associations were crucial for developing automobile suburbs since they allowed for installment plans to purchase a house. One of the goals of Better Homes in America was “to spread knowledge of methods of financing the purchase or building of a home” and they educated their readers about building and loan associations and how to budget for and finance a house.<sup>53</sup> The Architects’ Small House Service Bureau also helped its readers understand financing and wrote in their *Small House* periodical how working with a Building and Loan association was beneficial:

A building and loan association...affords a safe way to invest savings at a relatively high dividend rate. It makes saving easy by providing for the regular laying-away of small sums. Third, it makes the grueling task of getting a start easier and sooner done. Fourth, it provides for payment of the cost of the property by monthly payments little or no greater than the rent on an equally good home. And thus it changes the monthly rent from an expense into a permanent investment.<sup>54</sup>

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<sup>50</sup> "Home and the Automobile," *Keith's Magazine on Home-Building* 50 (August 1923), 5, Accessed April 20, [https://books.google.com/books?id=rSLXAAAAIAAJ&printsec=frontcover&source=gbs\\_ge\\_summary\\_r&cad=0#v=onepage&q&f=false](https://books.google.com/books?id=rSLXAAAAIAAJ&printsec=frontcover&source=gbs_ge_summary_r&cad=0#v=onepage&q&f=false)

<sup>51</sup> National Park Service U.S. Department of the Interior, *Historic Residential Suburbs*, 23.

<sup>52</sup> National Park Service U.S. Department of the Interior, *Historic Residential Suburbs*, 51.

<sup>53</sup> James Ford, "Architectural design and sound construction," in *The Better Homes Manual*, 159.

<sup>54</sup> "The Building and Loan Association," In *The Small Home* (Milwaukee WI, Architects' Small House Service Bureau, February 1928), 28.



The Better Homes in America program became the government's voice to encourage quality housing through good design and suitable materials. Their message was delivered through publications, model houses used as demonstrations, and other exhibits that culminated in communities all over the country during annual Better Homes Week. Most model houses that were part of Better Home in America local campaigns can be found in automobile suburbs.<sup>55</sup> Local Better Homes committees identified lots in automobile suburbs where a model house could be newly constructed to demonstrate the key principles of Better Homes in America. Many of the model houses were the earliest houses built in a new automobile subdivision. This piece of information may be helpful to historians and preservationists who are researching small houses as this offers a possible connection to Better Homes in America.

An early house built in a 1920s suburb may also have been used as a model house by a speculative builder. Many builders turned their focus to the small house trend of the 1920s made popular by Better Homes in America. Builders noticed they could profit from filling entire neighborhoods with small houses and use the model house concept to market their developments. The Better Homes in America "stamp of approval" was used for marketing builder developments. The North Boulevard Park neighborhood in Atlanta, Georgia had a Better Homes model house built during its early development. An advertisement in the *Atlanta*

*Constitution* wrote that:

The fact that the National Board of Better Homes has selected North Boulevard Park to build Better Home No. 1 is proof enough of its popularity in price and location. BUY A LOT HERE NOW.<sup>56</sup>

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<sup>55</sup> Some exceptions exist, for example Everyman's House was built in an existing streetcar suburb along the streetcar line.

<sup>56</sup> "Spring is Here in North Boulevard Park," *The Atlanta Constitution*, April 18, 1926, 36.

The popularity of the “Better Homes” concept and national reach of the program made it something that developers used to show that the neighborhood they were developing was a good investment for prospective homeowners.



## Chapter 2: The Architects' Small House Service Bureau & Small House Designs

## The Creation of a Small House Service Bureau

The American Institute of Architects (AIA) is credited with beginning the Small House Movement through the plan service they endorsed called the Architects' Small House Service Bureau. The Architects' Small House Service Bureau set standards that would be promoted by other groups such as the Better Homes in America program as well as several other organizations in the 1920s. The goal of the bureau was to “provide dependable stock plans, advice and counsel for small home builders and at a cost which makes it possible for anyone, no matter how small the home or purse, to enjoy many of the privileges of architectural service—privileges which are generally only possible for builders of larger dwellings where individual practicing architects are usually employed.”<sup>57</sup>

The bureau not only hoped to bring work to architects, but also sought to introduce their profession to the masses and “raise the public's awareness of the value of professional design.”<sup>58</sup> This, they felt, would lead to “better architecture and better construction.”<sup>59</sup> Even though low-cost housing was not a new typology, AIA felt that architects should be designing small houses rather than builders and contractors who they felt had “no right to be called architects.”<sup>60</sup> Prominent New York architect Ernest Flagg described the complexity of small house design in *Flagg's Small Houses, Their Economic Design and Construction*:

It may seem to some that the steel frame has little to do with small houses. This may be true of the frame itself but not of the methods of design applicable to it. These methods apply to every artistic construction whether steel frame or otherwise...The idea that it requires one kind of skill to deal successfully with the design of a tall building and

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<sup>57</sup> *Report of the Committee on Small Houses*, Better Homes in America records, Hoover Institution Library & Archives, Box 12, Folder 14.

<sup>58</sup> *Report of the Committee on Small Houses*, Box 12, Folder 14.

<sup>59</sup> *Report of the Committee on Small Houses*, Box 12, Folder 14.

<sup>60</sup> *Report of the Committee on Small Houses*, Box 12, Folder 14.

another with the small house is fallacious; both alike are architectural problems, and in both alike the immutable laws of right design govern.<sup>61</sup>

Robert T. Jones, the Technical Director of the Architects' Small House Service Bureau felt strongly that architect involvement was needed in small houses designs:

Plans for small houses are not developed by guesswork or by some strange background of artistic sensibilities. They represent the hard work of an expert to solve a problem.... It takes knowledge of materials, workmanship, costs, and it requires the power to assemble the necessary forms so that they will have good architectural quality...the rooms have to be arranged in an orderly manner, so that they will be commodious, comfortable, taking advantage of the site and locality, providing for furniture, the circulation about the house.<sup>62</sup>

The Architects' Small House Service Bureau reminded the public in their plan books that every element of small house design "is of consequence" and that "the general excellence of mass and form cannot compensate for the unhappy choice of certain ornamentation [or] the clumsy handling of a single opening."<sup>63</sup> Better Homes in America detailed in their plan book how an architect-designed stock plan with good proportions and attention to detail could make a house look more expensive than it was:

There are no wide overhanging eaves to increase building costs and darken the rooms. Simplicity dominates everywhere, and yet if you note the little things, such as the arched entrance doorway, the casement windows, the pitch of the roof, the wide shutters with an old-fashioned touch, the brick entrance steps, you will see that details like these and good proportions have given this house all the earmarks of a much more expensive home than it really is (Figure 14).<sup>64</sup>

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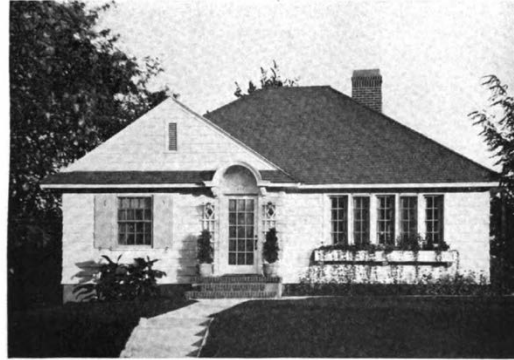
<sup>61</sup> Ernest Flagg, *Flagg's Small Houses: Their Economic Design and Construction, 1922* (Courier Corporation, 2013), Section XXVIII.

<sup>62</sup> James Ford, "The Plan Service of the Architects' Small House Service Bureau," in *The Better Homes Manual*, edited by Blanche Halbert (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1931), 183.

<sup>63</sup> "What is wrong with one of these houses?" In *The Small Home* (Milwaukee WI, Architects' Small House Service Bureau of the United States, Inc., June 1928), 22.

<sup>64</sup> *Better Homes in America Plan Book of Small Homes (Three, Four, Five and Six Rooms)* (Prepared for Better Homes in America by The Architects' Small House Service Bureau, 1924), 15.

# Better Homes In America



**Plan Book of Small Homes**  
(Three, Four, Five and Six Rooms)

Figure 14- The house on the cover of the Better Homes plan book was given as an example of why using an architect-designed stock plan was important. Good proportions and attention to detail in the arched entrance doorway, the casement windows, the pitch of the roof, the wide shutters with an “old-fashioned touch,” and the brick entrance steps made the house look more expensive than it was (according to the plan book). *Better Homes in America: Plan Book of Small Homes*, 1924.



Figure 15- The house on right was said by the Architects' Small House Service Bureau to be badly designed with an oddly placed dormer, proportions that were off, and lacking artistic ornamentation such as the thin columns on the vestibule. A properly designed house is on the left and was accomplished using working drawings by the Bureau. *The Small Home*, 1928.

Images were shown in the Architects' Small House Service Bureau publications to educate the public on designs they felt lacked attention to detail (Figure 15). AIA Vice President Nelson Max Dunning asked the American Construction Council for support in raising the standards of small house design and quality:

The design of the small house has, consequently, fallen away—to a large extent—from the practice of the skilled Architect and has landed in the hands of the Speculative Builder who has been prone to sacrifice every consideration of refinement in plan, design, setting and construction to the exigencies of speed and economy—so called—and the demands of keen price competition...I am speaking in general terms and do not wish to be understood to include all speculative housing projects—for I have seen some of them and know of many others, that have been carried out on a high plane, not only from the standpoint of design but also of construction.

By and large, however, the housing projects of the Speculative Builder, particularly in the vicinity of the large cities, are of a very low grade, both in design and construction, and in many cases are a menace to health, safety and morals, and are certainly not good investments...The American Institute of Architects took cognizance of conditions effecting the building of small houses...and sponsored the organization of the Architects' Small House Service Bureau. These bureaus...are giving their best efforts to the preparation of complete drawings and specifications for Small Houses—which if followed, will insure a house well designed and planned and durably and economically constructed. A house that will improve rather than detract from the charm of a neighborhood.<sup>65</sup>

The Architects' Small House Service Bureau and Better Homes in America promoted the idea that a prospective homeowner should purchase an undeveloped lot, select an architect-designed stock plan, and work closely with the contractor to make sure the house was built to a high standard. Although it was more tedious for the homeowner, they felt there was less risk of purchasing a badly constructed house whose construction had been rushed to meet demand or profit goals. While this may seem like propaganda (and some of it may have been), the National Parks Service's "Residential Suburbs" notes that this was a time of "widespread real estate speculation and fraud" so it seems they were not completely wrong to caution prospective

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<sup>65</sup> *Address before the American Construction Council, November 18, 1925 (N. Max Dunning)*, Better Homes in America records, Hoover Institution Library and Archives, 1923-1935, Box 12, Folder 14.

homeowners.<sup>66</sup> Better Homes in America literature warned that speculative builders “put up large numbers of houses to sell to any comer instead of building houses to order. The desire to make quick profits outstripped pride in craftsmanship and hence houses were slapped together, painted up attractively, and equipped so that they would look well to intending purchasers...”<sup>67</sup> Better Homes hoped to educate the public and noted that most buyers didn’t know the difference but that in “a year or two he would notice signs of poor construction.”<sup>68</sup>

Architects’ Small House Service Bureau’s early success can partially be attributed to an endorsement by the Department of Commerce (DOC) in 1921 and their collaboration with the trade organization Southern Pine in 1921. The DOC endorsement is mentioned in their publications to reassure their readers of their legitimacy as an organization. The bureau was sponsored by the Southern Pine Association in order to publish their first book of one hundred small house plans called *How to Plan, Finance and Build Your Home*. Forming alliances with trade organizations and newspapers in the 1920s helped plan services reach the masses and popularize small house design.

Throughout the 1920s, the Architects’ Small House Service Bureau also published their house plan designs in a monthly periodical *The Small Home* (Figure 16). Readers could obtain the publication for fifteen cents per individual issue or \$1.00 for an annual subscription. Plan catalogs were also printed entitled *Small Homes of Architectural Distinction*. Upon selecting a house design the homeowner would receive “three complete sets of blueprints, three sets of specifications, three quantity surveys, two forms of contract agreements.”<sup>69</sup>

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<sup>66</sup> National Park Service U.S. Department of the Interior, *Historic Residential Suburbs*, 26.

<sup>67</sup> Ford, "Architectural Design and Sound Construction," in *The Better Homes Manual*, 158.

<sup>68</sup> Ford, "Architectural Design and Sound Construction," in *The Better Homes Manual*, 158.

<sup>69</sup> Ford, "The Plan Service of the Architects' Small House Service Bureau" in *The Better Homes Manual*, 186.

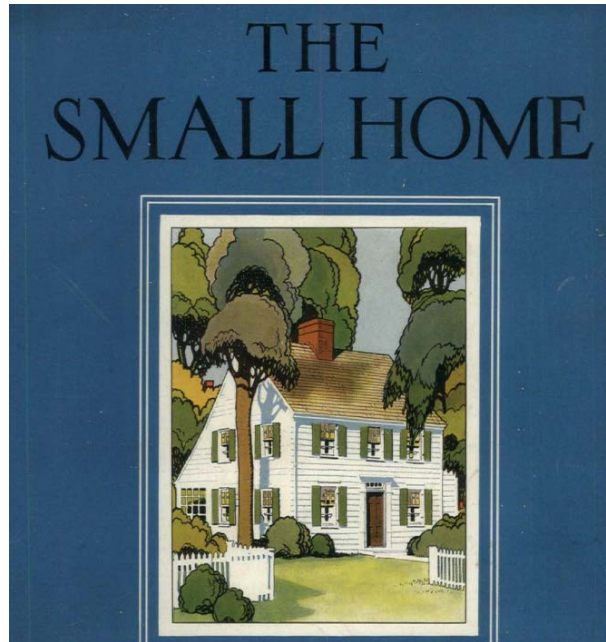


Figure 16 – The cover of the Architects' Small House Service Bureau monthly periodical. *The Small Home*, 1929.

Blueprints cost \$6.00 per principal room and \$0.50 for shipping meaning plans for a five-room house would cost \$30.50 (Figure 17). The Architects' Small House Service Bureau also provided "professional counsel and advice, and at no extra charge over the cost of the blueprints."<sup>70</sup> An AIA memo in 1923 celebrated their accomplishments saying "The Architects' Small House Service Bureau movement has passed the experimental stage. It has been functioning for more than three years, and while still in its infancy it is no longer a matter of speculation."<sup>71</sup> They had seven regional Bureaus and plans for at least three more bureaus. By 1924 there were more than three hundred stock plans available by the Architects' Small House Service Bureau.<sup>72</sup>

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<sup>70</sup> Ford, "The Plan Service of the Architects' Small House Service Bureau," in *The Better Homes Manual*, 183.

<sup>71</sup> *Report of the Committee on Small Houses*, Better Homes in America records, Hoover Institution Library & Archives, Box 12, Folder 14.

<sup>72</sup> *Report of the Committee on Small Houses*, Box 12, Folder 14.



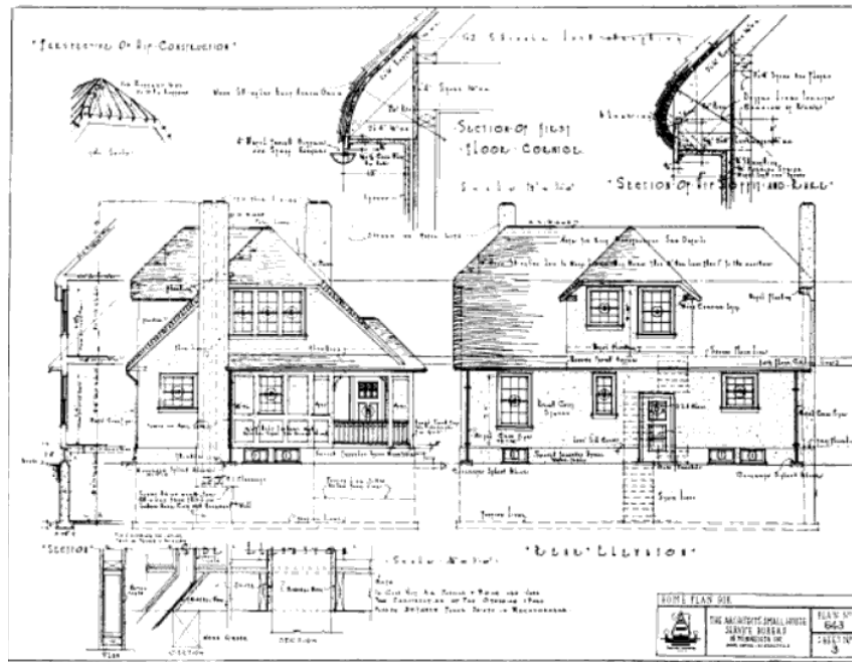


Figure 17 – An example of a working drawing by the Architects' Small House Service Bureau mailed to prospective homeowners who used their plan service. *How to Plan, Finance, and Build Your Home*, 1921.

Newspapers were crucial to architect-designed stock plans reaching the masses. The Architects' Small House Service partnered with the *Minneapolis Journal* in 1923 to provide a newspaper mat service which was a column that printed their stock plans and gave ideas for financing, construction, interior design, furnishings, repair, and landscaping.<sup>73</sup> The column was called "Help for the Man Who Wants to Build." The AIA described their expansion to other newspapers:

The Architects' Small House Service Bureau of the United States has begun a mat service for the newspapers, one paper in every city in the country, to spread the Bureau idea before the reading public. Several newspapers in different parts of the country have

<sup>73</sup> "Architects' Small House Service Bureau: Inventory of its records at the Minnesota Historical Society," Minnesota Historical Society, Accessed April 21, 2022, <http://www2.mnhs.org/library/findaids/01085.xml>.



already contracted for this and it is hoped that the matter will spread more or less rapidly.<sup>74</sup>

The mat service is described in more detail as having:

Full pages of interesting matter, showing plans, elevations and perspectives of a well-designed house in each issue. The reader is given a full description of the house and is advised how to proceed to build, what to do and what to avoid doing. He is given advice on the selection of his lot; on how to go about his financing; how to select a builder or an Architect...In other words, through the medium of the press, the prospective house builder is given the same advice that a conscientious Architect would give his client.<sup>75</sup>

Newspapers showed tremendous interest as the Architects' Small House Service Bureau small house efforts and the following newspapers are known to have printed their column: *Intelligencer and News Journal* (Lancaster, Pennsylvania), *Register-Gazette* (Rockford, Illinois), *Daily News* (Chicago, Illinois), *Times-Star* (Cincinnati, Ohio), *Morning Leader* (Winona, Minnesota), and the *Sunday Courier* (Poughkeepsie, New York).<sup>76</sup> There were many more newspapers that printed their plans even if they weren't officially featuring their "mat service" column on housebuilding. One such newspaper was *The Times Herald* in Port Huron, Michigan (Figure 18). Newspapers broadcasted "the story of good construction, good design, good equipment and the proper use of materials...the articles are pointing out the necessity of the architect and telling his story to a call of home builders who are not interested in the architect's business."<sup>77</sup>

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<sup>74</sup> Edwin H. Brown, "Committee on Small Houses," *Journal of the American Institute of Architects* 10, Harrisburg, PA, American Institute of Architects, January 1922, 14, Accessed April 20, 2022, <https://hdl.handle.net/2027/mdp.39015016764345>.

<sup>75</sup> Address before the American Construction Council, November 18, 1925, Box 12, Folder 14.

<sup>76</sup> Edwin H. Brown, "Architects' Small House Service Bureau of Minnesota," *Journal of the American Institute of Architects* 9, Harrisburg, PA, American Institute of Architects, 1921, 90, Accessed April 20, 2022, <https://hdl.handle.net/2027/nyp.33433077547085>.

<sup>77</sup> Report of the Committee on Small Houses, Box 12, Folder 14.

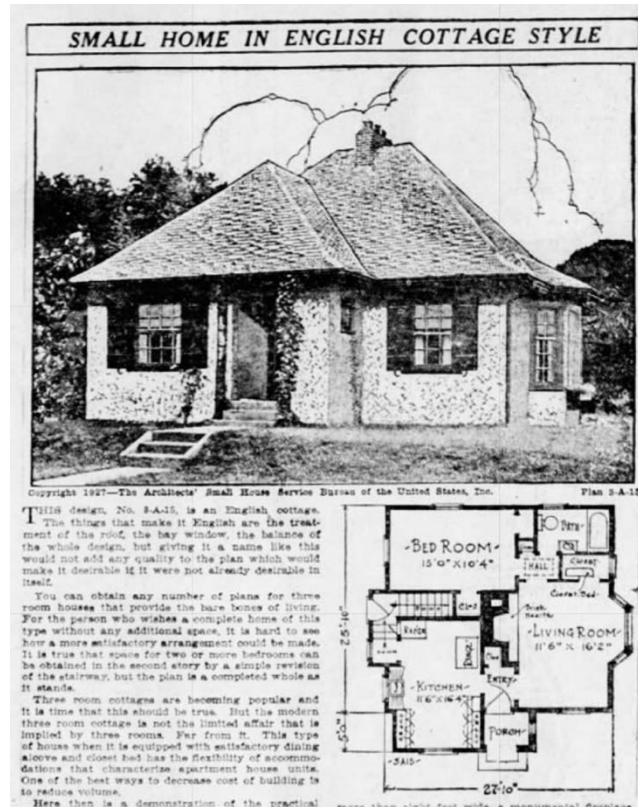


Figure 18 – The Architects' Small House Service Bureau plan 3-A-15 printed in *The Times Herald*, 1927.

The AIA reported regularly on the accomplishments of the small house bureau to the board and network of architects. They felt the biggest testament to their accomplishments were the built examples of small houses from their plans found around the country (Figure 19). AIA encouraged architects all over the U.S. to create regional offices to service the needs of small house design around the country. While not as lucrative for architects as civic buildings and large residences, AIA encouraged architects to get involved anyway. AIA felt that it was a public service and "the logical way to the value of the architectural services in the minds of the people is to do some conspicuous public good."<sup>78</sup>

<sup>78</sup> "Public Architectural Service," *Journal of the American Institute of Architect* (1921), 21.



Figure 19 – House images published in an American Institute of Architect (AIA) memo showing built examples and the influence of the Bureau. Better Homes in America records, Hoover Institution Library & Archives.

AIA also reminded architects that this would bring them work and also produce aesthetically pleasing houses in cities everywhere:

Several hundred architects [would be] profitably employed in producing plans for small houses, and the springing up, from one end of the country to the other, of a home building nation, building homes that are livable and useful, economical, safe and good looking. And these homes will ultimately be designed by architects who live in the different localities and thoroughly understand the many and various problems of building in their own bailiwicks.<sup>79</sup>

Despite the encouragement of AIA, not all architects were convinced of the merit of their involvement with small house design:

In 1924, interest in the ASHSB among 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.' 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 sealed by the apparent lack of interest of professional architects.<sup>80</sup>

AIA archival documents detail that the lack of interest came from the preference for large, public commissions and the inability by some architects to design small houses.<sup>81</sup> Some felt apathetic and questioned if their designs were making a difference with the increase of small houses built en masse by speculative builders and mail-order kit house company houses which filled suburbs. While some architectural professionals were outspoken about small house design and felt it beneath them, there were enough architects interested and enough plans were being ordered to form ten regional small house service bureaus around the country in the 1920s.

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<sup>79</sup> Brown, "Architects' Small House Service Bureau of Minnesota," 140.

<sup>80</sup> Lisa Marie Tucker, "The Small House Problem in the United States, 1918–1945: The American Institute of Architects and the Architects' Small House Service Bureau," *Journal of Design History* 23, no. 1 (2010), 53, Accessed April 20, 2022, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/25653158>.

<sup>81</sup> Small house design was a new skill set, and some architects did not excel in the design of this typology. Tucker, "The Small House Problem," 53.

## Raising Design Standards with Better Homes in America

Better Homes leaders agreed with AIA that the best small house designs were from architect stock plans and wrote that “taking chances on sketchy plans is like trying to beat a railroad train at a crossing.”<sup>82</sup> In 1924 Better Homes in America officially partnered with the Architects’ Small House Service Bureau which provided designs for their plan book entitled *Better Homes in America: Plan Book of Small Homes (Three, Four, Five, and Six Rooms)* (Figures 20-21). The support of the AIA and endorsement by the Department of Commerce made the Architects’ Small House Service Bureau a logical choice for Better Homes:

The Architects' Small House Service Bureau...is a professional organization composed of many practicing architects from the leading architectural offices of the country. It is the only housing Bureau in America, producing and offering plans for three, four, five and six-room homes, that is so controlled and endorsed.<sup>83</sup>

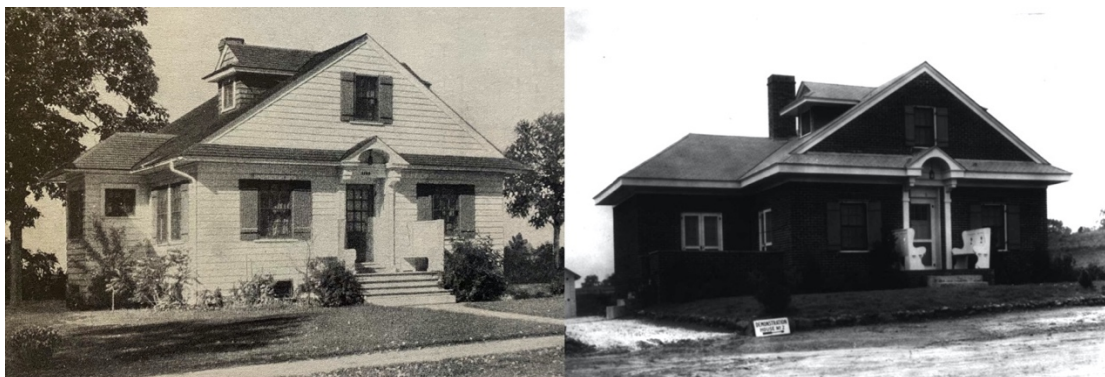


Figure 20- An example given by the Architects’ Small House Service Bureau of a house built from plan 4-A-14 (left). The same house was built in Greenville, South Carolina for Better Homes Week (right). *Small Homes of Architectural Distinction*, 1929 / Better Homes in America records, Hoover Institution Library and Archives.

<sup>82</sup> *Better Homes in America: Plan Book of Small Homes*, 84.

<sup>83</sup> *Better Homes in America: Plan Book of Small Homes*, 2.



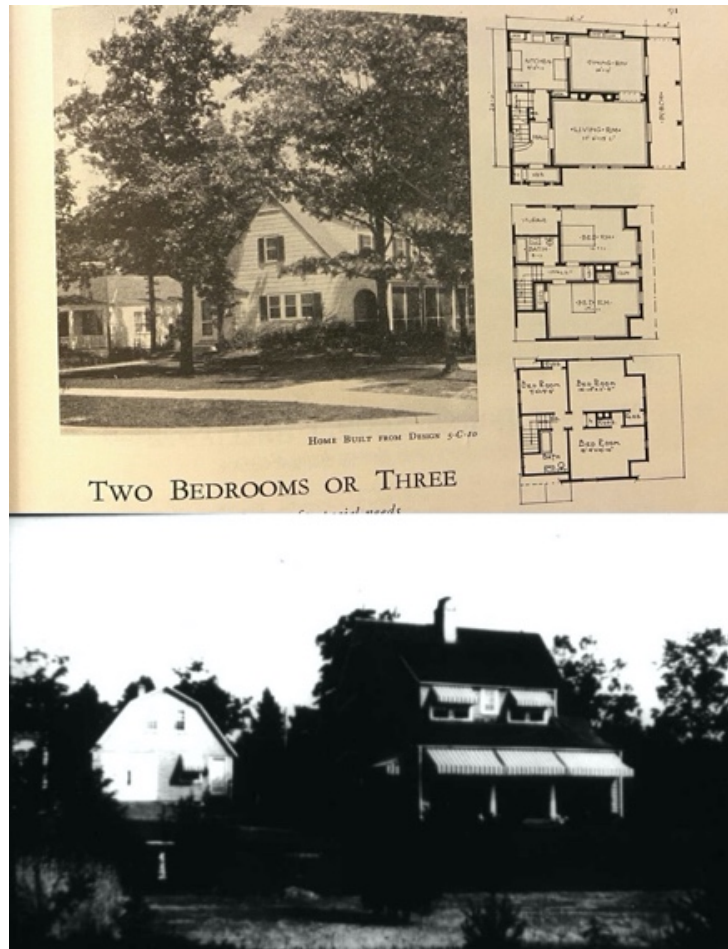


Figure 21 - Better Homes Week model house in Monroe County, Pennsylvania (bottom) built from Architects' Small House Service Bureau plan 5-C-10 (top). *Small Homes of Architectural Distinction*, 1929 / Better Homes in America records, Hoover Institution Library and Archives.

Better Homes' partnership with the Architects' Small House Service Bureau shows a strong interest by Better Homes in America leaders to raise design standards for small houses. Yet, James Ford expressed at various points in the program his desire to have the program focus even *more* on architectural design for small houses. Education for the housewife seemed to take precedence which may have been due to the leadership of Marie Meloney who promoted home economic demonstrations and practice cottages. Model houses geared towards the housewife led to a focus on the plan and modernizing the interior over a house's overall architectural merit.

In 1924, special prizes for architectural merit were suggested at a board meeting to bring more attention to artistic small house designs in Better Homes Campaigns.<sup>84</sup> A separate prize for architectural merit was thought to bring more specific focus on the architectural aspect of the house designs instead of furnishings, interior plan, and other aspects. Prizes for architectural merit were implemented and AIA architects were appointed as the judges (Figure 22). Ford wrote in a letter to architect Kenneth Chorley (who was largely responsible for the way Colonial Williamsburg looks today) saying that:

There is no question in my mind of the value of a plan of this sort. Our standards in American small house architecture have been low and cannot easily be raised unless attention is very definitely called each year to the best examples of new small house architecture in each community and to the reasons for the selection of the house which is adjudged to be the best. By following this method for a period of years our people will begin to distinguish good taste from bad, and to distinguish good planning from poor planning, and the better types of small house architecture will before long be copied widely.”<sup>85</sup>

Ford continued over the course of the program to seek ways to put an emphasis on architectural design as a major component of the model houses. He communicated with various AIA leaders over the years asking for input on how to make architectural design a more prominent part of the program. Ford wrote to AIA architect and chairman William Harmon Beers saying:

This organization has found the development of architectural taste the most difficult of the problems that it faces. Our committees are making notable improvement in house furnishing, up-keep of premises and landscaping but we feel we must give special emphasis this coming year to the arousing of “consumer” interest in the architectural design of small homes. This and cooperation in publicity are the two problems which I would most like to discuss with you.”<sup>86</sup>

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<sup>84</sup> *Minutes of the third (second annual) meeting of the Board of Directors, January 14, 1925*, Better Homes in America records, Hoover Institution Library and Archives, Box 1, Folder 10-11.

<sup>85</sup> *Letter from James Ford to Kenneth Chorley, April 11, 1925*, Better Homes in America records, Hoover Institution Library and Archives, Box 40, Folder 2.

<sup>86</sup> *Letter from James Ford to William Harmon Beers, June 23, 1930*, Better Homes in America records, Hoover Institution Library and Archives, 1923-1935, Box 12, Folder 14.

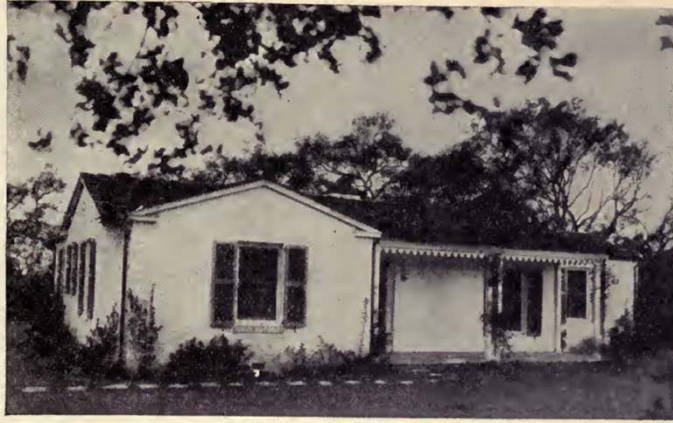


FIG. 20.—The five-room cottage and floor plan (Fig. 21) which received the Better Homes gold medal in the National Better Homes architectural competition of 1930. Note the room arrangement providing opportunity for ample light and sun. (Photograph by Haight.) (Mrs. William Brown Meloney, founder of Better Homes of America, donor of medal.)

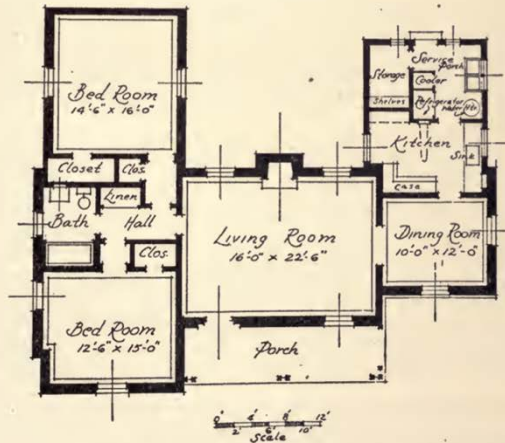


FIG. 21.—Cottage on estate of Mr. William R. Dickinson, Hope Ranch Park, Santa Barbara, Calif. (Reginald D. Johnson, architect.)

Figure 22 – An architectural Merit prize awarded to Santa Barbara’s Better Homes Committee in 1930. The five-room cottage is in Hope Ranch Park and the architect was Reginald D. Johnson. *The Better Homes Manual*, 1931.



Ford outlined in another letter (this time to AIA architect C. Herrick Hammond) that the local committees were not trained in architecture and that literature was needed that had simple, non-technical language about the principles of small house design that they could easily understand.<sup>87</sup> Ford goes on to say that “if the public were taught to demand good architecture, it would get it, but in general the mass of our population whose incomes are less than \$3,000 per year are condemned to live in ugly and inconvenient houses.”<sup>88</sup> Ford hoped that supplemental material with a specific focus on small house design would “explain to the home-builder or buyer how to select his house plan, how to provide for convenience, comfort, natural lighting, ventilation, equipment, and proper intercommunication of rooms.”<sup>89</sup>

### Characteristics of a “Better Home”

The Architects’ Small House Service Bureau created standards which Ford and Better Homes in America used to define what made a “Better Home.” As previously mentioned, Ford hoped the public would seek small house designs that provided comfort and convenience, natural lighting, ventilation, modern equipment and the proper intercommunication of rooms. Individualization through selecting a house plan versus buying a house that was already built was also key to achieving a small, better house. In this scenario “The builder worked on contract for the lot owner, providing construction services only and having no ownership stake in the finished product.”<sup>90</sup>

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<sup>87</sup> *Letter from James Ford to C. Herrick Hammond, December 2, 1928, Box 12, Folder 14.*

<sup>88</sup> *Letter from James Ford to C. Herrick Hammond, December 2, 1928, Box 12, Folder 14.*

<sup>89</sup> *Letter from James Ford to C. Herrick Hammond, December 2, 1928, Box 12, Folder 14.*

<sup>90</sup> *The California Department of Transportation, Tract Housing in California, 1945-1973: A Context for National Register Evaluation, Sacramento, CA, The California Department of Transportation. 2011, 4.*

Ford described the selection of a lot and house plan as a "highly individualized exercise predicated on a particular family's idiosyncratic needs."<sup>91</sup> The Better Homes manual described that the small house should "reflect the individuality of the owner."<sup>92</sup> The construction of houses en masse was not ideal from an aesthetic standpoint and did not promote individuality:

... the use of the same design for a number of houses...produces monotony...the duplication of houses...look as if they came out of the same mold [and] is a thing to be avoided...It seems to indicate...on the part of the builder...a lack of interest in anything but the commercial side of his undertaking. Houses made in that way have no individuality...no matter how good the design may be, the continued repetition of it is deadly.<sup>93</sup>

Architect plan services gave homeowners hundreds of plans to choose from which helped suit their needs and gave them an individualized design. Plan services like the Architects' Small House Service Bureau allowed for changes to be made such as reversing the plan or eliminating rooms. It was recommended that a plan be reversed to best fit the site or provide the most sun exposure. Materials could also be changed such as stucco or shingles to replace wood siding. The straightforward and compact designs of architect small house plans could be customized to the homeowner's budget and preference without losing the overall design aesthetic.

In Better Homes in America's *Book of Small Homes* there is a two-page spread showing the nine ways a five-room house could be built and arranged for the customized budget and preferences of the homeowner (Figure 23). These different arrangements were moving the entrance porch, including or not including a side porch, combining the dining room and living room, relocating doors, adding or removing fireplaces, or adding a dining alcove to the kitchen. The plans were designed so that

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<sup>91</sup> Kristina Marie Borrmann, "A Model House Scientifically Designed and Managed: "America's Little House" (Thesis, University of California, 2015), 42.

<sup>92</sup> Ford, "Architectural design and sound construction," in *The Better Homes Manual*, 149.

<sup>93</sup> Flagg, "Reducing Costs by Standardization of Parts," in *The Better Homes Manual*, 66.

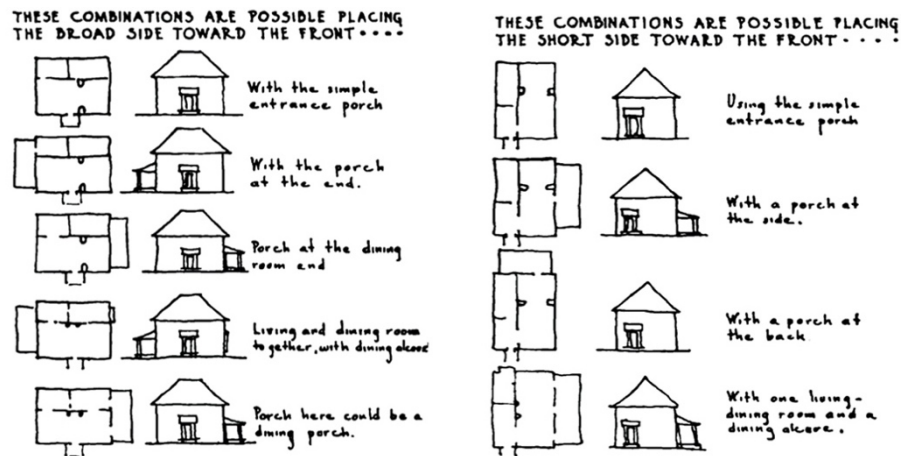


Figure 23- The various combinations of Architects' Small House Service Bureau plan 5-A-63. *Better Homes in America: Plan Book of Small Homes*, 1924.

homeowners could easily add rooms onto the house after it was built and as their income increased. This could be accomplished without messing up the clean lines, proportions and design aesthetics that were carefully articulated by the architect.

Many of the designs were modest copies of Colonial-era houses. The difference was small houses used twentieth-century materials in their construction, had modern floor plans, included improvements like electricity, modern appliances, advancements in heating and plumbing and other added comforts. Not only were period-style designs the most “American” choice, fulfilling nationalist sentiments of the 1920s, but the simple massing and typically rectangular plans made for low-cost construction and easy replication. Some of the simplest designs contained little historical reference to the Colonial style except for a few decorative elements such as shutters or entrance porch details. These straightforward designs helped reduce cost for the homeowner (Figure 24).



Figure 24 – “Four Room Cottage with many delightful qualities.” A simple design with Colonial-era elements demonstrated in detail like the shutters and entrance porch. *Small Homes of Architectural Distinction*, 1929.

### Comfort, Convenience, and Proper Intercommunication of Rooms

Small house designs in automobile suburbs “reflected less hierarchical relationships, technological innovations, and a more informal and relaxed lifestyle.”<sup>94</sup> The focus on the house plan design, and the arrangement of rooms was primary to the important work of small house architects. Large houses of previous decades were considered to have too much wasted space with unnecessary hallways and extra rooms. Small houses from architect plans were compact and saved cost by eliminating wasted space. Houses before the Small House Movement often had a library, study, music room, parlor, or other compartmentalized rooms. These rooms disappeared from small house plans of the 1920s and the emphasis was on easily accessing all the rooms. The dining room was eliminated in some plans or combined with the living room. The parlor from earlier houses became the living room and grew in size as emphasis was placed on gathering

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<sup>94</sup> National Park Service U.S. Department of the Interior, *Historic Residential Suburbs*, 56.

there as a family (which further promoted wholesome family reform ideals). The living room replacing the parlor is described in *Small Homes of Architectural Distinction*:

Do you remember the old-time parlors? There were horsehair chairs, a sedate sofa that was rarely sat upon...a marble fireplace or one made of cast iron...the doors were shut, the windows closed, blinds latched; lightness, jollity, and dust did not penetrate the sacred confines of that room. The parlor is gone, and with its passing has come the living room. When an architect arranges the details of a modern small house plan, the living room gets his first consideration. It must be of generous proportions, have well-placed windows and an open fireplace. There must be spaces for furniture, room for people to move about.<sup>95</sup>

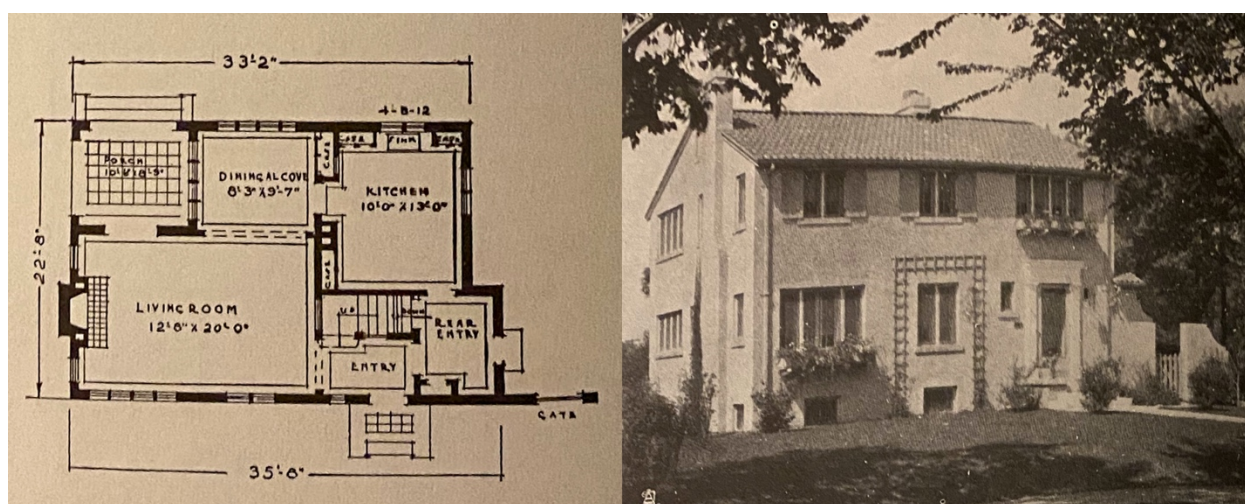


Figure 25 – First floor plan which illustrates a large living room that runs the width of the house. A dining alcove is accessed from the living room and the kitchen. The plan is the Architects' Small House Service Bureau plan 4-B-12. *Small Homes of Architectural Distinction*, 1929.

The living room in many small house designs ran the length or depth of the house and was made possible by making a hallway smaller or eliminating it altogether (Figure 25). A dining alcove was added at the rear of some house plans to make up for the removal of the dining room. In some plans a portion of the living room was used for the dining space which created a modern open floor plan concept. *Small Homes of Architectural Distinction* explains how the

<sup>95</sup> Robert T Jones, *Small Homes of Architectural Distinction*, New York: Harper & Brothers, 1929, Reprinted as *Authentic Small Houses of the Twenties: Illustrations and Floor Plans of 254 Characteristic Homes*, New York: Dover Publications, 1987, 65, Citations refer to the Dover Publications edition.



corner of the living room or kitchen can make a pleasant dining place: "Meals for the family may be served in a sunny corner of the kitchen or in the fernery, a delightful little room with windows on three sides. Or if there are guests, what could be more charming than a table set in one end of the living room with a fire blazing cheerily in the grate?"<sup>96</sup> The use of a corner of the living room was widely popularized by Caroline Crane's *Everyman's House* which will be discussed in Chapter 3.

A house plan that eliminated wasted space, and rooms that were well-arranged provided convenience for the woman whose "job" was to be the manager of the house. Compact plans in small houses were meant to eliminate steps and make a woman's tasks more efficient. In a publication by Better Homes in America, it stated that "the plan or design must receive careful attention. Not all houses are arranged for the convenience of the occupants. For example, there are houses in which the dining-room and kitchen are separated from each other by a room, not a service pantry. This means that as long as the house is used the housewife must walk back and forth, taking a large number of unnecessary steps. In some houses it would seem no attempt had been made to make the housework easy."<sup>97</sup> Better Homes in America promoted the idea that "the modern twentieth-century housewife should be a trained expert, discriminating consumer, and moral arbitrator within a defined architectural setting."<sup>98</sup>

This may have seemed like a step backward since the women's suffrage movement had just secured the right for women to vote and during the war women had to carry out duties to help war efforts that didn't revolve around housekeeping. Yet, after the war, programs like Better Homes in America promoted the message that the woman's place was in the home, and her focus

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<sup>96</sup> Jones, *Small Homes of Architectural Distinction*, 65.

<sup>97</sup> John Gries, James Taylor, *How to Own Your Own Home: A Handbook for Prospective Home-Owners* (Better Homes in America, 1924), 19.

<sup>98</sup> Hutchison, "The Cure for Domestic Neglect," 68.

was to keep the house comfortable while making sure the children were well-cared for.<sup>99</sup> Modern appliances (demonstrated in model houses) were also meant to be labor-saving devices to make the housewife's work less tedious.

While streetcar suburb houses oriented outdoor recreation to the front porch, larger lots in automobile suburbs gave ample space in the rear for recreation and garden space (Figure 26). Plans incorporated vegetable gardens and informal paved terraces at the rear or side of the house, allowing extra space for dining and socializing. These spaces increased comfort and enjoyment in 1920s small houses.

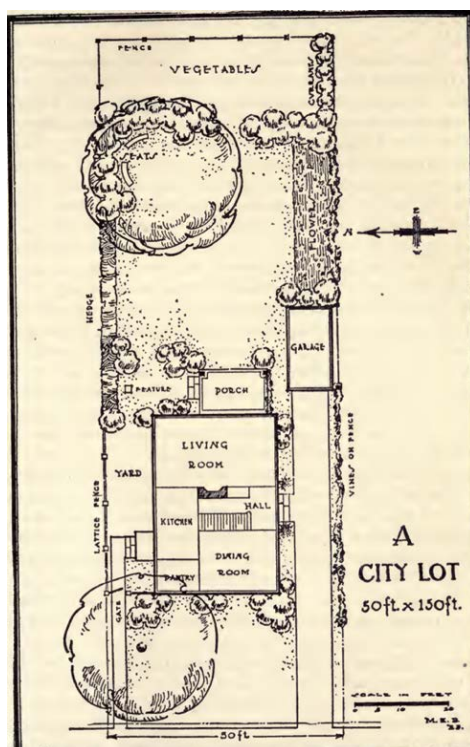


Figure 26- An ideal plan and site for a Better Home: a large area in the rear for recreation and a vegetable garden, privacy from neighbors, and a detached garage placed at the rear of the house. The ideal lot was 50 x150 feet (found in many automobile suburbs) versus the 25x100 foot lots (found in streetcar suburbs). *The Better Homes Manual*, 1931.

<sup>99</sup> Moulds, "The Domestic Standard: American Homeownership and the State, 1917-1950," 48.

## Natural Lighting and Ventilation

Many streetcar suburbs had parcels that were organized in a grid which was the easiest to lay out and most cost effective for subdividers. This resulted in houses that were close together with shallow side-yards in between creating little privacy from neighbors or natural light in the interior spaces. The house styles typically found in streetcar suburbs were front-gabled such as the American Four Square and Queen Anne. They were tall and narrow to accommodate the narrow lots (Figures 27-28). James Ford wrote about building on a narrow lot and some of the houses that resulted:

It is almost impossible to build a beautiful, detached house on a lot that is only 25 feet wide and still allow ample light and air at the sides. One essential principle of architectural beauty is that the width of a house shall be greater than its height, for only in this way will it fit in with the horizon line in a way that will please the eye. But on the narrow lot the height almost inevitably exceeds the width, and a street of such houses looks like a row of irregular teeth which need the attention of a dentist.<sup>100</sup>



Figure 27- Houses on narrow lots can be found in many streetcar suburbs which pre-dated automobile suburbs where most Better Homes are found. Narrow lots reduced privacy, light and ventilation for homeowners. *Richmond Times-Dispatch*, March 9, 2019.

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<sup>100</sup> Ford, "Architectural Design and Sound Construction," in *The Better Homes Manual*, 157.



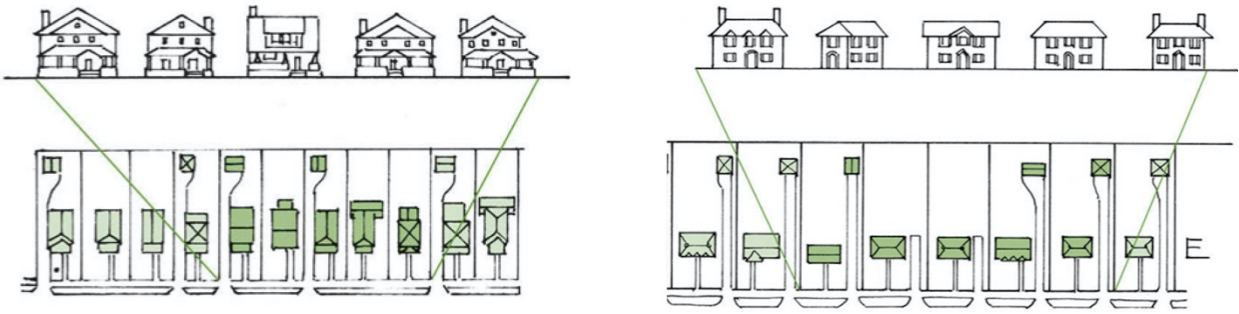


Figure 28 - Streetscape of streetcar suburb (left) versus automobile suburb (right). Houses in streetcar suburbs were on narrower lots and typically contained front-gable houses built to fit a narrow lot. Automobile suburbs allowed for the house to be turned sideways on the lot and for more space between houses. *A Field Guide to American Houses*, 2015.

Previously streets radiated out from streetcar lines forming a wheel spoke design. Houses in automobile suburbs were built in the vacant land between the “wheel spokes” or further away in new areas. Since land was cheaper further away from cities in the 1920s, lots could be larger (often fifty feet by one-hundred fifty feet) and houses no longer needed to be tall and narrow (on lots that were twenty-five feet wide). Wider lots allowed the gable to be oriented to the side and many 1920s period-style houses were designed in that manner.<sup>101</sup> Better Homes leaders encouraged prospective homeowners to explore these designs produced by the Architects’ Small House Service Bureau and others.<sup>102</sup> These designs which were oriented with the roof ridge parallel to the street required homeowners careful planning and siting of the lot as most streetcar lots would not sufficiently fit Better Homes (Figure 29).

<sup>101</sup> Jonathan Lane, “The Period House in the Nineteen-Twenties,” *Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians* 20, no. 4 (1961), 170, Accessed April 20, 2022, <https://doi.org/10.2307/988040>.

<sup>102</sup> In many period-style houses of the 1920s designed by the Architects’ Small House Service Bureau, the main roof ridge ran parallel with the street rather than many streetcar suburb houses where the gable end façade main roof ridge was perpendicular to the street.



Figure 29 - An illustration urging caution to homebuyers when selecting a lot. Larger lots in some automobile suburbs allowed for a wider range of house styles (including the popular 1920s period-revival designs). House styles were no longer restricted to front-gable houses which were meant for the narrow lots of the streetcar suburb. *The Better Homes Manual*, 1931.

The arrangement of the house on the lot was important, as well as selecting a plan that allowed for the best sun exposure on that lot. Homeowners were advised to carefully consider the best siting for natural light. Unlike some crowded city conditions people had left in the city, small house designs had more light and air due to large lots and many windows incorporated into the plans. Bedrooms were to have windows on three sides if possible (Figure 30). Dormers were on many 1920s small house designs and increased light and air to second-floor bedrooms. Living rooms were to have windows on three sides to provide a view to the outdoors, ample sunlight, and a cross-ventilation breeze. The Architects' Small House Service Bureau claimed that "no room that is lighted by windows on three sides...can ever be wholly cheerless by day, no matter what the weather. If it is not sunny, it will at least be light."<sup>103</sup>

<sup>103</sup> Jones, *Small Homes of Architectural Distinction*, 64.



Figure 30- A bedroom in model house for Greenville, South Carolina's Better Homes campaign. Multiple windows in the bedrooms, living room and kitchens were meant to provide light and ventilation--key principles of a Better Home. *Better Homes in America Guidebook for Campaigns: Better Homes Week, May 10 to 17, 1925, 1924.*

French doors also were common on 1920s small, better house designs leading to the simple outdoor terraces. Sunrooms on the side or back were also part of small house designs providing light and added ventilation to that part of the house. Sleeping porches were also featured spaces in architect-designed plans. They provided a ventilated bonus space for sleeping. Full width porches common on twentieth-century bungalows were not typically found on small houses by the Architects' Small House Service Bureau. Large front porches blocked light and ventilation to the interior and were also an added cost to build. If a porch was desired, it was often placed on the side forming a small wing at a right angle to the house and functioned as a sunroom or sleeping porch.

## Chapter 3: Better Homes in America & Model Houses

## Better Homes Week National Campaigns

Model houses were a central component to the Better Homes in America program.

Secretary of Commerce Herbert Hoover believed that there were "energizing forces that radiate from the homes of the nation" and that there were important conclusions local communities demonstrated in the model houses:

The Better Homes movement has derived its soundness and its widespread influence from the work of several thousand voluntary local committees which have carefully studied the home-making problems of the families in their own communities under their own local conditions. During the past five years, they have embodied their conclusions in demonstration houses and have given practical aid to millions of American families in their home-making problems.<sup>104</sup>

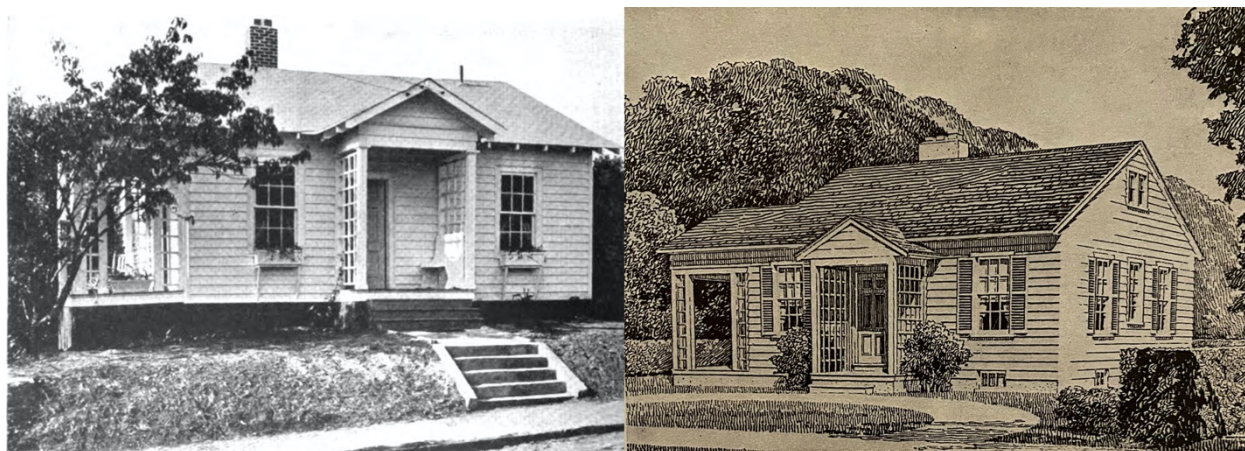


Figure 31- Model house demonstrated by African Americans in Atlanta, Georgia in 1926 (left). The house was built from the Architects' Small House Service Bureau plan 4-A-8 (see drawing on the right). *Better Homes in America Guidebook for Campaigns: Better Homes Week, April 25 to May 1, 1926, 1925 / Small Homes of Architectural Distinction, 1929.*

By 1924 "every state in the Union and Alaska participated" in Better Homes in America campaigns with some states featuring multiple model houses (Figure 31).<sup>105</sup> The states with the largest participation from 1924 to 1928 were Alabama, California, Colorado, Georgia, Illinois,

<sup>104</sup> "Herbert Hoover Urges Better Homes in America," *Healdsburg Tribune*, November 9, 1926.

<sup>105</sup> *Brief Summary of the 1924 Better Homes Campaign*, Better Homes in America records, Hoover Institution Library and Archives, Box 1, Folder 10-11.

Iowa, Kansas, Michigan, Minnesota, Mississippi, Nebraska, New York, North Carolina, Ohio, Pennsylvania, Tennessee, Texas, Virginia, and West Virginia.<sup>106</sup> Model houses for Better Homes Week were to be "of good design and construction [and] completely furnished on a predetermined budget proportioned to the cost of the house with grounds carefully planted and landscaped."<sup>107</sup> "Good design" was to be achieved by using architect-designed stock plans from Better Homes in America's own plan book, a local architect, or other professional plan services like the Architects' Small House Service Bureau.

Some model houses were built by local Better Homes committees like the Home Sweet Home House in Washington D.C. and the House That Budget Built in Santa Barbara, California. Other houses were borrowed from homeowners or builders if the house met the standards of Better Homes in America. Builders were not allowed to advertise or even list their name anywhere on the house. Yet, it was noted by *The Buffalo Enquirer* in 1923 how builders looking to make a quick profit exploited the Better Homes campaigns. This made it a challenge for some local committees to find houses to demonstrate if they couldn't build one from scratch:

Speculative builders are going to [help] build better homes...[and] in various towns and cities...builders have agreed to do the job under the supervision of the Better Homes organization...Heretofore, the local chairman in a given town has been under a serious handicap in securing a demonstration house in which to carry on her campaign...Usually, the most available houses for this purpose were new homes constructed by speculative builders for selling. If she accepted the ready invitation of the builder to borrow one of these houses as a demonstration house it meant that the builder would quickly exploit the fact and sell it and others like it to the public with the implication, they were "model" better homes. In very few instances were these houses sufficiently in conformity with the ideals of modern home construction which rule the Better Homes movement to furnish any basis of truth for such an assumption. The chairman was, therefore, forced to insist that the builder sign an agreement rigidly prescribing his advertising intentions. While

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<sup>106</sup> *Number of Better Homes Committees Organized by States for Years 1924 to 1928 Inclusive*, Better Homes in America records, Hoover Institution Library and Archives, Box 32, Folder 7.

<sup>107</sup> James Ford, "Governmental and other educational organizations," in *The Better Homes Manual*, edited by Blanche Halbert (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1931), 744.



many builders were ready to conform, others were not, and campaigns in many towns and cities had to be abandoned.<sup>108</sup>

Each year a guidebook was published by national headquarters with suggestions for local committees on what a Better Home should be and notable examples from the year before. The guidebooks also included guidance on how to run a local Better Homes Week. Local committees were encouraged to develop their own guidebooks as well that listed where events were held during Better Homes Week, had directions to the model houses, and explained the goals of Better Homes in America. Santa Barbara, Boston, Atlanta, and Chicago were a few cities that accompanied their Better Homes campaigns with yearly guidebooks (*Figure 32*).



Figure 32 – A guidebook created by Atlanta, Georgia's local Better Homes Week committee for the national campaign in 1927. Better Homes in America records, Hoover Institution Library and Archives.

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<sup>108</sup> "To Build Better Homes Result of Campaign," *The Buffalo Enquirer*, October 3, 1923, 14.

Participating communities were asked to keep a record of “all activities” including clippings from newspapers to document the publicity their campaign received.<sup>109</sup> The wide distribution of pamphlets by Better Homes in America, local Better Homes committees, newspapers, and magazines was key to the program's success. Cities were asked to keep detailed records of their campaigns to add to the Better Homes in America research efforts. Santa Barbara kept extremely detailed records of their campaigns and it is likely other cities did as well.

Once built, model houses were opened for the community to tour during Better Homes Week. The program of events included much fanfare with presentations, essays by local students, sermons, songs, book recommendations, and other events proclaiming the goals of Better Homes in America. Lectures during Better Homes Week were on the topics of "homeownership, home-building, home-financing, gardening" and other issues about the BHA campaign.<sup>110</sup> Women on Better Homes committees were expected to create home economic demonstrations and model kitchen contests (Figure 33).

Better Homes committees were judged not only on their model house designs, but on their programs including instruction in cooking, cleaning, decorating, and other demonstrations to aid the housewife. The goals pertaining to women listed in Better Homes publications were: “To supply knowledge of the means of eliminating drudgery and waste of effort in housekeeping, to spread information about public agencies, which will assist housekeepers in their problems, to encourage the establishment of courses of instruction in home economics in the public schools, and particularly the construction of school practice houses and home

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<sup>109</sup> *Better Homes in America Guidebook for Campaigns: Better Homes Week, May 10 to 17, 1925* (Better Homes in America, 1924), 15.

<sup>110</sup> Ford, "Governmental and other educational organizations," in *The Better Homes Manual*, 743.



economics cottages where girls in our public schools and colleges may, by actual practice, learn the best methods of conducting household operations and of home making.”<sup>111</sup>



Figure 33- Model kitchen demonstrated by Greenville, South Carolina in the 1925 Better Homes Week campaign. Features were the enamel-top work-table with large drawers and attached stool, the sink with a swivel faucet, and two enamel drain-boards directly beneath the window. *Guidebook of Better Homes in America: How to Organize the 1926 Campaign*, 1925.

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<sup>111</sup> *Better Homes in America Guidebook for Campaigns: Better Homes Week, April 25 to May 1, 1926* (Better Homes in America, 1925), 7-8.

# SCHOOL COTTAGES

## For Training in HOME-MAKING



Figure 34- Five-room Home Economics Cottage built by Port Huron's Better Homes Week Committee. *School Cottages for Training in Home-Making, Better Homes in America*, 1926.

School practice houses and home economics cottages may have been inspired by a home economic cottage in Louisiana from 1919. Better Homes literature features a quote from the teacher, Miss Lilian Hammons saying the house “gives the girls training and practice in housewifery, better ideas as to arrangement of equipment, and creates interest in home work.”<sup>112</sup> School practice houses and home economics cottages became popular and Port Huron, Michigan, Buffalo, New York, and Ames, Iowa all had model houses of this type (Figure 34).<sup>113</sup> Port

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<sup>112</sup> James Ford, Blanche Halbert, *School Cottages for Training in Home-Making* (Better Homes in America, 1926), 29.

<sup>113</sup> Ford, "Governmental and other educational organizations," in *The Better Homes Manual*, 745

Huron's cottage was later named the "Meloney Cottage" since Marie Meloney came to personally visit the home economics cottage in Michigan.

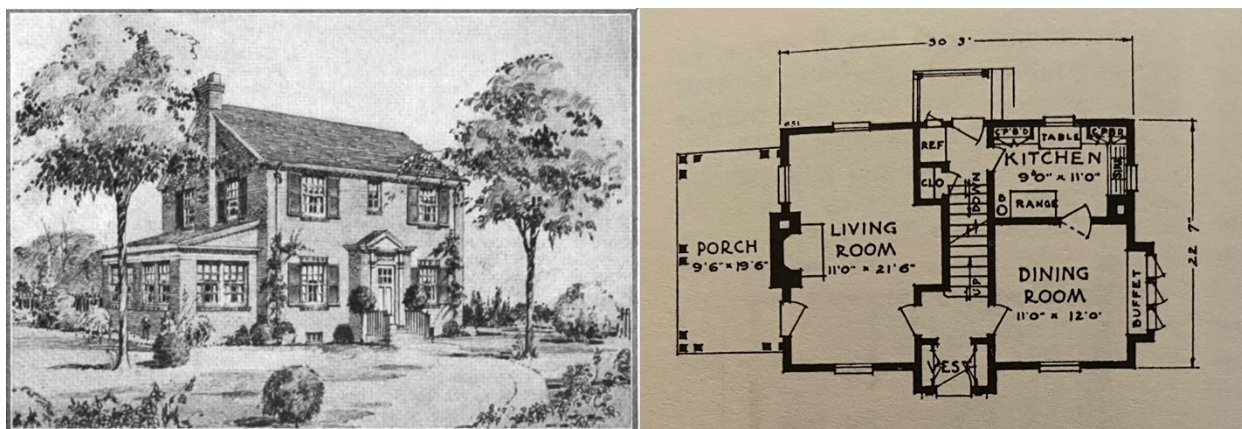


Figure 35-Girl Scout house in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania for the Sesqui-Centennial Exposition. It was to serve as a permanent center of homemaking for the Girl Scouts. The house was built from the Architects' Small House Service Bureau plan 6-A-17. *Better Homes in America Guidebook for Better Homes Campaigns in Cities and Towns: Better Homes Week, April 21 to May 1, 1927, 1926 / Small Homes of Architectural Distinction, 1929.*

Hostesses for the model houses were women from the community and they often involved local Girl Scouts. Girl Scouts also had model houses built by the local Better Homes Committees which became permanent club houses including in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania and Santa Barbara, California (Figure 35). The hostess was to "keep the room in perfect order" and "urge people to make suggestions," amongst other duties.<sup>114</sup> Hostesses were also to observe and report to the national Better Homes headquarters what questions were asked and what men vs. women found most interesting. As the visitors were inspecting the model home, they too were being studied so headquarters could make improvements to future home recommendations.

<sup>114</sup> *Better Homes in America: Additional Suggestions to Local Chairman* (Better Homes in America, 1924), 15.



Figure 36- A Better Homes exposition which took place during Better Homes Week and displayed furniture and products for the interior of houses. *The Daily News*, May 12, 1925.

With hundreds of people walking through the model houses in cities all over the U.S., vendors and trade associations clamored to have their products featured in the houses and at various local exhibits during Better Homes Week (Figure 36). Trade associations advertised their building materials during Better Homes Week, including stucco, brick, lumber, metal lath, etc. Better Homes committees solicited donations from vendors and manufacturers that resulted in “free” advertising for them with their products used to build Better Homes or featured in the interiors. Local guidebooks detailed product names and prices so visitors could upgrade the interiors of their houses or buy them once their new house was built. Many brands capitalized on the campaign and advertised their products even when they were not part of the local campaign (Figure 37).

<p><b>Perfect Planning Means Positive Possession</b></p> <p>George H. Blain 11 Penn. Avenue Passaic, N. J. GAS APPLIANCE For Heating and Hot Water</p>	<p><b>Better Homes Are Electrically Equipped</b></p> <p>K. &amp; O. Electrical &amp; Hardware Company 118 Main Avenue Passaic, N. J.</p>	<p><b>"The Roof Over Your Head"</b></p> <p>Wm. C. Beyenberg &amp; Son 181 Van Nostrand St. Passaic, N. J.</p>	<p><b>Build With Brick for Permanence and Beauty</b></p> <p>Campbell, Morrill &amp; Co. 101 Main Avenue Passaic, N. J.</p>	<p><b>Better Features for Better Homes</b></p> <p>Arrow Electric Co. 184 Main Avenue Passaic, N. J.</p>	<p><b>FRED W. JONES</b> <b>Builder of Fine Homes</b></p> <p>118 Amsterdam Avenue Passaic, N. J.</p>	<p><b>For the Better Home</b></p> <p>NATIONAL ELECTRIC CO. 115 MAIN AVENUE Passaic, N. J.</p>	<p><b>"Quality Features" for Better Homes are to be had at Geng &amp; Geng's</b></p> <p>Geng &amp; Geng, Inc. 115-117 Passaic Street Passaic, N. J.</p>
<p><b>Better Homes</b></p> <p>Seasoned Lumber</p> <p>Builder's Supplies &amp; Hardware Materials</p> <p>D. WARSHAW 100 Main Avenue, Office Second Floor</p>						<p><b>Avoiding Their Luck Better and Last Longer</b></p> <p>M. ELICHMAN 181 Passaic Street Passaic, N. J.</p>	
<p><b>for Paint and Varnishes</b></p> <p>Grapek 115 Broadway Ave. New York City</p>	<p><b>Build the Garage the Better Way</b></p> <p>A. Rosenthal Co. 101 Passaic Ave. Passaic, N. J.</p>					<p><b>ANDES</b> Gas, Steam and Gasoline Pumps</p> <p>118 Broadway Passaic, N. J.</p>	
<p><b>Fire Insurance</b></p> <p>The Rockland-Johnson Company 115 Broadway Passaic, N. J.</p>	<p><b>"Be Sure &amp; Be Yours"</b></p> <p>The Guaranty Mortgage &amp; Title Insurance Co. 115 Broadway Passaic, N. J.</p>	<p><b>Plumbing Engineers and Contractors</b></p> <p>STANDARD Floor Covering Co. 111 Main St. Passaic, N. J.</p>	<p><b>Attractive Grounds Make a Better Home. Plant Seasonally!</b></p> <p>Quality Flower Shop 118 Main Avenue Passaic, N. J.</p>	<p><b>For Better Home</b></p> <p>STANDARD Floor Covering Co. 111 Main St. Passaic, N. J.</p>	<p><b>The Humphreys Hot Water Heater</b></p> <p>Burrell Plumbing Company 11 Garden Street Passaic, N. J.</p>	<p><b>The Kitchen is Better When It Has a Tappan or Tappan Gas Range</b></p> <p>Passaic Plumbing Supply Co. 115-117 Main Ave. Passaic, N. J.</p>	<p><b>ANDES</b> Gas, Steam and Gasoline Pumps</p> <p>118 Broadway Passaic, N. J.</p>

Figure 37 – Newspaper advertising all the vendors that make up a “Better Home.” The page is titled “Build the Better Way, You Can’t Afford Not To.” *Passaic Daily Herald*, May 16, 1924.



As previously mentioned, speculative builders opened model houses of their own during Better Homes Week. Mail-order kit house companies like Pacific Ready-Cut also advertised model houses saying there was “No better time than Better Homes Week to plan your new home. Pacific Ready-Cut Homes are Better Homes. This is Better Homes Week...Come in and let's talk it over.”<sup>115</sup> Sears, Roebuck, & Company, another mail-order kit house company stated that they too were building quality homes: “This is Better Homes Week. Sears, Roebuck, & Company has always maintained these standards and the policy of consistently lower prices, though its vast purchasing power, has aided in the development of Better Homes to more than eleven million families throughout the United States” (Figure 38).<sup>116</sup>



Figure 38 – An advertisement by Sears, Roebuck & Company showing their support of higher building standards promoting by Better Homes in America. The *Daily Santa Maria Times*, April 26, 1927.

<sup>115</sup> "The Plans are Already Drawn for Your Home," Advertisement, *Daily Santa Maria Times*, April 26, 1927, 6.

<sup>116</sup> "This is Better Homes Week," Advertisement, *The Philadelphia Inquirer*, May 15, 1928, 16.

In 1924, *Fruit, Garden, and Home* was renamed *Better Homes and Gardens*, an indication of just how important this movement was. This name-change concerned Marie Meloney since the journal was not affiliated with the Better Homes program, and she wrote to James Ford asking if they should take legal action (Figure 39).<sup>117</sup> Ford wrote back saying, “If imitation is the sincerest form of flattery, perhaps we should be pleased with the increasing adoption of the term ‘Better Homes’ through the country.”<sup>118</sup>

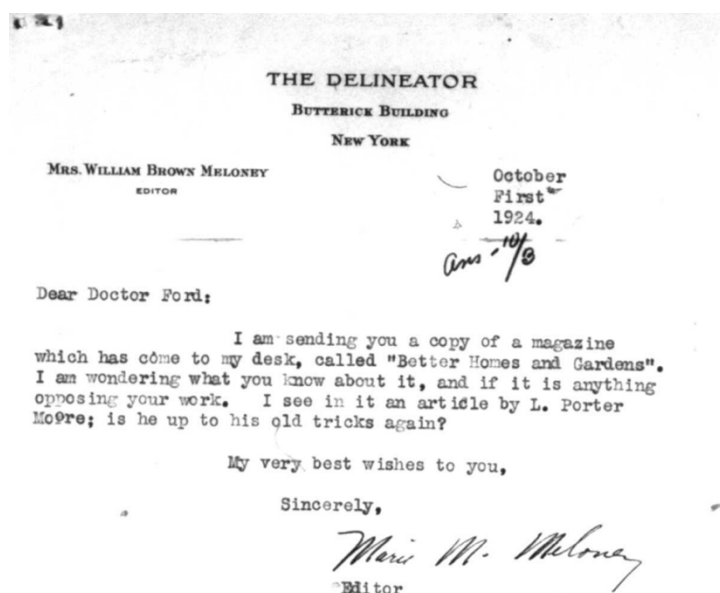


Figure 39 – A letter from Marie Meloney to James Ford asking about *Fruit, Garden and Home* changing its name to *Better Homes and Gardens*. *Better Homes in America* records. Hoover Institution Library and Archives.

Three cash prizes were awarded to the best *Better Homes* campaigns in the country by the *Better Homes Committee on Awards*. Cities that entered *Better Homes Week* competitions

<sup>117</sup> Letter from Marie Meloney to James Ford, October 1, 1924, *Better Homes in America* records, Hoover Institution Library and Archives, Box 1, Folder 11.

<sup>118</sup> Letter from James Ford to Marie Meloney October 3, 1924, Box 1, Folder 11.

were judged on architecture, landscaping, location, decoration, arrangement, furnishings, and equipment. The awards committee was especially interested in model house entries that closely followed the suggestions given in Better Homes guidebooks. Communities were also judged on "campaign organization and community support," including local publicity and participation from city government, schools, merchants, churches, "motion-picture houses," and associations.<sup>119</sup>

To win the prize, local committees were asked to submit a report on the cost of the campaign and give a "comprehensive picture of what took place."<sup>120</sup> Some questions included: "How many visitors attended, how much newspaper publicity did you receive, what cooperation did you receive from schools, and how was the church involved?" The questions regarding the model houses asked if they were detached, semi-detached, a house in a row, or a remodeled house. This shows that the competition was not just for single-family houses and there was a desire to improve housing in general. However, most of the focus was on single-family houses. The questionnaire also asked for ways in which next year's local Better Homes Week could be scaled. For instance, what neighboring communities within a fifty-mile radius might participate the following year?

The Better Homes program leaders hoped to reach every town in America. Better Homes Week attendance was widespread, and Ford reported in 1925 that over three million people were in attendance across different communities.<sup>121</sup> Better Homes Week each year would not have attracted as many visitors without the help of newspaper and magazine promotion (Figure 40). Newspapers heavily promoted local campaigns and published model house updates. Local

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<sup>119</sup> *Better Homes in America Guidebook for Campaigns: Better Homes Week, May 10 to 17, 1925*, 31.

<sup>120</sup> *Additional Suggestions to Local Chairman*, 5.

<sup>121</sup> Moulds, "The Domestic Standard: American Homeownership and the State, 1917-1950," 81.



campaigns that received prizes or honorable mentions by national headquarters were featured in newspapers and gained widespread publicity nationally.



Figure 40 – Sacramento was an avid supporter of Better Homes in America. They participated with many model houses over the years. *The Sacramento Bee*, June 1, 1923.

Several women's magazines also helped promote Better Homes campaigns. There had already been widespread interest in home improvement, house designs, interior decoration, and gardening in early twentieth-century magazines. Better Homes in America was appealing since it touched all those topics and magazines "reflected the growing interest in home improvement and appealed increasingly to owners of small homes."<sup>122</sup> Some of these magazines were *Better Homes and Gardens*, *American Home*, *House and Garden*, *Garden and Home Builder*, *McCall's*, *California Southland*, *California's Home and Garden Magazine*, and *Sunset*.<sup>123</sup> *California Southland* and *California's Home and Garden Magazine* frequently featured full spreads

<sup>122</sup> National Park Service U.S. Department of the Interior, *Historic Residential Suburbs*, 59.

<sup>123</sup> National Park Service U.S. Department of the Interior, *Historic Residential Suburbs*, 59.

documenting Better Homes campaigns, particularly Santa Barbara's. *California Southland* was also an early supporter of the small house movement and the use of architect-designed stock plans. The editor of the magazine stated in 1924 that the journal would "publish in each number small houses or details of larger homes by California's leading architects; and will also offer designs and sketches by young men who are selling plans and designs for small homes. Thus, the best architecture will be made available to all who apply to this journal."<sup>124</sup>

### Everyman's House – 2026 South Westnedge Avenue

During the Better Homes program, one of the most famous model houses was Everyman's House. The house is extant and located at 2026 South Westnedge Avenue in Kalamazoo, Michigan. It was designed by Dr. Caroline Bartlett Crane, an exceptional woman with vision and a commitment to civic duty. Crane held different roles over the years, including being a teacher, journalist, minister, and social reformer. She was concerned with issues of sanitation and living conditions and a social reformer who had received national recognition by the time Better Homes had formed. Crane (like other reformers) believed that the "manifestation of an improved social world was possible through redesigned physical environments."<sup>125</sup> Her social reform ideas caught the attention of Herbert Hoover (Secretary of Commerce and President of Better Homes in America) who wrote Crane a letter in 1924 asking her to participate in Better Homes Week that year. Crane agreed, and the model house Everyman's House was built in seven weeks (Figure 41). She named it Everyman's House since it was meant to appeal to a modest budget, and the rooms had flexibility depending on the homeowner's family size and preference.

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<sup>124</sup> "California's contribution to Better Homes," *California Southland* 8, no. 82. October 1926, 27.

<sup>125</sup> Moulds, "The Domestic Standard: American Homeownership and the State, 1917-1950," 104.



Figure 41 – The exterior of Everyman’s House. *Better Homes in America Guidebook for Campaigns: Better Homes Week, May 10 to 17, 1925, 1924.*

She described “Everyman” as “the man who cannot have the ‘grand house’ but should be able to have the decent, attractive, convenient, ‘little house.’”<sup>126</sup> “Everyman” was the “father [who] finds it none too easy to make both ends meet, and the mother who does all her own work.”<sup>127</sup> Everyman's House was designed as a Colonial Revival style “cottage” that had “deep cream clapboarded walls with moss-green roof” and contained five principal rooms and one bathroom.<sup>128</sup> The house design concentrated on the needs of the mother with design features that were meant to increase the efficiency of her family duties and house chores (Figures 42-46).

Crane described the house as follows:

<sup>126</sup> Caroline Bartlett Crane, *Everyman’s House* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday Page, 1925), 44.

<sup>127</sup> Crane, *Everyman’s House*, 44.

<sup>128</sup> Crane, *Everyman’s House*, 18.

In erecting our demonstration home, the better homes committee has had in mind to build a house suitable for an average family of rather small income; to keep the cost as low, considering the prevailing prices of materials and labor...and to provide the maximum of convenience for a mother with several children...who—like 90 per cent of American mothers—does all her own work. In this little colonial cottage it will be noted the bathroom is on the first floor, and that the space usually is given to a dining room, used some two hours out of the 24, is given instead to a combination parents' room and nursery, used every hour of every day and night. The living room runs the depth of the little house, being lighted on three side, and with a fireplace in the center of the fourth side. At the further end of the living room is a group of casement windows framed at either end by cupboards running to the ceiling and fitted with a window seat 7 feet long...<sup>129</sup>

A view of the landscape from the windows in the living room was also planned for, a feature that was recommended by small house architects. Crane described that the windows in the living room looked out upon a city park and wooded hills with suburban homes. She also described in detail the use of the living room corner for the dining room and the modern features of the kitchen she so carefully designed:

In front of the [living room] window seat stands a two-leaf table, for which most of the day need hold nothing but a vase and a book or two. At mealtime, however, it is converted into a dining table...The kitchen is so planned that the stove, sink and work table are grouped closely together. This passway counter is continuous with one of the sink counters, providing ample work space around the stove...Below the passway counter is a warming closet...In this space is a rack for holding platters...and shelves for vegetable dishes...The sink in this house is 33 inches high, instead of the usual 30 inches. The stove and convenience of the kitchen are designed to [help] steps and labor. The basement...[has] ample headroom...and is well ventilated and lighted naturally and artificially.<sup>130</sup>

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<sup>129</sup> James Ford, "Exhibitor Describes Model Dwelling that Suits Pocketbook of Average American Wage Earner," Better Homes in America records, Hoover Institution Library & Archives, Box 70.

<sup>130</sup> Crane, Foreword in *Everyman's House*.



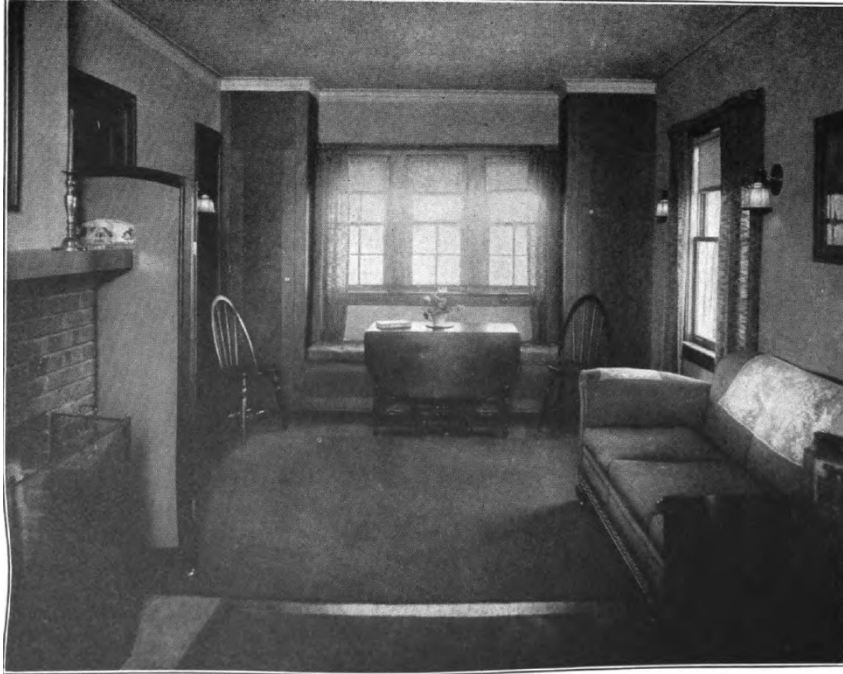


Figure 42- Living room of Everyman's House running the full depth of the house and containing a dining area in the corner. The living room was lit with windows on three sides. *Everyman's House*, 1925.



Figure 43 – The kitchen in Everyman's House which had features such as a pass-through opening from the kitchen to dining area, a sink at a height determined to be more suitable for women, a warming closet for food, and an efficient arrangement to help eliminate steps for the housewife. *Everyman's House*, 1925.



Figure 44 – The kitchen in Everyman’s House with a large window to provide light and ventilation. Ample counter-space was provided to make the tasks of the housewife more pleasant and efficient. *Everyman’s House*, 1925.



Figure 45 – Ample storage was provided all over the house. The latest utensils and appliances were displayed for Better Homes Week. This image shows how the Mother’s Suite with a bed for the baby connected directly to the kitchen. *Everyman’s House*, 1925.



Figure 46 - The Mother's Suite was a bedroom that was conveniently located next to the kitchen so while the baby was napping or playing the mother did not have to travel far. It was designed to be used as the main bedroom for the parents but it could also be used as a guest room. *Everyman's House*, 1925.

Storage was a key element which also made her design modern and convenient, and she wrote that "The first floor [has] an ample coat closet with hat shelves and rack for rubbers..."<sup>131</sup> Crane described the second story which was well ventilated and lit by windows and dormers and describes how the house can be expanded with an extra bathroom later:

The stairs ascend...to the second story, where are, on either side, a bedroom...each having a large dormer alcove. Each of these bedrooms is provided with good cross ventilation and two good closets. Opposite the head of the stairs is a small dormer, in which the roughing in is made for a future toilet and lavatory.<sup>132</sup>

Crane goes on to describe the ways *Everyman's House* is suited for the mother and her role as

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<sup>131</sup> Ford, "Exhibitor Describes Model Dwelling," Box 70.

<sup>132</sup> Ford, "Exhibitor Describes Model Dwelling," Box 70.



“house manager”:

The mother always has her baby and children of preschool age near her without keeping them in the hot and steamy kitchen where most accidents...happen. A feature of this room [the mother's bedroom] is the child's bed, taking no floor space, but supported over the feet of the mother's bed, where she can most conveniently care for her baby at night. The mother has to go upstairs only once a day, to care for the upper rooms. Climbing stairs becomes at times a great burden and danger to a mother...In case of sickness of any member of the family, the downstairs bedroom, bath and toilet are of the greatest possible convenience to both the patient and the one who acts as nurse. The downstairs bath, small but complete enables the mother to bathe the little children and supervise the somewhat older ones without climbing the stairs. At the same time, she is in position to watch the cooking and baking and conveniently answer door or telephone.<sup>133</sup>

After seeing the house, Hoover said that, “Mrs. Bartlett Crane has ably demonstrated that relief is available to overburdened mothers who have to keep house and bring up children.”<sup>134</sup> Crane designed Everyman's House to be flexible and wrote that “In case the family is small and there are no little children, the downstairs bedroom can be used as a dining room [or] in case there are several little children this room can be a nursery, and the parents and their little ones can sleep in the larger chamber above.”<sup>135</sup> She also designed it so that it could grow with a family noting that a sun room or additional wing on either side could be built (including a sleeping porch above), as well as the previously mentioned extra bathroom. She also included plans for a detached garage that was designed to be placed at the rear of the site.

Crane retained a landscape designer for the grounds, another small house recommendation of the 1920s. Crane may have gotten inspiration for the exterior of Everyman's House from the Architects' Small House Service Bureau or other plan book sources since the exterior was not radical, yet her attention to detail in the plan, and elaborate description of

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<sup>133</sup> Ford, "Exhibitor Describes Model Dwelling," Box 70.

<sup>134</sup> Crane, Foreword in *Everyman's House*.

<sup>135</sup> Ford, "Exhibitor Describes Model Dwelling," Box 70.

various rooms was radical. More details of the various rooms can be seen in the scale model at the Kalamazoo Valley Museum (Figure 47).



Figure 47- A scale model at the Kalamazoo Valley Museum showing the interior of Everyman's House. Valerie Smith, 2022.

Everyman's House was an example that was featured for many years in *Better Homes* publications. It was also widely published in newspapers all over the country as an example of what a small house design should be. It helped propel the idea that women were house managers, and their workload should be made more efficient through house plan design and modern appliances. Although Crane is credited with the design of Everyman's House, she involved local architect Gilbert Worden to create working designs for the contractor (Figures 48-50). Although he questioned some of her "radical" plan ideas, he executed them to her liking and was enthusiastic about contributing to this project for the national Better Homes program.<sup>136</sup>

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<sup>136</sup> Moulds, "The Domestic Standard: American Homeownership and the State, 1917-1950," 116.

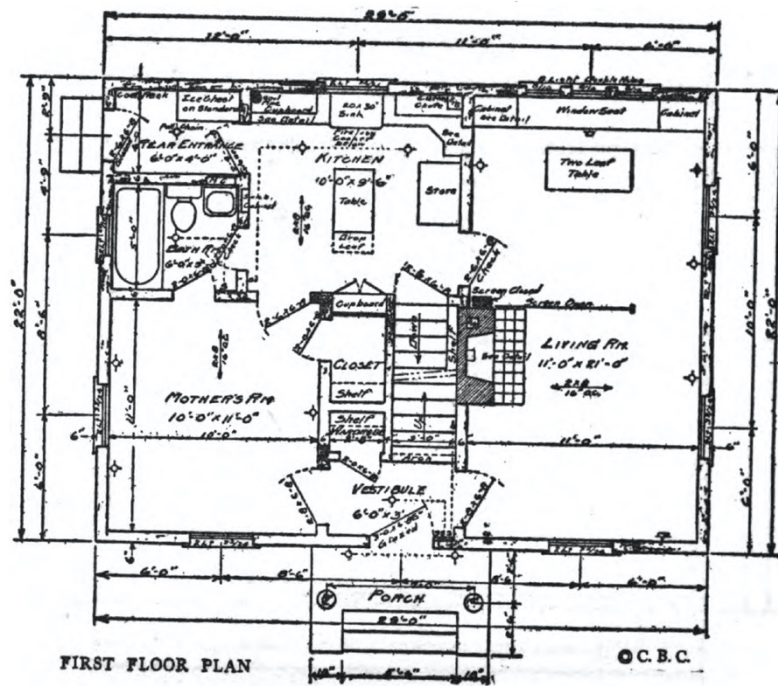


Figure 48 – The first floor plan of the model house. *Everyman's House*, 1925.

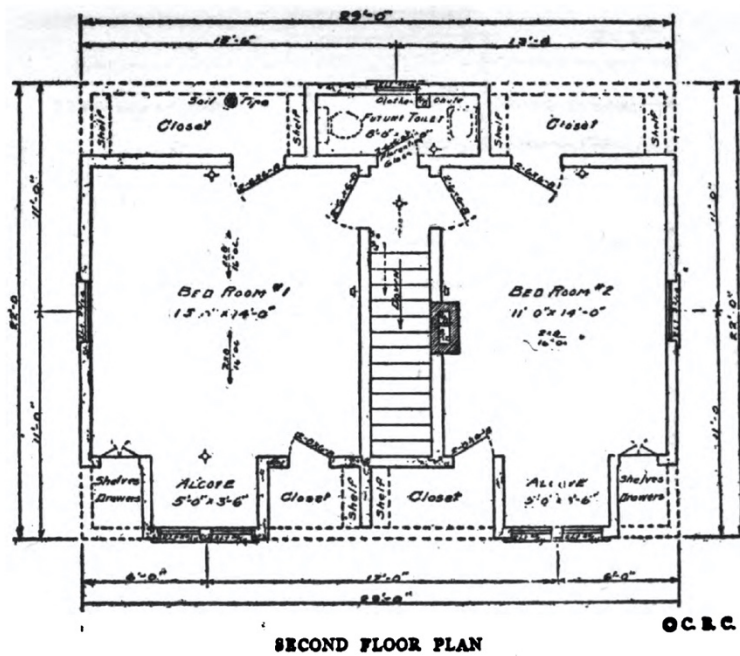


Figure 49 – The second floor plan of the model house. *Everyman's House*, 1925.

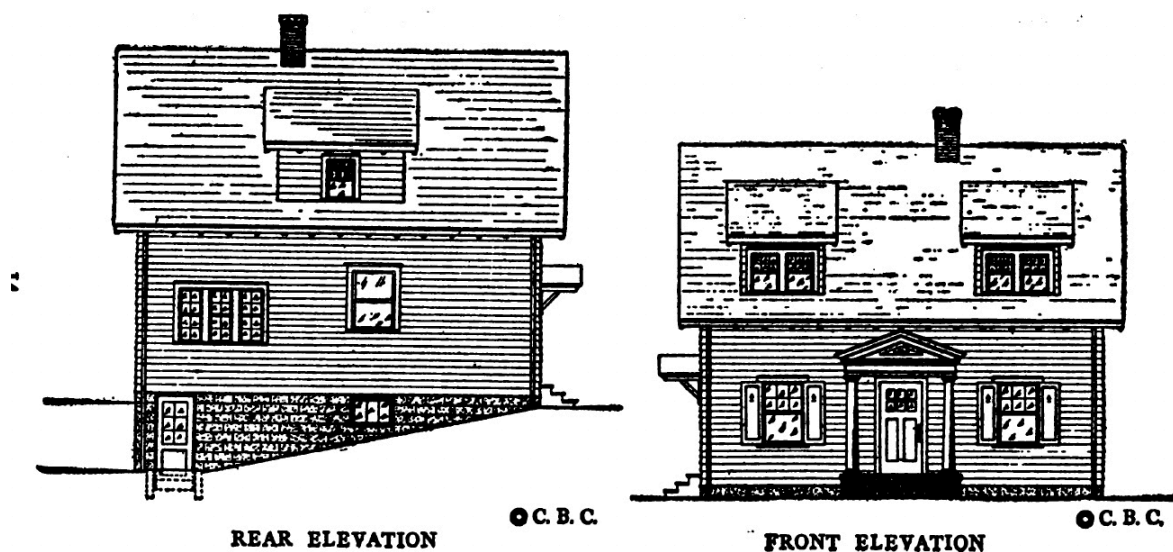


Figure 50 – The front and rear elevation of the model house. *Everyman's House*, 1925.

The lot was purchased by local realtors for \$1,000 and was donated for use during Better Homes Week. On March 24, 1924, ground was broken followed by a dedication. The cornerstone (still visible on the house today) contains Hoover's letter asking Crane to participate, a Better Homes guidebook, and a copy of the speeches that had been prepared for the dedication (Figure 51).<sup>137</sup> A contractor Henry Vanderhorst built the home and did not demand payment until the house was sold. Crane herself spent \$25.00 for the cost of the water permit. The total cost of the house (if all had not been donated) was estimated at \$6,300. Crane noted that some features could be eliminated to make it possible to build for \$5,000.<sup>138</sup> Women's groups, schools, furniture stores, and landscapers donated goods and services for the model house. The

<sup>137</sup> Crane, *Everyman's House*, 6.

<sup>138</sup> Crane, *Everyman's House*, 43.

local Better Homes Committee only spent \$500.00 to furnish the house and promote it for Better Homes Week.



Figure 51 – The Mayor dedicating the model house in 1924. *Everyman's House*, 1925.

Publicity for the house was carried out through newspapers, radio, and colored slides at the movie theater.<sup>139</sup> Local pastors promoted the house in their sermons (something that was highly recommended in Better Homes guidebooks). Everyman's House opened to the public on May 12, 1924, for Better Homes Week. Around 20,000 people came to visit the model house during Better Homes Week.<sup>140</sup> The incredible turnout required the house to stay open past the scheduled hours to accommodate all the visitors (Figure 52).

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<sup>139</sup> *Better Homes in America Guidebook for Campaigns: Better Homes Week, May 10 to 17, 1925*, 35.

<sup>140</sup> Crane, *Everyman's House*, 24.





Figure 52- A newspaper article about Everyman's House which shows the incredible turnout to view the model house. The *Washington Post*, 1924 from the Better Homes in America records, Hoover Institution Library & Archives.

A local real-estate man who visited the house said it was "the biggest little house I ever saw."<sup>141</sup> Crane explained that this was because the house was "compact" and the plan eliminated hallways between rooms and to reach the stairs. There was also no wasted space in the plan, including under the attic eaves since Crane designed closets and storerooms for this area. Hoover sent Crane a letter informing her that Kalamazoo's Better Homes campaign won first prize out of the 1,500 cities that entered the Better Homes competition that year. Better Homes awarded the committee \$500.00 for the excellent design and campaign, which exceeded expectations. The 1925 guidebook described Everyman's House saying:

It is early to judge the effect on Kalamazoo of this practical demonstration in homemaking. Yet, from the questions, the comments, the attitude of visitors, one is able to form an opinion. It would seem that the people who came were glad the demonstrations had been held, and that they took away from it a number of helpful

<sup>141</sup> Crane, *Everyman's House*, 19.

suggestions which they intended to use in making their houses more comfortable, or which they might use in planning new homes for their families.<sup>142</sup>

In addition to the plan and focus on the housewife, the committee also appreciated the furnishings, color scheme, community participation, large attendance, and the public-school programs incorporated during Better Homes Week. This wide range of criteria was typical in judging the model houses. President Coolidge wrote to Crane to congratulate her saying:

I have been much impressed during the past three years with the widespread interest and cooperation in the educational movement for Better Homes in America. I take great pleasure in sending to you and the Better Homes Committee for Kalamazoo my sincere congratulations for the notable contribution which you have made in the general campaign for Better Homes in America. The award of the first prize is indicative of the outstanding merit of the worthy enterprise in which the citizens of your community so loyally participated.<sup>143</sup>



Figure 53 – Everyman’s House as it looks today. Valerie Smith, 2022.

Everyman's House is extant but not protected from demolition or significant changes to the exterior. It is one of the rare examples identified through this research in which its history as

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<sup>142</sup> *Better Homes in America Guidebook for Campaigns: Better Homes Week, May 10 to 17, 1925*, 38.

<sup>143</sup> Crane, *Everyman’s House*, 16.



a model house in the Better Homes program is known by the community and local historians. Little has changed with the appearance except that a garage was built onto the north elevation, the windows in the dormers have been changed, and the porch columns have been changed (Figure 53). The garage addition covered original windows, which Crane had carefully planned to flood the living room with light and ventilation and provide views of the neighboring park. Small house architects would have recommended the garage be placed in the rear of the lot (but after the 1920s, most homeowners preferred attached garages). People in the community know about Everyman's House and some have anecdotes about someone they know who lived in the house.<sup>144</sup> One previous homeowner was so passionate about Everyman's House and its connection to Crane that she gave an extensive lecture informing the community about its history. Crane herself loved Everyman's House, and it is rumored that she built a replica of it somewhere else in Michigan. To date, the replica has not been located. Crane wrote a book called *Everyman's House* in 1925 and tried to write a screenplay, but there was no interest in making a movie out of her model house endeavor (Figure 54). The foreword of the book was written by Hoover and the dedication said: "To the people of my hometown, Kalamazoo, Michigan. Whose inspiring cooperation made possible the erection and demonstration of Everyman's House, awarded First Prize by Better Homes in America, 1924."<sup>145</sup>

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<sup>144</sup> This information was discovered upon visiting Kalamazoo and speaking to residents in the community at the library and Kalamazoo Valley Museum.

<sup>145</sup> Crane, Foreword in *Everyman's House*.

# EVERYMAN'S HOUSE

BY  
Mrs. CAROLINE (BARTLETT) CRANE

WITH A FOREWORD  
BY  
HERBERT HOOVER



Figure 54 – The frontispiece of the book *Everyman's House* by Caroline Bartlett Crane. *Everyman's House*, 1925.

## The Home Sweet Home House (Demolished)

The Home Owners' Service Institute sponsored one of the most famous Better Homes model houses called the Home Sweet Home House in Washington D.C. They ran a highly successful plan service due to their partnerships with newspapers such as the *New York Tribune*. The Home Owner's Service Institute and the *Tribune* hosted design competitions and sponsored the construction of many model houses in the 1920s. Some Home Owner's Service Institute model houses like Home Sweet Home House were open during Better Homes Week and were widely publicized especially on the East Coast. Speculative builders and real estate agents also used their plan service to build model houses to draw interest to new subdivisions.

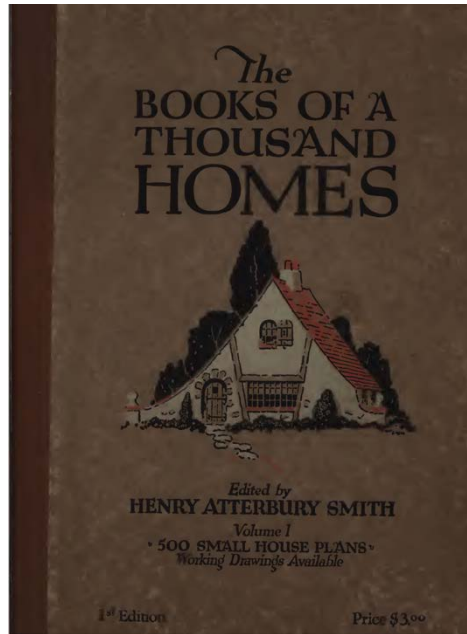


Figure 55- *The Books of a Thousand Homes* published by the Home Owners' Service Institute, 1921.

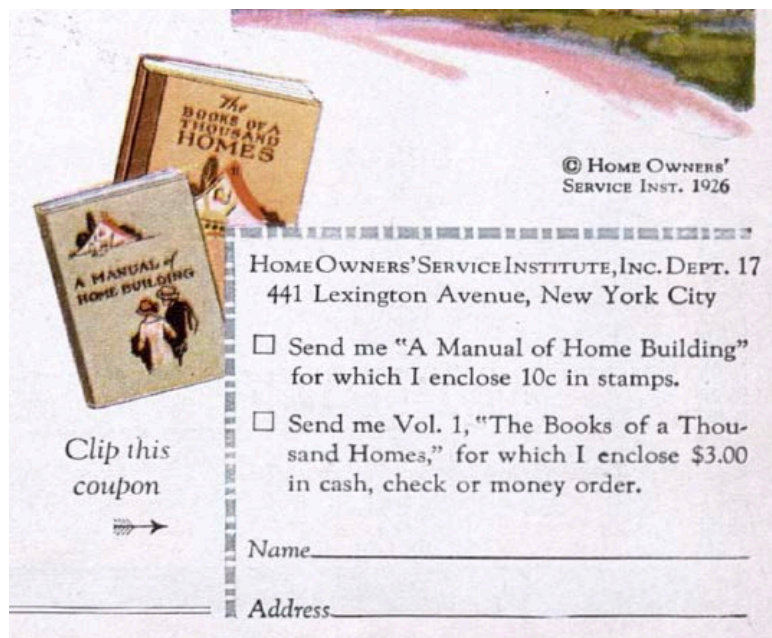


Figure 56- Coupon published in *Good Housekeeping* to obtain a copy of *The Books of a Thousand Homes* or *A Manual of Home Building* published by the Home Owners' Service Institute. *Good Housekeeping*, 1926.

*The Books of a Thousand Homes* was a widely circulated plan book published by the Home Owner's Service Institute in 1921. (Figures 55-56). *Thousand Homes* could be purchased for \$3.00 and was published in two volumes containing "500 Small House Plans of Moderate Cost 3 to 8 Room Houses."<sup>146</sup> It was edited by architect Henry Atterbury Smith, the Chairman and Architectural Advisor of the *Tribune* Building Plan Committee. Atterbury was concerned with ideas about health and disease in New York tenement housing and designed "model tenements," including the Shively Sanitary Tenements (also known as the East River Houses) that were completed in 1911. The Homes Sweet Home house was built for Better Homes Week just after the program was incorporated as a nonprofit in 1923. The model house was called the Home Sweet Home house because it was modeled after what was said to be songwriter John Howard Payne's childhood Colonial-style house from 1750 (Figures 57-58).<sup>147</sup>



Figure 57 – Home Sweet Home house on the Mall in Washington D.C. during Better Homes Week, 1923. *The Books of a Thousand Homes*, 1921.

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<sup>146</sup> Henry Atterbury Smith, *The Books of a Thousand Homes*, New York, Home Owners Service Institute, 1921.

<sup>147</sup> It turns out this was not actually the birthplace of John Payne and he never lived there. A historic preservationist discovered this information, and the museum has created exhibits to reflect this new information. John Hanc, "Home Sweet Home Museum Changes Its Tune," *New York Times*, March 16, 2016.



Figure 58- The house that Home Sweet Home house was modeled after. Today it is the Home Sweet Home Museum located at 14 James Lane in East Hampton, New York. *New York Times*, March 16, 2016.

Payne's 1823 song *Home Sweet Home* stirred up feelings of nostalgia and had become especially popular with soldiers who had fought in World War I. The house was designed by New York architect Donn Barber (who also was on the advisory council of Better Homes in America). Barber "incorporated the efficiency of the modern home with the wholesome distinctive grandeur of the home of Colonial days."<sup>148</sup> The plan was altered from the original Payne house to appeal to twentieth-century families. The use of concrete blocks and clapboard siding modernized the home compared to the original Payne home, which was frame construction with wood shingles.<sup>149</sup> Trade associations provided materials for Home Sweet Home, including Associated Metal Lath, Atlas Portland Cement, General Electric, U.S. Gypsum Co, and American Radiator Co. Other features were "a modern gas range, a one-piece porcelain-

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<sup>148</sup> "Better Homes in America Week," *Building Age and Builders' Journal* 45, (June 1923), 44-45.

<sup>149</sup> "Better Homes in America Week," 44-45.

enameled kitchen sink, hot and cold running water, and a refrigerator" and a bathroom with "brass piping, built-in fittings, tiled walls, floors, etc."<sup>150</sup>

Furnishings were Colonial-style but were not actually antiques (which was common in the 1920s). The replication of Colonial-era furniture in 1920s interiors was promoted in women's magazines such as *The Delineator*. A large spread in *Thousand Homes* labeled it "The Most Talked-of House in America."<sup>151</sup> The model house was situated on the mall in Washington D.C. and its visible location drew extensive publicity and many visitors. President Harding dedicated the house on June 4, 1923. It was to remain at its place near the national capital to be a "typical example of better home planning and construction for the average American home."<sup>152</sup>

Interestingly, the Home Sweet Home House was seven rooms, and newspapers noted this to be "somewhat larger than most of the houses in the various cities that celebrated better homes week last year, yet it is to be practically designed and equipped for a family of moderate means."<sup>153</sup> The plan was re-designed when the Home Owner's Service Institute published it in *Thousand Homes*. They offered homeowners two different plans and one eliminated a bathroom and made other changes to the plan to make it more cost-effective. The model house had served its purpose to educate the American public on small house design. *The Independent-Record (Helena)* newspaper noted that "whatever the size of the better home, the points stressed are that it should be architecturally sound, well planned, and with adequate yard space."<sup>154</sup> Even though it had seven rooms instead of the standard of six for small houses, it was still considered on the smaller side from what people were used to seeing.

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<sup>150</sup> "Better Homes in America Week," 44-45.

<sup>151</sup> Smith, *The Books of a Thousand Homes*.

<sup>152</sup> "Better Homes in America Week," 44-45.

<sup>153</sup> Frederic J. Haskin, "Home Sweet Home," *The Independent-Record (Helena)*, May 1923, 4.

<sup>154</sup> Haskin, "Home Sweet Home," 4.



As was the case throughout Better Homes in America, the popularity of the Home Sweet Home House was capitalized upon. For example, the Home Owners' Service Institute promoted their plan service for many years using the Better Homes Week model house concept as a marketing tool for other house plans. Many newspapers had their own plan books that they developed during this time and the *Wilkes-Barre Times Leader* was one such newspaper which used the popularity of Home Sweet Home House to promote their services (Figure 59).



Figure 59 - Advertisement that used the popularity of the Home Sweet Home house and song to sell house plans in the Wilkes-Barre Times Leader newspaper. *Wilkes-Barre Times Leader*, 1924.

Herbert Hoover's wife Lou Hoover intervened when the house was about to be dismantled (even though it was meant to be a permanent demonstration). She requested that it be donated to the Girl Scouts National Council as "a permanent demonstration point for home



economics."<sup>155</sup> Mrs. Hoover worked with the architect Donn Barber to move it to its new location at 1750 New York Avenue, Washington D.C. (Figure 60).<sup>156</sup>



Figure 60 – Home Sweet Home house at its permanent location, 1750 New York Avenue, Washington D.C. after it was donated to the Girl Scouts. Vintage Girl Scout Online Museum (<https://www.vintagegirlscout.com>).

The house was re-dedicated in 1925 for the National Girl Scouts Week and it affectionately became known as the "Little House." A dollhouse modeled after the "Little House" was gifted to the Girl Scouts by Lou Hoover in 1930 (Figure 61).<sup>157</sup> The Little House inspired more Girl Scout club houses and by 1930 there were more than seventy across America. In Santa Barbara, a Girl Scout house was integral to their 1926 Better Homes campaign and is extant and listed as an official city landmark. *Building Age* said that "Home Sweet Home with its low upkeep cost and its durable exterior finish will retain its new appearance for a much longer

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<sup>155</sup> Smith, *The Books of a Thousand Homes*.

<sup>156</sup> Amy Edwards, "Lou Hoover, Grace Coolidge and the Girl Scouts Little House," Hoover Heads (Blog), March 27, 2019, Accessed April 20, 2022, <https://hoover.blogs.archives.gov/>.

<sup>157</sup> Vintage Girl Scout Online Museum, "Girl Scout Little Houses," <https://www.vintagegirlscout.com/girl-scout-little-houses>.

time than did the old Payne Home. People in 2250 A.D. will probably look at it with a good deal of interest."<sup>158</sup> Unfortunately, Home Sweet Home house was demolished in 1969.<sup>159</sup>

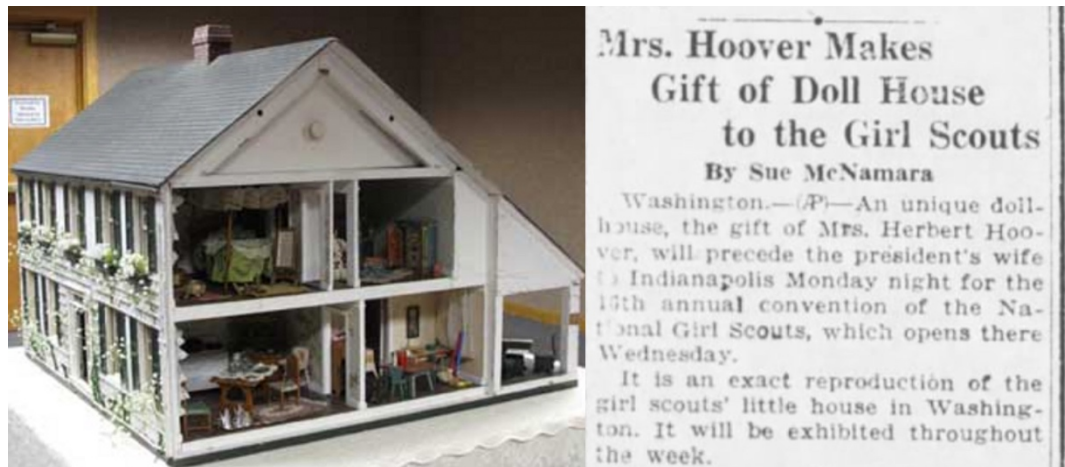


Figure 61 - A dollhouse was modeled after the "Little House" was gifted to the girl scouts by Lou Hoover in 1930. Vintage Girl Scout Online Museum / *Sioux City Journal*, 1930.

## Locating Other Model Houses

During this research, over twenty model houses that were part of Better Homes campaigns were located (Figures 62-63). *Appendix A* shows historic images next to a current image of the houses that were located. The addresses are also included in the *Appendix* to give historians and preservationists an idea of the locations this sample represents. Better Homes in America model houses exist in virtually every state in the country and with additional research more of these special houses can be discovered. Further research is needed to determine how many of these houses are locally or nationally listed, but most seem to have been forgotten and

<sup>158</sup> "Better Homes in America Week," 45.

<sup>159</sup> "The Girl Scouts Keep House at 1750 New York Avenue NW," DC History Center, Accessed April 20, 2022, <https://dchistory.pastperfectonline.com/photo/69D320FA-6882-4EA3-AA86-475692834488>.

go unnoticed. They may be in danger of demolition like two of the houses on the Appendix that are no longer extant (the Home Sweet Home House and the Alice Ames Winter House).

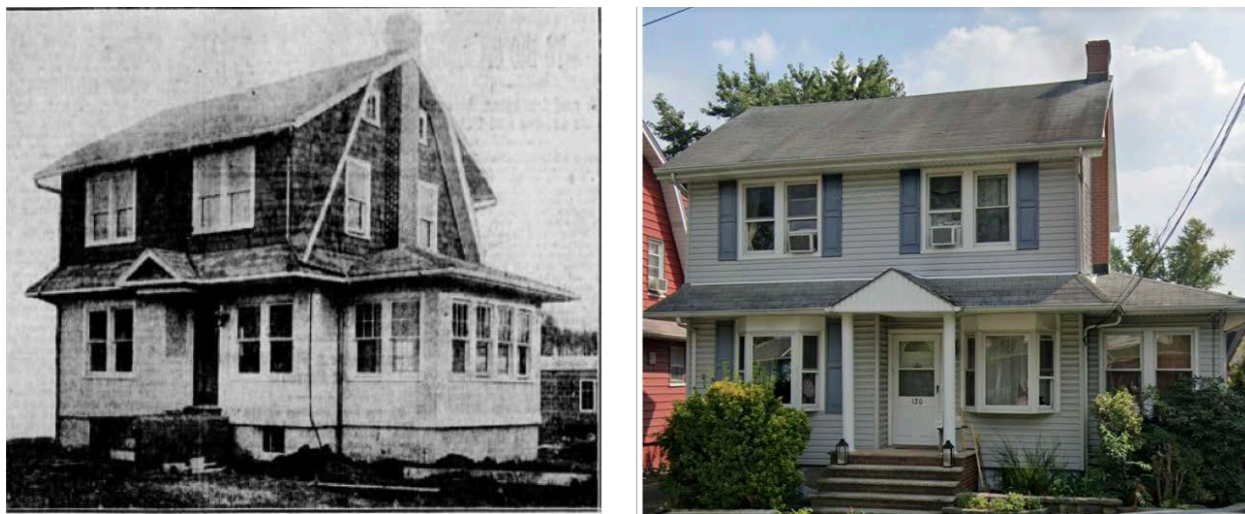


Figure 62- Extant Better Homes in America model house located in Bergenfield, New Jersey. *The Record*, April 22, 1926 / Google Maps.

The following chapter will show how Santa Barbara produced successful Better Homes campaigns and the small house contributions under the leadership of Pearl Chase. The dedicated attention to small house design allowed for a nationally recognized campaign year after year. Although Santa Barbara had the buy-in of architects in the Community Arts Association which other cities did not have on such a large scale, many other cities had extensive Better Homes campaigns (including small towns and rural areas). If historians and preservationists are interested, they can obtain a copy of Better Homes in America guidebooks from a variety of sources to conduct small house research in their areas.

It is helpful to search historic newspapers starting first with the state and then narrowing down the search to specific cities (particularly ones noted in Better Homes materials). Searches

such as “Better Homes Week,” “Better Homes Exhibit,” “Better Homes Model House” (or “Demonstration House”) all turned up enormous amounts of information. It is also helpful to browse through the advertisements of historic newspapers as much can be learned about the interior and exterior trends of 1920s houses during Better Homes Week. Many newspapers had their own Better Homes Week sections that will be informative when researching 1920s small houses. Hopefully, the images and the research from this thesis will prompt local preservationists in various cities to begin to take an interest in locating Better Homes model houses and other architect-designed stock plan houses from the 1920s in their community.

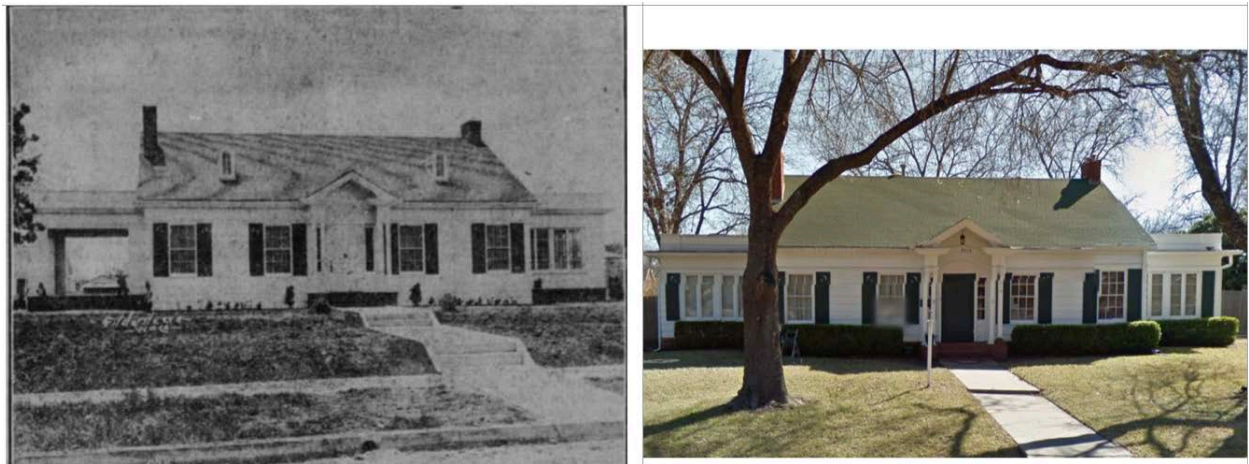


Figure 63 - Extant Better Homes in America model house located in Waco, Texas. *The Waco News-Tribune*, 1923 / Google Maps.

## Chapter 4: Case Study - Santa Barbara, California

Santa Barbara, California is an ideal case study to demonstrate how a local community participated in the Small House Movement and Better Homes in America's campaigns. This chapter will explore what led to Santa Barbara's interest in small house design, detail their annual Better Homes campaigns, and provide examples of extant model houses used for Better Homes campaigns. The research for this case study focuses on local Better Homes campaigns from 1925-1927 and research on the twenty-five model houses exhibited during those years. In the future, the additional campaigns could be researched to show a complete picture of Santa Barbara's participation through 1931. This case study can be used as a starting point for historians and preservationists in Santa Barbara to understand the significance of the small houses they encounter. It will allow them to attribute significance to small houses which do not fall into the Spanish Colonial Revival style, which was a dominant style of the era, as detailed in this staff report:

This house is an example of a small, residential interpretation of the Spanish Colonial Revival style, which became an important part of Santa Barbara's heritage in the 1920s, when the City deliberately transformed its architecture and look from an ordinary western style town into a romantic Spanish Colonial Revival/Mediterranean style city.<sup>160</sup>

New research provided in this case study will help preservationists convince the local landmarks commission of their merit. Better Homes in America model house research adds additional historic context to Santa Barbara's architectural history of the 1920s. The research in this thesis can be used to add extant model houses to the eligible resource inventory list so they can be evaluated for designation. Santa Barbara's Historic Preservation Department tracks national, state, and locally eligible assets on a Historic Resource Inventory list. Qualifying assets are made

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<sup>160</sup> City of Santa Barbara, *136 West Yanonali*, Historic Structure Report, Accessed April 20, 2022, <https://santabarbaraca.canto.com/pdfviewer/viewer/viewer.html?v=hp&portalType=v%2Fhp&column=document&id=t3b9cu6g6l7l3dgl1a32pimel6j&suffix=doc>.



City Landmarks or given a local Structure of Merit designation. None of the extant Better Homes model houses that were identified have been listed as City Landmarks or as Structures of Merit except for the Girl Scouts cottage from the 1926 campaign.

Due to the lack of research on the model houses of the Better Homes program, staff members did not have the information needed to evaluate small houses that were part of the local campaigns. Therefore, they have been unable to argue for houses such as the House that Budget Built (which will be discussed later in this chapter). The house does not represent a "small, single-family, Spanish Colonial Revival style" dwelling, nor could it be tied to an architect or stock plan before the research in this thesis.

## Pearl Chase

A large part of Santa Barbara's small house efforts in the 1920s are due to the contributions of Pearl Chase. Chase was a "pioneer in the fields of conservation, preservation, social services, and civic planning" and a leader in the Small House Movement in Santa Barbara.<sup>161</sup> She was the "city's unofficial ombudsman in matters of natural beauty and public welfare, suggesting health and building codes and encouraging sign ordinances, saving trees and creating and enhancing parks."<sup>162</sup> She acted as a city planner before women were seen as "contributors to the modern city planning movement" and when women worked "predominately behind the scenes."<sup>163</sup>

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<sup>161</sup> "Pearl Chase 1888-1979," Pearl Chase Society, Accessed April 21, 2022, <https://www.pearlchasesociety.org/>.

<sup>162</sup> "Community Development and Conservation Collection 1892-1995," Online Archive of California, Accessed April 21, 2022, <http://www.oac.cdlib.org/findaid/ark:/13030/c8g15zs0/admin/?query=Better%20homes#hitNum1>.

<sup>163</sup> Lee M.A. Simpson, "City and County Planning in Santa Barbara," in *Selling the City: Gender, Class, and the California Growth Machine 1880-1940* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2004), 133.



Chase was an active preservationist in Santa Barbara and in 1952 she was awarded woman of the year by the *Los Angeles Times*. In 1963, she formed the Santa Barbara Trust for Historic Preservation. While Chase is known locally in Santa Barbara for her historic preservation contributions, she also advocated for historic preservation efforts outside Santa Barbara, including the reconstruction of Wakefield (the birthplace of George Washington). In 1973 she was given an award by the National Trust for Historic Preservation that she accepted in Washington D.C.<sup>164</sup>

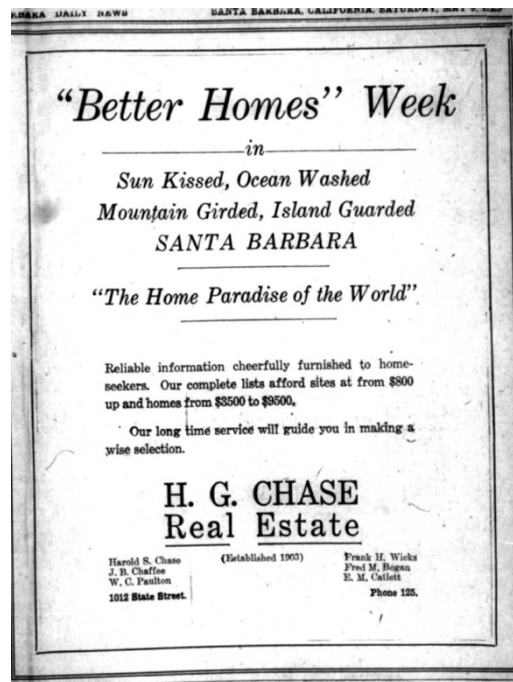


Figure 64 – Advertisement the real estate business of Pearl Chase’s father in the Santa Barbara area. Better Homes in America records. Hoover Institution Library and Archives.

Chase was the daughter of Hezekiah Griggs Chase, the "city's leading subdivider" beginning in the 1910s and through the 1920s.<sup>165</sup> Having access to connections through her

<sup>164</sup> "Pearl Chase 1888-1979."

<sup>165</sup> Simpson, *Selling the City*, 135.

father's business (including agents and contractors) proved helpful during her Better Homes model house efforts. Her campaigns also benefitted her family's business by creating houses "of all sizes and prices" to sell and bringing attention to new subdivisions through publicity from Better Homes Week campaigns (Figure 64). Small house efforts in Santa Barbara fulfilled her civic duty but also attracted a new class of buyers that helped expand her father's real estate business.

Chase's education at Berkeley, social standing, political connections, passion for beautifying the city, and family business in real estate allowed her to advance the Small House Movement in Santa Barbara. *Selling the City: Gender, Class and the California Growth Machine's* author Lee M.A. Simpson credits her as having "actually served as one of the longest planning incumbents in the state, if not in the nation."<sup>166</sup> Chase's "ability to engage the language of female moral authority and capitalism, her belief in public education as a potent tool for selling her vision, her organizational skills, and her network of powerful civic organizations all enabled Chase to become one of the most powerful and respected city planners in the country."<sup>167</sup>

Chase felt strongly about the beautification of Santa Barbara and the creation of quality houses for people with a moderate income (Figure 65). Her dedication to the beautification of Santa Barbara through the Better Homes local program and yearly architectural competitions propelled the city to the forefront of the Small House Movement. Her beautification efforts are still seen today as this world-famous city contains some of the best-preserved architecture from the 1920s (not to mention many extant small houses).

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<sup>166</sup> Simpson, *Selling the City*, 166.

<sup>167</sup> Simpson, *Selling the City*, 167.

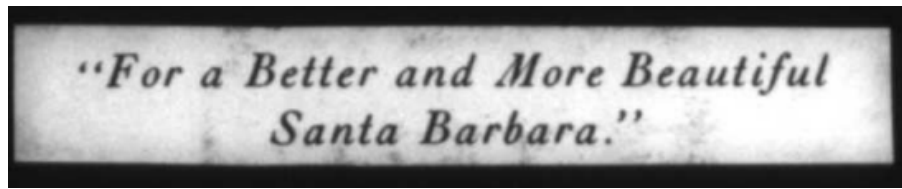


Figure 65- Santa Barbara's Better Homes committee featured slogans in guidebooks to encourage people to "beautify" Santa Barbara through Better Homes campaigns. Better Homes in America records. Hoover Institution Library and Archives.

Chase's role in the field of planning and the empowerment of women is evident when studying her accomplishments. Chase "became the nexus of the Santa Barbara growth machine" shaping the plan and development of the city until she died in 1979.<sup>168</sup> Her life provides strong evidence of the unique position women played in the growth and development of urban California in the early twentieth century.

### The Problem: Quality Housing for Modest Incomes

California's population steadily increased in the early twentieth century due to wealthy migrants seeking its Mediterranean climate which was said to help with many illnesses including tuberculosis. Santa Barbara became a city for the wealthy, drawing capitalists from the East Coast who sought a warm place to enjoy the winters as well as permanent residents.<sup>169</sup> Subdivisions with small lots mostly did not exist as the land was divided for the large estates of its wealthy residents. Santa Barbara's population increased beginning in 1910 and increased fifty percent between 1920 and 1930.<sup>170</sup> Opportunities were abundant with the growing tourist industry, movie industry, agriculture, and other jobs that drew people seeking employment.

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<sup>168</sup> Simpson, *Selling the City*, 142.

<sup>169</sup> Simpson, *Selling the City*, 134.

<sup>170</sup> Simpson, *Selling the City*, 135; City of Santa Barbara. "119 Los Aguajes Ave," Historic Structure Report.

The new groups of people arriving no longer just included the wealthy and this created a need for smaller real estate subdivisions and dwellings for people with more moderate incomes.<sup>171</sup> The arrival of the middle and working class to Santa Barbara led to a shortage of quality housing and slum conditions for some newly arriving workers, many of whom were Mexican immigrants. The *Santa Barbara Morning Press* wrote about the need for improved housing for the working class. A survey done by the Department of Health evaluated the housing conditions in Santa Barbara in the early 1920s. While Santa Barbara did not have tenements like New York City, it had wooden shacks that were unfit dwellings. As was true with the rest of the country there was a great demand for housing and reformers were focused on creating quality housing for the working class. In Santa Barbara, "the supply of habitable houses [did] not begin to supply the demand."<sup>172</sup> Sheds were rented out by landowners who profited from the sub-par housing provided to the newcomers. The study done by the health department notes the wooden sheds with "families of five to eight living in one room" in dwellings that had no windows.<sup>173</sup>

The need for ordinances became apparent to Santa Barbara's reformers. It was recommended that there be rules for the minimum height of ceilings, floor space per person, no windowless rooms, and cross ventilation.<sup>174</sup> Health officers could now declare a house unfit for living and request it be torn down. As a result of the health department survey, reformers in Santa Barbara implemented the idea of a nurse to travel to homes of the working class to "instruct housekeepers in matters and teach them cleanliness in sympathetic helpful ways. Such a

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<sup>171</sup> Simpson, *Selling the City*, 135.

<sup>172</sup> "Housing Conditions in Sections of This City are Not as Ideal as Citizens Generally Believe." *The Morning Press*. June 6, 1920.

<sup>173</sup> "Housing Conditions."

<sup>174</sup> "Housing Conditions."

nurse exercising patience and tact will be welcomed by the poor. A nurse should also be instructed to report neglect of landlords, as tenants fear unpleasant consequences."<sup>175</sup>

Santa Barbara was early to the national trend of educating the poor and immigrants on cleanliness that became a common theme throughout the Better Homes in America program. It is unclear how effective these tactics were and if budget-friendly tips and model houses were inspiring or failed to acknowledge the circumstances and challenges faced by working class immigrants in a middle-class white society. While some may have welcomed the guidance it may have been demoralizing to others. The *Morning Press* bluntly pointed out the "problem of foreigners" and their unwillingness to sleep outdoors:

Because the poor in this city are for the most part Mexicans who refuse to sleep out of doors, according to the observation of the visiting nurses, the problem of sleeping many to a room and without proper ventilation is especially aggravating among the poorly housed in this city.<sup>176</sup>

As previously mentioned, sleeping porches were a standard feature found in 1920s houses and were included in many architect-designed small house plans. Reformers in Santa Barbara explained that when families lived in a house without enough beds, a sleeping porch with its ventilation was an excellent alternative to sleeping on a damp floor. While the article described the importance of educating the poor, it also took the position that once the poor have quality dwellings, things would naturally begin to improve:

We have seen families rise from their shack surroundings and by hard saving, build themselves nice little cottages which they keep in good shape. They put in gardens on their own property and are encouraged to constantly improve things instead of allowing dirt to accumulate and buildings to [fall into disrepair].<sup>177</sup>

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<sup>175</sup> "Housing Conditions."

<sup>176</sup> "Housing Conditions."

<sup>177</sup> "Housing Conditions."

In the 1910s, Chase had worked with Santa Barbara County's Social Service Conference and formed progressive ideas about working with the poor Mexicans in the city.<sup>178</sup> She promoted the building of small houses that immigrants and working-class people could rent as a solution to the housing crisis in Santa Barbara.<sup>179</sup> Being a renter was not wholly consistent with the reform message of the 1920s found in campaigns such as Own Your Own Home and Better Homes in America. Still, she was realistic about what the working-class could afford and sought to create opportunities for quality housing.

Chase encouraged current homeowners to "put small homes in shape to be habitable because of the great demand."<sup>180</sup> She hoped that owners would bring forth quality small houses for the poor to rent. She noted in the *Morning Press* that "several people have been interested in a project to provide a number of small desirable cottages near the center of the city where people work, but the difficulty of building under the present high prices has kept them from going ahead with the improvement."<sup>181</sup> One such "small desirable cottage" called the House that Budget Built would be built near the city center during the national Better Homes in America campaign in 1925. The national program helped implement many of Chase's small house ideas for Santa Barbara. It is striking to note that Santa Barbara was early to the movement to promote small, quality single-family houses. Chase and others were already turning their focus to small houses locally before Better Homes in America began. After the need for quality housing for people of modest incomes was identified in Santa Barbara, Chase turned her attention to involving architects in designing small houses through competitions and house plans.

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<sup>178</sup> Simpson, *Selling the City*, 144.

<sup>179</sup> "Housing Conditions."

<sup>180</sup> "Housing Conditions."

<sup>181</sup> "Housing Conditions."



## Small House Design in Santa Barbara

The School of the Arts began in 1920 when a group of residents organized a performing arts school which became known as the Community Arts Association. The Community Arts Association offered courses in music, graphic arts, decorative arts, and French lessons. An architecture branch was added in 1922 called the Plans and Planting department which was instrumental to the architectural design of Santa Barbara in the 1920s. The goal of Plans and Planting was to serve as a “clearing house for the study and expression of ideas in the architectural development of the city...The department has assistance in a subcommittee of architects who meet to discuss the guidance of home and commercial structures and offer advice and suggestions to develop the natural beauty of the city.”<sup>182</sup> The subcommittee helped steer the architectural aesthetics and standards in Santa Barbara and “urged that the town identify its individual character and then use planning principles to develop it.”<sup>183</sup>

Historic preservation began on a small scale in Santa Barbara in 1917 and 1919 when Gardiner C. Hammond and Bernhard and Irene Hoffmann purchased Hill-Carrillo adobe and Casa La Aguirre to restore the structures.<sup>184</sup> The Community Arts Association “was one of the agencies most responsible for Santa Barbara’s recognition of the beauty of its old adobes...and used adobes as its branch headquarters” before the 1925 earthquake.<sup>185</sup> The Plans committee also turned their focus to restoring old adobes which allowed them to “remake the city, not as a shrine to the past but as a city of the future grounded firmly in the past through architectural control.”<sup>186</sup> Hoffmann was appointed the chairman of the Plans committee and Pearl Chase was the

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<sup>182</sup> Hamilton McFadden, “Community Arts Association, Santa Barbara, Calif,” *The American Magazine of Art* 15, no. 6 (1924), 300–303. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/23928391>.

<sup>183</sup> City of Santa Barbara, *136 West Yanonali*, Historic Structure Report.

<sup>184</sup> Simpson, *Selling the City*, 135.

<sup>185</sup> “Community Arts Music Association of Santa Barbara.”

<sup>186</sup> Simpson, *Selling the City*, 138.

secretary.<sup>187</sup> The two were preservation-minded and their power and influence in the city, with the other members of the Plans committee “formed Santa Barbara into a city controlled by preservationists.”<sup>188</sup> Santa Barbara became one of “the first cities in the United States to conceive of historic preservation as being integral to the planning process.”<sup>189</sup>

*California Southland* magazine wrote about the high architectural standards encouraged by the Plans committee:

When the people of an entire town are interested in the building which is going on there, we may be sure there will result something worth investigating and reporting. Builders and promoters will, if they be wise, stop, look and listen before they begin to build; individuals will know what the town thinks of them; fakers and false fronts will hesitate before they try to put something over on that town. It is just this which the Community Arts Association of Santa Barbara has accomplished for that California town through its unusual “Plans Committee” with whom arrangements have been made to publish in this leaflet photographs of work done.<sup>190</sup>

The Plan committee was responsible for hosting many design competitions focused on small house design in the 1920s. In 1922, the Plans committee held their first small house competition meant to “stimulate an interest in the community in more harmonious and artistic and fitting buildings and dwellings in Santa Barbara.”<sup>191</sup> Another competition was held in 1923 for houses costing less than \$5,000. The submissions were anonymous, and the requirements were as follows:

A dwelling house, suitable for California, of not over five rooms, including living room, dining room, kitchen, two bedrooms and bath, (living room and dining room may be combined but will nevertheless count as two rooms) placed upon an in-side lot 50 feet wide upon the street and building line, and 150 feet deep without an alley in the rear, also a garage for one car...The character of the house, such as an exterior of stucco, shingles, or clap-board, also the size of rooms and whether the house shall have one or two stories

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<sup>187</sup> Fukuo Akimoto, “The Birth of Architectural Control in Santa Barbara,” 2006.

<sup>188</sup> Simpson, *Selling the City*, 140

<sup>189</sup> “Selected key dates,” Society of Architectural Historians, Program from Fifty-First Annual Meeting, April 19, 1998.

<sup>190</sup> “Good architecture.” *California Southland* 8, no. 83. November 1926, 26.

<sup>191</sup> Simpson, *Selling the City*, 140.

shall be left to the discrimination of the competitor. The drawings shall be accompanied by a bonafide estimate of cost by a re-sponsible builder. The house must not cost over \$5000, which sum is to cover all painting and decorating, exterior walks and drives, but not gardening or planting.<sup>192</sup>

The competition received over one hundred submissions and many of the designs were displayed in an exhibit at the Paseo de la Guerra (21 East de la Guerra Street). The Community Arts Association published sixty-two of the best designs in a book called *Small House Designs*. Like the plan books by the Architects' Small House Service Bureau, the book made architect designs available to the public for a low cost. Chase stated that the market for these plans was the middle class to working class saying "One can go to an architect and secure the beauty of line in detail, so that is so essential for a perfect whole but the majority of persons can ill afford architectural service--or in some cases would not appreciate it if they could. This is the class we are trying to influence."<sup>193</sup>

The book was edited by architects Carleton Monroe Winslow and Edward Fisher Brown and dedicated to Bernhard Hoffmann in recognition of his "devoted, far-sighted and generous leadership in promoting the development and enhancing the attractiveness of Santa Barbara."<sup>194</sup> The winners were determined by AIA architects appointed by the Los Angeles Architectural Club (an architectural club that would publish many small house designs by the Plans committee in the *Los Angeles Times*). The book had thirty-seven "Spanish-California" designs, ten "English Rural Stucco" designs, eleven "English Stucco" designs, and four "Wood Exterior" designs.<sup>195</sup> At the end of the book, a Cape Cod house was featured as design #62. This house was built in 1924

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<sup>192</sup> Carleton Monroe Winslow and Edward Fisher Brown, eds, *Small House Designs* (Santa Barbara, CA, Community Arts Association of Santa Barbara, 1924), 7.

<sup>193</sup> Simpson, *Selling the City*, 144.

<sup>194</sup> Dedication in *Small House Designs*.

<sup>195</sup> Simpson, *Selling the City*, 144.

<sup>195</sup> *Small House Designs*, 24-153.

at 20 East Junipero Street and was used as a model house for the 1926 Better Homes campaign. A popular plan was #61 by architect K.D. Church and was used for at least four Better Homes model houses that were identified as a result of this research (Figure 66). Other houses built from *Small House Designs* can be found around Santa Barbara and

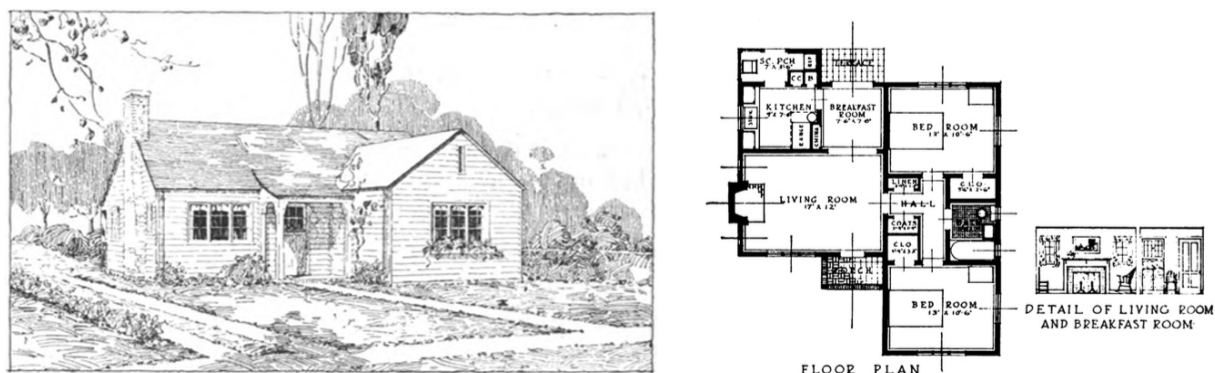


Figure 66 - Design #61 in the Community Arts Association's plan book. *Small House Designs*, 1924.

elsewhere in California. Santa Barbara's guidebook from 1927 notes "a similar house has been built in Pasadena and painted white with green trim."<sup>196</sup> Many of the designs may also be found in San Francisco since copies of the book were noted to have been requested by residents and builders.<sup>197</sup> The Community Arts Association's architectural competitions and small house efforts received national attention and were even mentioned in the Better Homes in America guidebook:

Some time before the Better Homes Campaign, the Community Arts Association held an extensive Small House Design Contest, and an exhibition was made of plans and models of houses and landscaping designs submitted. To follow up the work begun by the Association, and to emphasize the importance of attractive exteriors, the Committee printed a list of small houses in Santa Barbara as representative of the best to be found. This list was included in a local Guidebook distributed by the Committee.<sup>198</sup>

<sup>196</sup> *Santa Barbara Better Homes Week April 24 -May 1, 1927, Guidebook*, Better Homes in America records, Hoover Institution Library & Archives, Box 66, Folder 2.

<sup>197</sup> Simpson, *Selling the City*, 150.

<sup>198</sup> *Better Homes in America Guidebook for Campaigns: Better Homes Week, April 25 to May 1, 1926*, 49.

Santa Barbara's Plan committee drew much publicity and local newspapers wrote about how the small house efforts in Santa Barbara were a notch above other efforts and that "While other cities have followed the old plan of building houses according to mail 'order plans' or...stereotyped designs, Santa Barbara has been seeking to give the humble house the same individualization that marks the efforts or the more ostentatious structures."<sup>199</sup> In the magazine *California Southland*, it was noted that mistakes could be made when not using architect-designed plans for small houses, including materials, siting, interior plaster, selection of hardware and electronics, use of ornamentation, and exterior colors.<sup>200</sup> *California Southland* acknowledged Santa Barbara's role in "teaching" good design but wrote a note of caution about the need for zoning and architectural control over bad designs: "Soon Santa Barbara will be outdistanced by her pupils if she does not stop building in ignorance and take to herself the lesson she has so nobly written in California's history."<sup>201</sup>

Another plan book that preservationists in California can refer to is *Distinctive Homes: California Number: With Designs for Sixty Homes*. At least one of the designs, #52 was built and won third prize in a competition held by the Plans committee in advance of Better Homes Week in Santa Barbara (Figure 67). The introduction details that "by constructing according to plans and specifications that have been made under Architectural supervision a well-planned and substantial house is assured."<sup>202</sup>

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<sup>199</sup> "Santa Barbara Homes Win," *Santa Barbara Daily News*, August 5, 1926, 18.

<sup>200</sup> "Santa Barbara Numbers," *California Southland* 8, no. 82, October 1926, 7.

<sup>201</sup> "Santa Barbara Numbers," *California Southland* 8, no. 82, October 1926, 7.

<sup>202</sup> *Distinctive Homes: California Number: With Designs for Sixty Homes* (Santa Barbara, CA: Santa Barbara Home Planning Co., 1923), 4, Accessed April 20, 2022, <https://catalog.hathitrust.org/Record/102635583>.

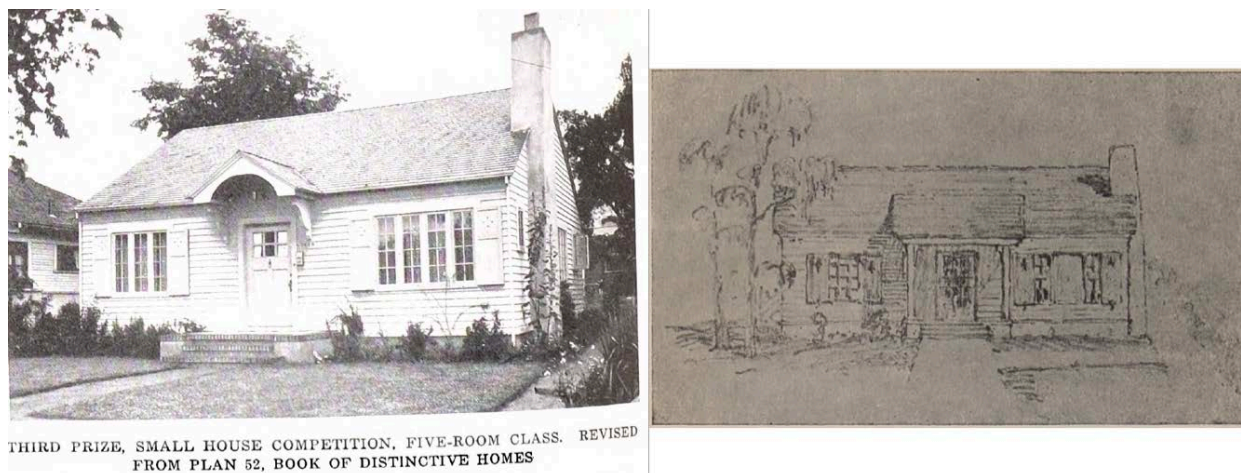


Figure 67- Small house built from plan #52 in *Distinctive homes: California Number: With Designs for Sixty Homes / California Southland*, 1925.

It is not clear who the architects were that drew the plans for the book and not much is known about the Santa Barbara Home Planning Company. It is likely a number of houses built from these plans can be found around Santa Barbara and elsewhere in California since the book was advertised in the *Los Angeles Times* and *Building Age and National Builder*.

In addition to the Plan branch of the Community Arts Association, an Architectural Review Board was formed in Santa Barbara in 1925. This group attempted to set aesthetic standards for the city and made Santa Barbara the first city in the United States to implement "mandatory municipal architectural control."<sup>203</sup> Bernhard Hoffmann left his post as chairman of the Plans and Planting Committee to direct the new review board with architects Carlton Winslow and George Washington Smith. Chase became the new chairman of the Plans and Planting Committee, a post she would hold for forty-six years.<sup>204</sup>

<sup>203</sup> Akimoto, "The Birth of Architectural Control in Santa Barbara."

<sup>204</sup> Simpson, *Selling the City*, 166.





Figure 68- “Old” Santa Barbara building before the earthquake (left) and the rebuilt version after the earthquake in the Spanish Colonial Revival style representing “new” Santa Barbara by architects Soule, Murphy & Hastings (right). *New Santa Barbara*, 1926.

On June 29, 1925, the Santa Barbara earthquake destroyed many buildings in downtown Santa Barbara, and most of the Victorian-style buildings in the city were lost. This newly formed Architectural Board of Review oversaw rebuilding of a "new" Santa Barbara after the earthquake. The design goal was to rebuild in a style that reflected the city's Mexican and Spanish Colonial past (Figure 68). The interest in reviving the Mexican and Spanish Colonial past had begun in the late nineteenth century. Yet, the 1925 earthquake, which damaged many of the commercial buildings in downtown, allowed the council members to rebuild the area in a Spanish Colonial Revival aesthetic.<sup>205</sup>

Despite this interest in the Spanish Colonial Revival style, the House that Budget Built and the Boyd House, two east coast Cape Cod style designs, were demonstrated during Better Homes Week as model houses in 1925 and 1926. The Cape Cod style was decidedly counter to the architectural aesthetic being promoted in Santa Barbara by the Architectural Board, but Chase promoted the model houses anyway during Better Homes Week. (Figure 69).

<sup>205</sup> Santa Barbara's downtown area was also rebuilt with Mediterranean Revival buildings in the 1920s.



Figure 69- The Boyd House, a Cape Cod-style cottage was demonstrated during Better Homes Week. This style did not match the goals put in place by the Architectural Board of Review for Spanish Colonial style architecture. It received national attention and was the first model house featured in the *Guidebook for Better Homes Campaigns in Cities and Towns: Better Homes Week, April 21 to May 1, 1927, 1926*.

Cost may have been a factor as the 1925 local guidebook detailed that for the House that Budget Built, "a Spanish style house was considered seriously, but the idea was abandoned because of the added expense necessary to carry out the design consistently with a tiled roof and plastered walls."<sup>206</sup> Chase's choice to promote houses in other period-styles may also have had to do with the civic duty she felt to the national Better Homes program. The model houses not only provided housing in Santa Barbara for people of moderate incomes and beatified the community but served to educate the nation on architectural merit in small house design (regardless of the style).

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<sup>206</sup> *Santa Barbara Better Homes Week May 10-17, 1925, Guidebook, Box 66, Folder 1.*

## Santa Barbara's Participation in Better Homes in America

The Plans committee sought to "enhance the attractiveness of the city while encouraging affordable housing" which aligned perfectly with the goals of Better Homes in America.<sup>207</sup> The Community Arts Association's Plans committee was responsible for the robust Better Homes campaigns each year and they set an example for other Southern California cities as well as the nation. The Plan committee's decision to involve architects in designing small houses brought their Better Homes campaigns national attention and helped propel the Small House Movement in Santa Barbara. Other cities were inspired by Santa Barbara and *California Homeowner's* editor wrote that Los Angeles hoped to promote Better Homes in America, but they faced organizational challenges and were in "no such position as Santa Barbara, where the Community Arts Association is thoroughly organized throughout the year for this sort of thing."<sup>208</sup>

Local house competitions were held by the Plans and Planting committee a year before the upcoming Better Homes Weeks to identify houses that could be used as model houses. The houses submitted in the competitions were reviewed by local architects who were involved in the judging process. The best houses were selected for the national Better Homes Week each year. In addition to helping the committee identify houses that could be used for Better Homes Week, the competitions were formed "to compliment owners of attractive and suitable homes and to encourage others to emulate them."<sup>209</sup> The houses not chosen to be model houses were still promoted during Better Homes Week and lists were provided in local guidebooks encouraging people to go past them to observe the small house designs. Garden competitions were also held

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<sup>207</sup> Hattie Beresford, "There's No Place Like Home," *Montecito Journal*, October 2, 2008.

<sup>208</sup> *Letter to James Ford from the Editor of Homeowner Magazine, May 13, 1927*. Better Homes in America records. Hoover Institution Library and Archives. Box 32, Folder 2.

<sup>209</sup> Pearl Chase, Irving Foster Morrow, *New Santa Barbara* (Santa Barbara, CA, Plans and Planting Committee of the Community Arts Association, 1926), 50, Accessed April 20, 2022. <https://books.google.com/books?id=LZprAAAAIAAJ>.

in advance of Better Homes Week which resulted in garden tours as an event during Better Homes Week. This (and their model houses) became widely popular, and Santa Barbara became known nationally for the competitions: (Figure 70).

Your Small House and Garden competitions were a great contribution to the national movement. Our Memorandum No. 4 to local chairman was based on it and led to such competitions in scores of other communities."<sup>210</sup>



Figure 70 - Garden tour admission card from Better Homes Week 1928. Better Homes in America records. Hoover Institution Library and Archives.

Better Homes in America made suggestions for other cities that wanted to replicate the competitions done in Santa Barbara saying "If such a competition is held in your community, a committee of judges including architects, nominated by the local branch of the American Institute of Architects, and specialists in landscaping or gardening from local garden clubs, professional associations, schools, or colleges, could award prizes to the best gardens or small

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<sup>210</sup> Chase, Morrow, *New Santa Barbara*, 51.

home premises, as was done at Santa Barbara."<sup>211</sup> Small cities such as Murray, Utah, were even inspired to incorporate garden contests and were praised by Better Homes leaders for their campaign and the "small garden contest similar to that [which] originated in Santa Barbara."<sup>212</sup>

Chase's Better Homes efforts (as was the case with all Better Homes campaigns) required many alliances to be formed. She engaged local politicians and organizations to fund and support annual Better Homes Week efforts. She knew how to reach various groups and convince them of the importance of the program:

When speaking to the Santa Barbara Women's Club, she would invoke the language of female moral authority, domesticity, and the protection of home and children. When speaking to a group of businessmen, such as the Building and Loan Associations, she invoked arguments that an investment in the Better Homes campaign would be an investment in their own businesses.<sup>213</sup>

In her plea for support from local organizations, Chase highlighted the "increasing demand upon us for advice, both within the City and by correspondence throughout the country."<sup>214</sup>

A Better Homes supplement by Pearl Chase was printed in the *New Santa Barbara* that detailed the widespread involvement of the local groups saying, "In the 1925 and 1926 campaigns so many were interested to help with their educational features that it is impossible to tell whether the Community Arts, the library, schools, women's clubs, businessmen or newspapers contributed the most to their success."<sup>215</sup> The support of newspapers was vital and some of the newspapers that featured Santa Barbara's Better Homes campaigns were the *Daily*

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<sup>211</sup> *Better Homes in America Guidebook for Better Homes Campaigns in Cities and Towns: Better Homes Week, April 21 to May 1, 1927*, (Better Homes in America, 1926), 20.

<sup>212</sup> *Better Homes in America Guidebook for Better Homes Campaigns in Rural and Small Towns: Better Homes Week, April 21- May 1, 1927* (Better Homes in America, 1926), 21.

<sup>213</sup> Simpson, *Selling the City*, 149.

<sup>214</sup> Simpson, *Selling the City*, 149.

<sup>215</sup> Irving F. Morrow documented Santa Barbara's rapid growth as the city rebuilt after the 1925 earthquake in *The Architect and Engineer* in July 1926. The Plans and Planting Committee reprinted his essay along with a supplement by Pearl Chase about Santa Barbara's Better Homes campaigns in *New Santa Barbara* in 1926. Chase, Morrow, 48.

*Santa Maria Times*, *The Santa Barbara Morning Press*, *The Santa Barbara Daily News*, *The Santa Ynez Valley News*, and the *Los Angeles Times*. *California Southland* magazine regularly featured articles and images of the model houses for Better Homes Week. The encouragement Chase received from Better Homes leaders like James Ford, and the national attention Santa Barbara's campaigns received created momentum. Chase requested local support for "traveling exhibits of photographs of attractive small house plans," and funding for the publication of several pamphlets to document their efforts and instruct the nation on small house design.<sup>216</sup>

Santa Barbara was awarded prizes for their model house entries from 1925 to 1931. The model houses were diverse in size, material, and type. They were constructed of wood, brick, adobe, hollow tile, or stucco. Some houses used repurposed materials including brick and lumber to reduce building costs. The dwellings were primarily single-family houses, but a few small apartments were demonstrated. Three of the houses that won prizes in the local competition were remodeled barns, and another was a remodeled adobe house. This concept was in line with Better Homes guidelines since the remodeling of older houses allowed farmers and others who did not have the funds to build new, to participate. Remodeling old structures also helped beautify cities which was a goal for Chase and Better Homes leaders. The house styles in Santa Barbara's campaigns were period-style including Cape Cod, Monterey Revival, Spanish Colonial Revival, Italian Revival, Tudor, and French cottage.

Chase and her Better Homes committee showed their commitment to modest budgets and were also inclusive of other demographics besides middle-class white homeowners. A six-room stucco house was built by a Black minister and was furnished with items donated by the Women's Club (Figure 71). His house was promoted by newspapers and was used as a model

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<sup>216</sup> Simpson, *Selling the City*, 149.





Figure 71 – The interior of the house of Reverend Harris, a Black minister's, which received donated items from the Woman's Club. Better Homes in America records. Hoover Institution Library and Archives.

house by Santa Barbara's Better Homes Committee. Several cottages were featured during Santa Barbara's campaigns, with some costing on average \$2,000. Women designed two of the model houses and *New Santa Barbara* wrote that “The best houses were those taken from books of plans by accredited and named architects, except for those designed by two women owners with long experience in building and two of which the Community Drafting Room had designed.”<sup>217</sup> The Better Homes program in Santa Barbara and the Plans department highlighted the small house design accomplishments of women even if they were not always recognized in the field of architecture (Figure 72). One of the houses for a Better Homes Week campaign was designed by a high school architectural drawing class.<sup>218</sup> The diversity of home types, budgets, styles, and inclusion of people of various races in Santa Barbara's campaigns was highly encouraged by the Better Homes program and set an example for the nation.

<sup>217</sup> Chase, Morrow, *New Santa Barbara*, 55.

<sup>218</sup> Chase, Morrow, *New Santa Barbara*, 55.



Figure 72- A model house made from used brick and designed by Anna Louise Murphy Vhay. *New Santa Barbara*, 1926.

## 1925 Better Homes Week Campaign

In 1925, Santa Barbara showcased five model houses during national Better Homes Week from May 10 to 17. They published their own Better Homes in America guidebook that detailed that "throughout the city as well as in these outlying districts great numbers of small homes are being erected, and many homemakers are deeply concerned in the numerous problems which present themselves."<sup>219</sup> The guidebook stated that the overarching goal was "to make Santa Barbara the Home City Beautiful."<sup>220</sup> Along with detailed information about the official model houses, the guidebook included "fourteen small houses with pleasing exteriors" and told visitors "as you go up and down the streets watch for the attractive houses and gardens."<sup>221</sup> "Several dozen houses were submitted to the Better Homes Committee and only a few could be shown." By visiting the fourteen houses, the guidebook said it would help develop

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<sup>219</sup> *Santa Barbara Better Homes Week May 10-17, 1925, Guidebook*, Box 66, Folder 1.

<sup>220</sup> *Santa Barbara Better Homes Week May 10-17, 1925, Guidebook*, Box 66, Folder 1.

<sup>221</sup> *Santa Barbara Better Homes Week May 10-17, 1925, Guidebook*, Box 66, Folder 1.

"discrimination and taste in architecture" and help visitors compare good and bad examples of design and workmanship.<sup>222</sup>

The 1925 Better Homes campaign was deemed a success with 9,500 people visiting the model houses.<sup>223</sup> The House that Budget Built and other model houses were so impressive that Santa Barbara tied with Atlanta for first prize, out of 2,000 communities that had participated in Better Homes Week.<sup>224</sup> Both cities presented model houses and campaigns that followed almost every recommendation found in the national Better Homes guidebook. A week after the 1925 earthquake, Chase received the news and amazingly, all the model houses they had featured were still standing after the earthquake (Figure 73). The letter from James Ford announcing that the campaign won first prize was published in *California Southland*:

My dear Miss Chase: I am delighted to be able to report to you that our Committee on Awards for the 1925 campaign for Better Homes in America unanimously voted to divide the First Prize between the Committee of Santa Barbara and Atlanta, Georgia. I am enclosing a check for \$250 herewith. Official announcement will be made in the newspapers on July 14. Our Committee was particularly interested in the remarkable quality of the furnishing and decoration of the demonstrated homes at Santa Barbara, and were agreed that yours was the best demonstration of home furnishing in this year's campaign. They were impressed, also with the quality of architecture and with the scope and excellence of your program. I wish to congratulate you and your Committee and all who were associated in your campaign upon its unusual merit. You have made a remarkable contribution to this important national movement for Better Homes in America and we feel deeply indebted to you for it.<sup>225</sup>

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<sup>222</sup> *Santa Barbara Better Homes Week May 10-17, 1925, Guidebook*, Box 66, Folder 1.

<sup>223</sup> *Guidebook of Better Homes in America: How to Organize the 1926 Campaign*, 49.

<sup>224</sup> *Guidebook of Better Homes in America: How to Organize the 1927 Campaign*, 39.

<sup>225</sup> "Santa Barbara's Better Homes Committee." *California Southland* 8, no. 68. August 1925, 12.



Figure 73 - A four-room adobe house "Model House B" in the 1925 Better Homes Week campaign (left). A significant addition has been made to the front elevation (right). The house was built from plan #8 in the Community Arts Association's Small House Designs plan book by architect Angus McD McSweeney. *California Southland*, 1925 / Google Maps.

## 1926 Better Homes Week Campaign

The slogan for the 1926 Better Homes Week in Santa Barbara was printed on the front page of the guidebook: "For a Better and More Beautiful Santa Barbara."<sup>226</sup> The number of model houses doubled from the previous year and the Better Homes committee showed ten in 1926. Santa Barbara won first prize in the Better Homes Week competition out of three thousand communities that participated nationwide.<sup>227</sup> The 1926 campaign included the previously mentioned six-room stucco house built by a Black minister which was listed in the local guidebook at 209 Gray Avenue and called "The Good-Will House" (Figure 74).<sup>228</sup> The owner was Reverend Charles A. Harris, of the People's Independent Church of Christ.

Furnishings for the house were donated and the lumber was second-hand. The total cost was around \$3,000. The Plans and Planting Committee landscaped the grounds. This house has

<sup>226</sup> *Santa Barbara Better Homes Week April 25- May 2, 1926, Guidebook*, Better Homes in America records. Hoover Institution Library and Archives, Box 56, Folder 1.

<sup>227</sup> *Santa Barbara Better Homes Week April 24 -May 1, 1927, Guidebook*, 66, Folder 2.

<sup>228</sup> *Santa Barbara Better Homes Week April 25- May 2, 1926, Guidebook*, Box 56, Folder 1.

been demolished, and today a commercial building is on the lot in its place. A waterfront neighborhood historic survey details that, “As more and more new multi-unit apartments were being constructed, the older West Beach residential neighborhood centered along Gray Avenue and Santa Barbara Street was disintegrating, as one by one the small turn of the century single-family houses were torn down to make way for large commercial warehouses and showrooms.”<sup>229</sup> Today, Gray Avenue is a trendy section of Santa Barbara with patios for socializing at Breweries and Wine Bars. There are no remaining traces of the Black minister’s house that was a model example of small house design at a low-cost in 1926.



Figure 74 – Reverend Charles A. Harris (left) and People’s Independent Church of Christ with Pearl Chase (right). Reverend Harris demonstrated a six-room stucco house for Better Homes Week in 1926. Better Homes in America records. Hoover Institution Library and Archives.

In 1926, the previously mentioned garden tours began to be a feature of Better Homes Week in Santa Barbara. Approximately 10,000 people visited the model houses, and Better

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<sup>229</sup> City of Santa Barbara, *On the Santa Barbara Waterfront*, Waterfront Survey and Historic Context Report, 21.

Homes in America leaders wrote that Santa Barbara "made a unique and most important contribution to the Better Homes in America movement, and the city itself is a standing example of the worth of concerted efforts toward improving the homes in a community (Figure 75)."<sup>230</sup> After the success of the 1926 campaign, photographs of the houses were sent to the International Housing Conference in Vienna, Austria, to be showcased as part of the Better Homes exhibit overseas.<sup>231</sup>



Figure 75- A five-room stucco house demonstrated in the 1926 Better Homes Week campaign. Better Homes in America records. Hoover Institution Library and Archives / Google Maps.

In 1926, the prize was not shared with another city as in 1925. The *Santa Barbara Daily News* wrote that "The victory of Santa Barbara in the "Better Homes" contest is cause for rejoicing among the people of this city because it is recognition of the fact that in home construction and furnishing, the city has attained a position of unquestioned leadership."<sup>232</sup> All but one of the ten houses from 1926 have been located (see Appendix C). Of the nine addresses found in research, they are all extant except the Black minister's model house. Most of the

<sup>230</sup> *Better Homes in America Guidebook for Campaigns: Better Homes Week, April 25 to May 1, 1926*, 43.

<sup>231</sup> Pearl Chase, "Encouraging the building of Better Homes," *California Southland* 8, no. 80. August 1926, 26.

<sup>232</sup> "Santa Barbara Homes Win," *Santa Barbara Daily News*, August 5, 1926, 18.



houses appear to have retained their integrity except for model house no. 1 (which will be discussed in detail later in this chapter).

## 1927 Better Homes Week Campaign

Ten model houses were opened to the public in the 1927 Better Homes campaign. Their slogan from past years was included at the bottom and stated that “Hundreds in our city and county are working together for a better and more beautiful Santa Barbara.”<sup>233</sup> Santa Barbara published their own guidebook for the 1927 Better Homes Week as they had done in 1925 and 1926. 4,000 copies of the guidebook were distributed at the model houses that year. The cover featured the Girl Scout model house that was called a “permanent house demonstration center.”<sup>234</sup>

The introduction in the guidebook stated that the events of Better Homes Week (April 24-May 1) were free and open to the public. The guidebook listed the locations of the model houses, the furniture, the cost of construction and if the house was for sale. It encouraged people to stop by the model houses and see the homemaking exhibits at the San Marcos building, the Elks building, and Guadalupe Hall. The activities and exhibits featured architecture, women’s handicrafts, a table setting competition, and a “home makers demonstration.”<sup>235</sup> There were six garden tours in 1927 that included the winner of the garden competition for that year (Figure 76). Three model houses were in the Lower East Side neighborhood, four were in the Upper East Side and North neighborhoods, and two were in the West Side neighborhood. Four of the model houses were for sale after Better Homes Week, No. 1, 3, 7 and 8.<sup>236</sup>

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<sup>233</sup> *Santa Barbara Better Homes Week April 24 -May 1, 1927, Guidebook*, Box 66, Folder 2.

<sup>234</sup> *Santa Barbara Better Homes Week April 24 -May 1, 1927, Guidebook*, Box 66, Folder 2.

<sup>235</sup> *Santa Barbara Better Homes Week April 24 -May 1, 1927, Guidebook*, Box 66, Folder 2.

<sup>236</sup> *Santa Barbara Better Homes Week April 24 -May 1, 1927, Guidebook*, Box 66, Folder 2.



FIRST PRIZE IN HOUSE AND GARDEN COMPETITION. MRS. JOHN D. VHAY,  
DESIGNER. PART OF THE BETTER HOMES ARTICLE ON PAGE 26

Figure 76 – First prize in the House and Garden competition. The house was designed by Louise Vhay, a woman designer at the Plans Committee. *California Southland*, 1926.

Model house no. 1, “The Little Grey House” is basically the same design as model house no. 2 from the 1926 Better Homes Week campaign (Figure 77). Both houses were from plan #61 by K.D. Church in the Community Arts Association’s *Small House Designs* book.



House No. 1, Santa Barbara, California, built complete, with garage, for \$4,327. This house received a special prize in the Small House Competition which was held as a part of the Better Homes campaign in Santa Barbara.

Figure 77 – “The Little Thrift House” from the 1926 campaign (left) and “The Little Grey House” from the 1927 campaign. Both were built from plan #61 by architect K.D. Church in *Small House Designs*. Better Homes in America records. Hoover Institution Library and Archives / *Guidebook for Better Homes Campaigns in Cities and Towns: Better Homes Week April 22 to April 28, 1928, 1927.*

Model house no. 5 was also from K.D. Church's design and was featured in the 1927 campaign. The house was owned by the architect himself in 1926 and was awarded first prize in the local small house design competition which landed it a spot as a model house. It received national attention and was featured on the cover of the publication *Better Homes in America Guidebook for Better Homes Campaigns in Rural and Small Towns: Better Homes Week, April 21- May 1, 1927* (Figure 78). The caption read: "Four-room house, Santa Barbara, California, well designed and inexpensive...construction, showing the advantage of careful planting. Suitable for village or suburban home."<sup>237</sup>

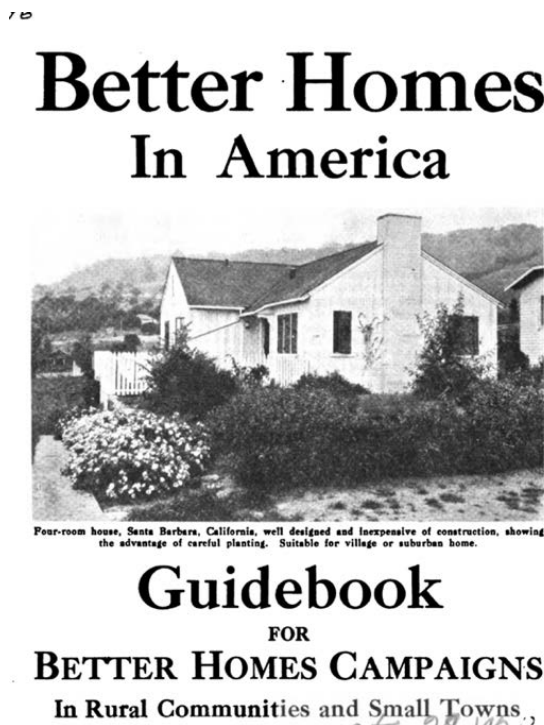
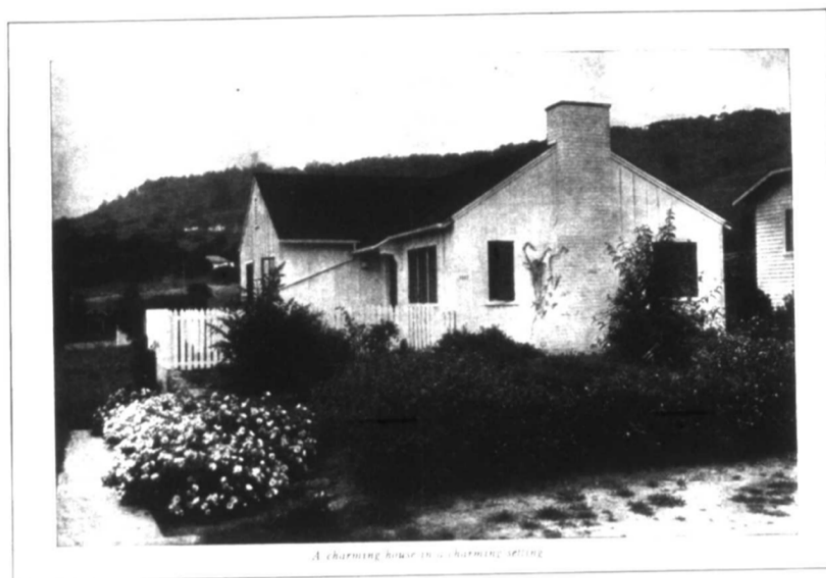


Figure 78- A fourth house that has been identified as having been built from design #61 in the Small House Designs plan book. This one received national attention and was featured on the 1927 guidebook. *Guidebook for Better Homes Campaigns in Rural and Small Towns: Better Homes Week, April 21- May 1, 1927, 1926.*

<sup>237</sup> *Guidebook for Better Homes Campaigns in Rural and Small Towns: Better Homes Week, April 21- May 1, 1927, 21.*



## One of the Better Homes in America

Figure 79- A fourth model house that that used design #61 from the Small House Designs plan book. Better Homes in America records. Hoover Institution Library & Archives.

Model house no. 5's national promotion as the prototype for small houses in both rural and suburban communities may have led to its replication around the country but further research is needed to determine if the design was used outside California. It was also featured in a lengthy spread in the magazine *Modern Priscilla* (Figure 79).<sup>238</sup> Model house no. 2 from 1927 was a three-room studio house that was built and furnished by the Plans Committee for classes at the Community Arts Association (Figure 80). The house was built on the complex used by the Community Arts Association which includes the famed Alhecama Theatre. The Alhecama Theatre is a City Landmark, but the report notes it does not include the other buildings in the complex.

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<sup>238</sup> *One of the Better Homes in America*, June 1926, Better Homes in America records. Hoover Institution Library & Archives. Box 66, Folder 2.



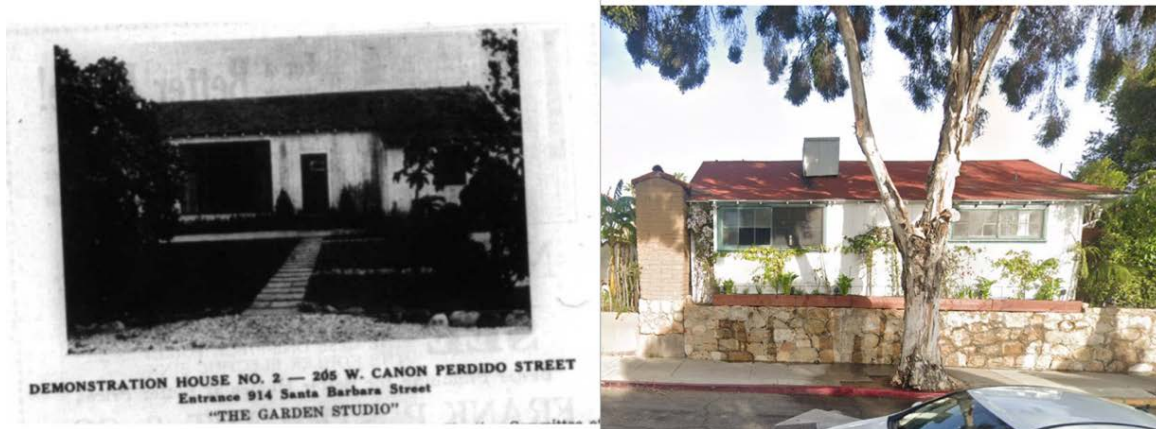


Figure 80- A three-room garden studio built for the Plans and Planting Committee in the Community Arts Association's complex. Better Homes in America records. Hoover Institution Library and Archives / Google Maps.

Model house no. 2 is “hiding in plain sight” but is difficult to recognize because of its transformation into a restaurant. The rear elevation (seen from East Canon Perdido Street) shows recognizable features of the original house but the front of the house is less recognizable as additions have been added to the original small house design (Figure 81).



Figure 81 - Zaytoon restaurant, originally model house no. 2. Valerie Smith, 2022.

The local Better Homes Week campaign was kicked off with a dedication ceremony at the Girl Scout Cottage (model house no. 4) at 1838 San Andres Street. The dedication included Mayor H.A. Adrian, Reverend Samuel Hughes, and other community leaders.<sup>239</sup> The theme of homemaking and training the youth in the messaging of Better Homes in America likely inspired the kickoff of Santa Barbara's events at the Girl Scout cottage. Over the years this clubhouse has been deemed significant to Santa Barbara's history and has been designated as a City Landmark (although its significance does not reflect its history as a model house). The Better Homes national guidebook detailed that "The Girl Scouts of Santa Barbara learn home-making in this cozy cottage. Demonstrations of home-making activities were given here during Better Homes Week."<sup>240</sup>

Santa Barbara's local small model house competition drew close to two hundred entries in 1927. The research for this thesis was not able to explore how many of these houses are extant but they are also an important component of the Small House Movement in Santa Barbara (Figures 82). Chase and the committee were proud of the level of design these houses exhibited and although more research is needed it appears many of them were built from the Community Arts Association's Small House Designs.

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<sup>239</sup> *Santa Barbara Better Homes Week April 24 -May 1, 1927, Guidebook*, Box 66, Folder 2.

<sup>240</sup> *Better Homes in America Guidebook for Better Homes Campaigns in Cities and Towns: Better Homes Week April 22 to April 28, 1928* (Better Homes in America, 1927), 32.



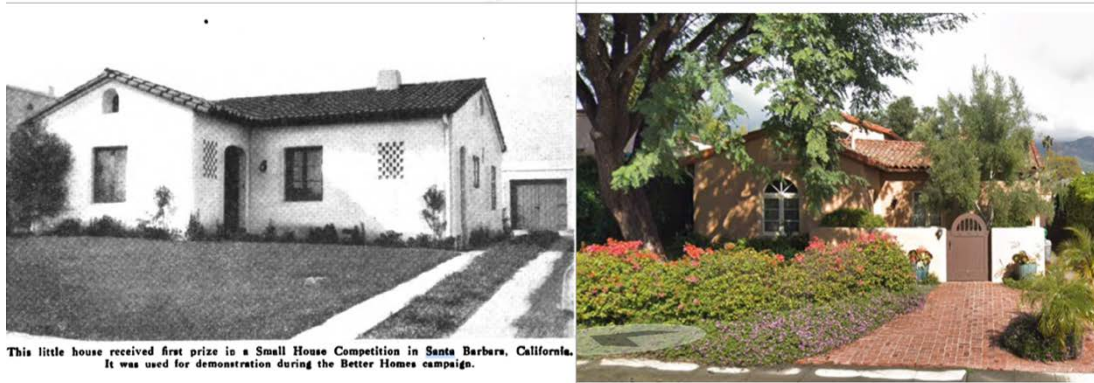


Figure 82 – Extant house from Santa Barbara’s local small house competition in advance of Better Homes Week. The house is located at 2940 Lomita Road, Santa Barbara, California. *Better Homes in America Guidebook for Better Homes Campaigns in Cities and Towns: Better Homes Week April 22 to April 28, 1928, 1927* / Google Maps.

## A Closer Look at Three Model Houses

This next section will examine in detail three model houses that were part of Santa Barbara’s local Better Homes Week campaigns. The examples were chosen because they were featured as national examples of Better Homes. The detailed examples will illustrate the need to uncover and document the forgotten history of Better Homes in America. The House that Budget Built represents an example of a Better Homes model house that received national acclaim but today “hides in plain sight” with its acclaim and history long forgotten. The Boyd House is known by historians and preservationists for being built from an architect-designed stock plan and its association with the original owners, the Boyd family. What is not yet detailed is its use as a model house while the family lived there and the national attention it received for its small house design. The third example, El Recuerdo, shows what can happen to a small house when major alterations are made making it difficult to designate and preserve. This house’s exterior and interior was widely published in newspapers, magazines and Better Homes materials. Today,

the house is almost unrecognizable due to many alterations and what appears to be a transformation from residential to commercial use.

### The House that Budget Built - 140 West Yanonali Street

The House that Budget Built was model house no. 1 during the 1925 Better Homes Week (Figure 84). This house is primarily forgotten along with other Better Homes Week model houses in Santa Barbara. While extant at 140 West Yanonali Street, it has not been recognized for its national or local significance in the Better Homes program and Small House Movement. In 1924, Chase worked with one of her father's real estate agents, W.C. Paulton, to purchase a lot in the newly subdivided Ambassador Tract. The tract is a few blocks north of the Pacific Ocean and south of downtown Santa Barbara in today's West Beach neighborhood. A city preservation report describes the West Beach neighborhood:

The neighborhood has an important collection of Spanish Colonial Revival single and multi-family residential buildings and bungalow courtyard apartment buildings...In the early 1900s, the Potter Hotel, a large luxury resort stood in the neighborhood. After the hotel was destroyed by a fire in 1921, the land was subsequently divided for multi-family residential use and became known as the Ambassador Tract...West Beach became the center for smaller hotels, motels and cottages, apartment buildings, boarding houses, restaurants, bathhouses, and an amusement area.<sup>241</sup>

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<sup>241</sup> City of Santa Barbara, *119 Los Aguajes Ave*, Historic Structure Report.



Another view of Demonstration House No. 1 at Santa Barbara, Calif. Note the irregular flags in the walk, the planting, and the open porch at the rear

Figure 83 – The House that Budget Built located at 140 West Yanonli Street in Santa Barbara , California. *Better Homes in America Guidebook for Campaigns: Better Homes Week, April 25 to May 1, 1925.*

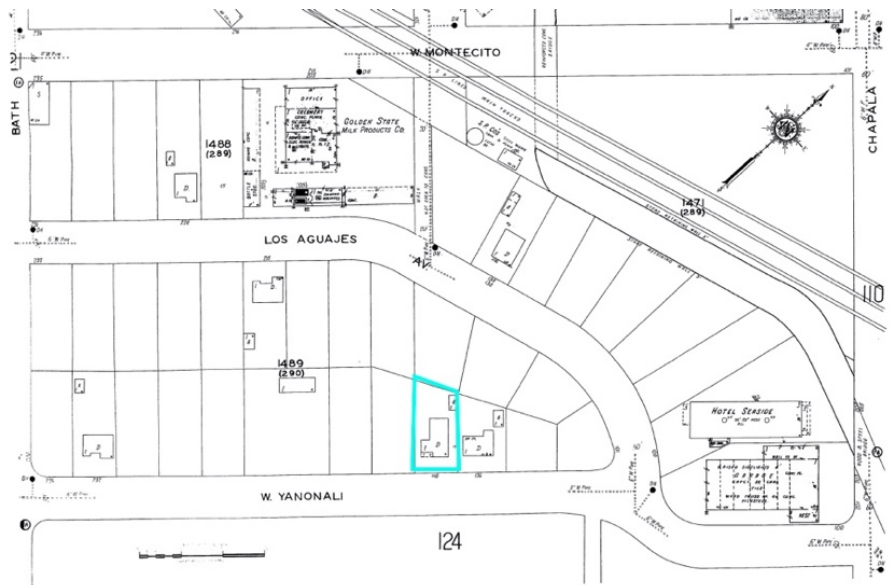


Figure 84- A map from 1930-1931 showing 140 W. Yanonali and surrounding vacant and developed lots. Sanborn Company, Insurance Maps of Santa Barbara, 1930-1931.

The House that Budget Built and its neighbor at 136 West Yanonali Street were two of the earliest single-family dwellings in the area (Figure 85). A 1930s map shows the neighborhood was still relatively undeveloped except for a few other houses on Los Aguajes

Avenue, the Hotel Seaside, a parking garage, and Golden State Milk Products Company. Chase and the Better Homes committee arranged to purchase the lot for \$2,750. They chose the subdivision because the "street was paved, sidewalk and gutters were in and all public utilities, including water, gas, light and telephone had been brought to it. These advantages made the lot worth more than those in outlying or less improved districts."<sup>242</sup> Chase held the deed for the house, and a loan was secured from the County National Bank and Trust Company.<sup>243</sup>

The House that Budget Built was constructed with the help of the local developer Earle Ovington. The Better Homes program goals and real estate goals were often at odds. Profit was the focus of the real estate industry and primarily catered to upper- and middle-class white residents whereas Better Homes sought to be inclusive of other demographics. Yet, *Selling the City's* author Lee M.A. Simpson notes the inconsistencies which sometimes resulted in local Better Homes campaigns. The developer Ovington advertised the Ambassador Tract as "carefully restricted" that would have likely kept African Americans and Mexicans from buying in the new neighborhood.<sup>244</sup> While Better Homes campaigns hoped to inspire all races to use architect-designed stock plans and build quality homes, some local campaigns did not help promote the idea of integrated neighborhoods. For African Americans and other groups this perpetuated systemic racism and limited the areas where they could build "Better Homes."

The House that Budget Built was designed as a one-story, six-room, frame house with clapboard siding that cost \$6,109 to build.<sup>245</sup> The style was classified as a Cape Cod bungalow. According to the Better Homes in America plan book, this style had "sweetness and simplicity,

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<sup>242</sup> *Santa Barbara Better Homes Week May 10-17, 1925, Guidebook*, Box 66, Folder 1.

<sup>243</sup> Simpson, *Selling the City*, 150.

<sup>244</sup> Simpson, *Selling the City*, 150.

<sup>245</sup> "Santa Barbara Home Wins in Nationwide Contest for Beauty, Comfort and Utility," *Monrovia Daily News*, December 26, 1925, 3.

and a certain ‘Down East’ quality.”<sup>246</sup> Santa Barbara’s local guidebook said the house was intended for a family of five (two adults and three children). John Frederick Murphy, of Soule, Murphy, and Hastings adapted plan #24 from *Small House Designs* for the design of the bedroom and bathroom (Figure 86).

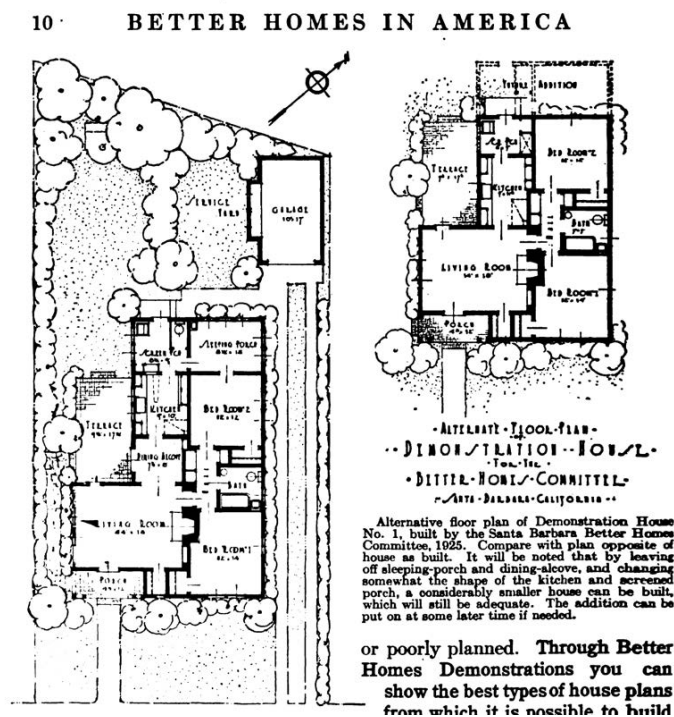


Figure 85- The plan for the House that Budget Built – adapted from *Small House Design* plan #24. Better Homes in America Guidebook for Campaigns: Better Homes Week, April 25 to May 1, 1926, 1925.

The exterior design resembles a reversed larger version of the Architects’ Small House Service Bureau plan No. 311 (Figure 87).<sup>247</sup> The final plan and exterior of the house were widely publicized in Better Homes materials, newspapers, and magazines. The original plan contained a living room, two bedrooms, a sleeping porch, a dining alcove, and a rear screened-in porch

<sup>246</sup> *Better Homes in America: Plan Book of Small Homes*, 84.

<sup>247</sup> *How to Plan, Finance, and Build Your Home* (Architects’ Small House Service Bureau and Southern Pine Association, 1921), Accessed April 20, 2022, [https://books.google.com/books?id=DW1JAAAAYAAJ&printsec=frontcover&source=gbs\\_ge\\_summary\\_r&cad=0#v=onepage&q&f=false](https://books.google.com/books?id=DW1JAAAAYAAJ&printsec=frontcover&source=gbs_ge_summary_r&cad=0#v=onepage&q&f=false).



(Figure 88). The living room was open to the dining alcove and fulfilled the open-concept and proper intercommunication of rooms desired for Better Homes. A simple terrace on the side of the house was accessed by a French door in the living room.



Figure 86 – Current image of the House that Budget Built (left) and possible inspiration for the exterior design from the Architects' Small House Service Bureau plan No. 311. Valerie Smith, 2022 / *How to Plan, Finance, and Build Your Home*, 1921



Figure 87 – The sleeping porch on the House that Budget Built. “Although this is called a sleeping porch, and is quite open to the air, it is plastered and not equipped with porch furniture; it has the qualities of a permanent room. Note the canvas curtains on automatic rollers.” *Better Homes in America Guidebook for Campaigns: Better Homes Week, April 25 to May 1, 1926, 1925.*



An alternate plan was provided in publications that showed prospective homeowners how, by eliminating the sleeping porch and dining alcove, and reducing the size of the kitchen and screened-in porch, \$1,100 could be saved.<sup>248</sup> The Better Homes guidebook noted that "the addition can be put on at some later time if needed."<sup>249</sup> The *Monrovia Daily News* featured the house on a half-page spread and noted that it had "beauty" and "utility" with rooms that were arranged for "comfort and convenience."<sup>250</sup>

The landscaping was done by Lockwood de Forest Jr. which helped "beautify" the site of the model house as per the goals of the Plans and Planting committee. The yard in the rear was originally divided into three parts--a children's play yard, a drying area, and the detached garage area.<sup>251</sup> The large tree now in front may have been part of a "tree planting ceremony" at the lot held by Chase and the committee in advance of Better Homes Week. The national Better Homes guidebook noted how "the planting around the house adds a great deal to its appearance."<sup>252</sup> 140 West Yanonali Street was put up for sale during Better Homes Week (Figure 89). The price was set at \$9,329.82 including the value of the land and cost of building the house.

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<sup>248</sup> *Santa Barbara Better Homes Week May 10-17, 1925, Guidebook*, Box 66, Folder 1.

<sup>249</sup> *Santa Barbara Better Homes Week May 10-17, 1925, Guidebook*, Box 66, Folder 1.

<sup>250</sup> "Santa Barbara Home Wins in Nationwide Contest for Beauty, Comfort and Utility," *Monrovia Daily News*, December 26, 1925, 3.

<sup>251</sup> *Santa Barbara Better Homes Week May 10-17, 1925, Guidebook*, Box 66, Folder 1.

<sup>252</sup> *Santa Barbara Better Homes Week May 10-17, 1925, Guidebook*, Box 66, Folder 1.

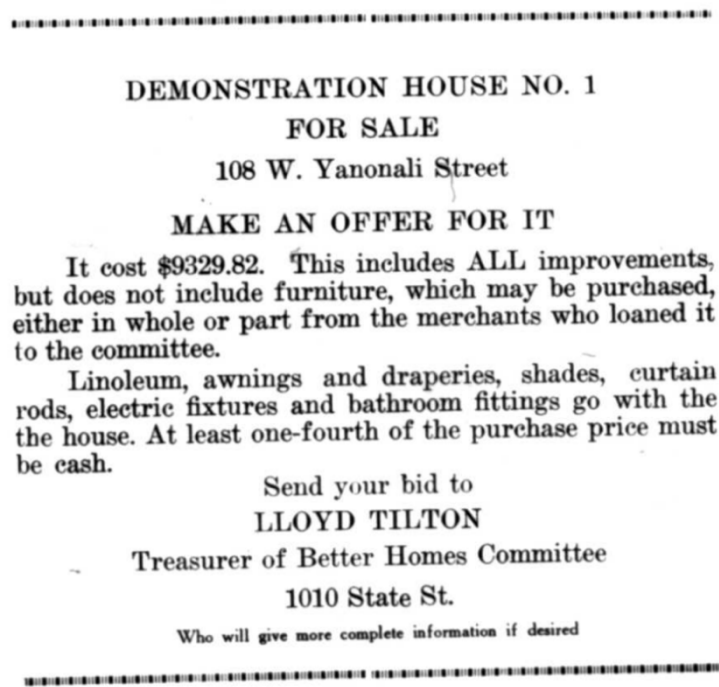


Figure 88 – Advertisement for the sale of the House that Budget Built. Better Homes in America records, Hoover Institution Library and Archives.

## The Boyd House – 20 East Junipero Street

20 East Junipero Street was model house No. 4 for the 1926 Better Homes Week campaign (Figure 90). The original construction permit for 20 East Junipero Street lists a cost of \$4,000.<sup>253</sup> The house was built in 1924 as a five-room frame house with clapboard siding, designed in a Cape Cod style. An article in *California Southland*, edited by Pearl Chase said the house was "A good example of what a comfortable and charming, well-arranged small house can be."<sup>254</sup>

<sup>253</sup> City of Santa Barbara, *20 East Junipero Street*, Historic Resource Report.

<sup>254</sup> "The National Home Movement," *California Southland* 8, no. 80, October 1926, 24.



Figure 89 – The Boyd House at 20 East Junipero Street. This image was taken after the windows on the northwest elevation were covered. Historic Resource Report for 20 East Junipero Street, 1980.

The lot was the ideal “Better Home” dimensions of 50 feet by 150 feet. The house had windows on all elevations that allowed maximum sunlight and ventilation. *California Southland* wrote that the house was “very livable, as well as attractive, and particularly well lighted”(Figures 91-92).<sup>255</sup> Another feature found at this house that was advocated by the Better Homes movement was the open plan between dining and living rooms. Doors between the two could be folded back when in use or closed to separate the dining area. The living room size was increased from the original plan, giving the living room greater priority.<sup>256</sup>

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<sup>255</sup> “The National Home Movement,” 24.

<sup>256</sup> “The National Home Movement,” 24.



Figure 90 – Living room of the Boyd house. Note the large windows and Colonial-style furniture. *Better Homes in America Guidebook for Better Homes Campaigns in Cities and Towns: Better Homes Week, April 21 to May 1, 1927, 1926.*



Figure 91 – View of the dining area connected to the living room. Better Homes in America records, Hoover Institution Library and Archives.

The furnishings in 20 East Junipero Street were of the "early Colonial type," as was the trend that was encouraged by Better Homes in America. It was built in 1924 by builder Alex MacKellar from plan #62 in *Small House Designs* (Figure 93). The builder reversed architect C.

Kruegl's plan, a practice that was (as previously mentioned) encouraged with architect-designed stock plans to provide the best sun exposure and siting for the lot. *California Southland* noted that "the plan is conveniently arranged and all the details are cleverly worked out."<sup>257</sup>

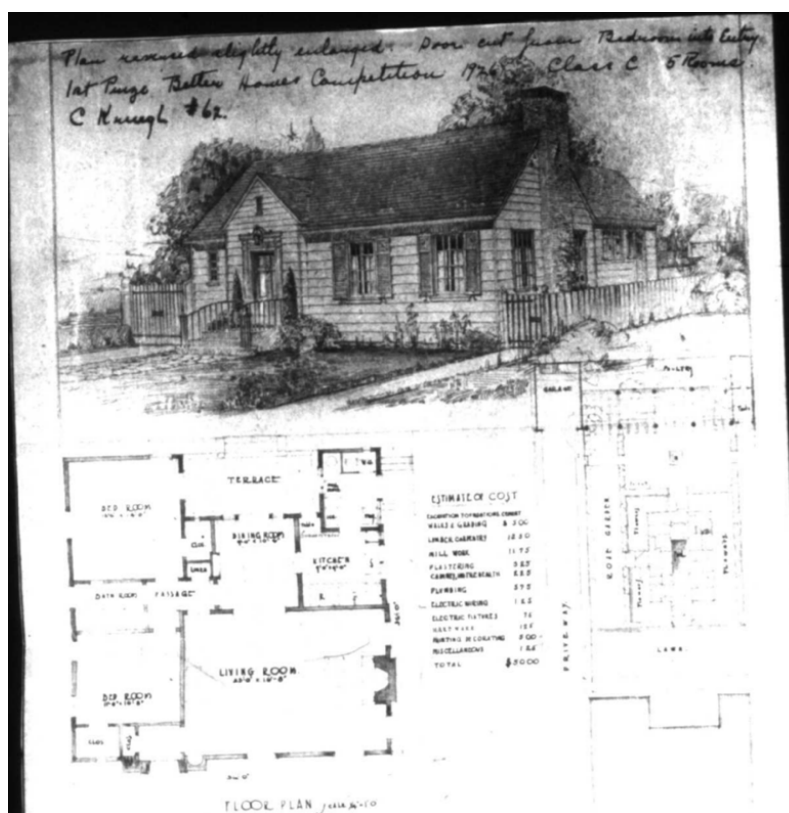


Figure 92 – C Kruegl's plan #62 in Small House Designs. Better Homes in America records, Hoover Institution Library and Archives.

The house belonged to the Boyd family when it was used as a model house in 1926. Francis Eugene Boyd was the Vice President of the Boyd Lumber and Mill Co.<sup>258</sup> His wife Katherine was the President of the Santa Barbara Woman's Club. It was natural that this house would be offered as a model house given Katherine's social connections and the strong support by society women for Better Homes in America. By 1930, census records show the Boyd family

<sup>257</sup> "The National Home Movement," 24.

<sup>258</sup> City of Santa Barbara, 20 East Junipero Street, Historic Resource Report.

had two children and a servant living in the house at 20 East Junipero Street.<sup>259</sup> While this was not a family of modest means or the "servant-less" household, the reasonable price to build and design the house from an architect-designed stock plan promoted the principles of Better Homes in America making it a good choice for a model house.

### El Recuerdo - 1423 San Andres Street

El Recuerdo was model house no. 1 during the 1926 Better Homes Week campaign in Santa Barbara (Figures 94-97). The house is referred to as "La Recuerda" in the 1926 local guidebook published by Santa Barbara, but the house plans list it as "El Recuerdo." The owner designed the house with "designs of the Architectural Advisory Committee in mind."<sup>260</sup> An article in *California Southland* notes, "it was planned by the owner who has built several houses in Santa Barbara and who cleverly took notice of all the beautiful designs which have been given to Santa Barbara by the Architectural Advisory Committee working under the new code."<sup>261</sup> Another article notes the house was planned by the owner's wife, who carefully noted local conditions when designing the house.<sup>262</sup>

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<sup>259</sup> "1930 United States Federal Census," Katherine Boyd, <https://www.ancestrylibrary.com/discoveryui-content/view/93031782:6224>.

<sup>260</sup> Chase, Morrow, *New Santa Barbara*, 59.

<sup>261</sup> "Santa Barbara's Better Homes Committee," 12.

<sup>262</sup> "Santa Barbara Better Homes Demonstration House no.1," *California Southland* 8, July 1926, 17-29.





Figure 93- Demonstration House no. 1, El Recuerdo. Better Homes in America records, Hoover Institution Library and Archives.



Figure 94- El Recuerdo, model house no. 1 in 2022. Valerie Smith, 2022.

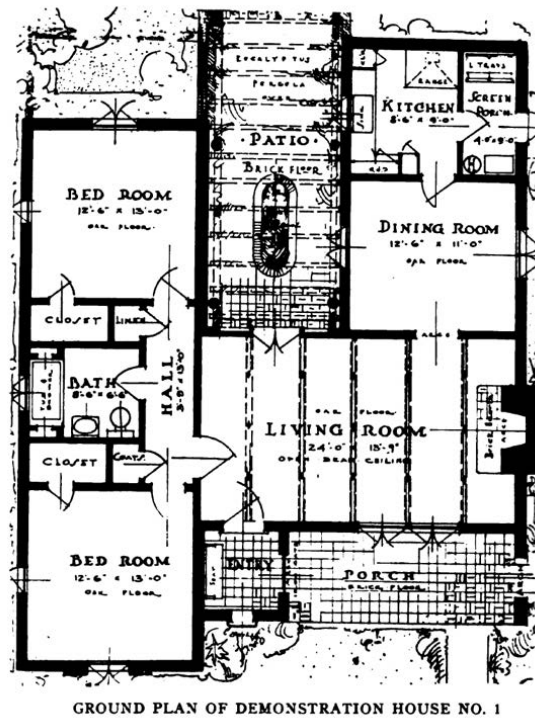
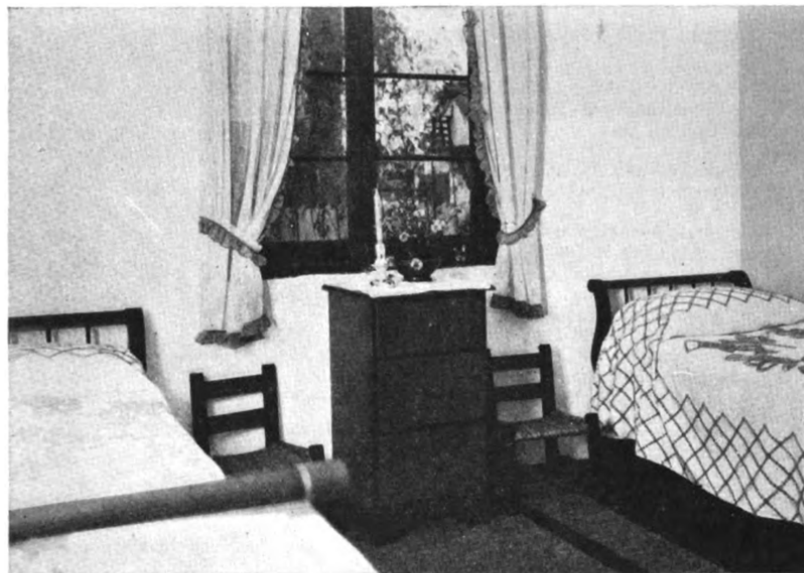


Figure 95 – Model house no. 1, El Receurdo, 1926. Better Homes in America records, Hoover Institution Library and Archives.



Children's bedroom in Demonstration House No. 1, of the Santa Barbara Committee. The furniture is a rich dark blue and rose is introduced in the bedspread and frilled curtains. A bureau, bookshelf and fairy tale pictures complete the furnishings. The total furnishing cost was only \$156.

Figure 96 – A bedroom showcased during Better Homes Week. *Better Homes in America Guidebook for Better Homes Campaigns in Cities and Towns: Better Homes Week, April 21 to May 1, 1927, 1926.*

*California Southland* calls it an "excellent example of the successful use of Spanish style in the small home."<sup>263</sup> El Recuerdo was built as a one-story, five-room adobe house "laid on continuous footing, reinforced with steel. Interior partitions are of lath and plaster to save floor space."<sup>264</sup> The original plan contained a living room with an archway to the dining room noted as an "open plan" in the drawings. The plan also shows two bedrooms, a kitchen, and a bathroom. The house was intended to be a demonstration for families with children and a room was furnished and displayed for children. An open-beam ceiling is noted on the plan, and a Spanish Colonial interior with a period-style fireplace is shown in historical images. Special features were a screened-in porch and courtyard patio accessed from the living room and dining room with a eucalyptus pergola over the patio. The lot size was 50 feet by 107 feet and was valued at \$1,900. The house cost \$5,547.25 to build and the furnishings cost \$1,163.25.

The model house is extant but heavily altered and appears to be used for commercial purposes. A metal security fence has been added to a concrete entrance gate and retaining wall. The entire front yard is covered in concrete. At first glance, it was not easy to see that the house today was El Recuerdo due to all the alterations. Yet, like the House that Budget Built, this house was "hiding in plain sight" and its fame from the Better Homes in America is long forgotten. El Recuerdo is not currently listed on Santa Barbara's Historic Resource Inventory list or Structure of Merit list and may not be eligible due to all the alterations.

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<sup>263</sup> "Santa Barbara Better Homes Demonstration House no.1," 17-29.

<sup>264</sup> "Santa Barbara Better Homes Demonstration House no.1," 17-29.

## Case Study Closing Notes

As a result of the research for this case study, five model houses were located from the 1925 campaign (see Appendix B), nine model from the 1926 campaign (see Appendix C), and nine from the 1927 campaign (see Appendix D).<sup>265</sup> Of the twenty-three addresses linked to model houses, all were extant except for the Black minister's house at 209 Gray Avenue. A quick visual inspection yields that most of the extant houses retain excellent integrity. Significant alterations have been made to model house B from 1925, and El Recuerdo from 1926. The alterations of model houses, and demolition of 209 Gray Avenue, show the urgency of preservation action relating to small houses in Santa Barbara.

Only one of the model houses has been designated a city landmark, the Girl Scout house at 1838 San Andres Street (but not for its connection with the Better Homes program). As a result of this thesis and communications with Santa Barbara's Historic Preservation Department, 140 West Yanonali Street has been added to the Historic Resource Inventory list. While this doesn't guarantee any protection from demolition, it will trigger a more in-depth review if demolition or alteration permits are filed. The Boyd House at 20 East Junipero Street has been on the Historic Resource list since the 1980s, but it has not been designated locally as a City Landmark or Structure of Merit. Its inclusion in the inventory list is due to its connection with design #62 in *Small House Designs*; the inclusion of Better Homes history could allow it to be designated as a City Landmark or Structure of Merit. Now that another layer of historical significance has been uncovered with Better Homes in America, it may become easier to

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<sup>265</sup> The totals include the previously discussed model houses: The House that Budget Built, The Boyd House, and El Recuerdo.

designate model houses. This research also could lead to a possible thematic National Register nomination of all the eligible Better Homes model houses in Santa Barbara. This could also include model houses that were part of small house competitions in advance of Better Homes Week. The introduction of Santa Barbara's role in the Better Homes in America program and Small House Movement will give preservationists another layer of historical context to preserve small houses. Locating and designating extant model houses and other small houses from the 1920s is essential to tell the story of Santa Barbara's social and architectural history.

## Chapter 5: Conclusions and Research Recommendations



## The End of Better Homes in America

Better Homes in America continued to have close to 10,000 communities participating in 1935 but the Depression was a setback for the program. In addition, President Roosevelt was not supportive of the program due to its ties with Herbert Hoover and funding had become scarce.<sup>266</sup> The program research transferred to Purdue University, and they launched research efforts to continue small housing efforts for the average American. In 1936, plans for nine model demonstration houses were published in *The Real Estate Record* (Figure 98).



Figure 97- Model house in a modern style at Purdue University. *The Real Estate Record*, 1936.

The model houses were built on one hundred and forty-three acres of donated land near the campus. The houses carried forward the principle that small houses should cost \$5,000 or less. The houses were opened to the public and were meant to be objects of research to “determine

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<sup>266</sup> Loren Stack Moulds, "The Domestic Standard: American Homeownership and the State, 1917-1950" (PhD diss., University of Virginia, 2014), 91.

why houses cost what they do, how costs can be reduced, and how low-cost housing can be improved in plan, construction and equipment.”<sup>267</sup> Many of the designs were modern rather than period-style designs of the 1920s but traditional-style houses continued to be featured.

After Better Homes in America, small house momentum continued with architect-designed stock plans. Beginning in the 1930s the Federal government used principles of the Better Homes in America program and the Architects’ Small House Service Bureau to standardize small houses so funding could be provided to prospective homeowners through the Federal Housing Administration. Some of the goals changed and building houses en masse was no longer discouraged since they wanted to encourage homeownership and stimulate the building sector after the Depression.

The concept of the homeowner choosing their lot and individualizing their house was not as prevalent as most houses were purchased after being built. The houses got particularly small instead of just being compact (averaging around 800 square feet). The narrow lot returned as builders divided the land they had purchased to fit more houses. Architects also continued to have an interest in small house design. *Architectural Forum* published small house plan books in the late 1930s entitled *Book of Small Houses*. Many of the images look like small house designs from the 1920s by the Architects’ Small House Service Bureau although the organization is not mentioned anywhere in the books. It is difficult to gauge the true effects on the built environment in the limited timeframe for the research for this thesis.

More research and survey efforts in the field are needed to determine how many houses were built from architect-designed stock plans and how influential the model houses of Better

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<sup>267</sup> Benjamin F Betts, "The Purdue Low-Cost Housing Demonstration," *The Real Estate Record*, 137 (1936), 19-23.

Homes were. However, some conclusions can be drawn about the impact of the Architects' Small House Movement and Better Homes in America which will be detailed in this chapter.

### The Impact of the Architects' Small House Service Bureau

The work begun by AIA's small house Bureau led to dozens of plan services to be started by various organizations that involved architects in the work of designing small houses. Many newspapers and trade organizations began their own plan service or published plan books that flooded the public with architect-designed stock plans in the 1920s. In a memo the AIA called the work of the small house bureau "heroic" and stated that many architects did not yet understand the importance of small house design (Figure 99).<sup>268</sup> The memo details that:

For the first time in the history of American home building here is a service for builders of smaller homes prepared by architects and offered to the public in the nature of a public service. When homes are built in accordance with Bureau plans and instructions the result is usually a permanent testimony to good construction and good design. These homes are more convincing testimony to Bureau influence than any report this Committee is able to prepare."<sup>269</sup>

While it wasn't the most lucrative for architects unless many plans were sold, their commitment to civic duty showed the nation that small houses could be well-designed...beautiful...BETTER. The AIA memo details that more than one thousand small houses were built the previous year around the country using the bureau's plans and that "every state in the union is represented by one or more Bureau homes."<sup>270</sup>

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<sup>268</sup> *Report of the Committee on Small Houses*. Better Homes in America records. Hoover Institution Library & Archives. Box 12, Folder 14.

<sup>269</sup> *Report of the Committee on Small Houses*, Box 12, Folder 14.

<sup>270</sup> *Report of the Committee on Small Houses*, Box 12, Folder 14.

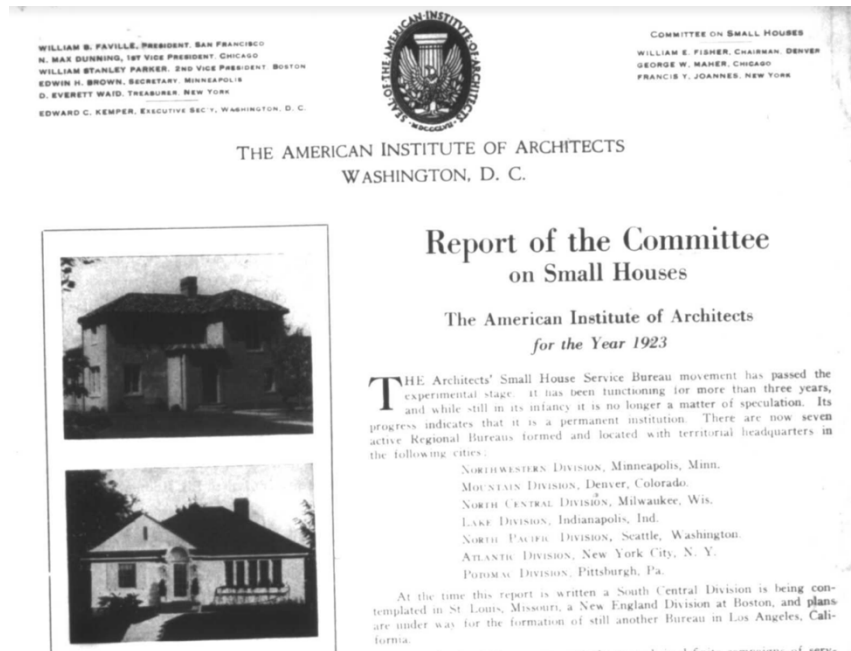


Figure 98 – An AIA memo that detailed the accomplishments of the Architects’ Small House Service Bureau in 1924. Better Homes in America records. Hoover Institution Library and Archives.

While neighborhoods across the country have not yet been surveyed to locate the houses, historic documents like AIA memos and bureau plan books detail that they were built all over the country. In addition, vernacular copies of these houses likely exist in cities all over since some builders and homeowners referred to the plan books to get ideas and then altered the designs to their preference. AIA noted that the “Bureau movement is a thoroughly practical one and is obtaining results. It is not propaganda or publicity for the architect or architecture...it is a real service to the public and the architect and it has already exerted a mighty influence in America’s small house architecture.”<sup>271</sup> Indeed, the work of the Architects’ Small House Service Bureau is historic, and it marks a change in taste for small house design which shows they had a significant impact.

<sup>271</sup> *Report of the Committee on Small Houses*, Box 12, Folder 14.

A neighborhood full of the same designs may not be the best place for historians and preservationists to survey if they are interested in locating, documenting the history, and preserving architect-designed stock plan houses ordered by an individual homeowner. The houses attributed to bureau plans of the 1920s would have been built by the homeowner's builder from a set of blueprints they received in the mail rather than purchasing a house already built in a neighborhood with many of the same designs. Finding a house from the 1920s that does not look like neighboring houses may mean it was built from an architect-designed stock plan chosen by the owner and could contain unique history that will interest historians and preservationists. Historians and preservationists can look at plan books by the Home Owners' Service Institute and Architects' Small House Service Bureau to match a small house to a plan. Newspapers can also be researched to find published plans that were available to the masses in the 1920s.

### The Impact of Better Homes in America

Leaders of the program like James Ford and longtime local supporters like Pearl Chase seemed to think Better Homes in America was extremely effective. Its long duration and continuation by Purdue's research department shows it was a program with merit. The architects involved with the program felt that Better Homes in America was making a difference and wanted the program's influence to continue. Before the architect of Home Sweet Home house, Donn Barber passed away in 1925 he wrote the following letter to *The Delineator*:

Some architects and architectural associations have criticized this method of wholesale distribution of plans at a nominal price, but I feel sure, however, that the architect's prerogatives have not been usurped in any way whatever. It is thoroughly in keeping with the program of *The Delineator* (which inaugurated the Better Homes in America movement) that the public should turn to it for expert advice and guidance for the small-home builder of limited means. I might add that it was through my work for *The Delineator* that I became interested in the Better Homes in America movement, and finally became one of the directors of the organization when it was incorporated a year or two ago. America is surely building better houses. Materials to go into these houses are

being chosen more and more by the architect or individual rather than by the contractor, and good design in a small house has now become virtually a necessity.<sup>272</sup>

Santa Barbara's local Better Homes committee wrote in their 1926 Better Homes Week Guidebook that Better Homes in America was "one of the most far-reaching movements ever launched for the betterment of America. It has touched the lives of millions of people; it has advanced policies of education; it has spread to foreign lands."<sup>273</sup> Better Homes encouraged a new standard to be met in small houses, a *better* standard in both design and quality. Better Homes in America also helped promote the idea that even modest incomes could own an "architect-designed" house" through plan services.



Figure 99 – Detroit News model house used for the Detroit Better Homes Campaign c. 1925 (left) The model house or one of its many replicas is located at 886 Washington Road in Grosse Pointe, Michigan. There are at least two replicas in the neighborhood. *Straub Cinder Building Blocks*, 1925 (left) / Valerie Smith, 2022 (right).

The research for this thesis shows that the influence of Better Homes was widespread. Many replicas of model houses were built around the country. For example, a model house sponsored by the *Detroit News* and designed by the Michigan chapter of the American Institute of

<sup>272</sup> "Donn Barber Goes Home," *The Delineator*, September 1925, 1.

<sup>273</sup> *Santa Barbara Better Homes Week April 25- May 2, 1926, Guidebook*. Better Homes in America records, Hoover Institution Library and Archives, Box 56, Folder 1.



Architects (AIA) was published in the trade catalog *Straub Cinder Building Blocks*.<sup>274</sup> The trade catalog said there were *hundreds* of replicas requested to be built after Better Homes Week. At least three replicas have been located in the Grosse Pointe area (Figure 100). It is likely similar scenarios occurred in cities all over the United States as a result of houses shown during Better Homes Week. These houses are important to locate and preserve in communities around the country.

The popularization of the model house concept by Better Homes in America is also a major impact the program had in the 1920s and later decades as well. The use of the model house by speculative builders and the simultaneous construction of small houses during the Better Homes program is important to document for local and national historical accounts. In a rare example of designation, a speculative builders house that was influenced by the Better Homes model house concept has been added to the National Register<sup>275</sup> It is located at 288 Wimbledon Road in Rochester, New York. Fred P. Tosch used the model house at 288 Wimbledon to attract people to his automobile subdivision, Rogers Estates (Figure 101). If historians and preservationists are interested in locating model houses from Better Homes in America, or other model houses sponsored by trade catalogs, speculative builders, or newspapers, much can be uncovered by searching in historic newspapers.

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<sup>274</sup> *Straub Cinder Building Blocks*, National Cinder Concrete Products Association, 1925.

<sup>275</sup> National Park Service U.S. Department of the Interior, *288 Wimbledon Road*, 2015.



Figure 100 – A model house at 288 Wimbledon Road (on the left) inspired by the Better Homes program by developer Fred P. Tosch. Google Maps.

The addresses of the houses are almost always listed since the goal was to attract as many people as possible to inspect the houses (Figure 102). As previously mentioned, often the earliest house in the neighborhood in the 1920s was used as a model house. This can be discovered by reviewing historic maps of automobile suburbs and then researching using the resources listed in this thesis to see if the house was used as a model house. There is a lot more research to be done on the topic of small houses in the 1920s. With each new discovery about Better Homes in America model houses there was a significant amount of information uncovered about 1920s houses and trends in general.

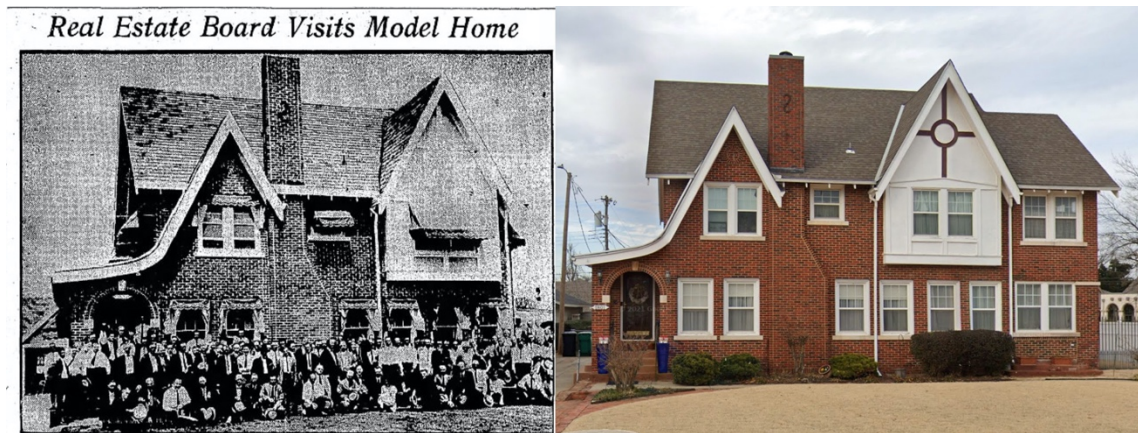















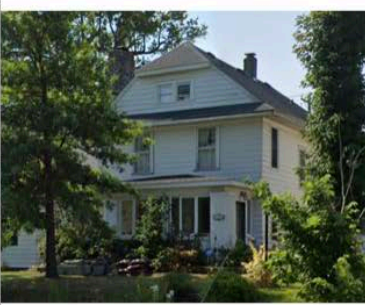


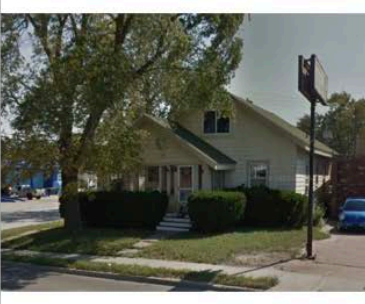


Figure 101- Builder model house located at 1801 NW 19th St, Oklahoma City, OK. *The Daily Oklahoman*, 1924 / Google Maps.

Better Homes in America model houses should be identified and considered for designation. If more research can be done to identify national Better Homes in various cities, a thematic National Register nomination should be considered. The designation will help tell the story of Better Homes in America and the Small House Movement. A new typology called the Small “Better” House could be defined (as Georgia’s preservation department did with the American Small House from the 1930s). This could help preservationists in the field identify houses built from architect-designed plans and houses used in local Better Homes campaigns. Hopefully, the research in this thesis will prompt preservationists to look at Small “Better” Houses with a fresh perspective and begin to include programs like Better Homes in America in their historic narratives. The knowledge of Small House Movement contributors like Better Homes in America, the Architects’ Small House Service Bureau, and Santa Barbara’s Community Arts Association will strengthen historic narratives and preservation efforts. Preserving Small “Better” Houses will provide a more complete history of single-family houses in American architecture and allow future generations a look backwards in history to the 1920s Small House Movement.

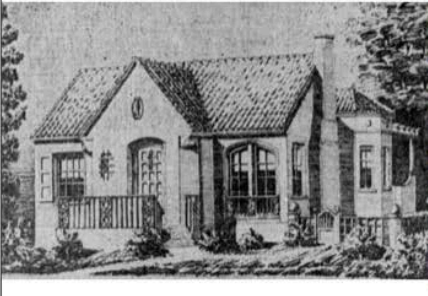
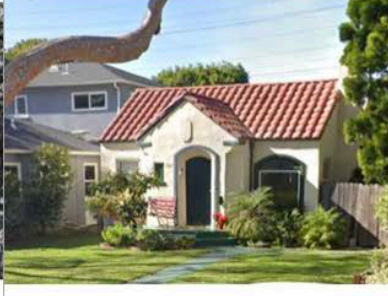









## Appendix A – Extant Better Homes Model Houses Around the United States

120 Bradley Ave, Bergenfield, New Jersey		
160 W Pine St, Stockton, California		
1025 43rd St, Sacramento, California		
15 Avon Rd, Binghamton, New York		
57 Howard Street NE, Atlanta, Georgia		

3018 Colcord Ave, Waco, Texas		
538 E Ewing Ave, South Bend, Indiana		
1630 Hennepin Ave, Minneapolis, Minnesota "Alice Ames Winter House"		DEMOLISHED
2202 Lapeer Ave, Port Huron, Michigan		
926 Queen Anne Rd, Teaneck, New Jersey		



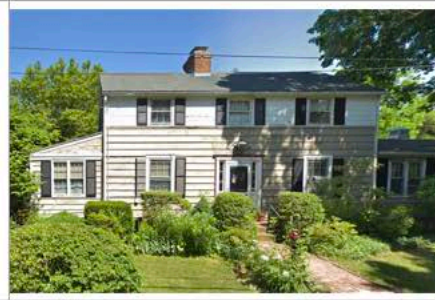
<p>10927 Wagner St, Culver City, California</p>		
<p>1750 New York Avenue, Washington, D.C.</p> <p>"Home Sweet Home House" and the "Little House"</p>		<p>DEMOLISHED</p>
<p>2026 S Westnedge Ave, Kalamazoo, Michigan</p> <p>"Everyman's House"</p>	 <p>Front view of house demonstrated by prize-winning Better Homes Committee at Kalamazoo, Michigan, 1914. (See page 24.)</p>	
<p>1705 Arlington Ave, Bessemer, Alabama</p>		
<p>1225 8th Ave W, Birmingham, Alabama</p>		



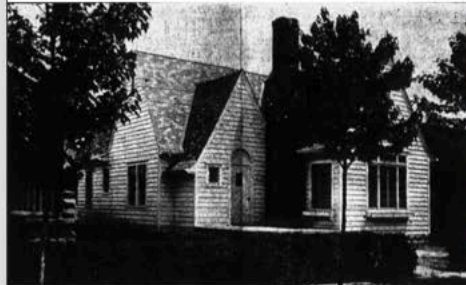
16 E Adams St, Stockton,  
California



11 Harmon Dr,  
Larchmont, New York



526 Homestead Ave,  
Seymour, Indiana



2640 Montgomery Way,  
Sacramento, California













830 Stone St, Port Huron,  
MI 48060

"Meloney Cottage"


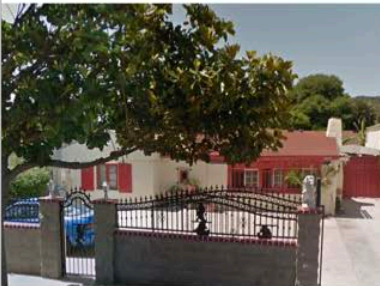



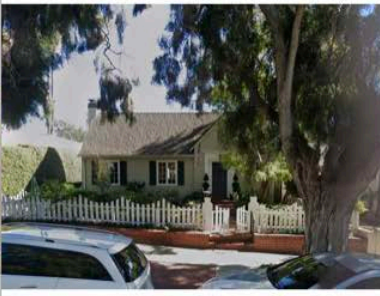

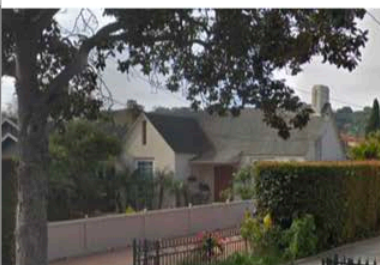


## Appendix B – Extant Better Homes Model Houses, 1925 Campaign, Santa Barbara

<p>140 W Yanonali</p> <p>"The House That Budget Built"</p> <p>Model House No. 1</p> <p>1925 campaign</p> <p>6-room frame house</p> <p>Plan #24 Community Arts Association (bedrooms and bath design only)</p> <p>City Landmark or SOM? N</p>	 <p>The six-room Demonstration House No. 1 at Santa Barbara, Calif., 1925. This house cost \$6,109 to build. The planting around the house adds a great deal to its appearance.</p>	
<p>315-A Bath Street</p> <p>Model House No. 2</p> <p>1925 campaign</p> <p>3-room frame house, bungalow with two other houses.</p> <p>City Landmark or SOM? N</p>	 <p>THREE-ROOM, \$1590 HOUSE PLANNED AND EXTERIOR IMPROVED BY BETTER HOMES COMMITTEE AFTER FRAMEWORK WAS IN PLACE. DEMONSTRATION HOUSE NO. 2 SEEN IN THE FIRST PICTURE AT LEFT.</p>	
<p>2218 Alameda Padre Serra</p> <p>Model House No. 3</p> <p>1925 Campaign</p> <p>3 apartments furnished by owner</p> <p>City Landmark or SOM? N</p>	 <p>DEMONSTRATION HOUSE NO. 3. THREE HILLSIDE APARTMENTS, DESIGNED AND FURNISHED BY OWNERS, OPEN TO PUBLIC DURING THE WEEK.</p>	
<p>1114 N Milpas</p> <p>Model House A</p> <p>1925 campaign</p> <p>Brick house, made from used bricks</p> <p>Similar to plan #51 - Community Arts Association - Leffler B. Miller</p> <p>City Landmark or SOM? N</p>	 <p>A BETTER HOMES DEMONSTRATION HOUSE Made from used bricks. Mrs. John V. Day, Designer.</p>	
<p>821 W Valerio Street</p> <p>Model House B</p> <p>1925 campaign</p> <p>Adobe house</p> <p>Plan #8 Community Arts Association Small House Designs</p> <p>City Landmark or SOM? N</p>	 <p>DEMONSTRATION HOUSE Second prize, four-room class</p>	




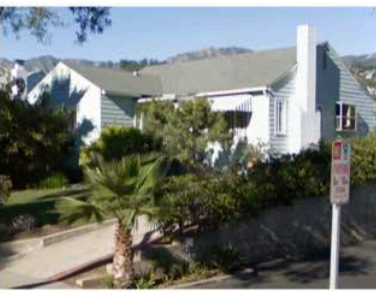
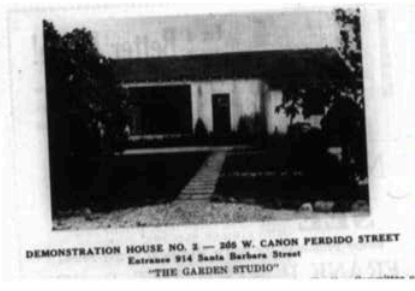
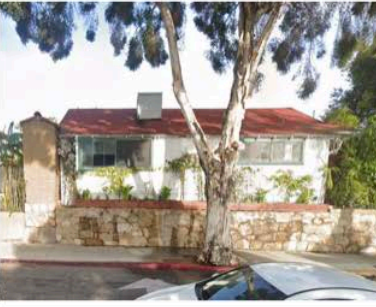
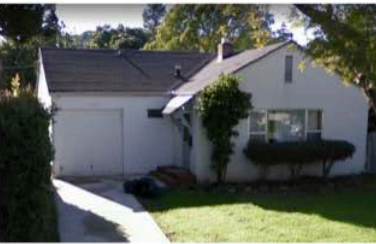




## Appendix C – Extant Better Homes Model Houses, 1926 Campaign, Santa Barbara







<p>1423 San Andres</p> <p>Model House No. 1</p> <p>1926 Campaign</p> <p>"El Recuerdo"</p> <p>Adobe house</p> <p>City Landmark or SOM? N</p>	 <p>DEMONSTRATION HOUSE NO. 1 - 1926 Planned by the owner with designs of the Architectural Advisory Committee in mind</p>	
<p>220 Second Ave</p> <p>Model House no. 2</p> <p>"The Little Thrift House"</p> <p>1926 campaign</p> <p>Frame house for a small lot</p> <p>Plan #61 Community Arts Association - K.D. Church</p> <p>City Landmark or SOM? N</p>		<p>CURRENT HOUSE NOT FOUND - NO MATCH FOR ADDRESS GIVEN IN GUIDEBOOK</p>
<p>209 Gray Avenue</p> <p>Model House no. 3</p> <p>"The Good Will House"</p> <p>6-room stucco house built with second-hand lumber</p> <p>City Landmark or SOM? N</p>		<p>CURRENT HOUSE NOT FOUND - DEMOLISHED OR MOVED</p>
<p>20 E Junipero</p> <p>Model House No. 4</p> <p>1926 campaign</p> <p>6-room frame house</p> <p>Plan #62 Community Arts Association - C Kruegl</p> <p>City Landmark or SOM? N</p>		
<p>1727 San Andres</p> <p>Model House A</p> <p>1926 Campaign</p> <p>Five-room stucco House</p> <p>City Landmark or SOM? N</p>		

1714 Mountain View Avenue Model House B 1926 Campaign 4-room stucco house City Landmark or SOM? N	 
121 Calle Granada Model House C 5-room Stucco house City Landmark or SOM? N	 
316 Salinas St Model House D "La Casita" 4-room house Plan #2- Community Arts Association - William Peck City Landmark or SOM? N	 
1819 Robbins Model House E "The House Built by Salvage" 5-room house frame house City Landmark or SOM? N	 <p>DEMONSTRATION HOUSE planned by architectural class at Santa Barbara High School. Associated Charities. Girl Scouts on opening day.</p> <p>CURRENT HOUSE NOT FOUND</p>
3201 Calle Cedro Demonstration House X "The Electrical House" 6-room stucco house City Landmark or SOM? N	<p>NO HISTORIC IMAGE FOUND</p> 



## Appendix D – Extant Better Homes Model Houses, 1927 Campaign, Santa Barbara

<p>912 Olive Street</p> <p>Model House no. 1</p> <p>"The Little Grey House"</p> <p>5-room frame house</p> <p>Plan #61 Community Arts Association - K.D. Church</p> <p>City Landmark or SOM? N</p>	 <p>House No. 1, Santa Barbara, California, built complete, with garage, for \$4,327. This house received a special prize in the Small House Competition which was held as a part of the Better Homes campaign in Santa Barbara.</p>	
<p>205 E Canon Perdido (209 E Canon Perdido)</p> <p>Model house no. 2</p> <p>"The Garden Studio"</p> <p>3-room studio house, board and batten</p> <p>City Landmark or SOM? N</p>	 <p>DEMONSTRATION HOUSE NO. 2 — 205 W. CANON PERDIDO STREET Entrance 914 Santa Barbara Street "THE GARDEN STUDIO"</p>	
<p>2011 Gillespie</p> <p>Model House no. 3</p> <p>4-room house with attached garage</p> <p>City Landmark or SOM? N</p>	<p>NO HISTORIC IMAGE FOUND</p>	
<p>1838 San Andres</p> <p>"Girl Scout House"</p> <p>Model House No. 4</p> <p>City Landmark or SOM? Y -City Landmark</p>	 <p>The Girl Scouts of Santa Barbara learn home making in this cozy cottage. Demonstrations of home making activities were given here during Better Homes Week.</p>	
<p>1117 E Cota</p> <p>Model House no. 5</p> <p>4 room house, board and batten</p> <p>Plan #61 Community Arts Association - K.D. Church</p> <p>City Landmark or SOM? N</p>	 <p>FIRST PRIZE, SMALL-HOUSE COMPETITION Four-room class; it is of wood</p>	

<p>1324 Garden</p> <p>"Casa del Jardin"</p> <p>Model House no. 6</p> <p>3-room apartment, stucco</p> <p>Plan #53 Community Arts Association -Frederick Eastman</p> <p>City Landmark or SOM? N</p>	<p>NO HISTORIC IMAGE FOUND</p>	
<p>116 E Padre</p> <p>Model House no. 7</p> <p>6-room house, remodeled from old barn</p> <p>Designed by Soule, Murphy and Hastings</p> <p>City Landmark or SOM? N</p>	 <p>HOUSE REMODELED FROM OLD BARN AFTER STYLE OF SPANISH FARM HOUSE. SOULE, MURPHY AND HASTINGS, ARCHITECTS.</p>	
<p>20 East fifth (Quinto)</p> <p>Model House no. 8</p> <p>7-room house, hollow tile and stucco</p> <p>Designed by Joseph J. Plunkett (may have used plan #34 - Community Arts Association - J.R. Daniels)</p> <p>City Landmark or SOM? N</p>		
<p>19 Puesta del sol</p> <p>Model House no. 9</p> <p>5-room house, hollow tile and stucco</p> <p>City Landmark or SOM? N</p>	<p>NO HISTORIC IMAGE FOUND</p>	<p>HOUSE NOT FOUND</p>
<p>1217 N Salsipuedes St</p> <p>Model House A</p> <p>6-room house</p> <p>"Hilltop"</p> <p>Designed by Leonard Cooke</p> <p>City Landmark or SOM? N</p>	 <p>DEMONSTRATION HOUSE NO. A — 1217 SALSIPUEDES STREET "HILLTOP"</p>	



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