Spaces of Class Formation: “The Working Man’s Reward” and the New Suburban History

Professor Elaine Lewinnek
California State University at Fullerton
Unplanned Suburbs
Toronto's American Tragedy 1900 to 1950
Richard Harris

MY BLUE Heaven
Life and Politics in the Working-Class Suburbs of Los Angeles, 1920–1965
Becky M. Nicolaides

Places of Their Own
African American Suburbanization in the Twentieth Century
Andrew Wiese

American Babylon
Race and the Struggle for Postwar Oakland
Robert O. Self

The New Suburban History
Edited by Kevin M. Kruse and Thomas J. Sugrue

The Suburb Reader
Becky M. Nicolaides and Andrew Wiese, editors

The Working Man's Reward
Chicago's Early Suburbs and the Roots of American Sprawl
Elaine Levitt
THE WORKING MAN'S REWARD.

WHERE ALL WAS DARKNESS,

NOW IS LIGHT.

A HOME

AT $10 A MONTH

S.E. GROSS

ASHLAND AVE

AND

47TH STREET

SUBDIVISION

BRANCH

OFFICE COR. ASHLAND AVE & 47TH ST.

South-east corner Dearborn and Randolph Sts.
A HOME FOR $100
In my Ashland Avenue and 47th Street Subdivision.

LOCATION.
These handsome cottages are located on 45th St. and Laflin St., between 45th and 46th Sts., (see plat of property on page 61)

DESCRIPTION.
They are well built and thoroughly finished throughout. Have seven foot basement, lake water, sewers and large lot. Sidewalks laid and fences built.

TERMS.
Price $1,050 to $1,500; 200 cash, balance on long-time and monthly payments of $7 to $11, same as rent.

BRANCH OFFICE AND HOW TO GET THERE.
Branch Office corner of 47th St. and Ashland Ave. Open every day. Take Archer and Ashland Aves. cars, or Halsted and 47th Sts. cars; either will take you to the office door; or take Grand Trunk R. R. trains to Ashland Ave. station and go two blocks north; or call at Main Office and you will be taken free to see the property.

SAVE YOUR RENT. SAVE YOUR CAR FARE.
Buy a home in my New City Subdivision within two minutes walk of your work. The money you now pay for rent and car fare will pay for your home. 350 men now working in the Packing Houses have bought homes from me in my New City Subdivisions. Why shouldn't you?

BRANCH OFFICE: N. E. Cor. Ashland Avenue and 47th Street. Open all day, every day in the week.

South-east corner Dearborn and Randolph Sts.
What do working-class suburbs mean for class consciousness?

- Bennett Berger, in *Working-Class Suburb* (1960), surveyed Ford auto workers relocated to suburban-looking Milpitas, CA and found employees felt working-class at work, while sometimes middle-class at home.
- Lawrence Glickman, in *A Living Wage* (1999) argues that American workers shifted, after 1870, from claims based on production (“we deserve the fruits of our labor”) to claims based on consumption (“we deserve an American standard of living”).
January, 1872: Chicagoans occupy City Hall to protest an early form of zoning

- “Leave a House for the Laborur. Don’t Vote Any More for the Poor Man’s Oppressor. No Fire Limitz at the North Site” were the signs of “mongrel fire bugs” “who wish to erect hovels on the North Side,” according to Chicago’s English-language press

- The German press reported: “The naturalized citizens of the north side that want Chicago to remain a city in which a worker can live in his own house are better Americans than any fresh bullies who maintain that our working classes should [herd] in large filthy barracks in order to sink to the level of the European proletariat.”
“Dear Sir: I am perfectly satisfied with the cottage I bought from you two years ago. I consider I have that much saved. It is better than a bank for a poor man. Respectfully, D. H. Brookins, 389 Gross Parkway.” (Samuel Eberly Gross advertising catalogs, 1886 and 1891)

Building and Loan Associations are “the only plan by which the working man can become his own capitalist, and create a source of wealth.” They are a plan of “mutual help for self-help,” a plan “of the people, by the people, and for the people.” (Edmund Wrigley, *The Working Man’s Way to Wealth: A Practical Treatise on Building Associations*, 1869)

Chicago’s social workers opined: “The ambition of the immigrant to own property in America is one of his most striking characteristics. For it he will make almost unbelievable sacrifices both of his own comfort and that of his wife and children, since the heavily mortgaged house too often calls for the united wage-earning power of the entire family....” This “land-hunger of the European peasant” leads to “not simple poverty, but undue frugality.” (Mary Frances Bruton, *A Study of Tenement Ownership*, 1924; and Edith Abbott, *Tenements of Chicago*, 1936.)
NEGROES UNDER PROTECTION OF POLICE LEAVING WRECKED HOUSE IN RIOT ZONE

S. E. GROSS, CHICAGO.

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FIRST FLOOR.

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