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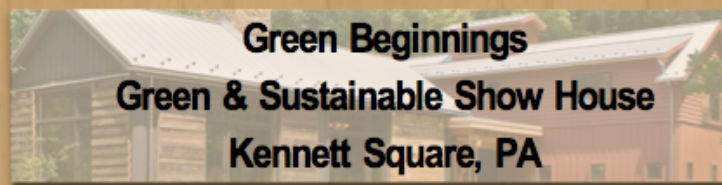
THE EVOLUTION OF SINGLE FAMILY DETACHED HOMES

WHERE DID THE CONCEPT OF GREEN & SUSTAINABLE HOMES COME FROM?

REPRINTED FROM GREEN BEGINNINGS: THE STORY OF HOW WE BUILT OUR GREEN & SUSTAINABLE HOME

UP UNTIL WORLD WAR II, LIFE IN THE UNITED STATES WAS CENTERED UPON THREE DISTINCT GEOGRAPHIC AREAS; CITIES, SMALL TOWNS, AND FARMS. AFTER THE WAR, THE CONCEPT OF SUBURBIA WAS BORN. FUELED BY THE FORD MOTOR COMPANY AND GENERAL MOTORS, WHOSE LEADERSHIP SET OUT TO SUCCESSFULLY FULFILL THEIR COMMON VISION TO MAKE AUTOMOBILE OWNERSHIP A REALITY FOR EVERY AMERICAN FAMILY, COUPLED WITH A FAIRLY ROBUST POST-WAR ECONOMY, LANDS OUTSIDE OF AMERICA'S URBAN CENTERS WERE GOBBLED UP BY DEVELOPERS WHO INTRODUCED AFFORDABLE HOUSING TO THE RETURNING VETERANS AND THEIR NEW AND GROWING FAMILIES. BY THE EARLY 1950'S, THE FIRST SUBURBAN SHOPPING CENTER WAS BUILT IN FLINT HILL, MICHIGAN, TO ACCOMMODATE FORD WORKERS AND THEIR FAMILIES LIVING IN NEWLY CREATED SUBURBIA.. THE SAME SCENARIO FOLLOWED SUIT THROUGHOUT THE COUNTRY. ZONING LAWS AND ORDINANCES WERE ENACTED, AND HOUSING DEVELOPMENTS LIKE LEVITTOWN, PENNSYLVANIA, FILLED THE COUNTRYSIDE SURROUNDING CITIES THROUGHOUT AMERICA LIKE WILDFIRE. IN THE SPIRIT OF AMERICAN INGENUITY, FREE ENTERPRISE, AND CAPITALISM, THESE DEVELOPMENTS PLACED AS MANY HOMES PER ACRE AS WERE PERMITTED BY LOCAL ORDINANCE AS POSSIBLE.

JUMPING INTO THE PRESENT, WHILE ARCHITECTURAL STYLES AND INNOVATIONS HAVE CERTAINLY ADVANCED IN HOME BUILDING, MUCH OF THE ORIGINAL FORMULAS IN PLANNING HOUSING COMMUNITIES HAS REMAINED THE SAME. LITTLE ATTENTION HAD EVER BEEN GIVEN TO SITUATING HOMES ON SITES IN RELATION TO NATURE; THAT IS, TO THE SUN, THE PREVAILING WINDS, AND OTHER NATURAL WORLD ELEMENTS THAT HAD SUSTAINED EVEN PRIMITIVE MAN FOR CENTURIES IN THE MOST RUDIMENTARY OF DWELLINGS SINCE THE BEGINNING OF TIME. SURE, WE EVOLVED TO RATING THE INSULATING QUALITIES OF HOUSES UNDER THE GUISE OF ENERGY CONSERVATION BY THE EARLY 1980'S, BUT THE REAL ANSWER TO A HOME THAT WAS TOO HOT IN THE SUMMER AND TOO COLD IN THE WINTER HAS BEEN AND STILL IS TO ADD BIGGER BOILERS FOR HEAT AND MORE TONNAGE TO AIR CONDITIONING UNITS FOR COOLING. THIS IS MOST TRUE WITH THE McMANSIONS THAT HAVE PEPPERED THE MOST PRISTINE LANDS ACROSS OUR COUNTRY OVER THE PAST SEVERAL DECADES. HAD THESE HOMES BEEN SITUATED ON THE SAME LOTS BUT WITH RESPECT TO THEIR EXPOSURE TO THE SUN FOR PASSIVE SOLAR GAIN; HAD THESE HOMES HAD BEEN POSITIONED TO BE PROTECTED FROM HOT SUMMER RAYS AND COLD WINTER WINDS SIMPLY BY UTILIZING THE EARTH'S NATURAL ELEMENTS LIKE SHADE TREES, HILLS AND BERMS, OUR COUNTRY AND INDEED THE EARTH WOULD NOT BE AS FAR ALONG IN THE GLOBAL WARMING AND ENERGY QUANDARIES WE FIND OURSELVES IN TODAY.



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NO, NOT A WHOLE LOT OF COMMON SENSE HAS BEEN HISTORICALLY APPLIED TO HOME BUILDING AS IT RELATES TO ENERGY EFFICIENCY THROUGHOUT THE PLANET, ESPECIALLY DURING THE PAST 50 YEARS, UP UNTIL NOW. PROFIT TRUMPED ALL ELSE. IT HAS TAKEN A CRISIS OF GLOBAL PROPORTIONS, GLOBAL WARMING, PLUS OUR DEPENDENCE ON FOREIGN OIL AND THE SHAKE-DOWN AROUND IT TO BRING US TO OUR SENSES AND TO EMBRACE THE CONCEPTS THAT WE ARE CALLING GREEN AND SUSTAINABLE LIVING TODAY.

ANOTHER WAY OF INTRODUCING YOU TO THE CONCEPT OF SUSTAINABLE HOUSING AND GREENER LIVING IS TO UNDERSTAND THAT UP UNTIL THE PRESENT WHAT HAS BEEN THE STANDARD, ACCEPTABLE WAY TO BUILD HOUSING JUST WASN'T WORKING ANYMORE. I LIKE TO TAKE THE CONCEPT OF UNDERSTANDING A BIT FURTHER AND EQUATE IT AS AN EXTENSION OF THE CONSCIOUSNESS THAT AROSE OUT OF THE SIXTIES, WHERE AUTHORITY AND EVERYTHING ELSE CAME TO BE QUESTIONED. AFTER ALL, THE ORIGINAL MOTHER EARTH NEWS ORIGINATED IN WOODSTOCK, NEW YORK. COUPLED WITH THE NEW AGE AWARENESS AND SEARCHING FOR SPIRITUALITY IN OUR LIVES, THE GREEN, SUSTAINABLE MOVEMENT IS A NATURAL PROGRESSION OUT OF THIS TRAIN OF THOUGHT. OF COURSE, AS NECESSITY IS THE MOTHER OF INVENTION, THE ENERGY CRISIS AND OUR SUCCESS IN LIVING LONGER, HEALTHIER LIFE STYLES HAVE FUELED THE FLAMES OF THIS NEW AND IMPROVED WAY TO CREATE ENVIRONMENTS THAT ARE SUPERIOR TO THOSE UP UNTIL NOW FOR OUR CHILDREN AND THEIR CHILDREN.

FINALLY, THE ECONOMIC PRESSURES FROM OUR DEPENDENCE UPON FOSSIL FUELS AS A PEOPLE HAS BEEN THE SINGLE MOST INFLUENTIAL FACTORS IN CHANGING THE STATUS QUO TODAY. SIMPLY STATED, WE NO LONGER HAVE A CHOICE. THE TIME HAS COME TO REPLACE THE STATUS QUO WITH ALTERNATIVE SOLUTIONS. AND, THE TIME IS NOW.