

Expanding the American Dream: Building and Rebuilding Levittown (S U N Y Series in the New Cultural History)



Much has been written about the housing policies of the Depression and the Postwar period. Much less has been written of the houses built as a result of these policies, or the lives of the families who lived in them. Using the houses of Levittown, Long Island, as cultural artifacts, this book examines the relationship between the government-sponsored, mass-produced housing built after World War II, the families who lived in it, and the society that fostered it. Beginning with the basic four-room, slab-based Cape Cods and Ranches, Levittown homeowners invested time and effort, barter and money in the expansion and redesign of their houses. The author shows how this gradual process has altered the socioeconomic nature of the community as well, bringing Levittown fully into the mainstream of middle-class America. This book works on several levels. For planners, it offers a reassessment of the housing policies of the 1940s and 50s, suggesting that important lessons remain to be learned from the Levittown experience. For historians, it offers new insights into the nature of the suburbanization process that followed World War II. And for those who wish to understand the subtle workings of their own domestic space within their lives, it offers food for speculation.

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