

Houses Chapter 3

Contributed by Administrator
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The first 30 years of the 1900s saw a building boom for the small single and two-family home, along with the detached 'auto barn' or 'garage'. The growth was spurred by a social movement to improve housing as well as the development of the American suburb. - Rachel Carley, Dictionary of American Domestic Architecture

Significant Houses Part 3: The Township

In the late 19th century the industrial age came to Monroeville (or Patton Township as it was then known) as coal mining in the Pittsburgh region spread eastward. But the deep mining boom soon ran its course, and by the first part of the 1900s life in the little farming community had lapsed back to what it had been for the past hundred years. By that time, those who didn't work on the farms were beginning to find work at the giant Westinghouse plant in nearby Wilmerding, or in the sprawling railroad yard in Pitcairn. Gradually, a need arose for housing for the families of workers, tradesmen and professional people. In the 1930s Monroeville was still a sparsely-populated, largely rural community, but gradually the horse-and-buggy gave way to the automobile as Monroeville continued its evolution from a farming community to a suburban one, with increased housing, commercial, and economic development. In the 1940s modern roads were being built, and many who worked in the mills of the Turtle Creek valley, might now get there by the family car continuing the tradition of the working commuter, as Monroeville became something of a 'bedroom' community. The automobile, along with the rising affluence of the middle class, created a demand for affordable housing within reach of the city. At first small affordable houses were offered by builders, but as people became more affluent the number of rooms a family desired increased. The need for additional rooms was best managed by a center hall plan. Entrances became more elaborate; front porches began to appear. Windows were enlarged. They continued to be of the double-hung design, but the trend was to replace multi-paned windows with a single pane of glass. Interiors became lighter and more spacious. As houses became more elaborate and spacious the large fireplace, originally the center of household life, was relegated to the cellar for whole-house heating, or to a kitchen wing where it was replaced by the cooking stove. Plans for modern homes replaced the entrance hall and formal parlor of Victorian times with the multi-purpose living room, reflecting a more informal life style. New construction was influenced by the prevailing architectural styles popular at the time. And so in this period we find examples of: Colonial Revival; the Bungalow; and various Period Homes.