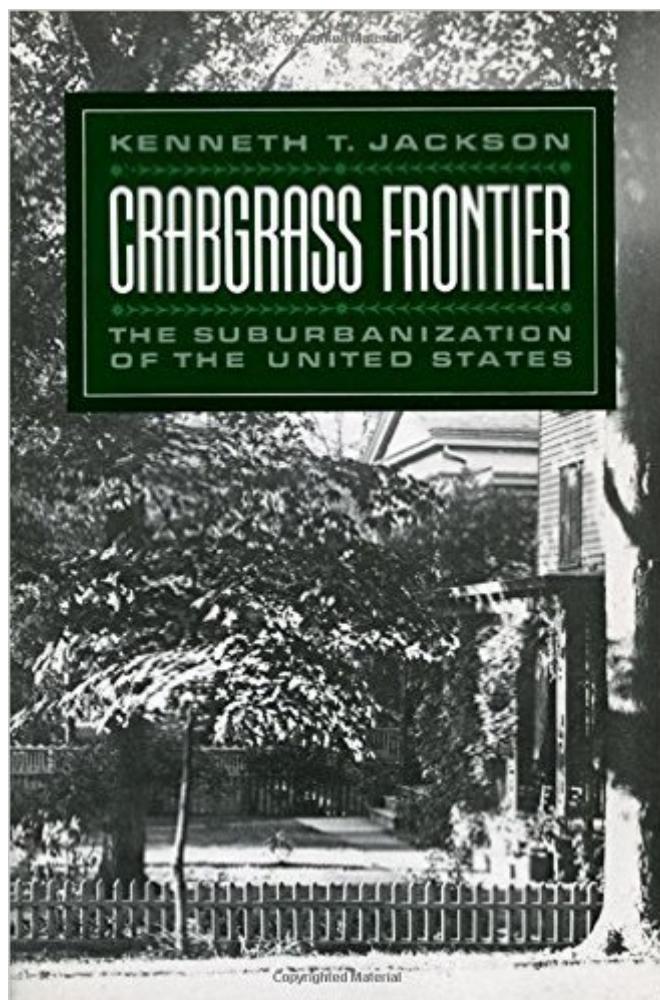


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Crabgrass Frontier: The Suburbanization Of The United States



Synopsis

This first full-scale history of the development of the American suburb examines how "the good life" in America came to be equated with the a home of one's own surrounded by a grassy yard and located far from the urban workplace. Integrating social history with economic and architectural analysis, and taking into account such factors as the availability of cheap land, inexpensive building methods, and rapid transportation, Kenneth Jackson chronicles the phenomenal growth of the American suburb from the middle of the 19th century to the present day. He treats communities in every section of the U.S. and compares American residential patterns with those of Japan and Europe. In conclusion, Jackson offers a controversial prediction: that the future of residential deconcentration will be very different from its past in both the U.S. and Europe.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

This book is obviously a classic of urban-studies literature and a lot of people have said a lot of good things about it. One thing to keep in mind when considering this book, however, is that (contrary to what others have said) it is *not* a history of suburbanization through the end of the 20th century. It is much more an explanation of the roots of 20th century suburbanization -- as they took form in the 19th century. The author does an excellent job of explaining the cultural and technological conditions that existed in the 19th century which made the move to the periphery seem attractive and, above all, logical. Today, in the 21st century, we have a difficult time placing ourselves in the shoes of the aspiring 19th century home-owner. We get stuck on the question "How could they just leave their cities to rot?" This book takes us back to show us the ideals, hopes and

dreams of the 19th century burghers -- which the author also expertly contrasts to 19th-century realities. In this way, Jackson shows us how the move to a tract-house on a winding lane named after a tree could only seem like the conquest of the new-world utopia to the train-hopping clerks who first embraced suburbia. The brightest examples of these cultural trends are the author's description of the rising symbolic importance of the garden, as well as his emphasis on the media-images associated with the new "old" country gentry. Overall, he describes an America (ironically) in search of its "country" roots, while in the midst of the greatest urban/industrial boom the world has ever known.

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