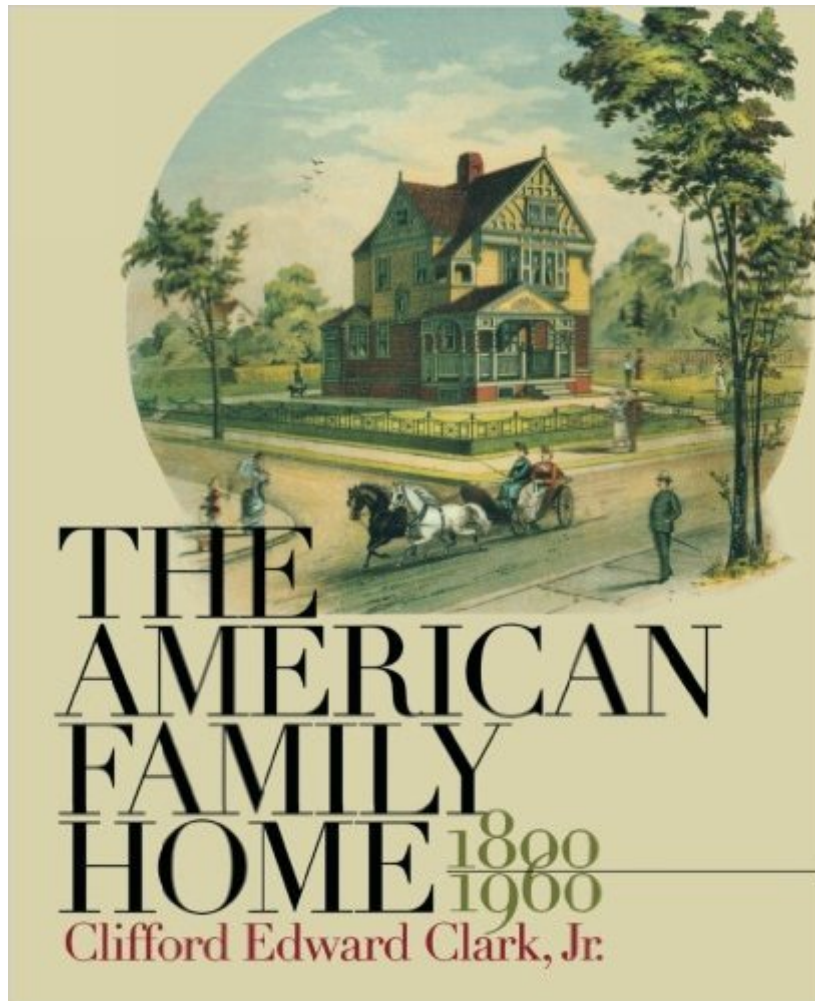


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# The American Family Home, 1800-1960



## Synopsis

In the nineteenth century, architects and family reformers launched promotional campaigns portraying houses no longer as simply physical structures in which families lived but as emblems for family cohesiveness and identity. Clark explains why, despite the fear of standardization and homogenization, the middle class has persisted in viewing the single-family home as the main symbol of independence as the distinguishing sign of having achieved middle-class status.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

"The American Family Home, 1800-1960," by Clifford Edward Clark, Jr., University of North Carolina Press, Chapel Hill, 1986. This 281-page paperback reviews American home architecture, and includes social commentary on changes in the family and the status of women, as home styles changed from strict Victorian standards to the more relaxed bungalow and finally the ranch style. We learn that once austere Greek Revival style was the standard. In about 1850, a New York landscape architect, Andrew Jackson Downing, developed modern balloon construction rather than the then common post and beam method with mortised and tenoned joints. This method of construction was gradually adopted in America as it was simpler, required less technical expertise and allowed more flexible house plans. Along with this change came a host of pattern books that encouraged new styles. Gothic and Italianate styles followed. The book does best with its discussion of the bungalow, which was conceived as a response to the Victorian styles after about 1900. The bungalow is a single story (or story and a half with dormers) with a wide, low pitched roof usually

with a broad porch and a substantial overhang at the eaves to shade the windows. Ideally they are built of natural local materials to blend into their environment. That can mean redwood in California, fieldstone or cobblestone in New England, board and batten in Oregon, or adobe in Arizona. Bungalows were popular until the ranch style arrived at the end of World War II. The book does a good job of describing Levittown and related suburban developments of ranch styles. In some respects the book is superficial. You will not find clear definitions of the various house styles.

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