



Houses from Books: The Influence of Treatises, Pattern Books, and Catalogs in American Architecture, 1738-1950

Daniel D. Reiff

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Many homes across America have designs based on plans taken from pattern books or mail-order catalogs. In *Houses from Books*, Daniel D. Reiff traces the history of published plans and offers the first comprehensive survey of their influence on the structure and the style of American houses from 1738 to 1950.

Houses from Books shows that architectural publications, from Palladio's *I Quattro Libri* to Aladdin's *Readi-Cut Homes*, played a decisive role in every aspect of American domestic building. Reiff discusses the people and the firms who produced the books as well as the ways in which builders and architects adapted the designs in communities throughout the country. His book also offers a wide-ranging analysis of the economic and social conditions shaping American building practices.

As architectural publication developed and grew more sophisticated, it played an increasingly prominent part in the design and the construction of domestic buildings. In villages and small towns, which often did not have professional architects, the publications became basic resources for carpenters and builders at all levels of expertise. Through the use of published designs, they were able to choose among a variety of plans, styles, and individual motifs and engage in a fruitful dialogue with past and present architects. *Houses from Books* reconstructs this dialogue by examining the links between the published designs and the houses themselves.

Reiff's book will be indispensable to architectural historians, architects, preservationists, and regional historians. Realtors and homeowners will also find it of great interest. A catalog at the end of the book can function as a guide for those attempting to locate a model and a date for a particular design. *Houses from Books* contains a wealth of photographs, many by the author, that enhance its importance as a history and guide.

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