Private Passage:
Service Planning in the Ladies’ Home Journal Houses,
1895–1919

by

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INTRODUCTION

In the historiography of American domestic architecture, the period between 1880 and 1920 is among the most intensively studied. This era is frequently represented as a critical period of transition between older, nineteenth-century approaches to domestic architecture and the newer models that were to define the American home during the twentieth century. Historians of the period have examined new approaches to domestic planning, new construction systems, and new kinds of domestic technology, all of which radically changed the ways in which homes were designed and used. Additionally, this period was one of rapid industrialization, which led to the emergence of new social, cultural, and political forces, many of which had a profound impact on American attitudes towards domesticity and the private home. Historians have related these developments not only to large, high-style works by well known architects, but also to more modest, middle-class homes, as well as the model home plans widely published in architectural pattern books and magazines during the period.

Perhaps the landmark study among histories of the period is Vincent Scully’s 1955 book *The Shingle Style*, which was later revised and republished as *The Shingle Style and the Stick Style* in 1971. In this revised work, Scully outlines a historical narrative beginning with the mid-nineteenth-century designs and theoretical writings of Andrew Jackson Downing, and ending with the Prairie Style houses of Frank Lloyd Wright. Scully sees this period as defined by a movement away from a Romantic interest in structural rationalism, and towards a more modernist focus on
dynamic volumes and continuous surfaces. In the planning of interiors, Scully sees a similar development, as plans ceased to be organized around discrete, functionally-specific rooms, and architects instead attempted to create open, flowing plans with a dynamic sense of interior space. In crafting this narrative, Scully essentially traces an American genealogy for the formal characteristics that, by the middle of the twentieth century, were understood to be representative of modernist architecture. This approach has been immensely influential, and Scully’s arguments underlie many subsequent discussions of the period. One recent example is Sandy Isenstadt’s 2006 book *The Modern American House: Spaciousness and Middle Class Identity*, in which Isenstadt traces the development of the idea of spaciousness in American domestic architecture, “spaciousness” meaning the visual experience of space in houses that were, out of economic necessity, restricted in actual size. Although focusing on small, moderate-cost dwellings, Isenstadt’s argument is essentially a modernist one, consistent with Scully’s earlier work.

While Scully’s approach is both extremely influential and perceptive, it is not without its limitations. Scully focuses primarily on large, expensive houses built by well-known architects, reflecting his interest in formal and aesthetic developments, rather than social or economic influences on American domestic architecture. Scully also looks exclusively at social spaces within the home, while ignoring kitchens and other service spaces, which generally did not develop along the broad lines that he describes. When Scully does attempt to include service spaces in his argument, his

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standards of openness decline drastically, as when he points out that a kitchen is “close” to a dining room, without describing this arrangement in any greater detail. More frequently, Scully treats service spaces as secondary in importance, and ignores them in his arguments, as when he writes of Richardson’s Codman House (1869–71), “Except for the service areas behind the dining room, the three units of hall, drawing room, and dining room, form the only spatial divisions on the ground floor.”

Since the 1980s, the feminist history movement has made vital contributions to our understanding of Progressive Era domestic architecture, particularly with regards to the design of service spaces. Historians like Gwendolyn Wright, Dolores Hayden, and Elizabeth Cromley have all argued that the design of kitchens and related spaces was of utmost importance to many Progressive Era architects, and that these spaces must be considered central, rather than incidental, to any discussion of the period’s domestic architecture. In her 1980 book, *Moralism and the Model Home*, Gwendolyn Wright argues convincingly for the importance of the kitchen in the modern American house, but also attempts to look beyond the ideas of professional architects to examine the influence of progressive reformers, domestic advice writers, and housewives themselves. More recently, Elizabeth Cromley has made similar arguments in her 2010 book, *The Food Axis*, a survey of American architecture which attempts to trace changes in house design by looking at the spaces in which food was stored, prepared, and consumed. Cromley is also associated with the growing field of vernacular architectural history, which has contributed significantly to our understanding of the period. Vernacular architectural historians like Cromley, as well

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3 Scully, *Shingle Style*, lvi.
4 Scully, *Shingle Style*, 5.
as Thomas Hubka, Leland Roth, and Annmarie Adams, have written about domestic architecture in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, attempting to examine not only the way houses were designed, but also how they were used by the ordinary people who inhabited them.  

This feminist and vernacular scholarship is critical to understanding the design of domestic service spaces, particularly in drawing attention to the influence of progressive reform movements—many of them lead by women—on American architecture. However, in examining these movements, some feminist histories have failed to question the biases present in their source material. In particular, I believe there has been insufficient attention paid to the role of social class in reform movements that were dominated by wealthy and middle-class individuals. The middle-class home is too often treated as a standard or “typical” dwelling, rather than the product of a distinct set of cultural and economic forces. Consequently, there has only been a partial understanding of the architectural impact of these social movements, one that has generally engaged with them on their own terms, rather than adopting a more critical perspective.

I have chosen to examine the model home plans published in the Ladies’ Home Journal between 1895 and 1919, a period that begins with the first plan

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published and concludes with the retirement of Edward Bok, the pioneering editor of the *Journal*, and originator of the magazine’s model home campaign. This period also coincides with the height of what is often called the Progressive Era, a period of widespread reform, often based on principles of rational and scientific management, which attempted to effect positive change in both the public and private spheres. This was also a period of rapid industrialization and urbanization, changes which in turn lead to an expansion of the American middle class, concentrated in urban and, increasingly, suburban areas. Simultaneously, the American cultural landscape was undergoing a profound shift with the rise of new mass-market publications like the *Ladies’ Home Journal*, which exploded in popularity in the last years of the nineteenth century.6

The *Ladies’ Home Journal* provides an extremely useful opportunity to investigate the transformation of American domestic architecture in the light of these social and cultural changes. However, I do not wish to assert that the *Ladies’ Home Journal* houses were “representative” of American architecture during this period. As model homes, the plans published in the *Journal* do not reflect the desires or needs of any real individual or family; rather, they were designed for “typical” or idealized users, as envisioned by their architects. The homes themselves are idealized models as well, intended to demonstrate the best, and not necessarily the most common, trends in domestic architecture. Even among Progressive Era magazines, many of which also published model home plans, the *Ladies’ Home Journal* is unique. While

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read by many men, the *Journal* was explicitly directed towards women, something that distinguishes it from most of the mass-market “general” magazines of the period. Under Bok, the *Journal* was also a distinctly progressive publication, one that strove to educate as well as entertain, and which attempted to improve the taste of its readership, particularly in the field of domestic architecture. However, while progressive, the *Journal* lacked the ideological consistency of more architecturally focused magazines like *The Craftsman* (1901-1916), which explicitly promoted the ideas of the American Arts and Crafts movement. Even among of magazine-published model home plans, the *Ladies’ Home Journal* houses are only one entry in a large field.\(^7\)

At the same time, I don’t believe the *Ladies’ Home Journal* houses were particularly atypical either. While progressive, the *Journal* was careful not to condescend to or alienate its readers, and the magazine received, and responded to, massive numbers of letters from its readership. During much of my period of interest the *Journal* was the most widely read magazine in America; this success was due to a carefully crafted editorial style aimed at attracting and retaining a mass audience. This enormous circulation, combined with a dedication to publishing model home plans, points to the *Journal*’s influence on domestic architecture, which alone makes the *Ladies’ Home Journal* houses a worthy topic of interest. The *Journal* also looms large in historical studies of Progressive Era architecture and culture, perhaps more so than any of its contemporaries. Given the importance of the *Journal* in the

\(^7\) See Gwendolyn Wright, *Moralism and the Model Home*, for a comparison of different magazines’ architectural agendas.
historiography of Progressive Era architecture, it is worth asking what can be clarified or modified in our understanding of the magazine’s agenda and activities.8

Also notable is the great variety of content published in the *Ladies’ Home Journal* during the Progressive Era. In addition to model home plans, the *Journal* published articles on home decorating, fashion, literature, and politics, as well as fiction, poetry, music, and reproductions of famous works of art. The *Journal* also published editorials and opinion pieces on many of the widely discussed issues of the day, usually with a progressive bent, and with a particular emphasis on those issues relating to women or the domestic environment. Perhaps most significantly, the *Journal* always contained a large amount of domestic advice aimed at women. Content like this, which was generally unique to women’s magazines like the *Journal*, offers many insights into the ways in which houses were inhabited and used, as well as clarifying Progressive Era attitudes towards domesticity and domestic labor. This great diversity of content makes the *Journal* an ideal site for looking at the design of model homes in their social, cultural, and economic context.

I have organized my thesis into one short, and two long chapters. The first chapter offers a brief history of the *Ladies’ Home Journal* up to the beginning of the first model home series in 1895. The second, longer chapter examines the model home plans published in the *Ladies’ Home Journal* between 1895 and 1919, with a

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particular emphasis on the planning of kitchens and service spaces. Roughly chronological, this chapter looks at not only at plans for two-story suburban homes, the most common type published in the Journal, but also plans for farmhouses, summer homes, and bungalows. I wish to demonstrate that these plans reveal a persistent and deliberate interest in the privacy and segregation of service spaces, even as social spaces were growing more open, spacious, and interconnected. In particular, the architects who contributed to the Ladies’ Home Journal were careful to provide private routes of circulation connecting the kitchen to various other parts of the house, something they frequently mentioned when describing their plans. The specific arrangements used to enable these paths of circulation could vary widely from house to house, while the connections provided for remained relatively consistent. This interest in private passage, which has been little discussed in architectural histories of the period, runs counter to a modernist narrative which describes the domestic architecture of the period as moving from segregation to openness, from discrete, functionally specific rooms towards flowing, multi-use spaces. Such an account cannot explain the planning of domestic service spaces during this period. Furthermore, I hope to show that service spaces were not merely retarded in their adoption of progressive architectural trends, but that their continued segregation was consciously pursued, and approvingly referred to, over a quarter century of plans.

In my second chapter, organized thematically, I examine the Ladies’ Home Journal houses from the perspective of two contemporaneous reform movements in an attempt to assess the degree, and nature, of their influence on the planning of
service spaces during the Progressive Era. In doing so I examine model home plans, editorials, and advice literature published in the *Journal*, as well as the works of prominent progressive reformers, many of whom also were published within the *Journal*. First I look towards the progressive housekeeping movement, which attempted to modernize the performance of housework through the use of new technology, the rationalization of work habits, and architectural reform. I also examine Progressive Era attempts to address the “servant problem,” or the decreasing availability of domestic servants during this time period. Both of these movements were widely discussed in the *Ladies’ Home Journal* and other Progressive Era publications, and both were interested in the reform of domestic architecture. While acknowledging the profound influence these movements had on American architecture during the period, I want to draw attention to the ways that these movements accepted, and relied on, traditional assumptions about middle-class gentility, privacy in the home, and the invisibility of housework. Consequently, neither progressive housekeeping nor progressive responses to the “servant problem” directly challenged the drive for private passage around the kitchen; in many cases, these movements reaffirmed such arrangements.

More fundamentally, architectural histories of the Progressive Era have almost exclusively treated the period as a transitional one, with Victorian cultural and architectural conventions gradually giving way to new, modern standards. Given this assumption, the tendency is always to emphasize those aspects of Progressive Era architecture that are seen to prefigure later, modernist developments, and to downplay those elements which are considered more conservative, or which were inherited from
earlier periods. For modernist historians like Vincent Scully, this has meant focusing exclusively on the increasing openness of social spaces, while neglecting to discuss service spaces, which did not develop along similar lines. Feminist and vernacular architectural historians have attempted to correct this tendency by drawing increased attention to service spaces within Progressive Era houses, and to point out the important role played by progressive reformers, women’s clubs, and advice writers in shaping the period’s domestic architecture. However, in emphasizing the role these different groups played in effecting change, feminist histories of the period often neglect to note the persistence of certain conservative or traditional assumptions, even within otherwise progressive movements.

While not denying that American domestic architecture underwent profound changes during the Progressive Era, I would like to propose an alternative kind of investigation, one that does not rely on parsing the architectural ideas of the period into progressive and conservative camps. Instead, I want to emphasize the ways in which these different ideas coexisted in the minds of architects, in the pages of the *Ladies’ Home Journal*, and in the plans of houses themselves. At the least, this approach can help to clarify the agendas of different social and architectural reform movements, by demonstrating what they did, and did not, attempt to accomplish. More fundamentally, I’d like to suggest that progressive ideas are often based upon traditional or conservative assumptions, offering new solutions to old problems.  

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9 In this particular point I have been influenced by Jackson Lears, *No Place of Grace: Antimodernism and the Transformation of American Culture, 1880–1920* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1981). Lears has convincingly argued that antimodernism during this period must be seen as an expression of modernity itself, one that eased the transition from a pre-modern to modern culture, while simultaneously maintaining a
Rather than oppositional, progressivism and conservatism are often two sides of the same coin, and both are essential to a thorough understanding of the domestic architecture of the Progressive Era.

critical edge. While Lears addresses different aspects of Progressive Era culture than I do, I have found his outlook and methodology an inspiration.
CHAPTER ONE

_The Ladies’ Home Journal_ was founded in 1883 when publisher Cyrus Curtis separated the women’s page from his earlier publication, the _Tribune and Farmer_, and developed it into a full-length magazine. The _Journal_ was edited successfully for six years by Curtis’ wife, under her maiden name of Louisa Knapp, during which time it increased in circulation to 440,000 copies, a large number for any magazine in that period.\(^{10}\) In 1889, however, Curtis became interested in hiring a new editor for the magazine, and approached Edward W. Bok, after reading the “literary letter” (what we would now call a column) written by him and syndicated nationally, including in Philadelphia, where Curtis lived. Bok, a Dutch immigrant who had come to the United States in childhood, had held a number of different positions in the newspaper and magazine industries, and was at the time working for _The Book Buyer_ and _The Presbyterian Review_ in New York, in charge of securing advertisements. Curtis first offered Bok the Job in April of 1889 and Bok, after consulting his mother, accepted and assumed the position in October of that year.\(^{11}\) While always careful to acknowledge the work of Louisa Knapp during the early years of the _Ladies’ Home Journal_, it was Bok who, over his thirty years as editor, would lead the _Journal_ to a success unprecedented by any other magazine.

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\(^{10}\) Edward Bok, _The Americanization of Edward Bok_ (New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1921), 166.

\(^{11}\) _Ibid_ 144–159.
How great was this success? By 1891 Bok had increased circulation to 600,000 readers, and readership continued to grow rapidly. In 1903 the *Journal* announced that its circulation had reached one million, the first magazine ever to do so. By 1915 the Journal had 1.6 million subscribers, at a time when other leading magazines had half that number. When one takes into account multiple family members sharing a subscription, copies lent to friends or neighbors, or read in libraries, actual readership is much higher. By one estimate, in 1903 the magazine was read by 60% of American women. Nor was its readership limited to women, either. Men always constituted a significant minority of the *Journal’s* readers; government figures show that the *Journal* was the third most requested magazine by soldiers during World War I. The *Journal’s* readership was mostly in the densely populated, urbanized regions in the northeast part of the country, but the magazine was widely read in the western states as well. In fact, per capita readership was actually higher in states like Colorado and Montana than it was in New York and Massachusetts. Analysis has also shown that readership was significantly lower in the South, in regions with large African-American populations, and, not surprisingly, in areas with low literacy rates. Despite these gaps in readership, by the early twentieth century one could safely call the *Lady’s Home Journal* the most popular magazine ever published.

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Part of this success may be attributed to good timing; Bok assumed editorship of the *Journal* just a few years before the largest expansion in magazine reading in American history. In 1889 the midcentury leaders in women’s magazines, *Godey’s Lady’s Book* (1830–1898), and *Peterson’s* (1849–1892) were both in decline and the leading monthlies of the day were high-class literary magazines, like *Harper’s* (Founded 1850), *Century* (1881–1930), and *Atlantic* (founded 1857), which sold for between 25 and 35 cents, and had circulations that five years later would seem relatively small in comparison to the new class of “general” magazines which were soon to emerge. The change came in 1893 when, faced with a recession, magazine editors began to drastically lower the prices of their magazines. Famously, Frank Munsey reduced the cost of his magazine from twenty-five cents to ten, and in seven months the circulation of *Munsey’s Magazine* (1891–1929) increased from just forty thousand to over half a million. This new pricing was quickly adopted by a number of existing magazines, while others, like *McClure’s* (1893–1929) were founded to meet this rapidly growing demand. This was made possible by the growth of the advertising industry; at ten cents *Munsey’s* was one of the first major magazines to be sold below cost, with production effectively subsidized by advertisers.\(^{17}\)

These new “general” ten-cent monthlies were remarkably diverse in their content. Besides copious amounts of advertisements, they generally included fiction, either short stories or longer works published serially. All contained some sort of news, ranging from sports to politics to society gossip. Increasingly, they were heavily illustrated with portraits of celebrities (particularly stage actresses),

\(^{16}\) Bok, *Autobiography*, 162.  
\(^{17}\) Ohmann, *Selling Culture*, 25.
reproductions of famous art works, and photographs of exotic locations. These magazines were designed to entertain, but were also important in serving the needs of a rapidly growing and highly aspirational American middle class. Through these magazines American readers could learn about Parisian fashions, see famous paintings, visit far-away places, and learn about the lives of famous literary and political figures. Magazines like Munsey’s, McClure’s, Cosmopolitan, and others permitted access to cultural experiences that had previously been restricted by geography, money, and social connections.

Richard Ohmann, in his book Selling Culture, has written extensively about this change, arguing that the emergence of these new magazines during the 1890s constitutes the first example of a true “mass culture” in the United States, where mass-produced cultural experiences were regularly distributed to wide audiences. Ohmann attributes this event to a convergence of social and economic factors: manufacturers needed better ways of advertising their goods to the middle class, publishers needed advertisers to help defray printing costs, and a growing segment of the population, what Ohmann calls the “professional-managerial class” wanted access to the kinds of cultural experiences that these new magazines could offer. According to Ohmann, this emergent class was important to the success of these magazines not just as readers, but also as the kind of educated, well-off consumers that advertisers were anxious to reach. At this time, very little magazine advertising was directed at the working classes, and publishers went to great lengths to assure potential advertisers that their magazine’s readers had taste, education, and above all, money.18

18 Ohmann, Selling Culture, 113-114.
While not strictly a “general” magazine, the *Ladies’ Home Journal* resembled these other publications in many ways. Bok believed that the lives of men and women were becoming more similar, which reduced the need for a magazine targeted solely at women.\(^{19}\) Perhaps in response, he introduced a number of features to the *Journal* common to the general monthlies, like profiles of prominent figures (or their wives) and writing by well known authors like Mark Twain, Rudyard Kipling, and Sarah Orne Jewett. In other ways, the *Journal* led the way in the development of the modern magazine, with innovative editorial practices that were later adopted by the “generals.” The *Journal* may have been the first magazine to change its cover design with every issue, a practice that would become widespread. The *Journal* was the first major magazine to publish advertisements on the same page as editorial content, and not just on separate pages at the back of the magazine.\(^{20}\) Bok was also an early advocate of the effectiveness of white space in advertisements, at a time when many publishers and advertisers considered this wasteful.\(^{21}\)

In other important ways the *Ladies’ Home Journal* differed from magazines like *Munsey’s* or *McClure’s*. Most significant was the inclusion of domestic advice, which always formed a large part of the *Journal*’s content. In this the *Journal* followed the example of earlier women’s magazines like *Godey’s*, as well as writers like Catharine Beecher and Harriet Beecher Stowe, who had published their domestic treatise *The American Woman’s Home* in 1869. In addition to advice about cooking, cleaning, and decorating, the *Journal* also included articles on etiquette and moral

\(^{19}\) Bok, *Autobiography*, 161.


behavior, specifically addressed to women. These kinds of content lead to a great deal of ridicule in the general press, which considered such content both lowbrow and embarrassingly feminine; Frank Munsey, apparently, did not even consider the Journal a magazine.\footnote{Ohmann, Selling Culture, 28.} Despite the jokes, this kind of advice was also critical to the success of the Journal. Late nineteenth and early twentieth century women were anxious to learn new, modern ways of performing housework, and the Journal always represented itself as a progressive, yet thoroughly practical source of such information. Furthermore, a predominantly female readership was a draw to many advertisers, who recognized that women were the primary consumers of the kinds of household goods that made up the bulk of early advertisements. By 1893 the Journal was turning away advertisers for lack of space.\footnote{Ibid, 251.}

Bok was also careful to establish an appropriate tone for his magazine. Believing that many magazines made the mistake of talking down to their audience, Bok made an effort to establish a friendly, personal voice for the Journal.\footnote{Bok, Autobiography, 163.} In part this was done by establishing regular “departments” written by named authors, many of whom became extremely popular with the Journal’s readers. One article, written anonymously by Bok and signed as “Ruth Ashmore,” received so many favorable responses that it became necessary to hire a full-time “Ruth Ashmore” to write a regular column, which ran for sixteen more years.\footnote{Ibid, 169–171.} Regarding the magazine’s voice, Bok always said that his motto was to give his readers what they asked for, “but
invariably on a slightly higher plane; and each year he raised the standard a notch.”26

This combination of popular appeal and “improving” content was central to the Journal’s mission throughout Bok’s tenure.

While this elevated tone probably attracted many readers, Bok seems to have had a genuine sense of the magazine as an instrument of social good. The Journal always refused advertisements from patent medicine companies, and Bok wrote several articles condemning such false cures, eventually endorsing the passage of the Food and Drug Act in 1906.27 While never as dedicated to muckraking journalism as magazines like McClure’s or Collier’s, the Journal undertook a number of editorial campaigns promoting a variety of movements, usually with an emphasis on subjects that were seen as a feminine concern, such as the beautification of cities, or the establishment of schools for domestic training. This crusading spirit was also evident in the advice content of the magazine, with various writers warning against unhealthy cooking or dangerous forms of childcare. This combination of the commercial and the crusading was evident even in the way the magazine was promoted, with Bok instituting a program that would pay the college tuition of women who were able to solicit a certain number of subscriptions to the Journal. Never able to go to college himself, Bok was clearly proud of being able to provide others with the opportunity; all the same, he noted in his autobiography that “the solicitation of a subscription by a girl desirous of educating herself made an irresistible appeal.”28

26 Ibid, 165.
27 Ohmann, Selling Culture, 273.
28 Bok, Autobiography, 175.
A similar combination of motives likely underlay the beginnings of Bok’s model home campaign. Bok always insisted that the inspiration for this project came to him during his travels around America, during which he was disappointed by the generally low architectural quality of the houses he saw. In his autobiography, Bok lamented the kinds of eclectic Victorian ornamentation that were common during the 1870s and 80s: “Where the houses were not positively ugly they were, to him, repellently ornate. Money was wasted on useless turrets, filigree work, or machine-made ornamentation.”

Bok wanted, through his model home plans, to improve the architectural character of an entire nation, and in writing his autobiography near the end of his life he proudly reproduced statements by Stanford White and Theodore Roosevelt suggesting that he had done so.

Bok’s ambitions went beyond questions of style, and he claimed that all of the *Ladies’ Home Journal* houses adhered to two rules: all servants’ bedrooms were to be large, and contain at least two windows, and none of the houses were to contain formal parlors, which Bok considered outdated, pretentious, and a waste of space. While both of these rules were broken at least once, Bok’s insistence on them indicates that he saw architectural reform as more than a purely aesthetic concern.

At the same time, when Bok published his first model home plan in 1895, he had many reasons to believe such a series would be popular with his readership.

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29 *Ibid,* 238. Bok wrote his autobiography in the third person.
Starting in the 1840s the older “builders’ guides,” which contained patterns for ornament and information about the use of the classical orders, began to be replaced by “pattern books,” which included plans and elevations of finished houses, and were targeted at a more general audience.\textsuperscript{33} The most famous of these, Andrew Jackson Downing’s 1850 \textit{Architecture of Country Houses}, was notable for including model plans for workman’s “cottages,” as well as plans for farmhouses and upper-class “villas.” Often cited, although perhaps less immediately influential, was the model cottage published in Catharine Beecher and Harriet Beecher Stowe’s \textit{American Woman's Home}, which in 1869 was prescient in its emphasis on compactness and efficiency. Starting in the 1870s, architects’ professional magazines began to include designs for low-cost model houses in addition to examples of individual projects for wealthy clients, as did builders’ magazines and publications aimed at the general public.\textsuperscript{34} The \textit{Ladies’ Home Journal} was not even the first women’s magazine to publish model home plans; \textit{Godey’s Lady’s Book} published over 450 before the 1890s.\textsuperscript{35} Around the same time as the \textit{Lady’s Home Journal} began publishing its plans, a new group of “shelter magazines” also sprang up, including \textit{House Beautiful} and Gustav Stickley’s \textit{The Craftsman}.

The late nineteenth century was a period of widespread interest in domestic architecture. Mid-century theorists like Downing were characterized by a belief in architectural determinism, and Downing had argued that a well-built house could affect the health and moral development of its inhabitants; on a large scale, domestic

\textsuperscript{33} Scully, \textit{Shingle Style}, xxvi.
\textsuperscript{34} Wright, \textit{Moralism and the Model Home}, 52–53.
\textsuperscript{35} Ohmann, \textit{Selling Culture}, 139.
architecture had the ability to determine the strength and success of an entire nation. This kind of belief in the power of architecture was widely adopted over the second half of the twentieth century, with an increasing emphasis, starting with Catharine Beecher, on issues of sanitation and efficiency. Domestic architecture was also of interest to the rapidly expanding American middle class for its ability to create and define class identity. Richard Ohmann has argued that changes in middle-class housing, as well as the rapid growth of American suburbs during this period can be attributed to an effort by the emergent “professional-managerial class” to create a distinct social space for themselves.\(^3\) Bok would have understood the presence of a powerful demand for information about model housing.

Bok originally believed that the *Ladies’ Home Journal* was overloaded with content, and convinced Curtis to purchase a Buffalo-based magazine called *Country Life*, which Bok intended to transform into a magazine on architecture, interior decoration, and gardening. However, Curtis’ purchase of *The Saturday Evening Post* required too many of the company’s resources to launch a new magazine, and Bok decided to make the *Journal* the site of his architectural project. When he consulted with architects, however, he found them nearly universally opposed to the plan. Many thought it cheapened the seriousness of their profession, and others worried

\(^3\) *Ibid*, 119–149. Ohmann’s professional-managerial class, or “PMC” should be considered a relatively affluent subsection of the larger middle-class. At times Ohmann seems to use the term “middle-class” interchangeably with “PMC,” as when he asserts, “most middle-class families had servants around 1900” (Ohmann, *Selling Culture*, 167). For this to be true one would have to define “middle-class” very narrowly; according to David Katzman, fewer than 8% of American had servants in 1900 (Katzman, *Seven Days a Week*, 56). In any case, according to Bok, most readers of the *Ladies’ Home Journal* did not have servants (Edward Bok, “The Few Who Have Servants,” *Ladies’ Home Journal*, July 1904, 18).
that such plans would provide unwanted competition. Bok argued that these plans would appeal to a class of readers unable to pay an architects’ fee, and that “with his wide circulation, he might become an influence for better architecture through these small houses.” Eventually, Bok successfully persuaded a handful of architects to submit plans to be published in the Journal, along with a complete set of construction documents, which readers could order from the Journal for five dollars.\textsuperscript{37} Finally, in December of 1895 the \textit{Ladies’ Home Journal} included on its title page the note: “Moderate Houses to Build will be a new feature for the Journal. For this series the most prominent architects in different parts of the country have been engaged to produce their model suburban houses, costing from $3500 to $5000. These articles go into the work in detail, and are illustrated.” On page thirty-seven of that issue, the Journal also ran its first model home plan under the title “A $3500 Suburban House.”\textsuperscript{38}

\textsuperscript{37} Bok, \textit{Autobiography}, 238–241.
CHAPTER TWO

In this chapter I will examine the model home plans published in the Ladies’ Home Journal between 1895 and 1919, with a particular emphasis on the planning of kitchens and service spaces. I have organized this chapter into four subsections. The first examines plans for two-story suburban houses, the first and most common kind of plan published by the Journal. The second looks at plans for rural dwellings, particularly model farmhouses, renovated farm buildings, and summer homes. The third examines plans for bungalows, a building type originally used for seasonal housing, but which became a popular model for low-cost suburban housing in the early twentieth century. In the fourth section, I will discuss the post-World-War-One plans published by the Journal in 1919, which was also Edward Bok’s final year as editor of the Ladies’ Home Journal.

Across these different categories, I will argue that the model home plans published in the Ladies’ Home Journal display a persistent and deliberate interest in the segregation of service spaces and in the provision of private routes of circulation to and from the kitchen. I believe the issue of private circulation is a particularly important one, and has not been sufficiently discussed in studies of Progressive Era domestic architecture. In part, this is due to an incorrect belief that private circulation was only important in large, servant-run households, and reflected a Victorian, as opposed to progressive, attitude towards domesticity and domestic planning. In my third chapter I will contest this assumption, and argue that private passage and the
segregation of service spaces was thoroughly consistent with, and even integral to, the most progressive approaches to domestic architecture.

Another reason that the issue of private passage may have evaded notice is that, while architects were quite consistent in the kinds of connections they enabled in their plans, the means of providing these connections could vary widely. For example, many architects published by the *Journal* were explicit that it should be possible to move from the kitchen to the bedrooms without passing through any of the more social parts of the house. In large, two-story houses this could be achieved with a back staircase, immediately adjacent to the kitchen. In smaller houses, architects frequently connected the kitchen to the main stair hall, allowing passage to the second story without moving through the living or dining rooms. In one-story plans, particularly plans for bungalows, architects often included a short hallway linking the kitchen to one or more bedrooms. In each of these cases the objective is the same, although this continuity would not be apparent from a cursory examination of the plans.

In general, this should point to the importance of questions of circulation in the study of domestic architecture, questions that have not been sufficiently addressed by the existing historiography. In their studies of domestic interiors, modernist critics like Vincent Scully have generally not emphasized patterns of use, instead focusing on “the aesthetic possibilities of interior space.”\(^{39}\) Vernacular architectural historians, while explicitly dealing with the way in which domestic space was used by its inhabitants, have shown an unfortunate tendency to discuss rooms in isolation, be it

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\(^{39}\) Scully, *Shingle Style*, xxxi.
the kitchen, the dining room, or the parlor.\textsuperscript{40} While many of these studies are excellent, I believe questions of connectivity and circulation have been neglected relative to other concerns, resulting in an incomplete understanding of Progressive Era domestic planning.

One recent work which has attempted to correct this tendency is Elizabeth Cromley’s 2010 book, \textit{The Food Axis: Cooking, Eating and the Architecture of American Houses}. In a survey of American domestic architecture, Cromley focuses not on individual rooms but on what she calls the “food axis,” or the group of spaces, both inside and outside the home, used for producing, storing, preparing, and eating food. This approach, based upon function rather than form, allows Cromley to trace the ways in which food activities migrated over time in response to changing social and cultural conditions. In doing so, Cromley makes many of the same observations as I have in this thesis. However, my arguments about Progressive Era domestic architecture differ slightly from Cromley’s in both emphasis and interpretation. While Cromley’s work emphasizes the expansiveness and diversity of spaces dedicated to food, I would like to focus on the way in which service spaces related to more genteel spaces dedicated to social and leisure activities. This relationship was an exceptionally complex one during the Progressive Era, with architects simultaneously striving for separation and interconnection between these different zones. Secondly, Cromley attempts to make a clear distinction between the complex service areas present in large, servant-run households and the simpler sets of spaces

\textsuperscript{40} For a number of examples of this kind of study, see \textit{American Home Life, 1880–1930}, ed. Jessica H. Foy and Thomas J. Schlereth (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1992).
used in smaller middle-class houses. While large houses would logically have larger and more complex service spaces, I would like to emphasize the essential continuity between large, expensive houses and more moderate-cost homes. In both cases, the segregation of service spaces and the provision of private routes of circulation were of primary importance to architects and domestic reformers. In this chapter I hope to draw attention to these issues as central in the determining the form of Progressive Era model homes.

The Suburban Home

The architect of the first *Ladies’ Home Journal* house was William L. Price (1861–1916), a Philadelphia-based architect who had worked in the office of Frank Furness during the 1870s. Price would later become known as the architect of large resort hotels, including several in Atlantic City, as well as the founder of a utopian Arts and Crafts community in Rose Valley, Pennsylvania. In 1895, however, Price was primarily a residential architect, working in a Tudor-inflected version of the

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41 Cromley, *The Food Axis*, 134–7 provides a good example of this approach. Cromley uses the plan of Frank Lloyd Wright’s 1902 Willits House as an example of a large, servant-run house, and compares it with a model cottage plan from Gustav Stickley’s *Craftsman Homes*, in order to demonstrate the different treatment of service spaces in large and small homes. While the Willits house does indeed have more spaces dedicated to food production, I would argue there is a great deal of continuity between the two houses’ treatment of the kitchen. In both cases the kitchen has a separate door to the exterior; in both cases the kitchen is separated from both the dining room and the hall by two doors of separation; In both cases it is possible to move from the kitchen to both the front door and the second story without passing through any social spaces. While the forms of the two houses are very different, the relationship between service and social space is largely the same in each.
shingle style. Although not as well remembered as some of his contemporaries like Louis Sullivan, he was at the time considered a prominent architect, particularly in Philadelphia. Bok apparently admired Price’s work, and would later commission Price to build his own house in Merion, Pennsylvania, completed in 1903. Consistent with Bok’s architectural philosophy, this house, named “the Grange,” was planned without a formal parlor, instead featuring a large living room making up nearly half of the first story. However, with twenty rooms and eight baths, Bok’s new home was far larger than any of the houses published in the Ladies’ Home Journal.

Price’s first and only plan for the Journal was published in December of 1895, and established the form of presentation which was to be followed by most Ladies’ Home Journal plans for the next twenty-five years. Over a single full page, the Journal ran a lengthy description of the house, written by the architect. This was accompanied by a set of floor plans, an exterior perspective drawing, and an interior perspective, in this case of the stair hall. A projected price of construction was always included with the plans, either as part of the title, or in a brief table of construction expenses at the end of the article. As with most pages in the Journal, a row of small advertisements ran down the outside edge of the page, in this case including ads for baby food, a program to eliminate stuttering, a book of “artistic” house plans by a Grand Rapids architect, and a manufacturer of hardwood doors in St. Louis. Starting around 1905 the Journal would increasingly run multiple plans per page, with far less description of each, but otherwise would follow this basic layout.

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The house itself is described as being in the “English cottage” style, with shingle and half-timbered walls, and rough-cut stone around the foundation and chimney (Fig. 1). In plan the house is highly asymmetrical, with the main entrance located on the western side, and opening, via a small vestibule, onto the central stair hall. On one side the hall connects to the dining room, which projects out from the eastern side of the house in a large bay. On the south side of the hall is a large room, lit by windows on three sides, and labeled a “parlor” on the floor plan. However, Price suggests other uses for the room in his description, writing “The hall, if it be made more than an entry, may be made a charming reception-room, and thus save the best room [the parlor], so often sacrificed to the goddess, Fashion, for a living-room or library, which should properly have at least south and west exposures.” Moving up the main stairs to the second story, one finds three bedrooms and one bathroom arranged along a short corridor, with two of the bedrooms connected via a small alcove. Price explains this arrangement, writing, “The alcove in the main bedroom giving access to child’s room I have found a very satisfactory arrangement, as it makes communication between the rooms without their opening directly into each other.” This interest in indirect or mediated connections between different rooms is common in these plans, particularly with regards to service spaces.

Moving back downstairs, we turn to the service portion of the house. The kitchen is located at the rear of the house, in the northwestern corner. It is eleven feet wide, and thirteen and a half feet long, smaller than the other rooms on the floor, although not minute in comparison. It is lit by windows on the northern and western walls, and in his drawing the architect has depicted a few of its furnishings, including
a sink, stove, cabinet, and countertop. This was to be another common feature in the *Ladies’ Home Journal* plans; while architects almost never indicated other kinds of furniture in their plans, most made some indication as to how the major pieces of kitchen equipment should be arranged. Finally, the kitchen is connected to the rest of the house via three separate doors, each of which I would like to examine in greater detail.\(^4\)

On the north wall of the kitchen a door opens onto a partially enclosed rear porch. This porch also contains a “W.C.,” the only toilet on the first floor, and a small closet, probably for an icebox. When looking at the planning of service spaces in the *Ladies’ Home Journal*, the kitchen-porch is probably the most ubiquitous feature, and its uses were numerous. Use of the front door was restricted to family members and guests of the same social class; the kitchen door was used by tradesmen, delivers of coal, ice, and other goods, and by domestic servants if the family employed them. Kitchen doors were probably also commonly used by family members; the architect of one later plan noted “usually in the family life of the occupants [the back door] became the thoroughfare to and from the house.”\(^5\) As in this first plan, kitchen porches frequently contained toilets, sometimes the house’s only toilet, although this arrangement became less common over time. Iceboxes and refrigerators were also often located on porches, rather than in the kitchen itself. This allowed the ice to be delivered without requiring the delivery man to enter the house, potentially tracking in dirt or mud, although it would require the occupant of the


kitchen to go outside in order to fetch food from the refrigerator. Some architects solved this problem by building refrigerators into the walls of the house, with doors opening both inside and outside.46 These contraptions, like the kitchen porch itself, can be seen as a kind of transitional space, acting as both a connection and a buffer between the outside, construed as both dirty and masculine, and the clean, feminine space of the kitchen.

On the east wall of the kitchen a second door opens onto a small pantry, which in turn opens onto the dining room. While the kitchen and the dining room share a common wall, the sole connection between the two rooms is through this pantry. Like kitchen porches, these rooms, inconsistently called “pass pantries,” “butler’s pantries,” or “china closets,” were nearly ubiquitous in the Ladies’ Home Journal houses, and the plans which did not include them tended to fall into a few distinct categories, a topic I will discuss in greater detail later. Architects’ descriptions of what these pantries were to be used for varied widely; storing food, plates, and silverware, washing dishes, and preparing salads were all commonly named uses. In some cases these rooms were included in addition to another pantry, presumably for storing food, and opening only onto the kitchen.47 Despite this inconsistency, there is one point which was constantly repeated any time an architect referred to these rooms; as Price writes, “Entrance from the dining-room to kitchen is best had through the pantry, which then answers as a serving room as well, and keeps much of the

noise and smells of cooking out of the dining-room.”\textsuperscript{48} The idea that cooking odors were somehow offensive and must be guarded against is a pervasive one in the \textit{Ladies’ Home Journal}, and it was widely agreed that it was necessary to place two doors of separation in between the kitchen and the dining room to avoid being disturbed at dinner. The most common way of achieving this separation was with a butler’s pantry, usually with the two doors either off-axis or perpendicular to each other, as is the case in William Price’s design. This would have the added function of preventing any possibility of seeing the kitchen from the dining room, rendering it undetectable to the eyes, as well as the ears and nose.

Concerns over cooking odors have a history in the architecture of English country houses, as does the butler’s pantry itself. However, in contrast to American examples, the English butler’s pantry was a fairly large space, which was used as an office of sorts by the house’s butler, as well as a storage space for valuable plate or linen. Unlike American butler’s pantries, these rooms did not act as passageways between kitchen and dining room. Instead, architects of English country homes, who were even more concerned about cooking smells than Americans, generally located kitchens as far from the dining room as possible, at the far end of large service wings. In large country houses the effort involved in serving food could be extreme; in Lynford Hall in Norfolk, built 1856–61, the kitchen and dining room were separated by over 200 feet of hallway.\textsuperscript{49} Clearly, such an arrangement was neither desirable nor


possible for the middle-class homes published in the *Journal*, and a compact “butler’s pantry” was used instead.

Why this aversion to cooking odors? Part of the answer is undoubtedly technological; a kitchen in 1895 would not have ventilated ovens, hoods over stovetops, electric refrigerators, or other such modern equipment. Coal or wood-burning stoves produced smoke and carbon monoxide and often leaked, which could be dangerous in a poorly ventilated house.⁵⁰ When architects did not include a butler’s pantry in their plan, they often made a note of some kind of ventilating feature in the kitchen that made a pantry unnecessary.⁵¹ Clearly, the control of kitchen smells was a legitimate concern for turn-of-the-century homeowner.

At the same time, one should acknowledge that for many, ensuring separation between kitchen and dining room was more than a purely practical concern. During the late nineteenth century, dining rooms were conceived of as a place of family togetherness, as well as the site of the formal dinner party, the highest expression of Victorian gentility, which had begun to spread to American middle-class families by the 1880s.⁵² Kitchens, on the other hand, were sites of domestic labor, which could be laborious, dirty, and decidedly not genteel. Kitchens were also often treated as the domain of domestic servants. Tellingly, when some architects rejected the butler’s pantry, they did so arguing that such features were only appropriate for families who

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employed servants.\textsuperscript{53} While convenience dictated that kitchens and dining rooms be adjacent to each other, the two rooms were considered radically different in character. The butler’s pantry acted as a buffer between servant and master, production and consumption, labor and leisure.

The third kitchen door in William Price’s “Suburban Home” is located on the south wall of the kitchen, and opens onto a short hallway, only about eight feet long. On the west side of this hallway are two staircases, one leading down to the basement, and the other leading up to a landing which connects, via another door, to the house’s main stair, continuing up to the second floor. At the south end of the corridor is another door, which connects to the house’s main stair hall. Like the butler’s pantry, these passageways were common in the \textit{Ladies’ Home Journal} houses. While back staircases became less common in later plans, possibly due to their high cost of construction, passage to the hall would allow one to move from kitchen to the second story without passing through either dining or living room. Like the butler’s pantry, this corridor acted as a buffer, placing two doors in between the kitchen and the hall. It also provides an invisible path from the kitchen to the front door, and to the bedrooms located on the second floor. Price alludes to both of these functions in his description, when he writes, after describing the use of the butler’s pantry for protection from smells, “the kitchen should not open directly onto the hall for the same reason, but passage from kitchen to hall without going through

any other room is very desirable.”54 This was a commonly repeated opinion among the architects of the *Ladies’ Home Journal* houses, although none of them ever explicitly say why direct passage from kitchen to hall is so desirable. Speculatively, one can imagine a number of possible scenarios: the housewife going upstairs to change out of her work clothes before receiving a guest, or a servant answering the front door without disturbing the family eating dinner, to name two. In both cases one sees the same tension between connection and separation that I have previously discussed.

Looking at these different circulation patterns, it is perhaps misleading to speak of a simple dichotomy between isolation and connection. The kitchen has three doors, more than any other room in the house, including its own door to the outside. Price took deliberate care to ensure an almost direct connection between the kitchen and the dining room, second floor, hall, and front door. At the same time, Price took equal care to buffer the kitchen from each of these other spaces with two doors. The reconciliation of these two goals lead to the creation of a set of spaces dedicated to circulation, which, when added together, are roughly equal in size to the kitchen itself. While part of the service zone of the house, none of these spaces are primarily dedicated to cooking or domestic labor. Instead, they are dedicated to maintaining a particular set of relationships between the kitchen and those parts of the house intended for family and public use.

William Price was in no way unusual in this respect. Both in their plans and in their writing, the architects published in the *Ladies’ Home Journal* constantly

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stress the importance of these same connections between the kitchen and the dining room, hall, and exterior. Compared with some other plans, William Price’s connective spaces appear minimal. One 1900 plan by Bruce Price provides a particularly good example (Fig. 2). Bruce Price (no relation to William Price) was a well-known New York-based architect of residential, commercial, and civic buildings, executed in a mix of neo-Georgian, Gothic, Romanesque, and shingle styles.\(^{55}\) His second work for the *Ladies’ Home Journal*, “A Georgian House for Seven Thousand Dollars,” is striking for the way he clusters connective passages together in a thick knot behind the front hall. The arrangement of spaces is different from William Price’s earlier design, but we see the same basic elements: back door, butler’s pantry, passage from kitchen to hall, and two doors between the kitchen and any other room. In fact, in this plan the addition of a small vestibule means there are three doors between the kitchen and the dining room, and four between kitchen and hall. Seen clustered together, these spaces effectively create a sixth room on the ground floor.\(^{56}\)

While more complex than most, the 1900 “Georgian House” is indicative of another major technique in planning access to the kitchen. Where the 1895 “Suburban House for $3500” had three doors opening into the kitchen, Bruce Price’s “Georgian House” has only one, with the butler’s pantry acting as a kind of “routing station,” linking the dining room, hall, and kitchen. A simplified version of the same system is found in the 1907 plan for “A Complete Small Suburban House,” by Harry


G. McMurtie (Fig. 3). Here a central butler’s pantry discretely links the three other rooms on the first floor, while ensuring the customary two doors of separation. Unlike the “Georgian House,” however, here there is only one staircase, and the back porch opens directly into the kitchen.\(^{57}\)

Plans for two-story suburban houses varied widely in their arrangement of connective spaces. Frank Lloyd Wright’s 1907 “Fireproof House for $5000,” one of three Wright plans published in the \textit{Journal}, exhibits the kind of open, flowing space we associate with his Prairie Style houses from that period. The main mass of the house is essentially an open square, with a central fireplace and a walled off corner for the kitchen (Fig. 4). The simplicity and openness of Wright’s plan is innovative for the period, although many other plans in the \textit{Ladies’ Home Journal} were moving in a similar direction, particularly with regards to the opening up of dining and living rooms to one another. Wright is highly conventional, however, in the paths of circulation he sets up around the kitchen. Here there is no butler’s pantry; instead, a small, square vestibule, no wider than a doorframe, links the kitchen to the dining room on one side and the staircase on the other. Another door connects the kitchen to a back porch, the basement stairs, and the main entry hall by the side of the house. Again, Wright places at least two doors between the kitchen and any other room.\(^{58}\)

In this house one detects an awkwardness in Wright’s planning of service spaces. In many of his Prairie Style houses Wright strove to reflect the arrangement of internal spaces in the external presentation of his houses. Here, however, the


kitchen is simply walled off from the otherwise open cubic mass, with no visual reference in the house’s exterior. The lack of any halls or corridors means that Wright achieves the customary separation of the kitchen from living spaces through an accumulation of tightly spaced doors, in a house that is otherwise without doorways or even distinct rooms. Of the seven doors on the first floor of Wright’s “Fireproof House,” six of them relate directly to kitchen circulation. Yet Wright was not unconscious or critical of this arrangement. In the statement accompanying this plan Wright simultaneously touts the radical simplicity of his design, while referencing the traditional features of kitchen planning:

“No attic, no ‘butler’s pantry,’ no back stairway have been planned; they would be unnecessarily cumbersome in this scheme, which is trimmed to the last ounce of the superfluous… The open kitchen, with pantry conveniences built into it, is more pleasant and as useful as the complement of kitchen, kitchen pantry, and ‘butler’s pantry.’ Access to the stairs from the kitchen is sufficiently private at all times, and the front door may be easily reached from the kitchen without passing through the living room.”

This tension between the increasing openness of living spaces and the persistent segregation of service spaces is evident in many of the Ladies’ Home Journal plans, particularly as they grew simpler over time. By 1910 almost all the two-story suburban homes published in the Journal had only three rooms on the first floor: a dining room, a living room, and a kitchen, sometimes with a small hall dedicated primarily to circulation. Living and dining rooms also were growing closer together; some architects, like Wright in his “Fireproof House,” left them completely open to one another, while other architects separated them with wide doorframes that

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59 Ibid
could be sealed with screens or sliding doors. Suburban kitchens, however, were always planned as discrete rooms, and were almost always separated from the rest of the house by two doors, and provided with “sufficiently private” passage from kitchen to both the front door and the stairs. A centrally located butler’s pantry, called a “service hall” in some plans, was a fairly simple way of achieving this, but still seems out of place in a context where so many architects were engaged in a critique of the cramped spaces and unnecessary rooms which they saw as typical of an outdated Victorian aesthetic. In subsequent sections I hope to help clarify this apparent contradiction.

**Rural Living: Farmhouses and Summer Cottages**

Two-story suburban homes were always the most common plans published by the *Ladies’ Home Journal*, but they were never the only ones. Perhaps surprisingly, given the *Journal*’s large urban readership, only one plan for a row house was ever published, although a number of other houses were planned for narrow lots, and may have been built in an urban setting. Starting in 1900, however, the *Journal* did publish a number of plans for model farmhouses, even though the magazine does not appear to have been as popular in agricultural communities; one study has found a inverse correlation between the number of farms in a region and per capita readership.

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This discrepancy likely reflects the preferences of the *Journal’s* editors, who were consistently distrustful of many features of urban life, advocating home ownership over renting, and freestanding single-family houses over row houses, boarding houses, and apartment buildings. In contrast, rural and farm living, despite rapid industrialization and urbanization, was considered an integral, and often idealized part of the American landscape.

Between 1900 and 1902 the *Ladies’ Home Journal* ran a series of seven plans for model farmhouses, all by architect Robert C. Spencer, Jr., concurrent with a series of large suburban homes by well-known architects, including Frank Lloyd Wright, Bruce Price, and Wilson Eyre, Jr. Born in Milwaukee, Robert Spencer studied architecture at M.I.T., and worked briefly at the prominent Boston firm of Shepley, Rutan, and Coolidge, the successor firm to H.H. Richardson. Spencer later started his own practice in Chicago, where he shared office space with Frank Lloyd Wright, who became a close friend. Although Spencer practiced as an architect, he is now better known as a writer, having written the first long article on Wright for the *Architectural Review* in 1900. Spencer also produced numerous model home plans and essays on architecture for magazines like *House Beautiful* and the *Ladies’ Home Journal*. While Spencer published at least one plan for a model farmhouse outside of the *Journal*, it is unclear if he had any practical experience with farm design.64

Spencer’s plans of 1900–1902 were the first, and only, extended series of model farmhouses published in the *Journal*, although a handful of other farmhouse plans

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plans would be published over the following twenty years. The first appeared in October of 1900, under the title “A Good Farmhouse for $3500.” The accompanying perspective drawing depicts a low, horizontal structure with shingled walls and roof, set in a hilly, lightly wooded setting (Fig. 5). Behind the farmhouse the roof of a barn or stable is just visible. In his description, Spencer explains that the plan was designed for the temperate climates between the far northern and southern states, and that his guiding principles in his design were “the characteristics of farm life” themselves: “breadth, simplicity, and comfort.”

Looking to the plan, one immediately observes a number of differences between this farmhouse and the suburban homes published in the Journal. The farmhouse is only one story, with a large, protruding living room at the center of the plan. Behind the living room is the kitchen, with an adjoining laundry room. On the other side of the house, three bedrooms and a bathroom are arranged along a long corridor, along with another smaller room that, according to Spencer, “may serve as a library, office, or parlor.” Notably, the plan includes no dining room; Spencer explains that the living room is to act as dining room as well, and that the kitchen contains a side table for the feeding of “extra hands.” In this, Spencer follows the example of Andrew Jackson Downing, who, in his 1850 Architecture of Country Houses, included dining rooms only in his plans for “villas,” or middle- and upper-

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class homes, and not in plans for either working-class “cottages” or farmhouses, where dining was implied to take place in either the kitchen or living room.\textsuperscript{66}

Looking at the connective spaces surrounding the kitchen, one sees both differences and similarities compared to the suburban paradigm. There is a kitchen door, here opening onto an arbor in the back of the house, as well as a door connecting to the separate laundry room, which in suburban houses was usually located in the basement. Since Spencer’s plan contains no entry hall, only a small vestibule, passage from the kitchen to the front door is through the house’s living room, contrary to the conventions for suburban housing. Furthermore, here the kitchen is separated from the living and dining room by only one door, located next to the cellar stairs. Interestingly, it would have been easy to include a second door on the far side of the cellar stairs; such passageways were common in suburban houses, making the omission of a second door particularly striking here. However, the corridor in the bedroom wing connects to both the kitchen and the living room via two immediately adjacent doors, allowing passage from kitchen to bedroom without passing through the living room, and vice versa. These kinds of connections would later become common in plans for bungalows, which dealt with the same problem of ensuring privacy for bedrooms in a single-story plan. Finally, the kitchen connects to a small pantry containing the icebox, which also opens onto the exterior for deliveries. Given that this last feature was often used to prevent tradesmen from

entering the kitchen, its inclusion seems somewhat odd here, where the kitchen was explicitly intended as a dining area for hired laborers.

Compared with plans for suburban homes, the Journal’s farmhouse plans were far more heterogeneous in their planning of service spaces. Another plan by Spencer, published in January 1901 and titled “A Southern Farmhouse to Cost $3000,” places the kitchen in its own separate structure, connected to the main house only by a short covered passage. Downing included such a kitchen in his plan for “A Small Country House for the Southern States,” referring to it as a “peculiar feature in all Southern country houses.”\(^{67}\) Spencer makes a similar comment, saying “the isolation of the kitchen is desirable in Southern houses,” but not explaining why. This feature was probably related to both the local climate and to the nature of domestic service in the South. In hot weather it would be advantageous to place the heat of the kitchen far from the main house, but such an arrangement may also indicate a desire to keep the (predominantly black) domestic workers separate from family life. Spencer also notes that “no provision has been made for the housing of servants. They are supposed to have their own cottages.”\(^{68}\) This too was characteristic of Southern service; while live-in service was the norm in the North into the 1920s, servants in the South had always tended to live outside their employer’s home, sometimes in separate buildings on the same property.\(^{69}\)

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Only one of Spencer’s farmhouse plans includes a true butler’s pantry, the April 1901 “Shingled Farmhouse for $2700,” which also is one of only two plans to separate dining and living rooms. The other, which appeared the following month under the title “A Plaster Farmhouse for $2600,” is of particular interest for its combination of cooking and dining spaces, in the form of a large dining room open to an adjacent “cooking alcove” (Fig. 6). This is the first, and one of the only truly open kitchens to appear in the *Ladies’ Home Journal*. Spencer described this space thus:

The dining room and kitchen are almost one apartment, and are separated by the alcove treatment just enough to retain the convenience and economy of the old-fashioned farm kitchen, which usually serves as a dining room, and often as a living room also. With its low arch, ample window surface, and hood over the range, the alcove will be so well ventilated that the fumes of cooking will not be annoying.

Here Spencer justifies his open kitchen by pointing out ventilating features designed to control odors, something I have already mentioned in my discussion of butler’s pantries. Even more interesting, however, is the link Spencer draws to the “old-fashioned farm kitchen.” This remark indicates that Spencer is not looking forwards, but backwards, towards historic and rural vernacular architecture, rather than towards any modern notion of the “open plan.” It is worth comparing this passage with one by the progressive reformer and efficiency expert, Christine Frederick, in a 1913 article titled “How I Made my Country Kitchen Efficient.”

Fortunately it is small, only ten by twelve. I think most country kitchens are too large; they are often a combination sitting-

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room and kitchen, which is a poor plan, because it entails the presence of too many objects unrelated to the actual work. It is much better to have the sitting-room separate so that the tired cook may sit down in a different room from that she has worked in.

Later in the article she adds:

It is true that in the country there are many “varied industries” of milking, preserving, and stock-feeding which are wrongfully brought into the kitchen, so that the country kitchen is often prone to be the scene of confusion and a dumping-ground for all kinds of unrelated utensils and work. It is best to have, as many do, a separate outshed for these distinct tasks, letting the kitchen remain free for its chief purpose—the preparing of foods.\(^\text{72}\)

Frederick was possibly the best-known and most influential advocate of what was sometimes called “progressive housekeeping,” a movement that attempted to modernize and make efficient the various kinds of domestic labor through the use of scientific study. I will discuss the architectural implications of this movement in the following chapter, but it is important to note that for Frederick, the most efficient kitchen, and therefore the best kitchen, is small, functionally-specific, and architecturally discrete. From these examples it would appear that, at this point, open-planned kitchens were more associated with rustic “country kitchens” than with any modernist spatial program.

After the conclusion of the first series of seven model farmhouses in 1901, the *Ladies’ Home Journal* largely stopped publishing plans for working farms. However, starting in 1909, the *Journal* began publishing plans and photographs of old farm buildings that had been renovated or remodeled for use as either seasonal, or year-round dwellings. These were not model home plans, but rather examples of

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completed projects, sometimes with floor plans and sometimes without, and usually with a brief description of what kinds of changes had been effected. These projects varied widely both in the original structure and in the final result. One article explained how a barn had been remodeled into a small summer retreat for an artist, while another showed a New England farmhouse that had been expanded to serve as a country house, complete with a service wing containing kitchen, laundry, and servant’s quarters. A number of articles like these ran in the *Journal*, many of them published between 1909 and 1911, and generally with greater frequency during the spring and summer months.

These renovated structures do not have any typologically consistent internal arrangement, and their plans vary according to the limitations of the original structure and the needs of the owners. However, in both seasonal and year-round dwellings, there was typically not the same emphasis on the separation of service spaces that one sees in the planning of suburban homes. Some plans placed the kitchen in a separate room, but opening directly onto the dining room via a single door. In one remodeled farmhouse, apparently intended as a year-round home, the kitchen and dining room are one space, with sink and stove removed to an attached, but still open, alcove (Fig. 7). Another example of an open kitchen, here a small “kitchenette”

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attached to a “dining alcove,” is seen in a 1911 plan for a barn renovated to become a two-family house, also apparently for year-round use.\textsuperscript{77} While the \textit{Journal} did publish plans for renovated farm buildings with more traditionally planned service zones, including butler’s pantries,\textsuperscript{78} the association between open kitchens and farm buildings is striking.

So far I have looked mostly at year-round homes, but I would like to change focus to examine the other kind of rural housing commonly published in the \textit{Ladies’ Home Journal}: summer homes. The \textit{Journal} published plans for summer homes much more regularly than plans for farms, with the first one appearing in 1897, only two years after the launch of the \textit{Journal}’s model home campaign. Summer homes were generally smaller, cheaper, and simpler than the suburban houses in the \textit{Journal}, and could be as simple as a large tent\textsuperscript{79}, or as complex as a two-story, eight-room house.\textsuperscript{80} Compared with plans for farmhouses, these plans may have been of greater interest to the \textit{Journal}’s readership; while the \textit{Ladies’ Home Journal} was not particularly popular in agricultural communities, it did have a strong base in the urban and suburban middle class, a group that was at this time building summer homes in large numbers.\textsuperscript{81}

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{77} Una Nixson Hopkins, “Once a Barn–Now a Two-Family House,” \textit{Ladies’ Home Journal}, February 1911, 17.
\item \textsuperscript{78} Howard S. Chandler, “What I Did With an Old Farmhouse,” \textit{Ladies’ Home Journal}, February 1911, 17.
\item \textsuperscript{80} “A Summer Home in the Woods,” \textit{Ladies’ Home Journal}, June 1914, 71.
\end{itemize}
The first plan for a summer home published in the *Ladies’ Home Journal* was “A $1500 Summer Cottage,” by Ashton Pentecost, which appeared in February of 1897 (Fig. 8). At the time, this was the cheapest plan ever published in the *Journal*; the architect explains that this low cost is made possible by the lack of cellar, heating system, and insulation that would be required in a house built for year-round occupation. In plan, this cottage is not so different from low-cost houses published in the *Journal*. A large central hall runs through the house, with a dining room on one side and another room, labeled “reception room or library” is across from it. The kitchen is located behind the dining room in a small, single-story ell. The kitchen has the traditional attached porch, and access to the dining room is through a small “serving closet,” which also opens directly onto the hall, ensuring the traditional two doors of separation in each direction. There is only one set of stairs, which are located in a “stair hall” adjacent to the main hall. The plan is simple and compact, but does not vary significantly from the kinds of plans used in year-round or suburban homes.\(^8^2\)

Starting around 1909, the *Ladies’ Home Journal* started publishing plans for summer homes with increasing regularity. These ranged from one room summer “camps,” costing as little as $100, to much larger and more permanent houses.\(^8^3\) It is difficult to draw generalizations across such a broad range of structures, but compared with year-round homes, these houses were far more likely to have a one room serve as both living room and dining room, and were also more likely to have


only one door in between the kitchen and the dining area. Both these trends can be seen in one plan from June 1909, by Carey Edmunds, which appeared under the title “The Rustic Summer House” (Fig. 9). Here a large living room with exposed rafters serves as a dining area, with a small kitchen attached to the rear of the house, separated by a single door.\textsuperscript{84} In extremely cheap or simple plans cooking was sometimes conducted in living areas as well, although it is difficult to compare these rudimentary structures with the plans of suburban homes.\textsuperscript{85}

However, a more relaxed, less formal architecture does seem to have been characteristic of even large, expensive summer homes. Vincent Scully has written about two summer “cottages” built in Kennebunkport, Maine in the early 1880s, both of which feature a single combined living/dining room. This was not for lack of space or money, however; one of these houses included a private bowling alley and both had multiple rooms for servants. Scully attributes this to the informality of summer living, which permitted a spatial openness not otherwise possible in middle or upper class homes.\textsuperscript{86} Alternatively, this could be interpreted as an issue of class identity. In year-round homes both the form and use of architectural spaces could be powerful tools for representing one’s social class. In contrast, ownership of a second home was in itself a status symbol, meaning that adherence to particular standards may not have been as necessary for maintaining respectability.

\textsuperscript{86} Scully, \textit{Shingle Style}, 88–89.
Compared with plans for suburban houses, plans for rural homes were less homogenous, and more responsive to cost, climate, and local traditions. They were less likely to contain butler’s pantries, or similar transitional spaces, and they often combined dining rooms with living rooms, or less commonly, with cooking spaces. In some cases, these arrangements were associated with historic, or “old-fashioned” models, while in other cases they may have been related to the relative informality of summer living. Some suburban homes published in the *Ladies’ Home Journal* did place only one door between kitchen and dining room, or combined living and dining rooms. However, these features generally appeared both later and less frequently in plans for suburban homes than in plans for farms and summer residences. In the following section, I will examine plans for bungalows, which the *Ladies’ Home Journal* published in large numbers starting in the early twentieth century. Bungalows represent a significant building typology themselves, but also draw from plans for both summer cottages and year-round suburban homes, and represent a potential point of relation between these two types.

**The Bungalow**

A bungalow is a difficult thing to define. The word itself comes from India, where the Bengali noun *bangla* refers to a low house surrounded by galleries or verandas, and is also identical to a Hindi and Hindustani adjective meaning “from Bengal.” During the nineteenth century the term was widely used to describe the
rudimentary, thatch-roofed structures used in the field by the British military.\textsuperscript{87} Despite these Indian origins, bungalows built in England or the United States very rarely have any direct connection to Indian architecture. Instead, the term seems to have taken on a life of its own in each of those countries, coming to describe a range of structures that often shared formal characteristics, but that also could vary widely in terms of scale, plan, and style. This has sometimes made it difficult for historians to agree on what should and should not be considered a bungalow. Notably, Clay Lancaster in his 1985 book \textit{The American Bungalow}, argues that, based on their formal qualities, the Prairie Style houses of Frank Lloyd Wright and his contemporaries are essentially bungalows, despite never being described as such at the time of their construction.\textsuperscript{88} On the other hand, Anthony King, in his 1995 book \textit{The Bungalow}, has argued against such a classification, contending instead that bungalows and prairie houses were simply products of a similar set of cultural and social forces.\textsuperscript{89} I will, for the most part, sidestep questions of classification by using the term “bungalow” only to refer to those buildings described as such by the writers and editors of the \textit{Ladies’ Home Journal}. At the same time, I hope to show that plans for bungalows in the \textit{Journal} were responding to forces that were also shaping the plans of houses not included under that label.

The first known British house to be called a bungalow was a summer home built in 1869, in a seaside resort in Westgate-by-the-Sea. Designed by John Taylor,

\textsuperscript{88} \textit{Ibid} p95–109
\textsuperscript{89} Anthony D. King, \textit{The Bungalow: The Production of a Global Culture} (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995), 154.
the house was a large, low structure, containing at least thirteen rooms.\textsuperscript{90}

Construction of bungalows increased in Britain over the second half of the nineteenth century, and architect R.A. Briggs built a number of bungalows in East Grinstead, and also published a book called \textit{Bungalow and Country Residences} in 1891. The 1880s and 90s also saw the first appearances of houses called bungalows in America. The idea of the bungalow seems to have come to America from Britain via professional connections between architects, or possibly through British pattern books crossing the Atlantic.\textsuperscript{91} While the bungalow continued to evolve as a building type in England and elsewhere in the British Empire, it is the American bungalow that interests us here.

The first known American house to be described as a bungalow, designed by William G. Preston, was built in Monument Beach, Massachusetts in 1880 and was published in the \textit{American Architect and Building News} in March of that year. Unlike most later bungalows, it was a high, two-and-a-half story building, executed in a variant of the stick style. It is unclear what defined this building as a bungalow in the eyes of its architect, although it may have been the large, continuous veranda wrapping the building, which has parallels in Indian architecture.\textsuperscript{92} A seaside summer home, this early bungalow was built at a time when American resort towns were growing at a rapid pace, concentrated primarily along the northeast Atlantic coast. Early American bungalows seem to have been associated with these kinds of developments; all known nineteenth century American bungalows appear to have

\begin{flushleft}
\textsuperscript{90} Lancaster, \textit{The American Bungalow}, 34–35.
\textsuperscript{91} King, \textit{The Bungalow}, 130.
\textsuperscript{92} Lancaster, \textit{The American Bungalow}, 77–78.
\end{flushleft}
been intended as summer homes, and almost all of them were found in the northeast states. Descriptions of these early bungalows emphasized their use as summer homes, and it is possible that this may have been one of the defining characteristics of the bungalow in the eyes of nineteenth-century American architects.\footnote{King, \textit{The Bungalow}, 128–130.}

This association carried over into the twentieth century, and is repeated in the pages of \textit{The Craftsman}, a magazine critical in popularizing the bungalow in America. Founded in 1901 by Gustav Stickley, \textit{The Craftsman} was an important advocate of the American Arts and Crafts movement, publishing articles on architecture, art, and design with an emphasis on “simplicity, harmony with nature, and the promotion of craftsmanship.” Starting in 1903, \textit{The Craftsman} also began publishing a large number of plans for bungalows, as part of their larger series of “Craftsman Homes.” These bungalows were initially always assumed to be summer homes, and descriptions emphasized their simplicity and rusticity. Stickley put it plainly: the bungalow was “nothing more or less than a summer residence of extreme simplicity, economic construction, and intended for more or less primitive living.”\footnote{\textit{Ibid} 134.}

In appearance these bungalows were low, one- to one-and-a-half story dwellings with low-pitched roofs, executed primarily in rustic stone and shingles. Bungalows were seen as representative of “simple living,” conducted away from the annoyances of modern urban life.\footnote{\textit{Ibid} 134–135.} They were also often represented as a masculine housing type, presented in contrast to the more ornate, formal, and “feminine” domestic architecture
of the nineteenth century. A poem titled “The Bungalow,” and published in a 1915 builder’s magazine put it thus:

“Here the home of American manhood
Independent and true in his life
With a welcome for friends and for neighbors
To share with his children and wife.”

While Stickley was promoting the bungalow as summer housing, another vision of the bungalow was emerging in California, particularly in the area around Los Angeles. While some “California bungalows” were summer homes, over the first decade of the twentieth century the bungalow was increasingly adopted as a cheap and easily built suburban home. This occurred simultaneously with the development of a new kind of decentralized urbanism, most evident in the city of Los Angeles, which doubled in size between 1900 and 1910. This expanding population was overwhelmingly housed in single-family homes; by 1930, 94% of Los Angeles residents lived in single-family homes, more than any other city in America. The bungalow acted as a cheap, simple, and “artistic” architectural model for this new suburban metropolis. The use of the bungalow as suburban home soon attracted attention outside of California; in 1906 The Craftsman published an article titled “The Bungalow: Its possibilities as a permanent home.” Eight years later, Helen Lukens Gaut wrote a similar article in the Ladies’ Home Journal titled “The All-The-Year-Round Bungalow.” In it, she wrote, “just a few years ago the all-the-year-round

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98 King, The Bungalow, 139–142.
99 Ibid 143.
bungalow was practically unheard of except in California and in our extreme Southern States. Now there is a steadily growing demand for these comfortable, compactly arranged houses, from all over the country."\textsuperscript{100}

The first appearance of the term “bungalow” in the \textit{Ladies’ Home Journal} came ten years earlier, in January of 1904, when the Journal published fifteen photographs of California bungalows, taken by W.H. Hill, a regular contributor of architectural photographs.\textsuperscript{101} While the article does not specify where in California these photographs were taken, other features by Hill identify him as being from Pasadena, which was also the home of Helen Lukens Gaut, who contributed many photographs of bungalows to the \textit{Journal}, and Una Nixson Hopkins, who contributed a number of plans for bungalows and other houses.\textsuperscript{102} A center for the development of the California bungalow, Pasadena was also home to Charles Sumner Greene and Henry Mather Greene, the architects of a number of large “ultimate bungalows,” including the Gamble House, built in 1908–1909.\textsuperscript{103} Pasadena was likewise the site of a number of early “bungalow courts,” speculatively built developments of small bungalows grouped around a central open space.\textsuperscript{104} Not surprisingly, Pasadena would feature heavily in many \textit{Ladies’ Home Journal} articles about bungalows.

\textsuperscript{100} Helen Lukens Gaut, “The All-The-Year-Round Bungalow” \textit{Ladies’ Home Journal}, July 1914, 29.
\textsuperscript{104} \textit{Ibid} 146–149.
Interestingly, this first mention of bungalows in the *Journal* does not include any definition of the term, suggesting that readers were assumed to already be familiar, or at least aware, of the bungalow as an architectural type. The bungalows pictured are described as having between five and nine rooms, and range in cost from $1600 to $5000. All are fairly low structures, either one or one-and-a-half stories high, but otherwise range widely in style. Most have low-pitched hipped or side-gabled roofs, but one “cottage bungalow” features a steep, front-facing gable. Several of the bungalows are executed in a simple variation of the “craftsman” style, with shingled roofs and exposed rafters and trusses. However, also included is a bungalow in a Japanese-influenced style, and another one is paradoxically described as both a bungalow and a Swiss chalet.105 Most of the bungalows published were generally “craftsman” in style, but this was never a defining characteristic; “colonial bungalows” were apparently highly popular among readers of the *Journal.*106

While the *Journal* ran a few more collections of bungalow photographs over the next two years, it is not until April of 1907 that a plan for a bungalow was published. This was not a California bungalow, but “An $1850 New England Cottage,” built in the mountains of Vermont (Fig. 10). Describing his plan, the architect, Charles St. J. McRee, wrote “the ‘bungalow’ type was finally decided upon, as offering the maximum of convenience with the minimum of expense, giving at the same time a home pleasing in appearance internally and externally.” In practice this meant a one-and-a-half story shingled structure with a veranda wrapping around the

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front part of the house. The first story contains a living room, dining room, bedroom, and bathroom; two more bedrooms are located in the attic. The kitchen is in a small, attached ell, along with a woodshed. Access to the kitchen is made either through the woodshed or from the dining room, via a butler’s pantry. This provides the conventional two doors of separation, but means that one must pass through the dining room on the way to the kitchen, something generally avoided in two-story suburban houses. In this it is not unlike earlier plans for other summer cottages.

The first Ladies’ Home Journal plan to be explicitly labeled a bungalow ran two months later, in June of 1907. Titled “A Comfortable Bungalow for $1500,” the house was designed by Robert C. Spencer, in his first appearance in the Journal since the conclusion of the model farmhouse series in 1901 (Fig. 11). Spencer describes the house as a summer home, saying that the low price is made possible by using “the most inexpensive construction consistent with mild-weather comfort.” However, Spencer also takes particular note of the fact that his plan contains separate dining and living rooms, with the dining room “so placed as to afford complete privacy, so that if built, for example, in a California suburb or a small town, the house would be suited to more formal and conventional use than one usually expects of a bungalow in the woods or at the seaside.” This remark is interesting for a number of reasons. First, the fact that Spencer made special note of the separation of dining and living rooms suggests that such an arrangement was not considered entirely typical in summer

bungalows. Second, it shows that even though Spencer is primarily treating the bungalow as seasonal housing, he is aware of its use as year-round suburban housing in California, and possibly elsewhere. Finally, it suggests that the planning of year-round or suburban bungalows may have differed from plans for earlier summer bungalows, particularly in their treatment of the dining room.

Spencer’s plan is roughly L-shaped, with one wing containing the bedrooms and bath arranged along a hallway, and the other wing containing a large projecting living room with dining room and kitchen behind it. There are two different front doors, both opening onto a recessed porch. One door opens directly onto the living room, while the other opens onto the hallway that connects the bedrooms and kitchen. These two separate but adjacent doors contribute to what Spencer approvingly refers to as “the practical isolation of the bedroom suite from the living portion.” Located at the rear of the house, the kitchen has the conventional back door and kitchen porch, but less conventionally, the kitchen opens directly onto the dining room, without any mediating passage. This was to become more or less typical in the Journal’s bungalow plans; of all the bungalow plans published between 1907 and 1919, about seventy percent of them had only one door between kitchen and dining room. For comparison, during the same time period, less than a quarter of all plans for two-story suburban houses omitted a butler’s pantry. Also typical of later bungalow plans is the door connecting the kitchen to the back hall. The functional equivalent of a back staircase in a two-story home, this door permits one to move from the kitchen to the bedrooms without moving through any of the public parts of the house. Despite
being located on a single floor, the separation of sleeping and living spaces was as important in bungalows as in any two-story house.  

Bungalows also frequently combined living and dining rooms into a single open space, although this became more common in two-story houses as well, particularly after 1910. In April of 1913 the *Journal* ran an article written by Una Nixon Hopkins, describing an already built “bungalow court” development of thirty houses. Although not named as such, the development pictured appears to be Bowen’s Court, built in Pasadena, by local architect Arthur S. Heineman. In addition to photographs, this article also included plans for two one-bedroom bungalows, and another plan for a double bungalow of two attached apartments, all of which feature a combination living/dining room (Fig. 12). This article is also representative of the increasing variety in the *Ladies’ Home Journal*’s architectural content, which after 1910 began to publish a significant number of articles describing already-built houses and multi-unit houses, rather than simply providing model home plans for potential homeowners. Among contributors to the *Journal*, Hopkins was perhaps the leader in this trend, publishing plans for a number of programmatically unconventional dwellings, including houses for multiple single women, houses for

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110 Ibid
women who work at home,\textsuperscript{114} and a “house built for children,”\textsuperscript{115} as well as a community center\textsuperscript{116} and a church.\textsuperscript{117}

Between 1909 and 1914, the \textit{Ladies’ Home Journal} published large numbers of plans for bungalows, as well as photographs, many of them taken by Helen Lukens Gaut of Pasadena, documenting built examples. Often multiple plans were published on a one page, and the titles of these series give some sense of the values associated with the bungalow as a type; “The Little-Money Bungalow,”\textsuperscript{118} “The Easy Housekeeping Bungalow,”\textsuperscript{119} and “The Comfortable Bungalow in California”\textsuperscript{120} are all representative. The ideas of comfort, simplicity, and efficiency were constantly reinforced in reference to bungalow plans. These plans tended to be relatively cheap, with many of them listing prices under $2000 dollars. These low construction costs were treated as the result of good design, and a testament to the simplicity of the plan. This stands in contrast to earlier \textit{Ladies’ Home Journal} plans for low-cost houses, which had tended to treat affordable housing as a challenge for the architect to overcome; one plan from 1896 ran under the rather unenthusiastic title of “A Livable

\textsuperscript{117} Una Nixson Hopkins, “The Homelike Little Church,” \textit{Ladies’ Home Journal}, March 1914, 45.
House for $2000,” 121 while another cautioned that when building a low-cost house, the central question must be “what one can do without, rather than what one could get.” 122 Plans for bungalows rejected this idea, instead associating low prices with coziness and simplicity. Describing a plan with the astonishingly low price of four hundred dollars, Helen Lukens Gaut wrote, “isn’t this a charming little cottage for a bride and bridegroom to begin life in?” References to “honeymoon homes” conjured up images of intimacy and comfort, while also suggesting that the young couple may one day move to a more substantial dwelling. 123

In the text accompanying one set of bungalow photos, titled “The One Thousand Dollar Bungalow,” Helen Lukens Gaut described one bungalow by saying, “while it has all the modern conveniences it suggests the ‘simple life’ in a most attractive form.” 124 This coexistence of “modern conveniences” and simple living lay at the heart of the bungalow’s appeal. Cheryl Robertson has explicitly addressed this duality in her 1991 article, “Male and Female Agendas for Domestic Reform: The Middle-Class Bungalow in Gendered Perspective,” where she argues that the drive for simplicity in bungalow plans derives from two distinct, and gendered, agendas:

“Thus, the male version of the simple life was generally backward-looking, rustic, and combative, in contrast to the female

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embrace of modern conveniences, streamlined work routines, and efficient management as the essence of a simplified life-style.”

Robertson sees the male agenda as best epitomized by the den, a new kind of male retreat within the home, which seemed to evolve in conjunction with the bungalow. The female agenda, Robertson argues, is embodied in the bungalow kitchen, which became the subject of increased attention in architectural texts during the progressive era as domestic reformers, most of them female, attempted to make housework easier and more efficient through architectural reform.

While Robertson’s parsing of the “simple life” into gendered perspectives is instructive, I believe she misinterprets the progressive agenda with regards to the design of kitchens. According to Robertson, bungalow kitchens were designed to be large, artistic, and a center of family life, a combination of “sitting room, boudoir, and laboratory.” Such a conclusion is not supported by an examination of the bungalow plans published in the *Ladies’ Home Journal*. Robertson contrasts bungalow kitchens with their “Victorian-era progenitor,” which had been a “segregated, servant-run domain, appended at the back of the house.” However, bungalow plans in the *Journal* overwhelmingly placed kitchens in the rear of houses, and sometimes even in appended, shed-roofed ells. Robertson refers to an 1884 plan in which the kitchen is slightly larger than the living room as evidence of

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125 Cheryl Robertson, “Male and Female Agendas for Domestic Reform: The Middle Class Bungalow in Gendered Perspective,” *Winterthur Portfolio* 26, no. 2/3 (1991), 133.
127 *Ibid* 129.
128 *Ibid* 127.
progressive interest in housework, but this was not the case in any of the plans found in the *Ladies’ Home Journal*, for bungalows or other kinds of houses. Instead, domestic reformers routinely praised small kitchens as the best and most efficient.\(^{130}\) Plans for bungalows published in the *Journal* are near-unanimous in their treatment of the kitchen as a distinct room, dedicated to work, without space for dining or socializing. Occasionally plans made reference to “breakfast alcoves” (now more commonly called “breakfast nooks”) built into the kitchen, but these were relatively rare, and reformers like Christine Frederick argued it was both more efficient and restful to eat outside of the kitchen once one had finished working.\(^{131}\) Despite its rustic associations, bungalow plans in the *Ladies’ Home Journal* did not return to the “old-fashioned farm kitchen,”\(^{132}\) or, to use Robertson’s phrasing “the multipurpose living hall inhabited by the pre-industrial pioneer, or colonial, family.”\(^{133}\)

What kinds of generalizations, then, is it possible to make about the planning of service spaces in the *Ladies’ Home Journal* bungalows? Like summer homes (which they often were), bungalows were less uniform in their internal arrangement than two-story suburban homes. Similarly, bungalows were less likely to contain some features common in two-story homes, particularly butler’s pantries. However, many bungalow plans did contain butler’s pantries, and many others included other


\(^{133}\) Cheryl Robertson, “Male and Female Agendas for Domestic Reform: The Middle Class Bungalow in Gendered Perspective,” *Winterthur Portfolio* 26, no. 2/3 (1991), 130.
features intended to segregate the kitchen, including private passage from the kitchen to the bedrooms. This could mean connecting the kitchen to a central hallway, or, as is the case in two 1914 plans by Helen Lukens Gaut, linking one of the bedrooms to a back hall that also connected the kitchen and the back porch (Fig. 21). These back hallways are analogous to back staircases, in that they provide a route from the kitchen to a bedroom that is completely separate from other circulation areas in the house. While the exact form of these spaces is particular to the one-story plans of bungalows, they address a concern that predates the bungalow as a type. The fact that these new kinds of spaces were developed indicates an active, as opposed to merely vestigial, interest in the continued segregation of the kitchen.

Bungalows in the *Ladies’ Home Journal* do not display a fundamentally different approach to the planning of service spaces compared with two-story homes. Like two-story homes, they often contained butler’s pantries, back hallways, kitchen porches, and other features intended to control and conceal circulation around the kitchen. Where they differ is in their relatively irregular use of these kinds of connective spaces. Where two-story suburban homes were relatively consistent, even formulaic, in terms of the circulation patterns that were provided for, bungalows were anything but. This may indicate that in the case of bungalow plans, the segregation of the kitchen was relatively less important, or was weighed against the need for compactness, simplicity, and economy of construction. However, I do not believe that the bungalow represents a rejection, either conscious or unconscious, of the

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interest in private passage to and from the kitchen that is characteristic of other plans in the *Ladies’ Home Journal*.

**World War I and Bok’s Retirement**

Between 1915 and 1919, the *Ladies’ Home Journal* published no model home plans at all, although it continued to regularly print photographs of built houses, as well as numerous articles about home decoration and furnishing. The reason for this sudden disappearance of model home plans is not clear, and the *Journal* made no statement explaining the suspension of the department. However, it is likely that this disappearance was due to the effects of World War I on the housing market. Starting in 1914, building costs began to rise, even prior to the United States joining the war, and soon after the housing market fell suddenly, and didn’t begin to recover until after 1921. Under these conditions, the editors of the *Journal* may have felt that there was less interest in plans explicitly aimed at prospective homebuilders.

Wartime also placed a number of new demands on both Bok and the *Ladies’ Home Journal*. Bok had learned of the United States’ imminent entry into the war in January of 1917, when he traveled to Washington to confer with government officials about the situation. In March of that year he again returned to Washington, this time to speak to President Wilson, to whom Bok offered the services of the *Journal* during wartime. Even prior to the declaration of war, the *Journal* had already begun to prepare, dedicating its Washington office solely towards making the *Journal* a “war

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magazine.” When the United States did declare war in April 1917, the Journal was one of the first monthly magazines to acknowledge the fact, not a simple feat given that the Journal had to be sent to press a full six weeks prior to publication.\(^{136}\)

Rather than send correspondents to the front, something that Bok thought the Journal ill-suited to, Bok focused the magazine’s energies almost entirely towards covering the effects of the war at home, as well as serving as a semi-official mouthpiece for various wartime government agencies. During these years the Journal regularly published messages about thrift, rationing, war bonds, and charity work, directly submitted by the U.S. Food Administration, the Department of Agriculture, the Treasury, the War Industries Board, the Fuel Administration, and the Committee on Public Information, as well as publishing monthly features by the Red Cross and the Y.M.C.A. Bok was busy with the war outside of his position as editor, serving as part of the Y.M.C.A.’s National War Work Council, as well as a Boy Scout commissioner in his hometown of Merion, Pennsylvania.\(^{137}\) Later, Bok traveled to England with twelve other magazine editors at the invitation of the British government, and visited various American military sites in France, at some points coming under artillery fire.\(^{138}\) In this context, the publication of model home plans may not have been considered a priority.

After the end of the war, however, the Ladies’ Home Journal again turned a great deal of attention to the question of domestic architecture, first beginning with a three-part series titled “How Are We Going to Live,” about new trends in domestic


\(^{137}\) *Ibid* 387–399.

architecture and housing policy. Writers for the *Journal* seemed to believe that the end of war would lead to widespread changes in American home life, and throughout 1919 the magazine took on a more speculative, and at times utopian, tone. In addition to articles on town planning and government assistance in home financing, the *Journal* published a number of pieces discussing two possible developments: the disappearance of the dining room and, more radically, the disappearance of the private kitchen, in favor of collective kitchens and food delivery services. This was an idea that had been in circulation in America since the middle of the nineteenth century, appearing in a number of different forms. While writers like Charlotte Perkins Gilman had proposed large “feminist apartment hotels” with central kitchens and kitchenless apartments as early as 1903, the *Journal* stayed firm in its commitment to the single-family house, but suggested that in the future food may be produced collectively outside of the private home and delivered, akin to the centralized production of heat and light by gas and electric companies. There was a sense among some writers that domestic production of any kind was outdated and anti-modern; as the writer Zona Gale put it in one article, “the private kitchen must go the way of the spinning wheel, of which it is the contemporary.” While these kinds of ideas had been covered in the popular press before, the fact that the *Ladies’ Home Journal* had devoted several months to the topic indicated a larger interest in these ideas. The *Journal* published at least seven articles on two possible developments: the disappearance of the dining room and, more radically, the disappearance of the private kitchen in favor of collective kitchens and food delivery services. This was an idea that had been in circulation in America since the middle of the nineteenth century, appearing in a number of different forms. While writers like Charlotte Perkins Gilman had proposed large “feminist apartment hotels” with central kitchens and kitchenless apartments as early as 1903, the *Journal* stayed firm in its commitment to the single-family house, but suggested that in the future food may be produced collectively outside of the private home and delivered, akin to the centralized production of heat and light by gas and electric companies. There was a sense among some writers that domestic production of any kind was outdated and anti-modern; as the writer Zona Gale put it in one article, “the private kitchen must go the way of the spinning wheel, of which it is the contemporary.” While these kinds of ideas had been covered in the popular press before, the fact that the *Ladies’ Home Journal* had devoted several months to the topic indicated a larger interest in these ideas.

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140 Hayden, *The Grand Domestic Revolution* is the major work on feminist plans for the collectivization of cooking and housework.


Journal considered such a radical restructuring of the domestic economy is indicative of the spirit of change that characterized the Journal in the period immediately following the First World War.

Discussions of the elimination of dining rooms were different in character, and based on a critique of the dining room as an unnecessary space, used only for small amounts of time each day, and often dedicated to an unseemly kind of social display. In all of these critiques there is a direct parallel to the Journal’s earlier campaign against the formal parlor, which, by 1919, was widely considered to be outdated and pretentious. In an article titled “The New House Without a Dining Room: A Bit Startling Until You Begin to Think About It,” Carey Edmunds wrote, “and is the idea of a dining-roomless house any more an innovation than our suggestion, some years ago, of a parlorless house? ...and yet how many modern houses are burdened now with that useless room [the parlor]?”144 Another writer went even further in his condemnation of the dining room, writing, “if you choose to go far enough back into ancient pagan times you will discover, I believe, that our present dining room is really a converted pagan chapel in which, in those days, meat sacrifices were made.”145 Bok was proud of his role in the campaign against the parlor, and he may have wished to lead the way in another progressive simplification of the American home before his imminent retirement.146

In the plans and articles published by the Journal, the elimination of the dining room meant that eating was to occur in the living room, rather than in the

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kitchen, or in some other hybrid space. Furniture particular to the dining room, like buffets and china closets, were to be eliminated as well, or hidden through “architectural camouflage” so as to be invisible when not in use. The living room was to connect to the kitchen, either via a butler’s pantry or through a single door.\textsuperscript{147} In other cases, a china-closet, disguised on one side as a curtained French door, opens onto both the kitchen and the living room, so that food and dishes may be discretely passed through.\textsuperscript{148} Notably, the \textit{Journal} did not publish plans for “dining-roomless” houses where the kitchen was the primary eating space; the nature of the kitchen, apparently, was not to be effected by this elimination of the dining room. This stands in contrast to the open “country kitchens” seen in some earlier farmhouse plans.

The one exception to this is a single plan published in February of 1919, in an article titled “Uncle Sam’s New Houses That You May Have Heard About,” part of the department “The Last Four Pages: Edited by the Office Dog.” This was a department that briefly ran at the end of every issue, featuring assorted content, ostensibly clippings collected from the floor by the eponymous dog. The exact involvement of “Uncle Sam” in the production of these plans is unclear, but the dog informs us that hundreds of houses have already been built from them. In this plan the first floor features only a large living room on one side, and a combination dining-room and kitchen on the other, separated by an entry hallway with a staircase to the second floor; in this it is reminiscent of both Catharine Beecher’s “American

Woman’s Home,” and the traditional New England hall-and-parlor house (Fig. 13). In the brief description of this plan the office dog writes, “This is his [Uncle Sam’s] idea of combining the kitchen and the dining room; and on page 3 of this issue THE HOME JOURNAL editors will show you their ideas of the dining-roomless house.” In the article mentioned, as in all Ladies’ Home Journal plans for dining-roomless houses, the kitchen remained separate from both living and dining areas; the quote above seems to suggest that this was the established policy of the Journal.

Along with the elimination of the dining room, house plans published in the Journal after World War I were also far more likely to contain breakfast rooms or alcoves. Breakfast rooms were small rooms adjacent to the kitchen where a family could enjoy an informal breakfast, or where a housewife could eat lunch by herself, in contrast to the (presumably) more formal family dinner, held in the dining room. References to breakfast rooms often emphasized that they saved labor by preventing the dining room from being disturbed before dinner, and therefore needing to be cleaned. The first breakfast room to appear in the Journal was in a plan for an “old English house” from 1901, where it was separated from the kitchen by a butler’s pantry, similar to the dining room. While occasionally alluded to in home decoration articles, the breakfast room does not appear in any model home plans until 1909, when Una Nixson Hopkins included a “breakfast porch” in one of her plans,

149 Hayden, Grand Domestic Revolution, 58.
and then a “dining alcove” in another plan from 1911. After this, the breakfast room is again absent from the Journal’s model home plans until after World War I.

The first post-war plans ran in March of 1919 under the triumphant title, “Now We Can Build Again: And Here is the After-the-War House.” Five photographs of bungalows were printed on a single page, each of which was accompanied by two different floor plans, representing different possible internal arrangements. The origin of these plans is somewhat unclear; while the article is written by Carey Edmunds, the Journal’s architectural writer in this period, the design is attributed to the firm of Gobner & Gates. It is possible that these plans were originally part of a mass-housing project, where potential buyers could choose between different floor plans for the same house. Alternately, since the attribution to Gobner & Gates was printed only under the photographs, and not the floor plans, it is possible that one or both sets of plans may have been produced by Edmunds himself, using the built work of Gobner & Gates as a starting point. This seems a more likely explanation, since the alternate plans all have different footprints in the rear of the house, while staying constant at the front, the view captured in the photographs.

For each of the five bungalows, one of the provided floor plans features a combined living room and dining room, while the other plan kept them separate, but connected them via a wide door frame or archway. Edmunds explains this by saying that while the dining room is generally a waste of space, he has tried to meet the

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demands of “the more conservative people who would not feel that the house was a home if it did not have a dining room.” None of the plans presented contain butler’s pantries, and the kitchen connects directly to the dining area via a single door. This was typical of the Journal’s post-war houses; of the thirty-nine plans published in 1919, only two of them feature butler’s pantries. Six of the ten plans published here contain either a breakfast room or alcove, including plans both with and without separate dining rooms. Nevertheless, Edmunds associates the breakfast room with dining-roomless houses in his accompanying text, writing, “where the dining room and living room are combined it is possible to have a breakfast or luncheon alcove built off the kitchen, or a small breakfast room near it. This leaves the living room-dining room undisturbed except at dinner.”

Given that the elimination of the dining room had been argued on the basis that it was an underutilized space, it seems odd that breakfast rooms should be simultaneously praised for allowing the living/dining room to be used less.

Furthermore, it should be noted that breakfast rooms and alcoves were never the only eating space in any of the Journal’s plans; in fact, of the plans published in 1919, it was more common to provide both a dining room and a breakfast room than to eliminate the dining room. The breakfast room or alcove, then, can be considered in two distinct ways. On the one hand, it represents a gradual easing of the long-standing separation of cooking and dining into distinct architectural spaces. On the other hand, the breakfast room can be seen as a way of separating formal and informal dining, and preserving the serenity (or gentility) of combined living/dining

\[155\] Ibid
spaces. Again, this points to the difficulty of describing architectural change in simple terms of “openness” or “segregation.”

Also interesting is that two of the plans in this first set of post-war houses have doors directly connecting the kitchen to one of the bedrooms, without any mediating space in between (Fig. 14, first plan). This should clearly suggest that cooking odors were no longer the serious concern they had been twenty years ago, a conclusion supported by the lack of butler’s pantries in any of the ten plans. This arrangement is also the simplest possible solution to the traditional problem of providing private passage from the kitchen to bedrooms, something that a number of other plans provide via small back hallways, or in one case, through a bathroom (Fig. 15). Private passage from kitchens to bedrooms was provided for in most of the plans published during 1919, although movement from the kitchen to the front door was generally through the living or dining room, something that had been avoided in earlier plans. Kitchen doors to the exterior, either with or without a screen porch, remained ubiquitous.

1919 was also to mark the last year of Bok’s editorship at the Journal. Bok always claimed that he had intended to retire in 1914, after his twenty-fifth year at the magazine, but that the onset of war had forced him to serve an additional five years.156 While Bok’s retirement seems to have been voluntary, he may also have been feeling pressure from the management of the Curtis Publishing Company. The Journal had been losing ground to competing women’s magazines, while other Curtis publications like Country Life and The Saturday Evening Post were exploding in

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156 Bok, Autobiography, 417.
popularity. Cyrus Curtis was interested in “modernizing” the magazine, and it appears that Bok was not receptive, although the exact points of contention are unknown. A month prior to Bok’s resignation, Curtis had written to George Horace Lorimer, editor of the Saturday Evening Post, saying, “I think the time has come to consider [a change in editors] seriously, and not to stay too long in a thirty-year old rut.” Bok announced his intention to retire on September 23, 1919, with his resignation to go into effect at the start of the coming year. Exactly how voluntary his resignation was remains unclear; by one later account he resigned only after dramatically refusing to accept Curtis’ program for the magazine.157 Bok always maintained that his departure was amicable, although perhaps he hinted at the conflict when he wrote in his autobiography, “Bok wished to say good-bye to his public before it decided, for some reason or other, to say good-bye to him. He had no desire to outstay his welcome.”158

Bok’s retirement did not end the publication of model home plans in the Ladies’ Home Journal, although their frequency decreased over the course of the 1920s. However, in observing the twenty-four years of plans published under Bok, however, one can see the conclusion of a certain trajectory. With the Journal’s adoption of the “dining-roomless” house after World War I, all the social and living functions of the house were unified in a single, multi-use space. This development can perhaps be seen as the ultimate expression of Bok’s original campaign against the parlor as an overly formal and underutilized space. Over these years the Journal

158 Bok, Autobiography, 418.
came to embrace the small, simple house not only as economical, but also as expressive of coziness and domesticity in itself. These shifts within the *Journal* correspond with broader changes in American domestic architecture during the period, as many architects came to embrace simplicity and compactness as ideals for the middle-class home.\(^\text{159}\) Given the *Journal*’s immense readership and progressive stance, it should be seen as a significant force in promoting these new standards.

With regards to the planning of service spaces, one can see both continuity and change over the course of Bok’s tenure. Plans published in the 1890s were careful to separate the kitchen from any other room by at least two doors, particularly via the butler’s pantry, which was nearly ubiquitous in house plans of any cost. By 1919, however, butler’s pantries had almost disappeared from the *Ladies’ Home Journal* houses, and kitchens routinely opened onto social spaces, and even bedrooms, via a single door. While interest in buffering the kitchen from the rest of the house declined over this period, the desire to provide private circulation routes around the kitchen remained constant, even as houses became smaller and simpler in plan. More fundamentally, with only a few exceptions, the *Journal* always treated the kitchen as a distinct room, separate from open living/dining spaces.

Faced with this apparent contradiction, it is tempting to say that service spaces were simply retarded in their adoption of the kinds of open planning which were being developed in other parts of the suburban house, particularly given the knowledge that open kitchens would become widely popular later in the twentieth century, especially in post-World-War-Two suburban housing. This approach is

consistent with the largely linear vision of modern architecture developed by historians like Vincent Scully, who have traced a change in the conception of domestic space from a series of discrete rooms, dedicated to a specific functions, to a more flowing, integrated interior space, “based upon the dynamics of interwoven members.” Such an approach is also highly teleological, looking to the mid-twentieth century to explain the direction supposedly evident in late-nineteenth century plans. Under this kind of analysis, the differing treatment of social and service spaces may be dismissed as a transitional phenomenon, created by the shift from one formal model to another.

I would argue that such an analysis is excessively linear, and cannot adequately explain the kinds of domestic planning seen in the *Ladies’ Home Journal* house. In addition, such an approach is deficient in overemphasizing the role of elite architects at the expense of other influences. In producing any model home plan architects respond to the needs and demands of a set of clients, either real or imagined. The development of new forms of kitchen planning required not only the ingenuity of architects, but also a public willing to accept these new forms. Changes in domestic architecture require changing notions of domesticity, which are only rarely driven by members of the architectural profession. In some cases these changes evolve in an organic, decentralized way, as individuals react to changing social and economic forces. In other cases, new standards of domesticity are disseminated by mass media publications like *The Ladies’ Home Journal*, or promoted in the treatises of domestic reformers and advice writers. In the following

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160 Scully, *Shingle Style*, lvi.
chapter I will examine some of the relevant forces in shaping Progressive Era conceptions of middle-class domesticity, which provide necessary context for understanding the planning of the *Ladies’ Home Journal* houses.
CHAPTER THREE

In the previous chapter I have argued that the model home plans published in the *Ladies’ Home Journal* show a persistent and deliberate interest in the segregation of service spaces, particularly in providing private routes of circulation to and from the kitchen. This kind of planning was specifically advocated by the architects published in the *Journal*, even as they strove for simplicity and openness in other parts of the house, apparently observing no contradiction in these two objectives. Furthermore, as new housing types, such as bungalows, emerged, new kinds of planning were developed to enable the same fundamental relationships between service and social space. This contradicts, or at least complicates, a modernist-formalist reading of the architecture of the period, which represents changes in domestic space as part of a linear progression away from discrete, functionally-specific rooms and towards a flowing and spatially-continuous “open plan.” Such a narrative may be overly determined by the historiography of modernism to begin with, but more fundamentally, it cannot explain the kinds of kitchen planning seen in the *Ladies’ Home Journal*.

Starting in the early 1980s, another historiographic tradition has emerged, one which attempts to explain the design and planning of Progressive Era service spaces not in relation to the formal tendencies of elite architects, but in the context of changing perceptions of housekeeping and domestic labor. Influenced by the feminist history movement, architectural historians have looked past the agendas of the (predominantly male) architectural profession, and have instead attempted to examine.
the influence of (predominantly female) advice writers, home economists, and housewives themselves. Instead of examining the high-style, and often quite expensive, houses of well-known architects, this approach looks more towards moderate- and low-cost housing, and particularly the kinds of model home plans published by the *Ladies’ Home Journal* and other mass-market publications. Finally, rather than treating kitchens and service spaces as secondary or subordinate spaces within the home, such an approach regards kitchens as being of preeminent importance to the architecture of the period and, from the perspective of social history, the most important room within the modern home.\textsuperscript{161}

In particular, historians have looked towards the progressive housekeeping movement of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, which attempted to modernize domestic labor, and “redeem” housekeeping as an important and distinguished profession. Progressive housekeeping experts advocated professional education for both housekeepers and servants, endorsed the reorganization and rationalization of housework, and promoted new, labor-saving technologies, but the movement also placed an important emphasis on the reform of domestic work environments. Architectural historians have seen the influence of this movement in the transformation of the kitchen from a large, multi-use room primarily dedicated to labor into a small, carefully arranged space filled with built-in cabinetwork and specialized technology. These new kitchens were explicitly conceived of as modern,

and were frequently compared to laboratories, as well as the compact kitchens of Pullman cars or ocean liners. Catharine Beecher had made these kinds of comparisons as early as 1869, but these ideas gained wider currency beginning in the 1890s.\textsuperscript{162} Rather than appended to an otherwise symmetrical composition, these new, modern kitchens were typically included in the main massing of the house, and their design was the subject of great interest from both architects and progressive housekeeping experts.

While there are now a large number of studies examining this progressive transformation of the kitchen, most of these tend to treat the kitchen in isolation, without examining its planning in relation to the rest of the house, other than to note the gradual disappearance of the “kitchen ell” in favor of more unified plans. This has lead some architectural historians to assume that increased progressive valuation of housework produced kitchens that were less private, less segregated, and more open to the social functions of the house.\textsuperscript{163} Others, like Gwendolyn Wright and Elizabeth Cromley, have rightly noted that the continued segregation of the housewife within a discrete kitchen remained fundamentally unquestioned during this period.\textsuperscript{164} I would go further, arguing that writers within the progressive housekeeping movement not only failed to challenge the architectural drive for separation and private circulation around the kitchen, but actively re-affirmed it. I believe a re-examination of the movement’s architectural agenda can partially explain the

\textsuperscript{163} Cheryl Robertson, “Male and Female Agendas for Domestic Reform: The Middle Class Bungalow in Gendered Perspective,” \textit{Winterthur Portfolio} 26, no. 2/3 (1991), 127–129.  
\textsuperscript{164} Wright, \textit{Building the Dream}, 172.
persistence of these architectural norms. Likewise, an examination of plans for model homes and model kitchens can elucidate the goals of the progressive housekeeping movement, as well its inherent biases and assumptions.

Some architectural historians have also attempted to connect changes in the planning of service spaces to the documented decline in the availability of domestic servants over the course of the Progressive Era. It has been argued that, as working-class women turned to other kinds of employment, middle-class housewives were increasingly required to “do their own work,” and devised new approaches to housework, as well as new kinds of houses, to enable them to do so. Furthermore, as live-in servants became increasingly rare, it was no longer as necessary to segregate the kitchen as when it had been the exclusive domain of a professional servant. That the “servant problem” had a significant impact on domestic architecture during the Progressive Era is well supported by architectural writing from the period; after 1908, the *Ladies’ Home Journal* published multiple plans for “servantless houses,” as did many other publications, and the dearth of domestic servants was frequently invoked as a justification for smaller, simpler houses filled with labor-saving technologies.

While a number of books have been published since the late 1970s examining the servant problem from both demographic and cultural perspectives, to my knowledge there has been no in-depth study of its effect on domestic architecture.

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during the Progressive Era. Instead, the servant problem is frequently mentioned in passing as one of the forces driving the progressive re-evaluation of domestic work and work spaces. In doing so, architectural historians tend to implicitly accept a Progressive Era understanding of the servant problem as primarily a problem of supply, rather than demand, and one that architects and middle-class families responded to by creating new kinds of homes which rendered live-in domestic service unnecessary. More generally, this implies a linear development in middle-class houses, with segregated “Victorian” kitchens, designed for the use of servants, being replaced with open “modern” kitchens, designed for the use of housewives themselves.¹⁶⁶ Such discussions are typically general in nature, and rarely offer a precise definition of “middle-class,” or attempt to examine the role of mass-media publications like the *Ladies’ Home Journal* in shaping popular perceptions of servants and the “servant problem.”

While not denying that the decline in domestic service over the Progressive Era contributed to changes in domestic architecture, I would argue that the impact of the “servant problem” was far less direct than an examination of much of the literature, both contemporary and historical, would lead one to believe. The servant problem must be considered both as a real, statistical decline in the employment of live-in servants, and as a kind semi-fictive narrative, widely disseminated by the press, and discussed according to a certain set of conventions. A more thorough

¹⁶⁶ In Cromley, *The Food Axis*, 134–137 there is an effort to treat servant-run and housewife-run households as distinct architectural types. While Cromley acknowledges that these to systems were coexistent during the Progressive Era, I believe she treats the presence or absence of servants as overly deterministic of architectural form.
understanding of these conventions is therefore necessary to evaluate the effects of
the servant problem on American domestic architecture. Similarly, an examination of
the model home plans published in the *Ladies’ Home Journal* can help to elucidate
Progressive Era attitudes towards the role of servants in the private home.

**Model Houses and Model Housekeeping**

What was the progressive housekeeping movement? I have chosen to use the
term “progressive housekeeping” consistently, as a generic, and generally accurate
descriptor. However, during the Progressive Era the same set of ideas were equally
likely to be described as “scientific housekeeping,” or simply “the new
housekeeping.” Likewise, a number of terms were also invented to describe the
academic curricula supported by the progressive housekeeping movement. Reformer
Ellen Richards used the terms “oekology” and “euthenics” to refer to the scientific
study of “normal family life,” and would later adopt the phrase “home economics,”
which has since become the most common term for the academic study of
housework.167 As this diverse nomenclature would suggest, the progressive
housekeeping movement was a decentralized one. While many universities, women’s
clubs, reform organizations, and advice writers expressed similar ideas about the
modernization of housework, there was never any pre-eminent group organizing these
disparate agents, and different proponents of “the new housekeeping” could have

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radically different ideas about what that meant. Nevertheless, there is a core set of ideas by which one can sketch an outline of the movement’s intentions.

First of all, the progressive housekeeping movement was, as the phrase indicates, progressive. What distinguishes writing on progressive housekeeping from earlier and later forms of domestic advice literature is the explicit belief that current means of performing housework were inefficient and outdated, and that housekeeping had stayed still as the rest of the world changed radically. Curricula in “domestic arts” or home economics had been in place since the 1870s, but these were primarily rural in focus, and generally lacked the emphasis on modernization and scientific reform that would become important to the movement during the 1890s. While this belief in modernization and reform was the defining aspect of the movement, there was great variety in the kinds of reforms proposed. Many progressive housekeeping experts promoted large-scale, communal reform, particularly in establishing schools for domestic training, but most progressive housekeeping treatises emphasized ways in which individual housewives could modernize their own housework. Such measures typically included the adoption of new labor-saving technologies, the systematization of work habits, the keeping of accurate budgets and schedules and, in many cases, increased consumption of industrially produced goods. While all of these measures had been proposed in earlier advice literature, in the 1880s and 1890s this advice was increasingly voiced as part of a rhetoric of progressive reform, rather than simply helpful advice.

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Secondly, there was a frequently expressed view that feminine labor (meaning domestic labor) needed to become more like masculine labor (meaning industry and business). It was perceived that industrialization had fundamentally changed the nature of masculine work, and that housework must modernize by adopting some of the same changes. Above all, this meant being “professional,” with housewives expected to adopt the traits of various male professions; in shopping housewives were to act as purchasing agents, in cooking they were both chemists and nutritionists, and in dealing with servants they were to be “managerial.” Progressive housekeeping experts like Christine Frederick and Lillian Gilbreth were also extremely interested in Taylorism, the detailed study of an individual’s motions and movements, originally aimed at increasing industrial efficiency.\textsuperscript{169} Taylorism had been developed by the mechanical engineer Frederick Winslow Taylor in the 1880s and 1890s, and its influence can be detected in the Journal as early as 1905. Predictably, accounts of the comparative inefficiency of women’s work, written by men and women, were often misogynistic in character, laying the blame squarely at the feet of women. One article, written by the president of the National Housewives League, and published in the Journal, asked the question in its title “Are Wives Wasting their Husbands’ Money?” In it, the author argues that the inefficiency and waste practiced by most women was detrimental to the economy, and that if men were in charge of housework

they would “run it as a business.” The idea running of a household “as a business” became a kind of mantra for most progressive housekeeping experts.

Finally, the progressive housekeeping movement was a fundamentally middle-class movement, not just in terms of the individuals involved in it, but in the problems it sought to address, and in the solutions it offered to those problems. Progressive housekeeping was meant to save both time and money, while maintaining certain standards of middle-class life, the most important of which was a single-family home. Most progressive housekeeping texts simply assumed that their readers lived in single-family homes, while others argued that more economical housekeeping would keep families from having to live in apartments or boarding houses. The middle-class agenda is perhaps even clearer in progressive calls for the “professionalization” of housework. The kinds of professions housewives were asked to emulate were not only masculine, but were also the kinds of jobs held by middle-class men in particular: manager, purchasing agent, and scientist. Also telling is the fact that the term “home economics” came to replace the earlier title of “household arts.” The change indicates an interest in representing housekeeping as a social science, rather than a form of craft or manual labor. Ironically, the progressive housekeeping movement was contemporary with the American Arts and Crafts movement, which sought to reclaim the honor of traditional forms of craft that

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173 Strasser, *Never Done*, 212.
had been eroded by industrialization; cooking and housekeeping, however, were never considered part of this mission. Attempts to create a distinctly middle-class “professional” housekeeper also sidestep the fact that there was already a large class of professional domestic workers, namely, servants. The need to differentiate the “professional” housewife from the servant was apparently very real; in 1909 the School of Domestic Science and Domestic Art in Rochester, New York was hit by a rumor that it was training its students to become servants. Consequently, the student body revolted, and the school was forced to change its curriculum to focus on dressmaking and millinery in order to stay open.\textsuperscript{174}

I would also like to make a distinction here between the progressive housekeeping movement and what Dolores Hayden has termed the “material feminist” movement, which was active at the same time, and similarly stressed the need to modernize and reform domestic labor.\textsuperscript{175} However, the basic tenet of the material feminist movement was the collectivization of domestic labor, either under a cooperative, socialist, or industrial-capitalist system. Charlotte Perkins Gilman, probably the best known of these reformers, argued against both the inefficiency and injustice of having a large class of untrained workers, performing a variety of tasks in isolation, and subsequently receiving no pay for their labor.\textsuperscript{176} Instead, Gilman argued that feminine labor must be collectivized and executed on a large scale by trained workers, as had been the case with the industrialization of traditionally masculine labor. While Gilman’s rhetoric can occasionally seem radical to the

\textsuperscript{174} Katzman, \textit{Seven Days a Week}, 244.
\textsuperscript{175} Hayden, \textit{The Grand Domestic Revolution}.
\textsuperscript{176} Charlotte Perkins Gilman, \textit{Women and Economics} (Boston: Small, Maynard & Company, 1898) 14.
modern reader, similar ideas were widely discussed during the early twentieth century, the “kitchenless houses” published in the *Ladies’ Home Journal* being but one example.\(^{177}\) By contrast, the progressive housekeeping movement wanted to modernize and improve ways of performing housework, without challenging the assumption that housework was to be performed by an isolated, gendered, and usually unpaid workforce. Progressive calls for the professionalization of housework never included the most fundamental feature of a profession, remuneration. Similarly, praise for an “industrialized” form of housework did not include the most fundamental features of the industrial system, the collectivization and specialization of labor. The “new housekeeping,” while progressive in rhetoric, was also characterized by a conservatism in its objectives, particularly when compared to other, contemporaneous movements.

The influence of the progressive housekeeping movement is evident in the *Ladies’ Home Journal* from at least the beginning of the twentieth century, if not before. During 1903 and 1904 the *Journal* ran a regular department by Maria Parloa called “The Woman With No Servant,” which emphasized systematized work schedules and the use of labor-saving technology.\(^{178}\) In 1905 the *Journal* inaugurated a new department called “The Housewife and Her Helper,” written by Frances A. Kellor, the general director of the Inter-Municipal Committee on Household


Research, based out of New York, Philadelphia and Northampton, Massachusetts.\textsuperscript{179} Starting in October 1906 this department was replaced on alternate months by another, called “The Woman Who Does Her Own Work,” written by the same author.\textsuperscript{180} While it is interesting that the names of these departments stress either the presence or absence of servants (something I will discuss later), their content was composed mostly of general domestic advice, with an emphasis on new technology, efficient workspaces, and the systematization of labor.

This emphasis became even more pronounced when, in 1912, the \textit{Journal} began publishing a department titled “The New Housekeeping,” written by progressive housekeeping expert Christine Frederick.\textsuperscript{181} One of the foremost voices in the movement, Frederick was always closely connected with the \textit{Journal}, which published much of her early writing. In 1920 Frederick would dedicate her second book, \textit{Household Engineering: Scientific Management in the Home}, to Edward Bok, who she considered an important supporter of her ideas.\textsuperscript{182} In her first piece for the \textit{Journal} Frederick struck a scientific tone, advocating Taylorist systematization of work, and listing the appropriate countertop dimensions for women of different heights. While Frederick emphasized work methods over tools, she also praised the

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{182} Christine Frederick, \textit{Household Engineering: Scientific Management in the Home} (Chicago: American School of Home Economics, 1920), dedication.
\end{itemize}
ability of gas and electric power to save labor. In later columns she would write about scheduling and record keeping, as well as the rational management of domestic servants.

While the primary interest of the progressive housekeeping movement may have been reforming individual work habits, there was always a strong emphasis on architectural reform, and in educating women about the most efficient domestic environments, particularly kitchens. Early home economics curricula included information on the proper planning of a house, but also its furnishing, lighting, heating, and plumbing. Students in these programs studied construction techniques and learned how to make their own architectural drawings. In her writings, home economist Ellen Richards attempted to make functionality and efficiency the foremost issues in home design, rather than pretense and display. Progressive housekeeping experts like Richards rejected the highly ornate “Eastlake” interiors still popular at the time, and in doing so aligned themselves, at least conditionally, with the American Arts and Crafts movement, which also rejected what it saw as an extravagant and pretentious tendency in Victorian homes. According to Gwendolyn Wright, the interaction between housewives, professional architects, builders, and reform organizations may be the most important legacy of the American Arts and Crafts movement.

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While progressive housekeepers supported simplicity and restraint in ornament and decoration, their primary interest in domestic architecture was not aesthetic, but functional. Along with an interest in sanitary or healthful homes, the belief that the home’s planning and design could make housekeeping quicker, cheaper, and easier was fundamental to the movement’s architectural program. This goal could be achieved in a number of ways. Simplified cornices and moldings would prevent the collection of dust and grime, making the house both more sanitary, and easier to clean.\textsuperscript{188} New materials for construction and insulation could make houses cheaper to build and more efficient to heat. New heating and plumbing systems, while adding considerably to the cost of houses, were also endorsed. It seems likely that paying for these new features forced builders to economize elsewhere; this could be done by making smaller, simpler houses, but also by using cheaper and less solid forms of framing and construction.\textsuperscript{189}

Reflecting the influence of Taylorist thought, the notion of “saving steps” became critical to the design of efficient homes and model kitchens. It was believed that large kitchens and poorly arranged houses forced women to move much more than necessary in performing housework; one article from the \textit{Ladies’ Home Journal} claimed that women walked 200 miles annually in serving meals alone.\textsuperscript{190} Another article, written by a man who started to do his own housework after his maid left, described how the author remodeled his kitchen to be smaller and more carefully

\begin{flushleft}
\textsuperscript{188} \textit{Ibid} 165.  \\
\textsuperscript{189} \textit{Ibid} 236–238.  \\
\textsuperscript{190} “Save Miles in the Kitchen,” \textit{Ladies’ Home Journal}, September 1919 “Save Miles in the Kitchen,” 128. 
\end{flushleft}
arranged after counting his steps in performing various tasks.\footnote{191}{T.P. Giddings, “A Six-by-Nine Kitchen,” \textit{Ladies’ Home Journal}, November 1905, 27.} In \textit{Household Engineering} Christine Frederick produced plans of different kitchens, drawing in the paths of circulation used in preparing and serving meals in order to demonstrate the most efficient arrangements (Fig. 16).\footnote{192}{Frederick, \textit{Household Engineering}, 22–23.} The notion of “saving steps” even appeared in advertising in the \textit{Journal}, with a 1911 ad for Hoosier Cabinets recounting the ways in which a “young housewife” saved many steps through her purchase of a Hoosier.\footnote{193}{Ad for Hoosier Cabinets, \textit{Ladies’ Home Journal}, October 1911, 75.} The Hoosier Manufacturing Company often sought to align itself with the progressive housekeeping movement, and used Christine Frederick’s endorsement in a 1917 ad, along with those of seven other “scientific women.”\footnote{194}{Ad for Hoosier Cabinets, \textit{Ladies’ Home Journal}, November 1917, p119.} Progressive housekeeping experts like Christine Frederick and Lillian Gilbreth frequently worked with such manufacturers, acting as mediators between housewives and private companies, and using a “scientific” rhetoric to promote the consumption of new industrial products.\footnote{195}{Laurel D. Graham, “Domesticating Efficiency: Lillian Gilbreth’s Scientific Management of Homemakers, 1924–1930,” \textit{Signs} 24, no. 3 (1999), 634.}

“Saving steps” was best accomplished by reducing the size of houses in general, and kitchens in particular. Progressive housekeepers were near unanimous in believing that small kitchens were the most efficient, while also emphasizing the importance of a logical arrangement of cabinets and appliances. Both of these principles were extremely evident in the architectural content published by the \textit{Ladies’ Home Journal}, particularly after 1905. Small kitchens saved the “vital
energy” of both servants and housewives, since “the smaller the kitchen, the shorter the work.” These new kitchens were frequently compared to the kitchens in dining cars, as well as “chemical laboratories.” These comments represent the new, compact kitchen as both modern and scientific; the desire to create a small kitchen with everything in reach of a nearly stationary worker also implies that these kitchens were to be occupied by a single worker, rather than a combination of family members and servants working socially, which had been the norm in earlier country kitchens. Frederick, for one, was explicit in her disapproval of this earlier model.

This last point is also related to the progressive housekeeping movement’s insistence on the kitchen as a function-specific space. In her book *Household Engineering*, Frederick put it plainly:

> What is a kitchen? It is a place for the preparation of food. All unrelated work, such as laundry work, with its particular equipment, should be kept out of the kitchen as much as possible. We see then that a kitchen, or a place merely for food preparation, can be much smaller than was formerly the case when it was used as a combination sitting-room, laundry, and general workshop.

Frederick had argued the same point earlier in the *Journal*, as had other progressive housekeeping experts and advice writers. One writer for *House and Garden* wrote,

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“To use the kitchen simply as a cook room and scullery, a place where food is prepared and pots and kettle are scoured, is the modern aim. All tramping through the room by service men or family is avoided.”  Family socializing, as well as the reception of guests, was to take place in the modern, open living room, with the kitchen reserved as the exclusive domain of the housewife, or less frequently, a servant. Many progressive housekeeping experts proposed features designed to keep service and delivery men from entering the kitchen, including refrigerators which opened onto both the kitchen and its porch and outdoor compartments where groceries could be deposited. Keeping service men out of the kitchen protected the privacy, or modesty, of the housekeeper, but also helped preserve the cleanliness of the modern “laboratory” kitchen. The separation of functions even extended to the arrangement of appliances; Louise Shrimpton believed that kitchens should be divided into a cooking section and a section for the storage of food and kitchen equipment, while Christine Frederick located all cooking along one wall of her model kitchen, with the equipment for dish washing placed opposite it. While the exact arrangements vary, the principle of separating out domestic functions was widely agreed upon.

This emphasis on the segregation of kitchens should be related to the aforementioned progressive goal of running a household “as a business.” While pre-

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industrial households had been characterized by the coexistence of family life and economic activity, by the end of the nineteenth century employment outside the home was considered the norm, at least for men. Home and office were conceptualized as distinct, and oppositional, environments. The progressive housekeeping movement attempted to reproduce this relationship for female housewives by segregating kitchens from living spaces, and by training women to act as “professionals.” Unlike the material feminists, who attempted to collectivize the performance of housework, progressive housekeepers did not seek to remove feminine labor from the home entirely, but instead attempted to isolate it, as much as possible, within the home itself. Progressive kitchens were thought of as an office within the home, adjacent to, yet emphatically distinct from spaces for leisure and socializing. As a “home office,” many progressive housekeeping experts suggested providing kitchens with a desk and filing cabinet, as well as a letterbox, address book, and telephone.\footnote{206} Frederick proposed a “business” or “office corner” within the kitchen, writing that “one thing that contributes to being businesslike is to have the right ‘business’ atmosphere,” where the housewife can plan menus, make delivery orders, and go over family finances.\footnote{207} For reformers like Frederick, the segregation of the kitchen from living space would have been the most important way of achieving a “business atmosphere.”

For this reason, I would like to contest a simple gendering of space within the Progressive Era home. Cheryl Robertson in particular has written about the “female embrace of modern conveniences, streamlined work routines, and efficient

\footnote{206} Wright, \textit{Moralism and the Model Home}, 239. \footnote{207} Frederick, \textit{Household Engineering}, 312.
management,” which she contrasts with a masculine agenda that was “backward-looking, rustic, and combative.”\textsuperscript{208} To be sure, during this period the kitchen was understood as a space occupied almost exclusively by women, and was also the site of progressive reform efforts, primarily led by women. As such, it must be understood as an explicitly feminine space. However, it is important to note that the progressive ideal of rational, scientific reform was still very much construed as masculine, even when voiced by and directed at women. Progressive architectural reform, therefore, was widely understood as the extension of masculine ideals into the design of domestic architecture. This was true not only in the kitchen, but throughout the entire house. Reformers implicitly associated the crowded, ornate interiors of the Victorian era with an excessive and irrational femininity, contrasted with the simplified—and masculine—interiors of the Progressive Era. One reformer argued that men were so uncomfortable in Victorian-style parlors that they were being driven to saloons in search of a more commodious environment.\textsuperscript{209} Another man wrote in the \textit{Ladies’ Home Journal}, after having renovated his kitchen,

“There is enough of the eternal feminine in my make-up to enable me to see the various household duties, but I have enough of the masculine, fortunately, to keep them in their proper perspective… for it is an admitted fact that to the average woman the house is a sort of heathen idol, which must be appeased at every cost, even though amiability, health, and happiness disappear down its capacious maw or lie crushed beneath the wheels of its chariot.”\textsuperscript{210}

\textsuperscript{208} Cheryl Robertson, “Male and Female Agendas for Domestic Reform: The Middle Class Bungalow in Gendered Perspective,” \textit{Winterthur Portfolio} 26, no. 2/3 (1991), 133.
\textsuperscript{209} \textit{Ibid}, 130.
Although not always so dramatically expressed, this misogynistic kind of rhetoric underlay many calls for the domestic reform during the Progressive Era, and provided implicit support for the continued segregation of kitchens and service spaces.

While in agreement about the need for spatially distinct kitchens, progressive housekeeping experts were less unanimous in their opinion of the butler’s pantry. Many writers and progressive architects believed that butler’s pantries placed an unnecessary distance between the kitchen and dining room, thus increasing the work involved in serving food.211 Others considered the butler’s pantry only suitable in large households, or in ones that employed servants.212 Christine Frederick argued against butler’s pantries in most houses, and in favor of direct passage from kitchen to dining room, but many of her plans for model kitchens included them, particularly in plans for large houses, or households with servants (Fig. 17.)213 The equation of butler’s pantries with domestic servants suggests that progressive housekeepers were not as fastidious in saving the steps of their servants as they were in saving their own; it also represents an interest in segregating servants from family and social life.

However, one 1909 article from the Journal explicitly endorses “a closet between the kitchen and dining-room” for women without servants, arguing that it “saves many steps,” by providing a place for dishes near to the dining room.214 This demonstrates

that for different progressive housekeeping experts the same rhetoric could be used to promote different, even contradictory architectural arrangements.

Frederick was also clear on the importance of privacy in planning houses, and in planning kitchens in particular. She argued that houses should be located towards the back of lots and masked by shrubbery, with casement windows placed close to the ceiling in order to protect the interior of the house from view. At times, Frederick can seem almost curmudgeonly in her insistence on privacy, as when she writes “Any one who has noticed a typical ‘row’ of American houses, with all porches adjacent, filled with rocking, gossiping people, will recognize that such an arrangement does not make for privacy.”

Frederick also thought houses, in addition to a large living room, should contain a den or library, where members of the family could relax in greater seclusion. Frederick refers to this arrangement as “efficient,” employing the term very loosely; this was common in advice literature during this period, with many writers using “efficient” simply as a synonym for “good.”

In describing the ideal routes of circulation around the kitchen Frederick is very much in line with the kinds of planning we have observed in the Ladies’ Home Journal houses. Frederick believed back doors should be arranged so that tradesmen would not have to enter the house, and that it should be possible to move from the kitchen to the front door without passing through the living/dining room. She was particularly insistent that staircases should be located in a hall, rather than in the living room, since “the open stairway (with no back stair) usually makes it necessary

215 Frederick, Household Engineering, 450–452.
217 Strasser, Never Done, 213.
for every one wishing to go upstairs to cross the living room and ascend in full view of all; this is never pleasant, especially with children and servants. ²¹⁸ Frederick was not opposed to the use of both front and back staircases, and depicted a back staircase in one of her plans for a model kitchen. ²¹⁹ Other domestic reformers published in the *Journal* generally agreed on these points for houses both with and without servants. ²²⁰

In this context, it is easier to see why the architects published in the *Journal* were so consistent in planning for private circulation around the kitchen, and why they were so vocal in their praise of such arrangements. From a historical perspective it is easy to dismiss this interest in private passage as conservative and outdated, more related to “Victorian,” servant-run households than to the modern, open houses of the progressive era. Architects of the period, however, would not have seen anything old-fashioned in such an arrangement. Instead, they would have been confident that their plans were consistent with the most up-to-date trends in progressive housekeeping, and that private circulation around the kitchen was both modern and “efficient.”

Progressive housekeeping had a profound impact on middle-class domestic architecture in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Progressive housekeeping experts joined with other reformers in their promotion of smaller and simpler houses, usually designed in either a craftsman, or colonial revival style. ²²¹ The movement’s greatest effect may have been in promoting functionalism in

domestic architecture, and making the efficient performance of domestic labor one of the most important, if not the pre-eminent, concern in house design. In the field of kitchen design progressive reformers were particularly influential, arguing in favor of a compact, carefully arranged, and technologically advanced work space. In this, the American progressive housekeeping movement preceded similar European developments, such as the well-known Frankfurt Kitchen of 1926. The significance of the progressive housekeeping movement in the evolution of the modern American dwelling cannot be underestimated.

However, one must be careful to acknowledge the limitations in what the progressive housekeeping movement attempted to accomplish. While attempting to redeem housekeeping as an honorable and “professional” occupation for middle-class women, the progressive housekeeping movement did not challenge the fundamental assumptions that held a woman’s domestic labor separate from her social and family life. If anything, the movement reinforced this distinction. This duality is evident in both the rhetoric the movement employed and in the architectural models it endorsed. Architectural reform movements emphasized the importance of domestic work spaces, but also their uniqueness, and attempted to keep them distinct from the rest of the house. Even as social spaces were becoming increasingly open and connected, privacy and private circulation, particularly around the kitchen, remained major concerns in the planning of the middle-class home. This fact must be seen as central, rather than incidental, to the architectural ideas of the period.
Servant Problems and the “Servant Problem”

Complaints about servants have a long history in American discourse. While these date back at least to the early eighteenth century, complaints about both the low quality and scarcity of domestic servants increased greatly during the nineteenth century, and between the Civil War and the First World War discussions of the “servant problem” were nearly ubiquitous in American newspapers, magazines, and other publications. During the Progressive Era, the issue was frequently addressed by social scientists, progressive housekeeping experts, and other reformers, and a number of treatises were published which attempted to analyze the problem from a scientific perspective, the best known of which is Lucy Maynard Salmon’s 1897 book *Domestic Service*. Despite the evident importance of the issue during this time period, the question was little studied by historians during the middle of the twentieth century. However, since the late 1970s a number of social and feminist historians have reconsidered the question of domestic service, attempting to analyze the issue from different economic, social, and cultural perspectives. Many of these studies, particularly David Katzman’s 1978 book *Seven Days a Week*, have attempted to expand on the traditional understanding of the servant problem to include multiple “servant problems,” affecting both servant and employer. While none of these studies are primarily architectural in emphasis, they provide a critical frame of reference for understanding the impact of the servant problem on American architecture, and for complicating a purely Progressive Era view of the issue.

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223 See note 163
What was the servant problem? The answer varies by time period; before the Civil War, complaints about domestic service had generally focused on issues of quality, particularly the perceived dishonesty, incompetence, and impertinence of most servants. Starting around 1870, however, the servant problem was increasingly described as a problem of quantity, with housewives bemoaning the difficulty of finding and retaining a suitable servant, or any servant at all. The growth of the manufacturing and retail industries had created a variety of new employment opportunities for young women, and it was widely agreed that this had greatly reduced the number of women entering careers in domestic service. Likewise, it was believed that the growth of railroads had created a transient work force and discouraged long periods of employment, thereby increasing the difficulty in retaining servants. Housewives also frequently complained about the high proportion of immigrants, particularly Irish, engaged in domestic service. Salmon commented particularly on “those who come to this country, often with preconceived and erroneous ideas as to the independence prevailing here, expecting high wages in return for inexperienced and unskilled labor.” The perceived unwillingness of native-born white women to enter into service was particularly lamented during the late nineteenth century.

The available statistical evidence supports many of these observations. While the number of domestic servants doubled between 1870 and 1910, this did not keep

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225 Salmon, *Domestic Service*, 67.
pace with the even faster growth of the American population during this period.\footnote{Katzman, \textit{Seven Days a Week}, 46.} Between 1880 and 1920 the number of domestic servants per one thousand families fell by more than one half; this was particularly true in the North, where manufacturing was growing quickest.\footnote{\textit{Ibid} 55–56.} Likewise, the percentage of working women entering service fell during the same period; in 1870, 50\% of American working women were employed as servants, but by 1930 this had fallen to less than 20\%.

While demand for servants grew during this period, the manufacturing and clerical professions grew faster.\footnote{\textit{Ibid} 53.} Complaints about the decline of native-born white servants are somewhat less supported; while native white women were proportionately under-represented among servants, they remained the most significant bloc until almost 1920, when they were passed not by immigrants, but by native-born black women. Immigrant women never formed the majority of domestic servants outside of New England and northeastern cities like New York.

While less publicly discussed, servants had their own complaints, equal to or greater than those of their employers. When one factors in room and board, domestic service tended to be better paid than other forms of employment available to women, but living in one’s employer’s house created its own set of problems. Servants complained about poor quarters, the lack of privacy, and the inability to entertain friends at home. Servants worked long and often irregular hours, a problem compounded by always being available to the demands of their employers. Domestic service provided little or no opportunities for advancement, and isolation within an
employer’s home provided few opportunities to find future husbands. More than
anything, servants complained about the low status afforded them; at work their
inferiority was constantly reinforced in comparison with their employers, and when
out, servants were looked down on by women who worked in shops or factories.
While some middle-class reformers were sensitive to these complaints, the voices of
servants themselves were only rarely heard in Progressive Era discussions of the
servant problem.\textsuperscript{230}

Attempts to solve the servant problem varied widely. Before 1870, reformers
had attempted moral suasion in an effort to change servants’ attitudes about domestic
service. Employers were encouraged to provide their servants with tracts on moral
behavior and the duties of a servant, often phrased in explicitly religious terms.
Employers were told to practice the Golden Rule and treat servants fairly and politely,
although such efforts were frequently characterized by a degree of paternalism on the
part of the employer. After 1870, however, proposed solutions to the servant problem
increasingly focused on improving living and working conditions for servants, as well
as reforming and rationalizing the profession itself.\textsuperscript{231} As with the progressive
housekeeping movement, reformers proposed both collective and individual actions.
Collectively, many reformers wanted to establish schools for training servants,
believing this would both improve the quality of domestic service and increase its
prestige, thereby attracting women, especially native-born white women, to the
profession. Salmon, however, rightly observed that such schools were unlikely to

\textsuperscript{230} Ibid 7–14.
\textsuperscript{231} Daniel Sutherland, \textit{Americans and their Servants: Domestic Service in the United
States from 1800 to 1920} (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1981),
147–148.
succeed when servants could so easily find employment without any training, and that demand for such schools existed only among employers, and not among the women they were intended to educate. Reformers also attempted to improve or replace the “intelligence offices,” or employment bureaus for servants, which were widely derided as dishonest, and were believed to encourage short periods of employment, since the agency collected a fee every time a placement was made. These businesses were generally shabby, often located out of their owner’s home, and middle-class women may have also resented having to deal with such intermediaries. Attempts to replace these agencies with model intelligence offices, run by reform organizations, had existed since the early nineteenth century, but had never succeeded in significantly displacing the for-profit agencies.

During the Progressive Era, reformers, including many connected to the progressive housekeeping movement, increasingly advocated ways in which individual housewives could better attract and retain servants. Housewives were encouraged to become better housekeepers themselves so that they could train and supervise servants more effectively. Rather than get servants to relieve themselves of their duties, housewives should think of themselves as managers, and run their household “as a business.” Housewives were instructed to set regular hours for their servants and keep to them, and to pay servants well, especially trained ones.

Salmon dedicated an entire chapter of Domestic Service to applying the principle of

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232 Salmon, Domestic Service, 183.
233 Dudden, Serving Women, 79–87.
profit sharing to the employment of servants, a difficult task since housekeeping does not traditionally produce profits. Instead, Salmon encouraged housewives to set a baseline monthly budget for housekeeping and then pay servants out of any subsequent savings, a system that may have created as many problems as it solved.\textsuperscript{236}

In order to remove the social stigma surrounding domestic service, Salmon also proposed using the terms “domestic” or “housekeeper” in place of “servant.” She was less willing, however, to totally abandon the use of first names in addressing servants, or to do away with the maid’s uniform, both of which were resented by many servant women.\textsuperscript{237}

Many of the reforms proposed were architectural in nature. Reformers agreed that servants’ quarters should be as pleasant as possible, and Bok insisted that servants’ rooms in \textit{Ladies’ Home Journal} houses be large and cross-ventilated.\textsuperscript{238} Reformers were aware that servants resented having no place to entertain friends, and some recommended making the kitchen larger, with a place for a servant to sit and relax.\textsuperscript{239} Predictably, progressive housekeeping experts like Christine Frederick opposed this, arguing instead that, when possible, employers should provide a room adjacent to the kitchen where servants can sit and eat, reserving the kitchen as a place for work.\textsuperscript{240} Clearly, many homeowners were unable or unwilling to pay for such a provision, and one woman, writing to the \textit{Journal}, explained that she had instead allowed her servant to use the house’s sitting room one or two nights a week, adding,

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\textsuperscript{236} Salmon, \textit{Domestic Service}, 235–250.
\textsuperscript{237} Ibid 207–210.
\textsuperscript{238} Bok, \textit{Autobiography}, 241.
\textsuperscript{240} Frederick, \textit{Household Engineering}, 26, 438.
“It’s the kitchen, ladies, that girls object to. After a girl has spent the greater part of a day in it her desire for that region is limited.”²⁴¹ However, such allowances almost never extended to permitting the servant to dine at the same table as the family, which was considered incompatible with restfulness and family unity.²⁴²

Some reformers, including both Salmon and Frederick, endorsed live-out service as another possible solution to the servant problem. Salmon argued that allowing servants to live outside of their employer’s home would attract more women to the profession, and that live-in service was an outdated, almost feudal system, out of line with modern developments.²⁴³ Frederick and others expressed similar views within the Journal.²⁴⁴ Surprisingly, the strongest opposition to this system may have come from servants themselves. A 1901 survey found that 66% of housewives approved of live-out domestic service, at least in some situations, while only 27% of the servants surveyed wanted to live out. This was likely because many housewives were unwilling to pay more for live-out service, despite the fact that live-out servants had to pay for their own room and board.²⁴⁵ A similar attitude can be seen in a 1918 article in the Ladies’ Home Journal, where one housewife complains, “My maid left to go into munitions work, at which she earns more money for herself than John, with all his big-heartedness and owner of his own business has ever been able to give me.

²⁴² Dudden, Serving Women, 47. Salmon, Domestic Service, 170–172.
²⁴³ Salmon, Domestic Service, 226.
to spend on clothes and other things for myself.” The author’s resentment is apparent, while ignoring the fact that the former maid’s salary needed to pay for more than new clothes.246

Nevertheless, by 1920 live-out service was in the process of supplanting the live-in model in most parts of America. This may have been driven in part by the increasing representation of Southern black women in Northern domestic service, with live-out service having long been widespread in the South. While this shift may reflect Northern housewives’ increased acceptance of live-out service during the time period, as well as resistance to having black women in their home, it also reflected the preferences of black domestic servants themselves. According to one survey, in the early 1920s 80% of white servant women preferred to live in, compared with only 36% of black servants. White women often looked at domestic service as a period between leaving their parents’ household and starting their own; black women, by contrast, were much more likely to work their entire life, including after marriage. Married women would logically be much more interested in having their own homes, as well as regular, and preferably limited, working hours.247

Of course, the simplest solution to the servant problem was to do away with servants altogether. Among the earliest reformers to propose this was William Alcott, the uncle of the author Louisa May Alcott. Writing in 1855, Alcott argued that the employment of servants was a product of a decadent, European influence, which had encouraged lavish housekeeping and aristocratic pretensions.248 Most reformers,

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247 Katzman, Seven Days a Week, 71–82.
248 Sutherland, Americans and Their Servants, 158.
however, were more moderate and treated the employment of servants as necessary or desirable for many households. Much later, Frederick argued that doing one’s own work had distinct advantages, and encouraged women to do away with domestic service, but also included an entire chapter in *Household Engineering* on the management of servants. Many reformers believed that the intractability of the servant problem would soon make the servantless household inevitable, but very few agreed with Alcott that servants should be actively eliminated.

It was also widely believed that, if the servant problem was to continue unabated, the design of houses could do much to reduce the labor of women forced to do their own housework. The *Journal* published a number of plans for explicitly “servantless” houses, or houses for “women who do their own work.” More than simply omitting servants’ bedrooms, these houses were described as specifically designed for women without servants, a concern which affected the planning, furnishing, and equipment of the house. One of the earliest examples of this is Robert C. Spencer’s June 1908 “House of Seven Rooms for $2500,” in the description of which Spencer wrote, “The kitchen is well arranged and compactly planned, and makes the work easy in what may often be a servantless house.”

In April of 1909 Una Nixon Hopkins wrote a narrative account about the building of a house, with accompanying plans, titled “The Bride Who Wouldn’t Have a Servant,” and the next year Hopkins published plans for four bungalows designed “For the Bride Who Does

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Her Own Work.” When “Uncle Sam’s New Houses” were published after World War I, these were described not only as “dining-roomless,” but “servantless” as well. Christine Frederick also published a plan for a “No-Servant House” in *Household Engineering.*

What kinds of features defined the “servantless house?” Echoing more general trends, the servantless houses published in the *Journal* were often small and simple in plan, although this was not always the case. As I have noted, many considered butler’s pantries unnecessary in households without servants, and both Hopkins and Spencer made note of its absence in their servantless houses. Perhaps the most notable feature of the servantless household was its equipment. Frederick in particular was insistent that housewives without servants should invest in labor-saving technology, particularly since “the woman doing her own work is so much more intelligent than the average hired worker, that she can get far better results with equipment requiring skill and understanding.” Dishwashers, washing machines, gas-powered irons, bread mixers, and pressure-cookers were all proposed, with Frederick referring to these devices as “mechanical servants.” Frederick argued particularly in favor of electrical appliances, calling these “the one way out” of the servant

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problem.\textsuperscript{255} This reflected the increasing affordability of electric power after 1910; originally limited to the upper classes, by the start of the Great Depression 85\% of non-farm buildings would have electricity. Many reformers agreed with Frederick that electricity and gas power had the ability to solve the servant problem, a point that power companies repeatedly made in their advertisements (Fig. 18).\textsuperscript{256} Many writers for the Journal expressed this idea as well, although plans for model homes tended to emphasize small footprints and convenient plans, while often not explaining exactly what made their plans “convenient.”

It is also worth noting that all of the architectural features characteristic of servantless houses were also proposed for households that did employ servants, and were suggested as ways of attracting and retaining servants by improving their working conditions. Reformers claimed that compact, simple house plans and scientifically arranged kitchens would make servants’ work easier, as would new kinds of technology. Even electricity was proposed as a way of making servants happier, and the majority of advertisements for electrical appliances before World War I showed the devices being used by servants, rather than housewives themselves.\textsuperscript{257} “Breakfast alcoves” off of the kitchen were frequently recommended for servantless houses, but other reformers claimed that the promise of a dining alcove would help attract good servants at the employment office.\textsuperscript{258} This is consistent with the observations of Daniel Sutherland, a historian of the servant

\textsuperscript{255} Frederick, Household Engineering, 391–394.
\textsuperscript{256} Strasser, Never Done, 76–81.
\textsuperscript{257} Ibid 78.
problem, who has argued that after 1900, domestic reformers increasingly directed their efforts towards households without servants, while promoting the same kinds of reforms that had previously been directed towards servants.²⁵⁹ It was generally agreed that butler’s pantries were unsuitable in servantless houses, but otherwise it is difficult to find any particular feature that distinguishes servantless houses from other homes planned for easy housekeeping.

One 1921 plan published in the *Journal*, while just outside my period of focus, is particularly demonstrative of this ambiguity. Designed by William C. Heck, and titled “A Servantless House,” the plan is for a large-two story house with a simple, plaster façade over a frame or hollow-tile structure (Fig. 19).²⁶⁰ The first floor plan is organized around a central hall containing the main staircase; to the left of the hall is a large living room, and to the right is the dining room. The kitchen is behind the dining room, with an adjacent breakfast room that also opens onto the hall. Heck’s description of his plan dwells almost exclusively on the kinds of modern technology contained within, describing in detail the furnace, electric dishwasher, and drying machine, and even specifying the kind of rods to be used in the closets. While many of these devices were new, in providing private circulation routes around the kitchen, Heck’s “Servantless House” is thoroughly in line with nineteenth-century domestic planning. Two doors are placed between the kitchen and both the dining room and the back door, and the breakfast room provides passage from the front door to the hall without passing through either the dining room or living room. While this

²⁵⁹ Sutherland, *Americans and Their Servants*, 190.
connection would also allow passage from the kitchen to the main stairs, Heck includes a back staircase in his plan; on the second floor the two staircases land within ten feet of one another. All this suggests that for many reformers and architects the servantless house was more a question of technology than planning. It also indicates that the use of private circulation routes around the kitchen, even including back staircases, was not limited to servants alone.

This last point is amply supported by other plans published in the *Ladies’ Home Journal*. Una Nixson Hopkins published multiple plans for servantless houses with private passage from the kitchen to one or more bedrooms. Usually this was accomplished by connecting the kitchen to a short hallway, although in one case Hopkins provides passage from the kitchen to a bedroom through the bathroom, something occasionally seen in other bungalow plans (Fig. 20).261 In Frederick’s two-story “No-Servant House” the kitchen is connected (through two separate doors) to the hall, which permits private access to both the staircase and the front door.262 In February of 1914, the *Journal* published three bungalow plans from Helen Lukens Gaut, apparently all from built examples (Fig. 21). All three of these plans offer direct, private passage from the kitchen to one of the bedrooms. In two of these plans this passage is through a short hallway leading to a room labeled “bedroom”, while in the third, the kitchen opens directly onto a small “maid’s room.” Since all three of these plans were produced by the same author and published simultaneously, it is reasonable to assume that they would observe the same conventions for the naming of

rooms, meaning that in two of the plans the bedroom attached to the kitchen is not intended for the use of a servant. Again, this all indicates that private circulation around the kitchen could be important even in houses without servants.

To better understand the “servantless house,” it may be helpful to step back and re-examine the servant problem from a different perspective than the ones I have previously presented. First, I would particularly like to emphasize the fact that, from a national perspective, live-in servants may have always been less common than Progressive Era sources would lead one to believe, and that the decline in the availability of domestic servants was confined to a relatively small portion of the population. In 1880 there were ninety-two domestic servants per 1,000 Northern families, which shrunk to only thirty-nine servants per 1,000 families by 1920. Given that some families employed more than one servant, this would suggest the percentage of Northern families that employed servants decreased from under nine percent to under four percent over these forty years. These numbers were smaller in the South, and smaller still in the states west of the Mississippi, a region where the *Journal* was particularly well read; in 1880 there were only forty-three servants per 1,000 Western households, which shrunk to only twenty-eight by 1920. All this suggests that the number of families which were capable of employing servants in 1880 but not in 1920 was quite small, probably under five percent. Given this, it seems worth asking whether the servant problem, or discussions thereof, had impacts

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that reached beyond this small segment of the population. More fundamentally, it should appear strange that in 1920, when over ninety-five percent of American households were without servants, progressive reformers and architects continued to treat the “servantless house” as a special case, requiring special treatment.

Secondly, while Progressive Era discussions treated the servant problem as almost exclusively a problem of supply, it is likely that demand for domestic servants increased greatly during this period, even relative to the growing population. During the late nineteenth and early twentieth century the American middle class grew rapidly as the manufacturing and clerical industries expanded and created new professional and managerial jobs. Then, as now, there was considerable vagueness about who was to be considered “comfortable,” or middle-class. Many families qualified as middle-class by living in a single-family house and having a husband work for a salary, yet lacked the income to pay for domestic servants.265 This kind of problem was alluded to in an 1896 article from the *Ladies' Home Journal*, which divided the people of New York City into seven classes. The first four live in various degrees of prosperity, and include families with incomes from $7500 a year and up. The descriptions of the fifth, sixth, and seventh classes are particularly interesting:

The comfortable class [the fifth], numbering about 25,000, is composed of those whose incomes range from $5000 to $7500. They also have luxuries, but nothing remarkable. The sixth class, those with incomes anywhere between $2500 and $5000, is to be pitied. The people of this class are too well off to be contented among the poor; they are not well enough off to keep the pace set by the rich, and so they are uncomfortable, knowing neither luxury or contentment. In numbers this class approximates 50,000. The seventh class [described earlier as the “contented poor”] includes those with incomes of less

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than $2500, and no aspirations to keep up with the rich in style of living. They are much better off on less money, for there is no need for them to waste their substance in show and pretense of luxurious living.”

The idea that one’s class obligated certain social standards that one’s income may not necessarily permit was repeated often in Journal articles on housekeeping, cooking, and fashion throughout the period. Domestic reform efforts implicitly addressed themselves to the “uncomfortable” sixth class by attempting to modify certain middle-class standards. More often, however, reformers attempted to make the attainment of these standards cheaper and easier, either through technology or scientific management.

Related to this point is the fact the Ladies’ Home Journal, while acknowledging the increasing difficulty in obtaining service, continued to represent the employment of servants as the both ideal and normative state, even for families trying to save money. An article from May of 1900 noted, “women are apt to economize on their servants’ wages—the very worst place in the whole house to economize.” Another article titled “The Art of Doing Without” advised women short on money “not to attempt a long and halting repast beyond the capacity of her purse and the capabilities of her servants.” These writers remained in line with the point of view presented thirty years earlier by the anonymous author of Six Hundred Dollars a Year, who wrote, “humble as was our position in this great world, we had a

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certain status to maintain. We must live in a respectable house, we must dress genteelly at least, and keep a servant too.”\(^\text{269}\) As was the case with “servantless houses”, articles in the Journal with titles like “A Christmas Dinner Without a Maid,” and “The Woman With No Servant” drew special attention to the absence of servants, while often containing only generic domestic advice.\(^\text{270}\) Even the idea that there was a servant “problem” reinforced the notion that limited access to full-time servants was not normal, but was instead a problem that could, and should be solved. This attitude persisted far longer than one might expect; in 1918 Congress considered enacting a wartime tax on domestic servants, but with an exemption for families employing only a single servant, arguing the employment of a servant was the “unalienable right of every American family.”\(^\text{271}\)

Ellen Lupton and J. Abbot Miller have addressed this point in their 1996 book *The Bathroom, The Kitchen, and the Aesthetics of Waste*. In it they argue that the idea of a “servant problem” was important even to families that were unable to afford, let alone find, servants:

The endless discussion of the ‘servant problem’ enforced the notion that being middle-class meant the possibility—however remote—of hiring servants, while at the same time reassuring the housewife that her ‘problem’ was shared with other members of her class, and had to be dealt with creatively and realistically...The supposed universality of the ‘servant problem’ became a defining feature of middle-class life; the ‘servant problem’ eliminated the obligation to hire help, while

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\(^\text{269}\) *Six Hundred Dollars a Year; or, A Wife’s Effort at Living Low Under High Prices* (Boston: Ticknor & Fields, 1867) 6. Quoted from Dudden, *Serving Women*, 112.


\(^\text{271}\) Sutherland, *Americans and Their Servants*, 186.
holding it forth as a distant promise, a reward owed by one class to another.\footnote{272} In other words, the ubiquity of the servant problem in Progressive Era discourse does not simply represent the frustrations of those wealthy enough to employ servants, but also the anxieties and aspirations of those who were not. Discussions of the servant problem, in focusing attention on the difficulty of finding a servant, conveniently deflected attention away from the far more common problem of paying for one.

Support for this thesis is readily found in the pages of the \textit{Ladies’ Home Journal}. A 1903 letter written to the \textit{Journal} by a reader complained that “the average woman who reads your magazine is forced through circumstances to do her own work.”\footnote{273} While acknowledging the fact that most women, even among the \textit{Journal}’s middle-class audience, did not have servants, this is portrayed as the product of unfortunate “circumstances,” rather than something characteristic of their class. In the first appearance of Frances A. Kellor’s department “The Woman Who Does Her Own Work” in October of 1906, Kellor is explicit that the lack of a servant does not imply an inability to pay for one, and that even if it does, this is because the servant problem has resulted in artificially inflated wages, as well as servants who demand conditions that housewives cannot provide.\footnote{274} Later, Kellor held a contest, asking women to submit accounts of how they organize their work without a servant. All of the winning entries explain why no servant was employed, with money never given as a reason; instead the absence of servants is either attributed to geography

(“We live in a village, a college town. Help is hard to get…) or to general scarcity
(“We tried to secure the services of some satisfactory person, but finding none…”).
References to “good help” or “satisfactory” servants allude to the perceived decline in
the competence of domestic workers, while also representing the potential employers
as women of discernment, who were unwilling to accept inferior help.275 The Ladies’
Home Journal never explicitly treated the presence or absence of servants as class
signifier; instead, the idea of a “servant problem” minimized the importance, or
appearance, of income disparity in an increasingly broad middle class.

While the writers for the Ladies’ Home Journal de-emphasized class
differences within its pages, these differences were acutely felt by women without
servants, as letters written to the Journal indicate. One letter from 1903 asks, “Many
of my friends, at whose houses I am frequently entertained, keep one servant or more.
I should like to return their hospitality, but how can I cook and serve a meal in the
proper style and be a hostess at the same time? I do this for my friends who live as I
do, but my rich friends would not understand.”276 Another letter from earlier that
year complains, “attending to the door is one of my most difficult problems. It is not
always possible to be dressed to receive callers when doing the housework.”277
Servants had traditionally played a role in screening out undesirable callers, while
women without servants were forced to be constantly available, even when in the
middle of cooking or cleaning.278 The problem of proper clothing was also an

275 Ibid, May 1907, 38.
276 Maria Parloa, “The Woman With No Servant,” Ladies’ Home Journal, July 1903,
32.
277 Ibid, April 1903, 40.
278 Dudden, Serving Women, 116.
important one for women without servants, both when receiving guests and during the
course of normal family life. Frances Kellor said she received many letters from
women who “liked to look as attractive as possible when their husbands come home;
and how is it possible to wear a nice frock with dinner to prepare and the dishes to
wash afterwards?”279 The need to keep housework hidden from view created an often
difficult duality in middle-class home life, with many women lamenting the difficulty
in acting as both hostess and housekeeper, mother and maid. Even Harriet Beecher
Stowe, who with her sister Catharine Beecher was a staunch and early advocate of the
dignity and importance of housework, had to admit that women without servants felt
a blow to their gentility and self-respect.280

This helps to explain the persistent interest in the segregation of kitchens, as
well as provisions for private circulation around the kitchen. A housewife unwilling
to be seen in her work clothes would clearly not desire to socialize with guests, or
even family, within her kitchen. Likewise, many women without servants would
have appreciated having a private path from the kitchen to their bedroom and a clean
set of clothes. Even butler’s pantries could serve a purpose in the servantless house,
hiding the housewife’s work in the kitchen from detection. Whether housework was
performed by a servant or a housewife, Progressive Era architects and domestic
reformers continued to treat it as something to be done in private, incompatible with
social and family life. Like the reforms of the progressive housekeeping movement,
the desire to address the servant problem through the creation of servantless houses

did not directly confront traditional systems of domestic planning. Rather, in many cases the difficulty of maintaining respectability without a servant may have reinforced the importance of these systems.

Middle-class women without servants were faced with the problem of meeting certain social standards, many of which were predicated upon the presence of one or more domestic servants. The Progressive Era servantless house responded to this problem in two distinct ways. On the one hand, some architects and reformers may have seen the servantless house as an opportunity for a more relaxed, informal style of life. This approach may be seen in the tendency for servantless house plans to merge dining and living spaces, and in their adoption of informal dining areas like breakfast rooms. The very presence of plans for servantless houses in a distinctly middle-class publication like the *Journal* probably reassured many women that the servantless lifestyle, if not ideal, was at least compatible with middle-class respectability.

At the same time, servantless houses also tried to enable the easy attainment of certain middle-class social standards that would, in other houses, rely on the presence of domestic servants. This second approach can be seen in the endorsement of the revolving tray or “lazy susan” for servantless households. Christine Frederick and others promoted the lazy susan as a way of easily passing dishes from one side of the dinner table to the other, thereby avoiding the “awkward passing from one to another.”²⁸¹ Few modern readers would consider the passing of dishes from one side of the table to the other to be an onerous or disruptive activity, or one requiring

²⁸¹ Frederick, *Household Engineering*, 397
special equipment. However, according to nineteenth-century etiquette, formal
dining was to be as sedentary an activity as possible, with all serving and clearing of
dishes performed by servants. With the adoption of service à la Russe, every plate
was prepared outside the dining room and served individually. Under this system, the
hostess was supposed to appear completely uninvolved in the work of cooking or
serving, even in so minor a matter as passing a dish.  

Obviously, this kind of formality was not fully attainable for households
without servants. However, according to reformers like Frederick, the use of a
portable serving tray would reduce the need for a hostess to rise from the table during
the meal, and a lazy susan could prevent the unnecessary, and disruptive, passing of
plates from one diner to another. What is important to note is that, in promoting
the lazy susan for servantless households, reformers like Frederick were attempting to
reproduce, as best as possible, a ritualized form of dining that, in its ideal
performance, relied on the presence of domestic servants. I believe this is analogous
to the continued segregation of kitchens and service spaces, even in explicitly
“servantless” houses. The complete invisibility of domestic labor was still considered
a middle-class standard, one best achieved through the use of domestic servants.
However, by isolating the kitchen within the home, and by providing private routes of
circulation around it, even women who did their own work could approximate a
similar separation of labor from leisure.

I have proposed here an alternative explanation of the servant problem’s
impact on American domestic architecture, one that is complimentary, rather than

282 Dudden, Serving Women, 122.
283 Frederick, Household Engineering, 396–398.
contradictory, to a more traditional understanding of the issue. To be sure, discussions of the servant problem in the *Ladies’ Home Journal* and other sources do reflect the very real frustrations of middle-class housewives trying to find and retain the help of a suitable domestic servant. These were clearly significant, and may have led some women to reject live-in service entirely and to seek out new technologies and new forms of architecture that would ease the burden of performing housework alone. At the same time, the servant problem should not refer solely to the frustrations of those who could afford a servant’s wages, but also to the anxieties of those who could not. To these women the “servantless house” would have represented a distinctly middle-class housing model (no one would ever refer to log cabins or tenement apartments as “servantless”), one that would allow them to maintain middle-class standards of gentility without requiring the presence of a servant. In either case, the absence of a servant did not lead to the immediate integration of service and social spaces. Instead, plans in the *Journal* indicate that the segregation of service spaces and the provision of private passages around the kitchen were of continued importance, even in servantless houses.

In the end, the ubiquity of the servant problem in Progressive Era discourse may be due primarily to how useful the *idea* of a “servant problem” was to so many different groups. To housewives unable to afford a servant it offered a distinctly middle-class explanation of their situation, one which minimized the appearance of income disparity, and united them with other members of their class. To architects and progressive housekeeping experts it offered a compelling rationale for new kinds of houses and housekeeping, one that could appeal to women both with and without
servants. For manufacturers of household equipment, the servant problem offered a convenient way to advertise their products, an opportunity they exploited willingly. Finally, for publishers like Bok, the servant problem sold magazines; despite the extensive coverage of the issue, the *Journal* received many letters asking why it didn’t address the question more often. For these groups, the widespread perception of a “servant problem” was a profoundly useful tool, a solution as well as a problem.

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CONCLUSION

In this thesis I have attempted to demonstrate the coexistence of progressive and conservative ideas about domestic planning in the *Ladies’ Home Journal* houses of 1895–1919. Within the space of the *Journal*, architects, advice writers, and domestic reformers all came to praise modesty and simplicity as ideals for the middle class home. Complex plans and ornate decoration were renounced, and formal, specialized social spaces like parlors and dining rooms were rejected as pretentious and impractical. At the same time, kitchens were nearly always treated as distinct, functionally specific rooms, even as social spaces were growing more open and connected. Architects planned houses with hidden circulation routes to and from the kitchen, so as to better ensure the invisibility of domestic labor. Even among progressive domestic reformers, the privacy and segregation of kitchens and service spaces remained unquestioned throughout this period.

Later in the twentieth century this model of domestic planning would be called into question. During the 1930’s, many of Frank Lloyd Wright’s Usonian houses were built with kitchens that, while still conceived of as compact, functionally-specific work spaces, were no longer closed off behind four walls and multiple sets of doors. Additionally, low-cost bungalows and pre-fabricated houses, like those sold by Sears, Roebuck and Co., often merged eating and dining spaces as a means of economizing.\(^{285}\) The open kitchen became widespread after the end of World War II, when both modern architects and mass housing developers began to promote houses with kitchens that were entirely open to social activity. Some

developers of post-war ranch houses, like William Levitt, treated the kitchen as a separate room, but located it at the front of the house, with the front door opening directly into it. Architects like Almon Fordyce and Royal Barry Wills, as well as the developer Joseph Eichler, promoted “living-kitchens,” where eating, dining, and socializing were combined into a single, flowing space. Rather than dividing the house between work and leisure, Fordyce divided the house into “quiet” and “noisy” areas, with the living-kitchen considered noisy, and bedrooms quiet. Rural and working-class households had long used kitchens as social spaces; in practice, many middle-class households may have as well, although this was not reflected within the prescriptive, idealized space of model home plans. Following World War II, the social kitchen was adopted as the dominant model among both developers and modernist architects.\(^{286}\)

Interestingly, these new living-kitchens were better accepted by post-World-War-II homeowners than the much older living/dining space. One study of Levittown in Long Island has found that in 1957, after development had been occupied for ten years, the most common renovation undertaken by owners was the addition of a room at the rear of the house. This new room was used as a living room, allowing the original living/dining space to be used as a more traditional dining room.\(^{287}\) Other families attempted to create distinct spaces for formal and informal dining, even if these were not in separate rooms. A study of Eichler homes in California has shown that some residents added a freestanding dining table in the living/dining space, in

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\(^{286}\) *Ibid* 177–198.

\(^{287}\) *Ibid* 179.
addition to the built-in kitchen table, used for informal meals. Privacy was frequently cited as a concern by those resistant to open-planned homes, and many of those who lived in such houses regretted having no place for more formal dinners, and no way to segregate the activities of children if desired. To this day, the separate dining room is present in most American houses large enough to allow one; unlike the formal parlor, the dining room has proven resistant to elimination.

In contrast, the social kitchen has been widely accepted into the twenty-first century. Even when a separate dining room is present, some or most eating is assumed to occur in the kitchen, which is additionally conceived of as place for socializing and relaxation. Modern “shelter magazines” like House Beautiful (founded 1896) and Home Magazine (1981–2008) treat the kitchen as a social space and the “heart of the home.” These kinds of uses recall eighteenth-century “halls,” or “great rooms,” a connection that some contemporary writers have made explicit. The social kitchen, as it emerged in the mid-twentieth century, is no longer seen as a new, or explicitly modernist space. Rather, the presence, and even concentration, of social activity in the kitchen is one of the governing assumptions in the design of contemporary houses.

However, all this must be seen as a distinct, later phase of development, one barely hinted at during Bok’s tenure at the Ladies’ Home Journal. Under a purely formalist art historical interpretation, like that presented by Vincent Scully in 1955, it

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is possible to argue that the Progressive Era opening up of social spaces prefigures the later inclusion of service spaces in the modern open plan. Such a linear approach is not without value, particularly in drawing attention to nineteenth-century precedents for modernist architects’ interest in simplified, open interior spaces. However, this interpretation fails to recognize the fundamentally different attitudes towards housework and domesticity present in these two periods. For Progressive Era architects, the segregation of domestic labor was not merely an as-of-yet unquestioned tradition, but a point of deliberate and ongoing interest in the planning of middle-class houses.

Likewise, from the perspective of social and feminist history, one could argue that Progressive Era interest in reforming the kitchen represents an attempt to “redeem” domestic labor, eventually leading to an acceptance of the kitchen as a social space. Like a purely formalist approach, this interpretation asserts a false continuity between two distinct phases of development. Progressive housekeeping reformers wanted to save women from the drudgery of disorganized housekeeping, and promoted the idea of a distinctly middle-class, modern, and “scientific” housewife. However, these new “scientific” women were expected to act in very different ways in their roles as wives, mothers, and hostesses. These different roles were reflected in clothing, epitomized by the housekeeper’s apron and the hostess’ gown. They also varied with time of day, with women assumed to work during the day and, ideally, relax with their family during the evening. Perhaps more than anything else, these distinctions were spatial, with spaces for domestic labor
deliberately held apart from social and leisure spaces, preserving the efficiency of the first and the gentility of the second.

An acknowledgement of these kinds of distinctions is critical to any holistic understanding of Progressive Era domestic architecture. By focusing exclusively on the development of new, progressive ideas and architectural models, historians have neglected to note the persistence of more conservative ideas governing the design of Progressive Era houses. In reality, progressive and conservative ideas were not only coexistent in Progressive Era model home plans, but also interdependent. Progressive architects sought to create modern, open living spaces that encouraged restfulness and family unity, an objective that required the segregation of domestic labor, conceived as dirty, difficult, and indecorous. Domestic reformers attempted to elevate and improve housework through the use of rationalization and scientific expertise, and proposed new kinds of workspaces organized around these principles. However, these new, efficient work spaces were defined by their functional specificity, and progressive housekeeping experts explicitly promoted the separation of service and social spaces as part of their reforms. Openness and segregation were both essential to the period’s conception of a modern, progressive domestic architecture.

The segregation of service and social spaces was one of the fundamental principles in the planning of the *Ladies’ Home Journal* houses of 1895–1919. The two zones existed in a state of state of uneasy symbiosis, the sites of different activities, discussed in different ways, and subject to different architectural treatments. Yet they were both parts of a greater domestic whole, and were usually occupied by the same women, who moved between the two in their parallel roles as
servant and hostess, mother and maid. Given this complex relationship, it is plain why the architects of model home plans would pay so much attention to structuring and controlling circulation between these two zones. The prevalence of connective spaces and private passages surrounding kitchens can then be seen as a way of mediating the simultaneous needs for connectivity and privacy, efficiency and gentility. A better understanding of these relationships is critical to an understanding of Progressive Era domestic architecture.
BIBLIOGRAPHY

My primary resource in writing this thesis has been back issues of the Ladies’ Home Journal itself, mainly those issues published between 1895 and 1919, with occasional digressions into earlier or later periods. The individual articles consulted are too numerous to list individually here, but I have cited certain articles in my footnotes, as they become relevant to my discussion.


Figure 1

Figure 2

Figure 3

Figure 4

Figure 5

Figure 6

Figure 7

Figure 8

Figure 9

Figure 10

Figure 11

Figure 12

Figure 13

Figure 14


Figure 15

Figure 16


Figure 17

The Universal Servant

MILLIONS of American and Canadian homes are blessed by the presence of a wonderful, versatile, faithful and saving servant.

It is hand maiden to the wealthy, companion to the comfortably off, a friend in need to the poor.

And yet, in each case, it is the same servant.

It is Gas

Figure 18

Figure 20

Figure 21