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ENGLISH AND AMERICAN COTTAGES, 1795-1855
A STUDY IN ARCHITECTURAL THEORY AND THE SOCIAL ORDER

BY
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A thesis submitted to the Faculty of the University of Delaware in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts in Early American Culture.

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This essay began as an attempt to trace the origins of the American cottage at 1850 to a seemingly logical source, the numerous English books of the same subject published between 1795 and 1835. Certain it is that in the eighteenth century architectural forms and ideas migrated across the Atlantic Ocean in this manner. "Mount Airy," (begun 1758) built in Richmond County, Virginia under the direction of John Ariss, is a notable example. For this design Ariss based the elevation of the north facade on a plate from William Adam's *Vitruvius Scoticus* (1750), and the south on a plate from James Gibbs' *Book of Architecture* (1728). Numerous similar examples of reliance on English design books have furthered our understanding of the early practice of architecture in this country and have illustrated the colonial dependence on England in matters of the fine arts.

Working in the nineteenth century and using such indicators of English books available in America as the auction catalogue of Ithiel Town's library, I sought to document specific instances of this continuing pattern. A comparison of English and American cottages did indeed reveal some expected similarities: smallness in size, location on a rural site, and origins in the picturesque tradition. But further study suggested that I was starting from the wrong
premise and asking of my material the wrong questions.

Far more important than the similarities were the differences between cottages in these two countries. In England the cottage movement was primarily an attempt by the landed gentry to improve the houses of the agricultural population. Landless, dependent, and living in what Doctor Johnson called mean habitations, cottagers occupied the lowest rung of England's social and economic ladder. Edmund Bartell thus defined the cottage as "a house of small dimensions, appropriate to the use of the lower classes of people." Indeed, the term "cottage" originated in medieval France and was associated with a system of feudal law based upon land tenure. In its origins, and certainly in English practice, the cottage was an integral component of the class structure.

In the United States, in contrast, the cottage became the home of the middle class family, and architects addressed their writings to those persons building or improving their own houses. Andrew Jackson Downing, foremost among architectural writers at mid-century, defined the cottage as "a dwelling of small size, intended for the occupation of a family, either wholly managing the household cares itself, or at the most, with the assistance of one or two servants." Unsurprisingly, American cottages rarely resembled their English prototypes. What is surprising is the degree to which books about cottages published in each country serve as baro-
meters of their respective social structures and societal values.

Historians of architecture have generally avoided study of the cottage by relegating it to the status of minor architecture. The thesis herein presented, however, is that the cottage, in both England and America, deserves more serious attention. In applying the precepts of picturesque theory to architecture, the cottage contributed to the breakdown of the Palladian notion of absolute laws of beauty and the universal application of fixed architectural principles. At another level, the English cottage represents the first major attempt by professional architects to improve the housing of the laboring class, and in their writings these men reveal a variety of social attitudes underlying the attempts to improve rural housing. The American cottage breaks with the eighteenth-century practice of large-scale borrowing or copying from English design books, perhaps primarily because of the different class of people for which it was designed. Finally, in this as in all architectural studies, the cottage should serve as a mirror in which the people of a nation reflect their social and cultural ideals.

This essay is the beginning of a larger study. Because of the constraints of time, no attempt has been made to demonstrate how the theories discussed are implemented by persons building their own houses. This is the next area.
which the architectural historian might profitably investigate. Nonetheless, my research has ranged far beyond the traditional limits of architectural theory, and my conclusions will doubtless seem suspect to some readers. I hope, however, that this essay will generate a more careful look at the cottage books, and suggest an alternative approach to the study of architectural and social history.

Every historian welcomes the opportunity to acknowledge the many persons and institutions that have contributed to his scholarly endeavors. Among the libraries which have generously shared their collections with me, I am especially indebted to the Avery Architectural Library, Columbia University; Morris Library, the University of Delaware; Wilson Library, the University of North Carolina; and the Library of Congress. Most of the research essential to this thesis was undertaken at the libraries of the Henry Francis Du Pont Winterthur Museum. There the staff, especially Frank H. Sommer III, Helen R. Belknap, and Nancy C. Schrock, provided in addition to their warm hospitality, friendship, and guidance, a marvelous situation in which to work. Words fail to express the loss which I personally, and all Winterthur fellows share, in the recent death of Miss Belknap. Her warm kindness and assistance meant so much to us, and her strength and courage was a model for us all. Many scholars have taken the time to respond to my
inquiries, including Donald Sutherland Lyall of London's Architectural Press, and Charles Beveridge of Washington, D. C. My thinking on a number of topics discussed in this thesis has benefitted from the incisive questions raised by Professor John Kasson of the University of North Carolina. At Winterthur I enjoyed the comaraderie of fellow students and scholars who have likewise contributed to this study, most notably Frank Sommer, Kenneth Ames, and Larry Gobrecht. As Coordinator of the Winterthur Program, Professor James C. Curtis provided much encouragement and friendly guidance. His careful reading of the manuscript has helped to improve it in several ways.

George B. Tatum advised this thesis, but such words hardly describe his contributions to a young student and his scholarly growth. From the beginning I had the good fortune of his advice, which saved me from many errors, and in the process of writing I came to rely on his deft editorial skills. Professor Tatum generously set aside time from his own sabbatical leave to answer my questions and read manuscript drafts, a courtesy for which I shall ever remain grateful. His encouragement and warm friendship made writing this thesis a genuine pleasure.

Finally, I am indebted to my family and the many friends who have encouraged my devotion to the study of history. Without their assistance and understanding, writing this thesis would have been impossible.
NOTES TO INTRODUCTION


3 The Oxford English Dictionary, II, 1042.

IL L U S T R A T IO N S


3. A house suitable for an artist's residence, in the Italian style, from J. B. Papworth's Rural Residences.

4. (a) A plate from Francis Goodwin's Rural Architecture, upon which Downing seems to have based the design for his own house.
    (b) Downing's Newburgh villa, from his first book, A Treatise on the Theory and Practice of Landscape Gardening, Adapted to North America.

5. A plate showing some of the improvements in home conveniences, from Catherine Esther Beecher's Treatise on Domestic Economy.
PART I: ENGLAND, 1795-1835

The years between 1795 and 1835 witnessed the publication of about fifty architectural books that can be loosely related by a common theme, the cottage. Almost invariably written and illustrated by trained architects, and displaying various styles and treatments of buildings, these books represented a major new trend in architecture and architectural-book publishing. At least half of the cottage books were issued in serial form, a practice that minimized initial production costs and protected the publisher from further losses should the book prove unpopular. After 1818, the plates in these books were frequently aquatints or lithographs, printing processes that gradually replaced engraving as the preferred media for architectural illustrations in the nineteenth century.¹

Books devoted to cottages were the first of the new pattern books to have wide distribution and influence. Earlier architectural books had been of two types: handsome publications such as Colen Campbell's *Vitruvius Britannicus* (1715 and thereafter), which were composed of a text devoted to architectural theory and illustrated with views of great houses; and builders' guides, such as Batty Langley's *Builder's Director* (1751), which stressed structural tech-
niques and were largely composed of plates of the classical orders and other decorative details, intended principally for the craftsman. In contrast, the pattern book presented the complete house in its landscape setting, usually accompanied by a discussion of architectural principles aimed at assisting the client in selecting the style of building most suitable for his own needs.

Interest in the English cottage after 1795 is generally considered an expression of the dominant aesthetic movement of the late eighteenth century, the picturesque. This has a certain validity, for the cottages appearing on the English countryside—rough in material and construction, irregular in outline, and varied in appearance—did seem to conform to the rules of painterly composition. These explanations parallel the two most frequent definitions of the picturesque, one made popular by Sir Uvedale Price in his Essay on the Picturesque (1794), the other to be found in the origins of the Italian "pittoresco," literally meaning after the manner of painting.

The interest in things picturesque was also a logical culmination of the major aesthetic development of the eighteenth century, the breakdown of the formal garden. To this end English philosophers and aestheticians of the eighteenth century had made several investigations into the
nature of beauty and sublimity, first clearly expressed in Edmund Burke's *Philosophical Enquiry into the Origin of Our Ideas of the Sublime and Beautiful* (1756). Burke divided aesthetic theory according to fundamental human instincts, self-propagation (the beautiful) and self-preservation (the sublime). Thus beautiful objects are those associated with emotions of love—forms, in short, which are smooth, regular, and characterized by gradual variation. According to Burke, beautiful things are small and delicate, having clear and mild coloring. The sublime, in contrast, gives rise to such emotions as pain, fear, and terror, and is associated with things possessing vastness, distance, and privation. Following the advice of the poet William Shenstone, who most clearly articulated the dependence of the landscape gardener on the landscape painter, Burke and others associated beauty and sublimity with seventeenth-century styles of painting. Like the canvasses of Claude Lorrain and Gaspar Poussin, the beautiful in its purest and most elegant forms is characterized by graceful, flowing lines and an idealization of nature. In contrast, the paintings of Salvator Rosa, demonstrating a wild and vigorous imagination, depict the violent and rugged landscape of the sublime.

As early as 1764, William Shenstone pointed out that Burke's aesthetic system contained a serious flaw, its
failure to account for objects occupying the middle ground between the extremes of beauty and sublimity. In his "Unconnected Thoughts on Gardening" the poet noted:

Garden-Scenes may perhaps be divided into the sublime, the beautifull [sic], and the melancholy or pensive; to which last I know not but we may assign as a middle place betwix the former two, as being in some sort composed of both. 5

Recognition of the fallacy in Burke's system led to the creation of a third aesthetic category, the picturesque. William Gilpin, who popularized picturesque tours through the hill country, defined this as "a term expressive of that peculiar kind of beauty, which is agreeable in a picture." 6 Gilpin thus created a distinction between objects of natural beauty and those suitable for a painter's canvas, for according to his definition both sublime and beautiful forms could be picturesque. 7

Perhaps because of the discussions generated by Gilpin's popular writings, three influential books devoted to a theory of the picturesque were published in the last decade of the eighteenth century, Richard Payne Knight's poem The Landscape (1794), Sir Uvedale Price's Essay on the Picturesque (1794), and Humphry Repton's Sketches and Hints on Landscape Gardening (1795). These books, and especially Price's Essay, established the picturesque as a third major aesthetic category, complementing the beautiful and the sub-
lime. Price admitted the importance of Burke's *Philosophical Enquiry* to his own thinking but felt that its two categories excluded many objects. His *Essay* attempted to show that "the picturesque has a character not less separate and distinct than either the sublime or the beautiful, nor less independent of the art of painting." Thus the picturesque, characterized by variety ("without which even beauty itself soon ceases to please") and intricacy ("that disposition of objects which, by a partial and uncertain concealment, excites and nourishes curiosity") would occupy the station between beauty and sublimity. If smoothness, regularity, and gradual variation were the characteristics of the beautiful, Price reasoned that roughness, irregularity, and sudden variation were attributes of the picturesque.

Like Price, Richard Payne Knight was a wealthy landowner in west country England, more interested in aesthetic theory than in the practice of landscape gardening. In his didactic poem *The Landscape* Knight expressed a similar interpretation of the picturesque, arguing that the landscape design should model as closely as possible the canvas of the landscape painter. Knight particularly favored the paintings of Claude Lorrain, whom he called "Nature's own pupil, fav'rite child of taste." Because he found the landscape composed solely of smoothness, regularity, and gradual variation to be insipid and monotonous, Knight devoted lengthy
passages of this work to a critique of Lancelot (Capability) Brown and his followers.

The publication of this attack on Brown and the practice of landscape gardening led Humphry Repton to defend his predecessor and his profession. A country gentleman, Repton had turned to landscape gardening in 1788, attempting to fill the void left by Brown's death five years earlier. Upon the publication of The Landscape and the Essay on the Picturesque, Brown quickly fashioned a reply, adding a lengthy footnote to chapter seven and an appendix to his Sketches and Hints on Landscape Gardening. Rejecting the notion that every country gentleman should make the knowledge of landscape gardening part of his education, Repton stressed the importance of professionalism in his work. Aware of the difficulties inherent in translating a pleasant picture into a garden, he emphasized the difference between theory and practice. In this Repton argued for utility instead of the pictorial approach of amateur theorists like Price and Knight.  

Another important development contributing to the interest in things picturesque was the denial of absolute standards of beauty. In his Philosophical Enquiry Burke rightfully asserted that genius rather than reason was the true source of creativity. But Burke had employed a Lockean
sensationist theory of perception, claiming that we perceive beauty strictly through the senses. By the 1780s this belief was widely challenged. Sir Joshua Reynolds, president of the Royal Academy, addressed this question in a discourse with his students in 1786. Believing that the great end of art was "to make an impression on the imagination and feeling," Reynolds asserted that the first principle of art would be "that of affecting the imagination by means of association of ideas." 

The most articulate critique of Burke's theory of perception was Archibald Alison's *Essay on the Nature and Principles of Taste* (1790). Like Reynolds, Alison added a psychological dimension to perception, the associational response to aesthetic experience. Denying absolute standards of beauty, an idea promulgated by Anthony Ashley Cooper, third Earl of Shaftesbury, and widely accepted by the architects of the neo-Palladian circle, Alison instead argued that what we judge to be beautiful is conditioned by our own experience. Objects are beautiful or sublime because of the thoughts and associations they evoke in the spectator's mind: "MATTER is not beautiful in itself, without reference to MIND," he wrote, claiming that "Beauty arises from the Expressions which an intelligent Mind connects with, and perceives in it." This idea influenced both Knight and Price and must be considered one of the cornerstones of
picturesque theory.

The assertion that beauty is evoked by associations made in the spectator's mind complemented the growing interest in the landscape and in turn influenced architects concerned with cottage design. In advocating fuller use of associations in the arts, Reynolds noted that "Variety and intricacy are beauties and excellencies in every other of the arts which address the imagination: and why not in architecture?" Four years after the publication of his Essay on the Picturesque, Price added An Essay on Architecture. For Price

the architect of buildings in this country should be an architetto-pittore, for indeed he ought not only to have the mind, but the hand of the painter; not only to be acquainted with the principles, but as far as design goes, with the practice of landscape design.

This unity of architecture and the landscape was, to Price, the single most important requirement of good design. His belief that the building should be conceived in accordance with the landscape adapts to architecture Alexander Pope's injunction to consult the genius of the place. In this the eighteenth century reversed the Renaissance practice of making the garden conform to architecture.

That the house and garden should be united in a single composition was especially important for the cottage movement, for these buildings were often thought of as
embellishments for the English garden. Moreover, landscape gardening and architecture had become highly interdependent. Beginning with "Capability" Brown, who himself designed several houses and who later worked in collaboration with Henry Holland, landscape gardeners often extended their practice to include architecture. Repton established a partnership first with the architect John Nash and later with his son John Adey Repton, who had apprenticed in Nash's office. Most authors of cottage books followed the practice of designing their buildings in conjunction with the landscape, and John Claudius Loudon, the only important cottage author who was a landscape gardener rather than a professional architect, was the most prolific and often the most sensible writer on the subject. Similarly, the most important American author of cottage books, Andrew Jackson Downing, was a landscape gardener who only established an architectural practice after the publication of several books relating the house to the garden.

As applied to architecture, picturesque theory established the principles of irregularity (an alternative to symmetry), variety, and intricacy; a sense of movement based upon the works of John Vanbrugh, whom Price called an architect with a painter's eye; and especially in cottage architecture, the use of rough building materials to achieve
contrast. To Reynolds' assertion that variety and intricacy were essential to architecture, Price added an enthusiasm for irregularity. For him, the picturesque would be created "by the accumulation of unequal and, at least apparently irregular forms, and the intricacy of their disposition." The writings of Humphry Repton forcefully argued for considerations of utility, fitness, and convenience, criteria that had been abandoned in favor of rigid symmetry by the neo-Palladians. The expression of picturesque theory in cottage design thus represents what Emil Kaufmann has called the final aesthetic assault on Baroque regularity. In his opinion, the cottage "visualizes the struggle for [architectural] freedom which had begun with Vanbrugh's dramatic protest against traditional formality."  

This interest in things picturesque was no doubt influenced by the complex of intellectual currents that formed the aesthetic movement usually called Romanticism and the philosophical movement known as the Enlightenment. These ideas may be discerned in the traditional explanations historians offer in describing the cottage movement. Though discussing the cottage only in passing in Architecture in Britain 1530-1830, Sir John Summerson suggests three reasons for its development in the late eighteenth century: an interest in the primitive hut, an idea related to the
Enlightenment fascination with the noble savage; interest in English vernacular architecture; and the popularity of traditional Italian architecture, especially as depicted in the seventeenth-century landscape paintings so admired by Price and Knight.26

The concept of the primitive hut was cogently explained and popularized by Abbe Marc Antoine Laugier’s *Essai sur L’Architecture* (1753). Though largely a discussion of the classical style, Laugier’s *Essai* traced the development of architecture from its earliest beginnings. Beside the banks of a flowing stream, in a remarkably pastoral environment, the first man faced the problem of devising adequate shelter. Because of excessive heat he was driven first to the cool forest and then, because of rain, to a cave. Darkness and disagreeable air made the cave unsuitable as a permanent habitat, and primitive man then sought a shelter that could provide protection from the elements without confinement to a dark, noxious area. Following the example of nature, the first man then fashioned a hut from the branches of trees (fig. 1), establishing the model upon which all subsequent architecture was based.27

Like Laugier and, of course, the source books of Burlingtonian classicism—Marcus Vitruvius Pollio’s *Ten Books of Architecture* and Andrea Palladio’s *Four Books of*
Architecture—Sir William Chambers included in his *Treatise on Civil Architecture* (1759) a discussion of the origins of building. According to Chambers, man progressed from the garden to caves (he called them caverns in rocks) and then was driven by darkness and dampness to seek more wholesome habitations. Following the advice of nature, primitive man fashioned the first hut, a rude conical shelter of boughs.  

In addition to an interest in the remote origins of architecture, the primitive hut represented the widespread eighteenth-century interest in the innocent primal man. Jean-Jacques Rousseau, for example, discussed and popularized the concept of the noble savage as predecessor of civilized man.  

The presence of American Indians, occasional visitors to European courts, doubtless strengthened this fascination with uncivilized peoples. So persuasive were these arguments that contemporary men often conceived of the European peasant in terms of primal man. Nathaniel Kent's *Hints to Gentlemen of Landed Property* (1775) echoed Rousseau's sentiments and drew a comparison between primitive man and the English cottager: "Cottagers are indisputably the most beneficial race of people we have: they are bred up in greater simplicity, live more primitive lives, and are more free from vice and debauchery, than any other set of men from the lower orders."
A second factor contributing to the popularity of the cottage was an interest in English vernacular architecture, especially the Gothic. Although some notable historians date the revived interest in the Gothic to the middle of the eighteenth century, B. Sprague Allen has convincingly demonstrated a persistent antiquarian interest in the Gothic, perhaps expressing a revolt against the rigid symmetry of neoclassicism, for at least a century before 1750. Manifestations of the Gothic, first in literature and sham ruins placed in the garden, then spread to more monumental forms of architecture. The popularity of Horace Walpole's Strawberry Hill (altered 1750-1753 and later) also contributed to the style's rediscovery among fashionable circles. While using medieval details in a whimsical, decorative manner, Strawberry Hill anticipated the picturesque principle of architectural irregularity.

In his thirteenth discourse Sir Joshua Reynolds linked the Gothic with associations of England's historic past. "As we have naturally a veneration for antiquity," he wrote, "whatever building brings to our remembrance ancient customs and manners, such as the castles of the Barons of ancient chivalry, is sure to give this delight." Because it was less concerned with absolute truths and beauties, Reynolds believed that the Gothic style was more suitable than the Greek for the English imagination. And, as Price noted,
the Gothic was valuable as an expression of the picturesque.\textsuperscript{35}

In the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, interest in the Gothic was significant but largely received only the scorn of the Royal Academy. Gradually its acceptance increased. One spectacular monument to the revived interest in medieval styles was William Beckford’s Fonthill Abbey (1796-1807), designed by James Wyatt; others were L. N. Cottingham’s restoration of the Chapel of Henry VII at Westminster and the restoration of Windsor Castle by Sir Jeffrey Wyattville. Important but less impressive were the seventy-four Gothic churches constructed by the Commissioners of the Church Building Act between 1818 and 1833.\textsuperscript{36} When fire consumed the Old Palace at Westminster in 1834, advocates of the Gothic successfully urged the building commissioners to recognize the Tudor Gothic as England’s own.\textsuperscript{37}

Many of the cottage books published after 1795 contributed to the belief that the Tudor style was somehow distinctly English, as indeed it was. Among the first books devoted to designs for cottages, two works emerge as especially important, James Waltoin’s \textit{Essay on British Cottage Architecture} (1798) and William Atkinson’s \textit{Views of Picturesque Cottages with Plans} (1805). Walton’s book, the first to illustrate cottages similar to those dotting the English rural landscape, stimulated interest in early vernacular
structures (fig. 2). Atkinson's Views included a number of designs for thatched cottages and small country houses of this type. Later books also pursued the theme of the old English cottage, including J. B. Papworth's Rural Residences (1818), P. F. Robinson's Rural Architecture (1823), Francis Goodwin's Rural Architecture (1835), S. H. Brooks' Cottage and Villa Architecture (n.d.), and in part the writings of T. F. Hunt and T. J. Ricanti.

A third factor contributing to the popularity of the cottage was the interest in Italian vernacular architecture, especially as depicted in seventeenth-century landscape painting. Elizabeth Kanwaring has documented the persistent importance of the Italian landscape for eighteenth-century English thought, discussing in particular the influence of Claude and Poussin. Reynolds' Discourses, Price's Essays, and Knight's Analytical Inquiry into the Principles of Taste (1805) all point out the relationship of Claude and Poussin to the English picturesque, primarily in terms of a painterly approach to landscape and secondarily in terms of the picturesque in architecture. From their paintings Knight acquired an appreciation for Italian vernacular architecture and the belief that the style was especially suitable for England. "The best style for irregular and picturesque houses," he wrote, "is that mixed style, which characterizes the buildings of Claude and the Poussins." An early product
of this interest in the Italianate was John Nash's design for Cronchhill (1802), which, Summerson believes, was derived from the types of buildings incorporated in Claude's landscapes.\

Cottage architects adopted the Italianate style primarily because of its irregularity and for what Francis Goodwin called its "breadth of effect." \(^{42}\) Edmund Aiken published one of the first designs for an asymmetrical, Italianate type of house (though he failed to identify it as such) as plates 14 and 15 of his *Designs for Villas and Other Rural Buildings* (1808). Ten years later J. B. Papworth published a design for an artist's residence that clearly and effectively adapted the Italianate style to the more picturesque parts of England.\(^{43}\) Papworth's commentary appropriately discussed the importance of landscape painting to his own artistic conception: in his opinion, "Calude Lorrain, Poussin, and other celebrated landscape-painters of the seventeenth century, introduced forms of buildings in their compositions that were well suited to the poetic feeling obvious in the works of those great masters." \(^{43}\) Francis Goodwin, for his part, favored the Italianate because of its irregularity, which "admits abundant internal arrangements, and convenient accommodations on every floor." \(^{44}\)

Other advocates of the Italian vernacular style in-
eluded T. F. Hunt, whose *Architettura Campestre* (1827) presented designs for buildings with flat roofs and overhanging eaves, campaniles, and arcades; P. F. Robinson, whose *Designs for Farm Buildings* (1830) included old English, Swiss, rustic, and Italian styles; and Charles Parker, who published *Villa Rustica* in 1832. The "painter-like effect" of the Italianate also received the attention of John Claudius Loudon, and his compendious *Encyclopedia of Cottage, Farm, and Villa Architecture and Furniture* (1833) contained numerous designs of this type. In addition, Loudon published an abstract of G. L. Meason's treatise on the Italianate style and a lengthy discussion of villa design by Robert Mallet and E. B. Lamb. His *Architectural Magazine* (1834-1838) also featured a series on "The Poetry of Architecture," written under the pseudonym Kata Phusin ("According to Nature") by the youthful John Ruskin, that explored this style at some length.

Though an interest in the primitive hut, in medieval English architecture, and in the Italianate contributed to the rediscovery of the cottage, these reasons do not entirely explain the popularity enjoyed by dwellings of this kind between 1795 and 1835. It is impossible to understand the development of the cottage apart from the changing social conditions in England during these years. Indeed, a careful reading of the cottage books reveals that
this first major effort by professional architects to improve the housing of the laboring class was, at least in part, an attempt to maintain the disintegrating social order of rural England.

An interest in cottages and the complexion of rural life existed before 1795, though it was not expressed in architectural books. The rural scene was changing, and Oliver Goldsmith's "The Deserted Village" (1769) expressed longing for the passing of an agrarian way of life: "E'en now, methinks, as pondering here I stand/I see the rural virtues leave the land." Less interested in looking back to a mythical golden age, George Crabbe's "The Village" (1783) attempted to portray realistically the hardships of rural life: "No longer truth, though shown in verse, disdain,/But own the Village Life a life of pain." Indeed, Crabbe's writings, in depicting the squalor of cottage life, did much to awaken an interest in architectural reform: "By such examples taught, I paint the Cot,/As Truth will paint it, and as Bards will not." The agriculturist Nathaniel Kent also painted a disheartening portrait of cottage life: "The shattered hovels which half the poor of this kingdom are obliged to put up with," he wrote, "is truly affecting to a heart fraught with humanity. Those who condescend to visit these miserable tenements, can testify, that neither health
or decency can be preserved in them.⁵⁰ By the 1790s, however, comments of this kind helped draw the attention of the landed proprietor to the conditions of the laborers working on his estate. At the same time the new books that featured designs for cottages offered suggestions on how architecture might alleviate these problems.

Cottagers had traditionally occupied the lowest levels of English society. Gregory King's analysis of social structure in 1688 grouped cottagers and paupers together, comprising the largest segment of the population. With an average annual income of £2.0.0 and expenses of £2.5.0 per head, cottagers lived in a state of abject poverty.⁵¹ In his study of pre-industrial England, Peter Laslett describes the cottager in terms of his livelihood: "Getting a living where you, you and your whole family, could make one, and wringing all that was possible out of the land which might be attached to the hovel you lived in."⁵²

The decline of the open-field system and the subsequent enclosure of common lands further undermined the economy of the rural poor. Though enclosure began in the late Middle Ages, its greatest period of activity occurred in the years between 1793 and 1815. In that brief span, a significant proportion of England's arable land was enclosed.⁵³ Enclosure was instituted to improve agricultural efficiency, a response...
to industrialization and the need to increase crop productivity in order to feed the growing urban population. Landed proprietors were the primary beneficiaries of the system, the landless poor its victims. Enclosure forced cottagers to rent lands they formerly tilled by traditional rights; by abrogating these common-land rights, enclosure increased the dependence of the cottager on the landed proprietor and intensified his impoverished state.\textsuperscript{54}

Together with high rents, the economic recession of the 1790s rendered destitute a large proportion of the agricultural population. The years of the Napoleonic wars (1793-1815) were especially poor for cultivation, and the harvest of 1795 was twenty-five percent below normal. The resulting high price of food was only matched by the rents levied by landowners, and while the agricultural poor suffered, landlords and independent farmers prospered.\textsuperscript{55} Since the poor laws provided assistance for the indigent only in his own parish, few of the peasants affected by enclosure and the recession ventured to other areas in the hope of improving their condition.\textsuperscript{56} To make matters worse, during the famine years 1795-1796, food riots erupted and threatened the social structure of rural England. It was this fear of widespread rebellion and of the breakdown of the social order that helped revive interest in the cottage as an architectural form. To avert such uprisings in the future, proponents of
reform advocated improving the houses of the rural poor and allocating to each cottager a small plot of land for cultivation.

The French Revolution also contributed to the climate of opinion favoring rural improvement. As Frances, Lady Shelley recorded in her diary, "the awakening of the labouring classes, after the first shock of the French Revolution, made the upper classes tremble." Cries of liberty and equality, Anglicized in Thomas Paine's incendiary tract "The Rights of Man" (1791), challenged the foundations of the English social order. For peasants, starving while landowners prospered, the appeal doubtless had a special ring. To prevent revolution from migrating across the English Channel, Parliament instituted censorship (banning Paine's writings, for example), prosecuted the leaders of working class organizations, and charged the Board of Agriculture (est. 1793) to study means of eliminating rural discontent.

With the publication of its Communications to the Board of Agriculture in 1797, this latter organization stimulated a general interest in cottage reform. In seven essays its report presented different aspects of cottages and cottage life. These were contributed by such notable figures as the Earl of Winchilsea, by Robert Barclay, a member of
Parliament, and by the architect Henry Holland. In his essay "On Cottages," Robert Beatson wrote in 1797: "There is no subject better entitled to the attention of so respectable an institution as the Board of Agriculture, than the means of accommodating that useful and truly valuable description of persons, the labourers who are employed in husbandry." The following year the Board offered a series of premiums, the first of which took the form of a gold medal to be given the person who would "draw up and produce to the Board, the best, simplest, and most practicable plan for ameliorating the condition of the labouring poor of the kingdom." The next two gold medals sought needed improvements in cottages and cottage life.58 The response to the Board's Communications, judged by the number of cottage books published in its wake, was phenomenal. These early books attempted to reinforce England's social order by eliminating some of the legitimate grievances of the poor. In Hints for Picturesque Improvement in Ornamental Cottages (1804), Edmund Bartell encouraged landowners to improve their estates by attending to the habitations of the poor residing there.60 The following year William Atkinson wrote: "The building of cottages for the labouring classes of society, and the keeping of them in good repair, are objects of the first national importance." Improvements in cottage life, he believed, would "not fail to have a salutary
effect" on the laboring class. The Board of Agriculture's plea for cottage improvements also inspired Joseph Gandy's Designs for Cottages (1805), which the author hoped would insure the stability of society by providing improved houses for the laboring poor. James Randall considered it a patriotic duty for the landowner to "provide comfortable accomodations for his tenants and peasantry," which he defined as "a class of people, nationally considered, of the highest importance, being, as well for numbers as for bodily strength, the country's great support." In addition to advocating that a small plot of land be attached to the cottage for cultivation, a measure first proposed by the Board of Agriculture, William Pocock stressed the philanthropic basis for rural improvement. Since a number of these books mentioned the agricultural board's advocacy of cottage reform, it may readily be inferred that the maintenance of social order was a primary concern in their publication.

After 1812 the number of cottage books published annually declined for a few years. This may partially be attributed to the depression in the London publishing trade. In addition, the passing of the second major food crisis (1809-1812) diverted attention from rural unrest to the continental battlefields of the Napoleonic campaign. But with the onset of nearly twenty years of rural depression in 1814, the flames of cottage reform were kindled with renewed
zeal. In 1816 Richard Elsam published *Hints for Improving the Condition of the Peasantry*, which called attention to their abject poverty and expressed deep concern for the miserable state of their habitations. Two years later J. B. Papworth published *Rural Residences*, which included a number of designs for laborers' cottages that could be rendered healthful and ornamental at trifling cost.

With the depression of the 1820s, social unrest in England intensified and reached threatening proportions. Because of a significant decline in mortality, population was increasing at an annual rate of 1.5 percent, portending demographic disaster. Wages declined and labor cheapened as a commodity, burdening the poor with high rents and taxes, falling prices for agricultural produce, and a critically fluctuating economy. Poor lists soared, and the mortgaging of numerous cottage freeholds resulted in the immigration of industrious cottagers to the United States. In 1829 John Claudius Loudon warned that while England might be safe against any foreign foe, peasant rebellion threatened its internal security. Additional grievances—repressive enforcement of game laws, the growth of rural slums, and the loss of winter employment to the threshing machine—contributed to a laborers' revolt in 1830.

These conditions generated the publication of a
remarkable number of cottage books. A casual survey indicates that at least nineteen such books were published in the decade following 1823. When subsequent editions of these and earlier books are counted, not less than forty cottage books were published during this ten-year span. In J. C. Loudon's *Encyclopedia*, more than half the dwellings to which he ascribes a descriptive name were called "labourer's cottages."

Efforts at cottage improvement took two distinct directions. The first attempted to improve the physical structure. To insure that the cottage would be fit for habitation, the site should be carefully selected to avoid dampness. Specifically, Loudon recommended that cottages have floors raised at least one foot above ground to avoid this problem, and that they be provided with thorough ventilation, adequate fenestration, and improved sanitary facilities. Ample space, convenience, and comfort were also essential considerations.

The second direction in cottage improvement, mentioned only occasionally before the 1820s, was the allocation of plots of land for cultivation by the cottagers. This is perhaps best understood as an attempt to compensate for the ill effects of enclosure without reverting to the open-field, common-land system. In *Rural Residences* Papworth wrote: "Every situation adopted for a cottage should afford to it a
piece of ground for a small garden." Such a measure, he suggested, would prevent idleness from leading the cottager to the alehouse, while the value of the crops would bolster the family's economy. Loudon also recommended that every cottage provide a plot of land for cultivation. The land was necessary, he believed, for growing food, healthful recreation, and the cottager's self-respect. One contributor to the Gardener's Magazine concluded: "Of all the plans recently suggested for improving the condition of the labouring poor, that of supplying them with land at a moderate rent is perhaps the one most likely to accomplish the object in view."?

These attempts to improve agricultural life are noteworthy, but they indicate only a passing interest in fundamental reform. The tenor of Loudon's writing, in particular, is significant, for while referring to the poverty and suffering of the laboring poor, he addressed not the victims of the economic system but the landed gentry. His was an attempt to effect reform by appealing to the philanthropy of the elite. It would serve the landlord's best interest, he wrote, "to encourage whatever will raise and elevate the character of the people who live on his land." But Loudon's was an untenable position, for the very people to whom he appealed were profiting from the exploitation of cottagers. What seems to underlie the cottage movement was the

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desire to maintain the existing social order, for the commitment to reform increased with the threat of peasant rebellion and subsided when those threats passed. Perhaps unwittingly, Loudon revealed the true intent of his efforts:

The depressed state of the agricultural population in England, the consequent pressure of the poor-rates in some places, and the outrages of incendiaries in others, have forced the attention of the landed proprietor to the means of ameliorating, or at least quieting for a time, their territorial populations [my emphasis]. 80

The Sussex Association for Improving the Condition of the Labouring Classes, which actively encouraged such improvements as Loudon described, nonetheless frankly recognized their efforts "merely as palliatives." 81

The year 1832 was critical for English society and essential to our understanding of the cottage movement. The great Parliamentary Reform Act of that year, which eliminated some of the rotten boroughs in industrial centers, is one indication of social and political change. In Loudon's writings, and especially in the pages of the Gardener's Magazine, the interest in cottage reform increased in the late 1820s and crested in 1832. In that year three, four, and sometimes five articles devoted to improving the state of the agricultural population appeared in each issue of the magazine. After 1832 interest in cottages, measured by the contents of the periodical, waned, and few designs

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for cottages or discussions of cottage life appeared in succeeding years. Nor did the subject receive much attention in the pages of Loudon's *Architectural Magazine*, published from 1834 to 1838. Because of the more complex process of publication, cottage books were slower to respond to the trend, but after 1833 the number of such books declined. The most important new book, Francis Goodwin's *Rural Architecture* (1835), was largely devoted to designs for extensive villas and attended only in passing to the need for cottages. And while a few books were reprinted in 1835 and in succeeding years, the heyday of the cottage movement clearly had passed.

Beginning in the winter of 1831 and extending through 1832, England experienced the first and most devastating cholera epidemic in its history. With the outbreak of the disease, Utilitarian reformers led by Jeremy Bentham and John Stuart Mill intensified their efforts to improve the quality of life, particularly in London. While that city's population had doubled in the first four decades of the nineteenth century, few residential units were added to house the increased numbers. Already overcrowded, London suffered from contaminated water supplies and inadequate sanitary facilities. Public health was further undermined by pollution, impure food, and the typical manifestations of the industrial city. To remedy these problems,
Edwin Chadwick proposed a comprehensive system of sanitary improvement and Parliament appointed a Select Committee on Public Walks. Concluding in 1833 that open spaces were essential to the maintenance of public health, the committee recommended that every town, village and city in the kingdom establish a public park or garden.

John Claudius Loudon was also alarmed over the cholera epidemic, and in addition to advocating large "breathing places" in cities and towns, he addressed a plea for cottage improvement in the language of the epidemic. Echoing the miasma theory of disease, which as the Select Committee's report indicates enjoyed wide currency in the nineteenth century, Loudon wrote:

Within the last six months the alarm occasioned by the cholera has caused increased attention to be given to the subject of comfortable cottages for agricultural labourers, and that of the condition of the poor generally; cleanliness, warmth, proper ventilation, and wholesome food being found the best preventives of that disease.

But this interest in reform was only temporary, subsiding with the wave of disease and suffering. The declining importance of the cottage after 1833 was paralleled by the failure to implement proposed Utilitarian reforms. The recommendations of the Select Committee on Public Walks, for example, were largely ignored, and urban conditions continued to deteriorate until the second cholera epidemic of 1848-1849 galvanized a renewed interest in reform. The
epidemic did serve to alleviate the oversupply of population that had depressed agricultural and industrial wages, and the threat of revolt by the peasantry and the urban poor vanished in the wake of the disease. The result, in terms of this study, was the decline of cottage book publication as an important aspect of England's architectural and social history.

The desire to improve the cottages of the agricultural population never completely died, of course. A number of cottage books continued to be published after 1833, and when the Builder commenced publication in 1842, it presented numerous designs for model cottages. The Poor Law Commission prepared a report on the sanitary conditions of the laboring population that decried the abundance of substandard housing and advocated specific improvements. Prince Albert took a personal interest in the condition of the laboring class after the second cholera epidemic, and at the Crystal Palace exhibition of 1851 he displayed model cottages for the industrial worker. He also rebuilt the cottages of the agricultural laborers at Windsor Castle. Compared with the intensity of interest in cottage improvements between the years 1795 and 1833, however, reformist efforts in these later years were sporadic and lacked the messianic fervor of earlier writings.
The emergence of the cottage as a distinct form represents the application of the picturesque principles of fitness, irregularity, and convenience to architecture. Drawing upon the concepts of the primitive hut and vernacular architecture in England and Italy, cottage architects after 1795 designed a substantial number of houses for agricultural laborers. Moreover, the cottage movement contributed to the acceptance of the Tudor Gothic as England's national style. But the cottage cannot be understood apart from contemporary social movements. It was no coincidence that the concentration of books about cottages appeared in the years following 1795, a period of social dislocation initiated by enclosure, an agricultural recession, and the reverberations of the French Revolution. Similarly, the concentration of books published during the years 1823-1833 coincided with widespread discontent, culminating in class riots in 1830 and the cholera epidemic of 1831-1832. To be understood, the origins of the cottage movement must be considered in conjunction with England's changing social and economic conditions. Indeed, the language of the cottage books themselves is explicit: conceived in times of social disorder, this movement attempted to preserve the deteriorating social structure of rural England.
PART II: THE UNITED STATES, 1835-1855

Manifestations of the English cottage begin to appear in the United States in the 1830s and persist throughout the nineteenth century. For a number of reasons, however, the American cottage developed in a manner quite different from its English predecessor.

Essential to our understanding of the American cottage is the strong sense of autonomy and cultural nationalism implicit in the texts of cottage books. The cottage appeared in the United States at the time when its literary and artistic leaders were redefining the importance of the physical environment in terms of the quest for a national culture. Since their founding, the American colonies had relied upon European ideas and leadership in the arts, and second-rate immigrant artists were generally more competent than their native pupils. Having made the grand tour of the European continent, Americans often returned to their native land and there copied the lifestyles of their English counterparts.

If the example of the Puritans is representative, American colonists shared a basic hostility to the natural environment. By the 1830s, however, values had changed and Americans saw in the uniqueness of the new world the oppor-
tunity to loosen the ties of cultural dependence upon the old. In "The American Scholar," Ralph Waldo Emerson proclaimed: "Our day of dependence, our long apprenticeship to the learning of other lands, draws to a close." For him, clearly, the American wilderness would provide the inspiration for artists seeking cultural autonomy: "America is a poem in our eyes; its ample geography dazzles our imagination, and it will not wait long for meters." While Nathaniel Hawthorne jestingly lamented the lack of an historical past and the hoary legends that might provide subjects worthy of the novelist's attention, James Fenimore Cooper found in the wilderness ample evidence of an American heritage. Describing the great pine tree at Lake Otsego, he wrote:

> It is indeed eloquent;...one hears it speak even now of the fierce storms that have whistled round its tops--of the seasons that have passed since it extricated that verdant cap from the throng of sisters that grew beneath it, and of all that has passed on the Otsego, when this limpid lake lay like a gem embedded in the forest. When William the Conqueror first landed in England, this tree stood on the spot where it now stands. Here, then, is at last an American antiquity.

Within the context of Romanticism, American artists and poets sought to explore the aesthetic potential of the New World. Asserting the unity of beauty and virtue, Thomas Cole called the American wilderness an "exhaustless mine"; his friend Asher Brown Durand, whose well-known painting

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"Kindred Spirits" depicts Cole and the poet William Cullen Bryant communing with nature, counseled young artists to "Go not abroad then in search of material for the exercise of your pencils, while the virgin charms of our native land have claims on your deepest affections." The American present, they felt, should replace the European past as a subject worthy of artistic endeavor.

Writers concerned with matters architectural also expressed nationalistic sentiments. By the middle of the century it was generally recognized that America needed to develop a national style of architecture. The foremost architectural writer of his time, Andrew Jackson Downing, wisely pointed out the impossibility of creating such a national style in a vacuum. Explaining to critics his belief that every great architectural style was built upon the lessons of earlier buildings and earlier styles, he asserted that America was "in the midst of what may be called the experimental stage of architectural taste." Though he lamented the absence of a truly national style, Downing was confident one would soon develop, a product of the universal spirit of progress which he saw manifested in the rapid acceptance of such modern improvements as rising closets (dumbwaiters), improved ventilation, indoor plumbing, and new methods of construction. To those persons who despaired the rise of a national taste Downing wrote:
This country is, indeed, too distinct in its institutions, and too vast in its territorial and social destinies, not to shape out for itself a great national type in character, manners, and art; but the development of the finer and more intellectual traits of character are slower in a nation, than they are in a man, and only time can develop them healthily in either case. 9

In the meantime, Downing believed, as did most authors of cottage books, that Americans should borrow forms and designs from European styles and make adaptations necessitated by the different climate and social structure of the new world.10

For his own part, Downing favored the English Gothic cottage, essentially rural and picturesque in character, as especially suitable for "naturalization (with the needful variation of the veranda, &c., demanded by our climate,)" in the new world. The most important factor determining the adaptation of European styles to American houses must be fitness. "In adopting any architectural style for imitation," Downing wrote,

our preference should be guided not only by the intrinsic beauty which we see in a particular style, but by its appropriateness to our uses. This will generally be indicated by the climate, the site or situation, and the wants of the family who are to inhabit it. 11

These unique architectural requirements were also recognized by Calvert Vaux, though he had trained for the profession in his native England. "The study of what has been
done by other nations," he wrote, "though useful as a help, will never, by itself, lead to much result in America, where the institutions, the needs of the climate, and the habits of the people, have a distinct character that requires special consideration." William H. Ranlett, author of The Architect, one of the earliest magazines of its kind published in this country, offered similar advice. While noting that a national style in architecture had not yet developed in America, he cautioned that "in adapting to our own necessities the architectural forms which were originated by other nations, we must, of necessity, so vary them as to give them, to a certain extent, an American expression."^13

Downing's first book devoted principally to architecture, Cottage Residences (1842), included in its title the phrase "Adapted to North America." The double meaning of this phrase, the reliance upon European styles and an impulse toward an American aesthetic, is clearly illustrated by the author's own house, erected at Newburgh, New York in 1838. In what surely must have been his first architectural design, Downing chose the Gothic style, and since there was no significant Gothic tradition in the new world, turned to England for guidance. More specifically, Downing seems to have based the overall elevation of his house on plate 18 (design 10) of Francis Goodwin's Rural Architecture (1835),
while possibly copying other details from this book and from John Claudius Loudon's *Encyclopedia of Cottage, Farm, and Villa Architecture, and Furniture* (1833). When compared to its English models, however, Downing's house appears to have improved the design in the direction of greater simplicity and restraint. The addition of a veranda across the river facade helps to relieve the austerity of the English examples and serves as a mediator between the works of man and nature, bringing the house and garden closer together.

Though the veranda was a feature of little importance in a cool, damp climate like England's, Downing felt it was indispensable for houses in many parts of the United States. In *A Treatise on the Theory and Practice of Landscape Gardening* (1841), he demonstrated how the veranda might well adapt a house to the American climate:

*In this country no architectural feature is more plainly expressive of purpose in our dwelling-houses than the veranda, or piazza. The unclouded splendor and fierce heat of our summer sun, render this very general appendage a source of real comfort and enjoyment; and the long veranda round many of our country residences stands instead of the paved terraces of the English mansions as the place for promenade; while during the warmer portions of the season, half of the days or evenings are there passed in the enjoyment of the cool breezes, secure under the low roofs supported by the open colonnade, from the solar rays, or the dews of night.*

Since the eighteenth century, large porches had graced the
important houses along the Hudson River, and Downing was doubtless influenced by that tradition. But his advocacy of verandas was just as clearly based upon his understanding of the precepts of English picturesque theory. Such a porch provided increased comfort for the family, and since it indicated human habitation and domestic comfort, expressed the building's purpose: "A fine country house, without a porch or covered shelter to the doorway of some kind, is therefore as incomplete to the correct eye, as a well-printed book without a title page." Even for houses of the simplest sort, Downing provided adequate shelter over the doorway. For a house in the southern states, especially, and for all parts of the country with hot summers, he recommended what he liked to call the bracketed style. On houses of this kind, broad projecting roofs cast a shadow over the upper story, thereby increasing the comfort of chamber-level rooms. And if American summers were noticeably hotter than English ones, so too were the winters colder. It was probably due to the severity of the winters that Downing rejected the use of thatched roofs, a particularly picturesque feature of the English cottage, in favor of wooden or slate shingles. To improve insulation he recommended that walls be filled with unfired bricks, and to insure better draught and more efficient retention of heat, suggested the use of interior chimneys. Other authors of cottage
designs and the leading proponent of domesticity, Catherine Beecher, offered similar advice.22

In all these respects, certainly, the cottage represented a basic response to the problem of creating a new culture in a new world. A second factor essential to our understanding of the American cottage is its middle class orientation. In the hope that concerned gentlemen would improve the habitations of the cottagers living on their estates, English books addressed the gentry. The size of the volumes and the frequent use of color illustrations reflects the considerable cost of these books. American cottage books, on the other hand, addressed a middle class audience. Most of these were inexpensive and offered to families of modest means advice on how they might improve their homes or construct suitable new ones, often at what seems to us a trifling cost.

The first house pattern book written by a native American was the series of designs for houses and churches that Alexander Jackson Davis published under the title Rural Residences in 1837. This included several designs that conformed to Downing's definition of the cottage as "a dwelling of modest size, intended for the occupation of a family, either wholly managing the household cares itself, or, at the most, with the assistance of one or two servants."23
As if such a definition did not adequately distinguish American from English cottages, Downing noted that in this country cottages were occupied

not by tenants, dependents, or serfs, as in many parts of Europe, but by industrious and intelligent mechanics and working men, the bone and sinew of the land, who own the ground upon which they stand, build them for their own use, and arrange them to satisfy their own peculiar wants and gratify their own tastes. 24

As an Englishman who had immigrated to the United States to become Downing's architectural partner, Calvert Vaux noted in the preface to his own book, Villas and Cottages (1857), that a high standard of living might easily be attained by working class Americans. Although many of the designs in Villas and Cottages seem extravagant and expensive, Vaux did include detailed plans for cottages and small villas suitable to a workingman's budget. 25

Believing that a modest home was within the reach of any capable and industrious person, the authors of Village and Farm Cottages (1856)—Henry W. Cleaveland, William Backus, and Samuel D. Backus—also addressed their volume to the working man. 26 Another architect who noted the differences between English and American cottages, William H. Ranlett, wrote that in England "the term cottage is confined to the residence of a poor rustic"; in the United States, however, the cottage was the appropriate dwelling for the majority of the people and should be designed, he felt, for the con-
The appearance of the cottage in the United States coincided with the nineteenth-century attempt to enshrine the home as the enclave of familial bliss, a domestic utopia. David Rothman has pointed out that this age "shared an intense faith in the rehabilitative powers of a carefully designed environment," and it was no accident that in the same year that Wiley and Putnam issued the first edition of Downing's *Treatise on Landscape Gardening*, Catherine Esther Beecher published her *Treatise on Domestic Economy*. Central to these and other contemporary examples of prescriptive literature was the role of the family in shaping behavior. Thus Miss Beecher asserted the importance of the family and the domestic environment for American civilization. Her specific concern was the role of women, for in molding character and morality in the household, they would determine America's future greatness. In this women shared the "exulted privilege of extending over the world those blessed influences which are to renovate degraded man." Henceforth women were to be the keepers of democracy's great moral enterprise.

Because she placed such emphasis on the home, Miss Beecher devoted lengthy discussions to its appearance and physical characteristics. One important chapter in the *Treatise on Domestic Economy* was devoted to the design and landscaping of cottages. Beecher believed that the cottage should be a reflection of the family's values and that its appearance should be a symbol of the family's happiness and contentment. She emphasized the importance of creating a space that was both functional and aesthetically pleasing, arguing that the exterior of a cottage should reflect the character of its inhabitants.

Beecher's approach to cottage design was influenced by the ideals of the Romantic movement, which emphasized the importance of nature and simplicity. She recommended using simple materials such as wood and stone, and avoiding unnecessary embellishments. Beecher believed that the cottage should be a place of refuge, a retreat from the world's hustle and bustle. She encouraged her readers to create a space that was both private and inviting, one that would nurture the family's relationship with nature and each other.

Beecher's advice was widely read and influential, and her ideas about cottage design were adopted by many American families. The cottage became a symbol of domestic bliss, a place where families could escape the stresses of urban life and enjoy the tranquility of nature. Beecher's work helped to establish the cottage as a beloved and recognizable symbol of American domesticity, and her ideas continue to influence cottage design today.
offered advice on the construction of houses. "There is no point of domestic economy," she wrote, "which more seriously involves the health and daily comfort of American women, than the proper construction of houses." In her opinion, the internal arrangements of rooms and the proper supply of conveniences were matters of paramount importance. Five particulars demanding the attention of the concerned housewife were: economy of labor, economy of money, economy of health, economy of comfort, and good taste. In addition to her strictures on the importance of convenience and proper ventilation, Miss Beecher suggested such modern improvements as dumbwaiters, indoor privies, and the internal supply of water (fig. 5). Although an importion criterion, the matter of good taste should only be considered after matters of domestic economy and convenience. These ideas Miss Beecher illustrated in a series of designs for cottages and small houses offered to the readers of the Treatise.

In a book published the following year, Downing expanded Miss Beecher's writings on the importance of the domestic environment. In Cottage Residences he expressed the belief that fitness—the adaptation of the home to the individual needs and comforts of the family—should be the primary consideration in architecture. In domestic economy, maximum comfort could be realized.
by having all the apartments arranged with reference to their various uses, and still further by introducing certain labor-saving apparatus to lessen the amount of service required, or to render its performance easy. 36

Among the devices he recommended were the rising closet (or dumbwaiter), the speaking tube, water-closets, and the rotary pump to supply water to the different apartments.37 Like Miss Beecher, Downing felt that only after considering the requirements of convenience and utility should the builders of a home concern themselves with matters of architectural style and ornament.38 Among others who shared this belief in the importance of the domestic environment were the authors of Village and Farm Cottages. Considering the family the foundation of the social order, they believed that the first aims of domestic design should be "convenience, facility in doing the work, and pleasantness of internal aspects and arrangements."39 The well-ordered household would contribute to a more virtuous society.

Soon after the publication of Beecher's Treatise on Domestic Economy, the Hartford, Connecticut clergyman Horace Bushnell devoted a series of sermons to discussions of childhood and the family.40 Because of his own lengthy and anxious wait for true conversion, Bushnell rejected the belief that revivalism and the dramatic religious experience
should be the primary means of extending Christianity. Instead, he believed that the child should grow up a Christian "not remembering the time when he went through a technical [conversion] experience, but seeming rather to have loved what is good from his earliest years." The most important instruments of "Christian Nurture" were the family and the domestic environment. Through the intimacy of the familial bond, Bushnell believed that parents exerted over their children an unconscious influence so powerful as to be an absolute force. This unconscious influence meant that without any proposed control whatever, parents were shaping the character of their children. Thus the family home had to be organized around child-rearing functions. Although Bushnell addressed the question of "Christian Nurture" primarily in theological terms, the intent of his words was translated into secular language in the normative literature of domesticity.

This growing interest in domesticity was a response to what Kirk Jeffrey has called the "sharp disjunction between the private world of the family and larger society." The middle class retreat to the family home, especially in a suburban or rural location, was a response to such changes in American life as urbanization, industrialization, and the altering demographic complexion of the nation. For
many, these changes portended a society far different from the highly local, predominantly agrarian communities of the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. Perceiving, at least, new and disruptive forces in society, this generation of reformers attempted to solidify the family's role as the foundation of the social order. It was this perceived change, and the resulting growth of individualism, that led to Bushnell's attempt to restore the organic nature of the family. In asserting that if homes were more beautiful and comfortable the family would be strengthened as a social institution, Theodore Dwight reinforced in secular terms the intent of Bushnell's arguments. The interest in improving the domestic environment was strengthened by two parallel ideas, the belief in the inherent morality of good architecture, and the belief that architecture should be expressive of individual character. In his Travels in New England and New York (1822), the Congregational minister and Yale president Timothy Dwight observed a direct reciprocal relationship between architecture and morality. The external appearance of the house, he felt, reflected the internal values of its inhabitants. In this context Dwight observed that "uncouth, mean, ragged, dirty houses constituting the body of any town will regularly be accompanied by coarse, groveling manners." For the interior of the house, Dwight noted that
"The dress, the furniture, the equipage, the mode of living, and the manners will all correspond with the appearance of the buildings and will universally be in every such case of a vulgar and debased nature."^48

Like Timothy Dwight, Downing expressed great concern for the moral aspects of domestic architectural design. He believed that good houses were a powerful means of uplifting civilization, exercising great influence over the manners and morals of the people. "So long as men are forced to dwell in log huts and follow a hunter's life," he wrote, "we must not be surprised at lynch law and the use of the bowie knife. But, when smiling lawns and tasteful cottages begin to embellish a country, we know that order and culture are established."^49 Downing also felt that the exterior of the house reflected the values and morals of its inhabitants: "The tasteful appearance which we long for in our country towns, we seek as the outward mark of education, moral sentiment, love of home, and refined cultivation."^50 Repeatedly expressing faith in "republican education," Downing advocated the establishment of institutions that would elevate the common man and improve his understanding of the arts and social behavior.^51 To the readers of The Horticulturist Downing best phrased his belief in the moral influence of architecture: "We believe in the bettering influence of beautiful cottages and country houses, in
the improvement of human nature necessarily resulting to all classes."52

Other writers who asserted the essential morality of good architecture included the authors of Village and Farm Cottages. In their opinion, every improvement in housing that contributed to increased comfort and beauty also contributed to intellectual and moral improvement.53 Oliver P. Smith assessed the moralist sentiment in his book, The Domestic Architect (1854). In this curious combination of pattern book and builder's guide Smith wrote: "Nothing has more to do with the morals, the civilization, and refinement of a nation, than its prevailing Architecture."54 To Downing's statement that fine art is the lending of moral significance to objects, Smith added the classical belief in the duality of beauty and virtue.55

The belief that architecture should be expressive of individual character, an idea closely related to the cult of domesticity, also gained wide acceptance at mid-century. Having met the criteria of fitness, convenience, and comfort, Downing next advised his readers to direct their attention to individual expression. This would not be the rampant individualism abhorred by Bushnell, however, but a statement of personal morality: "Domestic Architecture is only perfect when it is composed so as to express the utmost beauty and
truth in the life of the individual." Calling individual expression the highest beauty of domestic architecture, Downing encouraged his readers to improve their own houses by displaying in the design the best traits of their own character and individuality.57

A number of other writers shared Downing's observations on individual expression in architecture. In the pages of The Architect, Ranlett stated that the style and finish of a house indicated the intelligence and taste of its owner.58 Gervase Wheeler, an English-trained architect who noted no sense of individual expression in the cottages of his own country, praised the growing American tendency to express in the house the character of the family.59 This theme also appears in Charles Wyllys Elliott's discourse on Cottages and Cottage Life (1848). As Elliott's protagonists, the Ellisons, visit a number of different people, they observe that some of the homes resemble the character and values of their owners.60

Another key to understanding the pietistic attitude toward the home was the belief that good houses acted as agents of morality and order. Timothy Dwight considered good taste, the first and most powerful influence on the human mind, as the catalyst in America's transformation from wilderness to a civilized state.61 He believed that good,
tasteful homes would help improve society by awakening in people an appreciation for tasteful and orderly surroundings. This, in turn, would lead others to improve their own property, thus contributing to a general reformation in domestic design.\textsuperscript{62}

Downing considered the principle of reform through imitation one of the great foundations of America's national character. Convinced that fashion was a more powerful teacher than either the press or the school, he believed the private improvements would be the result of common people following the tasteful examples of architectural design.\textsuperscript{63} A beautiful home, landscaped with numerous shade trees, would spread the understanding of taste through imitation, silently but effectively, until the character of entire villages was improved.\textsuperscript{64} Thus Downing ordained his readers "apostles of taste," charging them to provide the models to be copied by their countrymen--to be, in effect, "benefactors to the cause of morality, good order, and the improvement of society" through their example.\textsuperscript{65}

This principle of effecting reform through imitation parallels in a social sphere Bushnell's "unconscious influence." In this way the morality of good architecture would emanate, spreading itself through example, and improve both the domestic environment and the stability of the social order.
Nathaniel Hawthorne was not immune to these arguments, and his character Hollingsworth in *The Blithedale Romance* advocated architectural reform based upon the excellence of his own house: "I offer my edifice as a spectacle to the world," he said, "that it may take example and build many another like it." Writers on architectural subjects who shared this idea included Gervase Wheeler and Charles Wyllys Elliott. The latter wrote: "The good influences of neatness, order, beauty—yes, and virtue, are extended as much by it [architecture], as by some preaching." By this means, domestic architecture and the well-ordered environment of the home would contribute to the development of a more virtuous people.

The middle class cottage, then, was a particularly American form, a response to the unique climate, resources, and social opportunities of the new world. Moreover, it could only evolve in a society devoted to the primacy of middle class values. Historians will long debate the exact nature of American society in the ante-bellum era, but with evangelical zeal authors of prescriptive literature pronounced it distinctly middle class. For these writers, the cottage was an appropriate residence for most Americans. The cottage should also be understood within the context of a reformist milieu. Part and parcel of their age and society's
value system, books about cottages offered to many Americans useful advice on how they might best improve their homes.

Understanding the cottage movement also has significant implications for the study of American history after 1850. Together with the voluminous treatises on normative behavior, cottage books encouraged families to withdraw from the deleterious influences of city life, to live instead in detached dwellings on rural sites. If the advice of the prescriptive literature is indicative of reality, the middle class home attempted to create a familial utopia, an isle of perfection in an otherwise imperfect society. Moreover, in rejecting urban life as an unmitigated evil, the cottage movement contributed to the seduction of the city by idealized rural values. Nature nostalgia created, by default, the inability of Americans to deal effectively with the problems of urbanization. 68
Laugier described the frontispiece of his *Essai sur L'Architecture* as "a rough sketch which nature offers us." The engraving illustrates the author's belief that architectural principles should be based on the lessons of nature. (courtesy, Avery Architectural Library, Columbia University)
Plate 6, design 5 from James Walton's *Essay on British Cottage Architecture*. The thatched roof and timber framing illustrate the old English tradition in cottage design.
John B. Papworth's design for a residence suitable for an artist, illustrating the picturesque massing of the Italianate. (courtesy, Libraries Division, Winterthur).
(a) Plate 18, vol. II of Francis Goodwin's *Rural Architecture*, upon which Downing based the facade of his own residence (t). (courtesy, Winterthur and Larry Gobrecht).
A plate illustrating some of the conveniences in domestic arrangement suggested in Catharine E. Beecher's Treatise on Domestic Economy. (courtesy, Winterthur).
NOTES

PART I:


5. Ibid., II, 125.


9. Ibid., I, 40.

10. Ibid., I, 22.

11. Ibid., I, 68.

12. Ibid., I, 50-51.


> Consult the Genius of the Place in all;
> That tells the Waters or to rise, or fall;
> Or helps th' ambitious Hill the heav's to scale,
> Or swoops in circling theatres the Vale;
> Calls in the Country, catches op'ning glades,
> Joins willing woods, and varies shades from shades;
> Now breaks, or now directs, th' intending lines;
> Paints as you plant, and, as you work, designs.


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24 Loudon, ed., *The Landscape Gardening and Landscape Architecture of the Late Humphrey Repton*, pp. 442ff.


29 See, for example, Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *Discours sur L'Origine de L'Inegalite parmi les Hommes* (1761), *Collection Complete des Oeuvres* (Geneva: Chez Volland, 1790), VI, 32-40.


33 Ibid., II, 66-69, 75.

34 Reynolds, *Discourses*, p. 366.


46. Ibid., pp. 775-783, 946-963.


50 Kent, *Hints to Gentlemen of Landed Property*, p. 209.


52 Laslett, *The World We Have Lost*, p. 47.


58 *Communications to the Board of Agriculture, on Subjects Relative to the Husbandry and Internal Improvements of the Country* (London: by W. Bulmer and Co., 1797- ), I, 103.


An incomplete survey of cottage books published in the decade after 1823 includes the following works: Nicholas Carlisle, *Hints on Rural Residences*, 1826
J. G. Jackson, *Designs for Villas*, 1829
Charles Parker, *Villa Rustica*, 1832
Francis Goodwin, *Domestic Architecture*, 1833
Edward W. Trendall, *Original Designs for Cottages and Villas, in the Grecian, Gothic, and Italian Styles of Architecture*, 1829


Hunt, *Exemplars of Tudor Architecture*, 1830

Hunt, *Designs for Parsonage Houses, Alms Houses, etc.*, 1827, 1833

Hunt, *Architettura Campestre*, 1827, 1830

J. C. Loudon, *Encyclopedia of Cottage, Farm, and Villa Architecture, and Furniture*, 1833

Loudon, *Gardener's Magazine*, 1826-1839

John Hall, *Novel Designs for Cottages*, 1825


Lugar, *Villa Architecture*, 1828

P. P. Robinson, *Designs for Farm Buildings, 1830*

Robinson, *Designs for Gate-cottages, Lodges, and Park Entrances*, 1833

Robinson, *Designs for Ornamental Villas*, 1826, 1829

Robinson, *Rural Architecture*, 1823, 1826, 1828, 1830

Robinson, *Village Architecture*, 1830, 1833

J. Thompson, *Retreats*, 1827, 1833

Earlier cottage books reprinted in these years include Edmund Aiken's *Designs* (1832), Thomas Dearne's *Sketches* (1823), Dearne's *Designs* (1823), Laing's *Hints* (1823), Lugar's *Country Gentleman's Architect* (1823, 1828), Papworth's *Rural Residences* (1832), John Plaw's *Ferme Ornee* (1823) and *Sketches* (1823), and William Pocock's *Architectural Designs* (1823).


Loudon, "General Results of a Gardening Tour," *Gardener's Magazine*, 8 (June 1832), 258-259.


79 Loudon, "General Results of a Gardening Tour," Gardener's Magazine, 8 (June 1832), 260.

80 Ibid., 257.


83 Ibid., pp. 50-51.


85 Loudon, "General Results of a Gardening Tour," Gardener's Magazine, 8 (June 1832), 257.


PART II:


13. Ranlett's most important essays and designs were compiled and published as The Architect, 2 vols (New York: William H. Graham, 1847, and New York: DeWitt and Davenport, 1849). See especially, II, 70.


15. Downing, Cottage Residences, p. 42.


17. The restoration of Van Courtland Manor in Westchester County, New York, provides an interesting example of this tradition.


24. Ibid.


30. Ibid., p. 36.

31. Ibid., p. 258.

32. Ibid., pp. 258-259.

33. Ibid., pp. 275-278, 292-296, 259.

34. Downing, *Cottage Residences*, p. 2.

35. Ibid., p. 1.

36. Ibid., p. 5.
37 Ibid.
38 Ibid., p. 2.
39 Cleaveland, et. al., Village and Farm Cottages, p. iv.

40 These sermons were expanded and published in 1847, first as "Discourses on Christian Nurture," then as "Views of Christian Nurture."


46 Timothy Dwight, Summer Tours; or, Notes of a Traveler Through Some of the Middle and Northern States (1834; 2d ed., New York: Harper and Brothers, 1847), pp. 77-78.


50 Downing, "Our Country Villages," The Horticulturist, 4 (June 1850), 538.

51 See, for example, "The New-York Park," The Horticulturist, 6 (1851), 346-349.


53 Cleaveland, et. al., Village and Farm Cottages, p. iv.


57 Ibid., p. 23; Downing, "A Few Words on Rural Architecture," The Horticulturist, 5 (July 1850), 10.


60 Charles Wyllys Elliott, Cottages and Cottage Life (Cincinnati: R. H. Derby and Co., 1848), passim.


62 Ibid., II, 347.

64 Downing, "On the Improvement of Country Villages," The Horticulturist, 3 (June 1849), 547.


67 Wheeler, Rural Homes, p. 273; Elliott, Cottages and Cottage Life, p. 52.

ENGLISH DESIGN BOOKS:


________. Designs for Parsonage Houses, Alms Houses, etc. London: Longman, Rees, Orme, Brown, and Green, 1827.


______ *Rural Architecture.* London: James Carpenter and Son, 1823.


**AMERICAN DESIGN BOOKS:**

Allen, Lewis F. *Rural Architecture.* Being a Complete Description of Farm Houses, Cottages, and Out Buildings, etc. New York: 1852.


OTHER SOURCES:


Board of Agriculture. *Communications to the Board of Agriculture; on Subjects Relative to the Husbandry and Internal Improvements of the Country.* London: by W. Bulmer and Co., 1797-18 --4.


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