ATLAS OF ANOTHER AMERICA: An Architectural Fiction

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Owning a home is a cornerstone of the American Dream, the ultimate status symbol in the land of the free. But is the dream in crisis? Mass-marketed and endlessly multiplied, the suburban single-family house has become an instrument of global economic calamity and ongoing environmental catastrophe. Never before have we been so badly in need of a reassessment of our cultural values from an architectural perspective.

With Atlas of Another America, Keith Krumwiede has written a bold and original work of speculative fiction that calls on Americans—and, increasingly, the rest of the world—to seriously reconsider the concept of the single-family home. Presented in the style of a historical architectural treatise comprised of over 150 drawings and images, Krumwiede's "Freedomland" is a fictional utopia of communal superhomes constructed from the remains of the suburban metropolis. Freedomland's strangely familiar visions draw on a long lineage of social and architectural thought—from Owen and Fourier to Ledoux, Branzi, and Koolhaas—in which imaginary but not entirely implausible worlds are envisioned in order to reframe reality and direct us toward new territories of action.
Atlas of Another America
An Architectural Fiction

Atlas of Another America is a work of speculative architectural fiction and theoretical analysis that scripts a counterfactual history and alternate futures for the American single-family house and its native habitat, the suburban metropolis. Mass-marketed and endlessly multiplied, the suburban house, long the definitive symbol of success in America (and, increasingly, around the world), has become an instrument of global economic calamity and impending environmental catastrophe. Still, the house, as both object and idea, remains largely unexamined from an architectural perspective. Atlas of Another America corrects this oversight through projects and essays that reflect upon, critique, and reformulate the equation that binds the house as an object to the American dream as a concept.

The book’s unique take on its suburban subject builds upon an important lineage of architectural research—from Piranesi and Le Doux to Branzi and Koolhaas—in which imaginary but not implausible worlds are constructed in order to reframe reality and reorient the discipline toward new territories of action. Like the most provocative work of these architects, the projects in An Atlas of Another America eschew formal innovation for its own sake and instead rely on the artful appropriation, exaggeration and reorganization of found forms to produce their oddly familiar visions in which past, present and future are intertwined.

The book, designed by the author, adopts the tone and format of an historical architectural treatise. The atlas of the book’s title is comprised of the complete drawings of Freedomland, a fictional utopia of superhomes—communalist phalansteries constructed from consumerist single-family houses. A deep appendix includes a cross-referenced catalog of the plans used in Freedomland; the essay “Atypical Plans,” a revision, through redaction and reconstruction, of Rem Koolhaas’ essay “Typical Plan,” reflects upon the causes and consequences of the American obsession with houses; the essay “Supermodel Homes” that considers the mad genius of David Weekley, one of America’s most successful homebuilders; “Six Typical Plans,” a taxonomic classification of suburban house plans; and “Notes on Freedomland,” an essay that describes both the conceptual intent and design process of Freedomland (and the book as a whole) while situating the work within the broader historical and socio-political streams of architectural thought and action. The book closes with the architectural short story “New Homes for Homes,” in which a young architect rewire familiar domestic products to produce new superhouses of collective living.
FREEDOMLAND

IN WHICH THE OBJECT IN VIEW IS TO UNITE,
IN A BETTER MANNER THAN HAS HITHERTO BEEN DONE
AND WITH A TASTE FOUNDED IN OUR VERY NATURE
WITH ECONOMY AND UTILITY,

AMERICAN HOMES

SO AS TO COMBINE ARCHITECTURAL FITNESS WITH PICTURESQUE EFFECT
IN THE SERVICE OF BUILDING COMMUNITIES
CONNECTED TO OUR NOBLE PAST AND PREPARED FOR AN UNCERTAIN FUTURE.

Birds Inspect the Plans of Freedomland
after "The Concert of Birds," 1670
Melchior d'Hondecoeter
The two remaining quadrants are preserved in—or if necessary restored to—their natural "beginning with the number one in the northeast section and proceeding west and east to more sustainably pursue its cyclical regeneration, signaling to its neighbors its deep Freedomland to become ever lighter and more efficient. Such advances will allow each town occurring in a free society will, as it has in the past, stimulate advances in home building waste at the center of each town, it is expected that the spirit of competition naturally and rebuilding will, in the early years, likely contribute to the rapid growth of the pyramid of this has the further beneficial consequence of producing an ever-changing prospect of built and rotation after eighty years. This has the positive effect of providing each resident, at regular manner similar to crop rotation—the entire estate, including the dwellings, which are of novelty as they are needful of the comforts of familiarity, Freedomland seeks to offer both affording them a life among like-minded neighbors with a shared sense of duty and purpose. that most closely matches their spatial, stylistic, and, consequently, social preferences, thereby therefore certain to attract the finest type of citizen. Depending upon the number of houses

So that we have more than ordinary Cause to expect, that in a very short Time, we shall be able to present 'tis as easy to dispose them regularly, and with due Regard to Order, Beauty, and the Comforts of Society, the solid life its self, as now we give the shadow only, in the following Explanation.

Additional funding for the checker board for a plan, for the blank square only be building spaces, and the other squares left open, as roof and trees. The atmosphere of such a town would be like that of the country...

A DISCOURSE CONCERNING THE DESIGNED ESTABLISHMENT OF FREEDOMLAND

A grid, the framework for Thomas Jefferson's vision of a rural democratic society of urban living is also good, improving as it does the health, happiness, and prosperity of the family.

In the former pedestrian section of this book, we have explored the principles of the neighborhood, the community, and the public square. Now, we will turn our attention to the private realm, to the homes and gardens that make up the fabric of our towns and cities.

Education is a key component of the neighborhood, and it is best left to individual families. However, the central squares of the settlement are devoted to more pressing and universal needs: the central squares are rightly devoted to education.
In Freedomland, the 3 by 3-mile town sites created by the quartering of a survey township are subdivided into thirty-six half-mile square sections and are numbered in a like manner to that of the original survey townships. The four squares at the center of each new township constitute the infrastructural heart of the town. The thirty-two remaining 160-acre sections are quartered, after the method provided for in the PLSS, in which each section could be further subdivided into quarter sections to produce 128 40-acre parcels.

Quartering of Survey Township
In Freedomland each 6 by 6-mile survey township—numbered according to the PLSS, as shown in the diagram to the right—is quartered, producing four squares, each three miles on a side. The northwest and southeast quadrants are each occupied by an independent town, while the other two squares shall remain undeveloped as natural preserves and hunting grounds accessible for the benefit of all the township's people. This four-square unit is the absolute minimum size required for the establishment of Freedomland.

B. Country
A. Town

The Infrastructural Civic Core
An infrastructural civic core occupies the four central squares of each town in Freedomland. The waste square, an ever-growing, manicured pyramid of refuse, rises slowly in section 16; the water square, a circular reservoir nearly one half-mile in diameter, occupies section 15; the energy square, a forest of 20 by 20-foot solar panels, powers the town from section 21; and the market square, located in section 22 and anchored by a 10-acre big box of exchange and interaction, provides a venue for public assembly as well as access to those products and services not sourced locally. The four corners of the market square are reserved for the joint recreational use of the townspeople.

Nine Sections in the Town's Northeast Quadrant
In each of the town's four primary quadrants the eight sections outside of the infrastructural core are subdivided into four 40-acre neighborhood farm estates. Each estate is composed of between eight and sixty-four houses. Every house in any particular estate is identical and was selected from the plan catalogs of the nation's greatest domestic builders. Operations common to the siting of these plans in their "natural" suburban habitat (namely reflection and rotation) are utilized here to produce tighter, "urban" groupings. These neighborhoods, depending upon the number of houses employed and their particular arrangement, give the impression of being either small villages or large villas.

Nine Sections in the Town's Northwest Quadrant
Nine Sections in the Town's Southeast Quadrant
Nine Sections in the Town's Southwest Quadrant
Finally, there seems to be but three Ways for a Nation to acquire Wealth. The first is by War, in the
Benevolence of the Hand of God in his Favour, as a Reward for his innocent Life and virtuous Industry.

The third by Agriculture, the only honest Way, wherein Man receives a
real Increase of the Seed thrown into the Ground, in a kind of continual Miracle, wrought by the
Romans did, in plundering their conquered Neighbours. This is Robbery. The second by Commerce,

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The Estates of Freedomland

Y ear 0

Sections 25, 26, 35, and 36

Section 1 NE Elysian Fields

SW Brook Farm Manor

NW Cuadratos d'Azilia

Section 2 NE La Grande Place des Petit

SE Bastide de Buck

NW Cuadratos d'Azilia

Section 3 NE the Happy Valley

SW Garageland

SE Rudoph's Reserve

NW Happy Valley

Section 4 NE Gessel Manor

SE Levittown the Younger

SW Rancho El Goodo

NW Happy Valley

Section 5 NE Blacksmith Village

SE The Village

SW Newville

NW Happy Valley

Section 6 NE Bellew Green

SE Casa di Branzi

SW Platz der Pope

NW Happy Valley

Section 7 NE Frederick's

SE Gage's Glorious Gay Gardens

SW The Big House at Fourier Forest

NW Happy Valley

Section 8 NE Ville d'Anelle

SW Garageland

SE Sharmen's Overlook

SW Happy Valley

Section 9 NE La Croix Brillante

SE Sharmen's Overlook

SW La Quinta de Zeiger

NW Happy Valley

Section 10 NE Il Super Studios

SE Sharmen's Overlook

SW La Quinta de Zeiger

NW Happy Valley

Section 11 NE Cirque de Besançon

SE Huge Acres

SW Bald Bend

NW Happy Valley

Section 12 NE Via Varner

SE Bloomersbury

SW Bald Bend

NW Happy Valley

Section 13 NE Robin Hood Gardens

SE Casa de Campo

SW Water

NW Happy Valley

Section 14 NE Davies Lawn and Tennis Club

SE New Haven

SW Walden 8

NW Happy Valley

Section 15 NE Water

SE Nishikado Palace

SW Water

NW Water

Section 16 NE Renaissance Garden

SE New Haven

SW Nestorville

NW Water

Section 17 NE Estate del Suzanne

SE Waste

SW Water

NW Water

Section 18 NE The Villas at Broad Acres

SE Schloss von Sibelius

SW Water

NW Water

Section 19 NE Du Flumadon

SE New Ark

SW Nadaville

NW Water

Section 20 NE The New Era Union

SE The Palace (of Don Barthelmismo)

SW Rancho Riata

NW Finio Farms

Section 21 NE Flumadon

SE New Ark

SW Nadaville

NW Water

Section 22 NE Market

SE Market

SW Market

NW Market

Section 23 NE The Little Hamlet

SE Market

SW Market

NW Market

Section 24 NE Ville d'Anelle

SE Garageland

SW Garageland

NW Happy Valley

Section 25 NE Blithedale Hall

SE NW A Chateau

SW The Villas at Pek Park

NW Acri Anonimi

Section 26 NE Maisons Dom-ino

SE Atria Romano Accipitris

SW The Villas at Pek Park

NW Acri Anonimi

Section 27 NE Supermodel Homes

SE Yostville

SW Wazeone Woods

NW Atria Romano Accipitris

Section 28 NE charcoal

SE Siedlung der Zimmer

SW The Villas at Pek Park

NW Acri Anonimi

Section 29 NE Subdivision Square

SE La Ville Bourgeoise

SW Subtopian Acres

NW Kubo Verde

Section 30 NE Banham's Bottom

SE Le Domaine de la Durand

SW Subtopian Acres

NW Kubo Verde

Section 31 NE Elysian Fields

SE La Ville Bourgeoise

SW Subtopian Acres

NW Kubo Verde

Section 32 NE Atypical Plans

SE Gage's Glorious Gay Gardens

SW The Big House at Fourier Forest

NW Samuelsville

Section 33 NE Topolobampo

SE Linda Court

SW The Reserve at Freedomland

NW Eupepsia Farms

Section 34 NE The Colony

SE Wilson Estates at Outterbridge Park

SW Wilson Estates at Outterbridge Park

NW Wilson Estates at Outterbridge Park

Section 35 NE Leroy's

SE Shangri-La

SW The Reserve at Freedomland

NW Eupepsia Farms

Section 36 NE Parallelogram Park

SE Pleiades Prospect

SW Village Green Preservation Villas

NW Eupepsia Farms

The Estates of Freedomland

Sections 25, 26, 35, and 36

Year 20

As the position of the estates change with each successive twenty-year rotation,
clusters appear, along with the opportunity for new neighborly associations.
Freedomland is transformed and the townspeople's prospects refreshed. Here, in
the townspeople's prospects refreshed. Here, in
Section 12 NE Via Varner

SE Bloomersbury

SW Bald Bend

NW Happy Valley

Section 13 NE Robin Hood Gardens

SE Casa de Campo

SW Water

NW Happy Valley

Section 14 NE Davies Lawn and Tennis Club

SE New Haven

SW Walden 8

NW Happy Valley

Section 15 NE Water

SE Nishikado Palace

SW Water

NW Water

Section 16 NE Renaissance Garden

SE New Haven

SW Nadaville

NW Water

Section 17 NE Estate del Suzanne

SE Waste

SW Water

NW Water

Section 18 NE The Villas at Broad Acres

SE Schloss von Sibelius

SW Water

NW Water

Section 19 NE Du Flumadon

SE New Ark

SW Nadaville

NW Water

Section 20 NE The New Era Union

SE The Palace (of Don Barthelmismo)

SW Rancho Riata

NW Finio Farms

Section 21 NE Flumadon

SE New Ark

SW Nadaville

NW Water

Section 22 NE Market

SE Market

SW Market

NW Market

Section 23 NE The Little Hamlet

SE Market

SW Market

NW Market

Section 24 NE Ville d'Anelle

SE Garageland

SW Garageland

NW Happy Valley

Section 25 NE Blithedale Hall

SE NW A Chateau

SW The Villas at Pek Park

NW Acri Anonimi

Section 26 NE Maisons Dom-ino

SE Atria Romano Accipitris

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Section 29 NE Subdivision Square

SE La Ville Bourgeoise

SW Subtopian Acres

NW Kubo Verde

Section 30 NE Banham's Bottom

SE Le Domaine de la Durand

SW Subtopian Acres

NW Kubo Verde

Section 31 NE Elysian Fields

SE La Ville Bourgeoise

SW Subtopian Acres

NW Kubo Verde

Section 32 NE Atypical Plans

SE Gage's Glorious Gay Gardens

SW The Big House at Fourier Forest

NW Samuelsville

Section 33 NE Topolobampo

SE Linda Court

SW The Reserve at Freedomland

NW Eupepsia Farms

Section 34 NE The Colony

SE Wilson Estates at Outterbridge Park

SW Wilson Estates at Outterbridge Park

NW Wilson Estates at Outterbridge Park

Section 35 NE Leroy's

SE Shangri-La

SW The Reserve at Freedomland

NW Eupepsia Farms

Section 36 NE Parallelogram Park

SE Pleiades Prospect

SW Village Green Preservation Villas

NW Eupepsia Farms

The Estates of Freedomland

Sections 25, 26, 35, and 36

Year 40

Following the next rotation in year forty, the estates are once again dispersed—more
with estates—are reborn as rural boulevards.

In year sixty, Freedomland is transformed yet again, as some of the roads—now lined
with estates—are reborn as rural boulevards.

The Estates of Freedomland
A Traveler Approaches Elysian Fields, Freedomland after The Road in the Rye, 1881
Grigory Myasoyedov

Elysian Fields
SE 1/4 NE 1/4 Section 1

52 Houses
114,888 Square Feet
160 Bedrooms
128 Full Bathrooms
32 Half Bathrooms

Ryland Homes, The Parson, 3,584 sq. ft., Delaware
Hunting at the Edge of Freedomland after Duck Shooting, 1852
Arthur Fitzwilliam Tait

Walden 8
NE 1/4 SW 1/4 Section 13
16 Houses
74,000 Square Feet
64 Bedrooms
64 Full Bathrooms
16 Half Bathrooms
Shea Homes, Plan 2 at Maravilla, 4625 sq. ft., California

Don Barthelmismo Meets with Workers at The Palace, Freedomland after Capital and Labour, 1874
Henry Stacy Marks

The Palace (of Don Barthelmismo)
NW 1/4 SE 1/4 Section 19
24 Houses
91,200 Square Feet
72–120 Bedrooms
96 Full Bathrooms
24 Half Bathrooms
Pulte Homes, The Provence, 3800 sq. ft., Nevada

A Romance Begins at Blithedale Hall, Freedomland after John And Sophia Musters Riding At Colwick Hall, 1777
George Stubbs

Blithedale Hall
SE 1/4 NE 1/4 Section 25
20 Houses
60,860 Square Feet
80 Bedrooms
80 Full Bathrooms
0 Half Bathrooms
K. Hovnanian Homes, Bellvue VIII, 3043 sq. ft., Texas

A Crowd Gathers in Fourier Forest near Freedomland after The Preaching of St. John the Baptist, 1601–1604
Pieter Brueghel the Younger

The Big House at Fourier Forest
NE 1/4 SW 1/4 Section 31
16 Houses
71,360 Square Feet
64–80 Bedrooms
48–64 Full Bathrooms
16 Half Bathrooms
David Weekley Homes, The Kramer, 4460 sq. ft., Texas
Parallelogram Park
SW 1/4 NE 1/4 Section 26

24 Houses
38,170 Square Feet
73 - 96 Bedrooms
48 Full Bathrooms
0 Half Bathrooms

The Architects of Freedomland
After A Group of Danish Artists in Rome, 1837
Constantin Hansen
AN APPENDIX
CONTAINING DOCUMENTS PERTINENT TO THE ORIGINS
OF
FREEDOMLAND
INCLUDING
"ATYPICAL PLANS,"
"SUPERMODEL HOMES,"
"SIX TYPICAL PLANS"
&
"NOTES ON FREEDOMLAND"

A View of Life in Freedomland
after Vue Perspective, Lecture de École moderne de Hollande, 1804
Claude-Nicolas Ledoux
The Homes of Freedomland

The ambition of [A]Typical Plan[s] is to create new territories for the business of pleasurable domesticity: the spaces of retreat and consumption that generate a regime of sharing and belonging...
Typical Plans is...
The work of architectural historian Veitch Bower
BRANCHING

that the cost of housing today is a function not

both larger and more complex. This suggests

motions along the way. It is interesting to note

more complex types, noting the organiza-

from the simplest type, the Foursquare, to the

exhibit qualities of morphological transfor-

American houses. While the plans of some

guide the planning and design of a majority of

American homebuilders. These types define a

dimensional floor plans offered by contemporary

Branching—lie behind the wide variety of

the sides of the house, producing a plan composed

thereby producing two long bars side by side. The

When elongated, the plan is stretched out as

the Laminar in two dis-

larly in the Sun Belt states, but is some-

often an exterior courtyard, particu-

cular plans but are distinguished by

in a layered manner similar to

Cellular plans are organized as a system of room-to-room asso-

large living space.

Cellular plans but are distinguished by

the Laminar type, but with a

nodes: lateral growth. The Foursquare is a

serves as a hub around which the

happens, generally speaking. The Laminar type is the

arrangement, the house becomes

average price per square foot: $119

BiSecTed

Average price per square foot: $152

The Foursquare becomes the Laminar in two dis-

that serves as a hub around which the

classic center hall colonial with layers added

as in David Weekley's The Paulette—as a

with a clear linear boundary dividing them

Each band. Laminar plans are often quite

rooms and spaces to create linear organiza-

Laminar plans use a layered formation of

surfaces, the exploitation of diagonal lines of

knowing and considered use of an array of

arrangements. These primary organizational

builders' carefully considered reorganizations

arsenal and allow them to deliver different

lifestyle for the prospective homebuyer. Many

out an idea of domesticity, of a possible

American homebuilders.

The individual plan, as used in the

area. The perception of scale.

mally connect spaces as the plan spreads

is frequently used in wider houses to for-

ment of the hall-based strategies found in

Branching houses are a further develop-

For the purposes of this text, Branching includes both the perpen-

a plan also suggests the next of the six

high-end houses. With its accretion of rooms,

after band as the number of public rooms

classic center hall colonial with layers added

as in David Weekley's The Paulette—as a

with a clear linear boundary dividing them

Each band. Laminar plans are often quite

rooms and spaces to create linear organiza-

Laminar plans use a layered formation of

surfaces, the exploitation of diagonal lines of

knowing and considered use of an array of

arrangements. These primary organizational

builders' carefully considered reorganizations

arsenal and allow them to deliver different

lifestyle for the prospective homebuyer. Many

out an idea of domesticity, of a possible

American homebuilders.

The individual plan, as used in the

area. The perception of scale.
The central axis has been displaced by the bifurcating, diagonal circulation that occurs between and across plan types. This feature of a tree of branching circulation can appear nearly Cellular in their planning strategies. Branching plans often combine proper-
The notes hereto subjoined, contain sundry remarks upon the foregoing Designs; and as far as they go, and may happen to meet with the reader’s approbation, they may be looked upon as so many architectural Maxims or Aphorisms: but previous thereto, I hope I shall stand excused, if by way of relaxation, from the dry exercise of measuring plans, I indulge in a few Miscellaneous observations and reflections, just as they happen to rise in my mind.

The reader will, perhaps, now and then, be led a little from the point; but when that happens, it is hoped, the step or two he may take out of the main path, may lead him to something, not totally uninteresting, or unconnected with the matter in hand, although, perhaps, not always entirely original.

He who borrows an idea . . . and so accommodates it to his own work, that it makes a part of it, with no seam or joining appearing, can hardly be charged with plagiarism.

But an artist should not be contented with this only; he should enter into a competition with his original, and endeavor to improve what he is appropriating to his own work. Such imitation is . . . a perpetual exercise of the mind, a continual invention.

Nothing can come of nothing; he who has laid up no materials can produce no combinations.

Like the combination of sounds, which is capable of producing new music to infinity, design and invention in Architecture . . . are in little danger of being exhausted by the most acute and persevering genius that ever did, or ever will exist. Many treatises have contained nothing more than a different arrangement of the same materials, and the very best have still left an ample field for the unlimited excursions of taste and fancy.

Over the length and breadth of this country are scattered cities and villages by thousands, and public and private edifices innumerable; and yet we may fairly say, there are the buildings, but where is the architecture? There is the matter, but where is the manner? There is the opportunity, but where is the agreeable result? . . . Why is there comparatively so little beauty in American buildings?

In a country like this, where the printing-press accompanies each stride that is made into new localities, and where every step is marked by a building of some sort, it seems inconsistent that there should be but little popular literature on architectural matters; yet such is undoubtedly the fact, and although Americans are certainly diligent readers and energetic builders, their habit of reading has scarcely had so much influence for good on their habit of building. Without recourse to a book of designs, the builder must in his own plane be necessarily tame and uniform, his edifices will be but a copy of each other, and that which he intended for an improvement, may, in reality, be a deformity.
based on mutual association. Could be free not only of the old established closed-corporation hierarchies of arbitrary power and picturesque effects.

Happiness and Elevation of the whole.

The domestic architecture of a people should be the natural outgrowth of its character, itself the advantages of A Metropolis, A University, and A Country Residence, without cent Palace, containing within itself, liberal in extent, and free from all intrusions—in their very nature, are scenes of continual activity. In the country, however, it is otherwise: their imitativeness has a standard to copy, which makes an appeal to their sense of excellence, graceless village may safely count upon. One of these is the principle of imitation, which will exist but the serfs do.

The prospects of architecture are not divorced from the prospects of the community. As the great principle of the dawn of the new era, the spread of the antieconomic condition, it is the business of the artist to see that the architecture of his world is to the world an ever-improving self-betterment.

It is necessary, above all things, to remember [For] in the habitations of Man it is proper to return to the anthropological gaze, our century cannot take us into the future. To return to the anthropological gaze, our urban cores. When we think of the city, we think of Manhattan or New York: Boni and Liveright, 1923. Some brought to socialism by the turn of the current— p. 177 in the spirit of the times, to be sure, and not to think of the West. We still recall the importance settings, and further, that we are no longer satisfied to just visit such natural settings—it is a model that, in its ineffable magnificence, is the key to the whole.

From the installation of a new plasma screen in your grandparents' living room, to the fervent desire to return to the natural world. The prescription is: there cannot be a going back (towards the garden nor the street has been able to produce a viable urbanism into the service of giving form to the new, postwar economic order. Yet Freedomland also reminds us that, in their failure, the monocultures, feedlots the size of large cities, atavistic red state underwrote an entirely new mode of environmental circles, underwrote an entirely new mode of understanding, we remain helpless in the face of problems we cannot.
Working feverishly through the night on her new assignment, the architect shuffled through The Company's catalog of home plans, searching for the perfect profiles, the right balance of expression and order, internal embellishment and external massing. Huddled over the machine, she made copy after copy, mirroring the plans as she went, clipping away a bit here or a chunk there, and then matching it to its inverted neighbor. She was on a deadline. Her employer wanted something new, something bigger and better—for all those empty nesters whose grown children with children were returning, all those new, expanded families—but not something too new. "Work with what we have," they told her. "We know how to build these things."

She remembered laughing derisively under her breath when the HR rep, reading aloud from the latest sales brochure, described LifeDesign® to the new recruits: "Remember, you're not just designing houses, you're designing lives. Because as the boss says, 'LifeDesign® blends the fundamentals of design, architecture, engineering, physics, psychology, and sociology to create a home that looks better—and lives better—than all the rest. '" At the time it sounded absolutely absurd, but now, she got it. And now, as her houses grew ever longer and more elaborate, she laughed aloud with uncontrollable glee as she imagined the fantastic new lives that would unfold along their length.

As day broke, she stood up and stepped back from the table, exhausted. She surveyed her creations, and she was happy. Then it struck her: Her houses needed names. The Company always named their plans. And they always used names that, through association, lent an air of sophistication or gravitas to their products. There were the plans named after Italian cities—The Vicenza, The Roma, The Pisa, The Milano—or famous artists (or architects)—The Picasso, The Renoir, The Van Gogh, The Palladio—or the Founding Fathers—The Washington, The Hamilton, The Franklin, The Jefferson. The names rarely had anything to do with the actual design—though occasionally a design resembling Mount Vernon might be called The Mount Vernon.

She realized that she wanted her houses to have names that were meaningful, names with history, names that spoke to her wild aspirations for the lives of those who would eat and drink, and laugh and cry, and love and hate in them. Then it came to her. At the design meeting later that morning, she presented the fruits of her labor: The Buckingham, The Ledoux, The Fourier, and The Owen. She could tell by the look on her boss' face that she wasn't going to be around much longer.