

Introduction

THERE'S NO PLACE LIKE HOME

Home Is Where the Heart Is

In 1948, Stanley and Wini Reben bought their first home for ninety dollars down. It was one of the many tiny two-bedroom Cape Cod homes springing up all over Levittown, New York after World War II.

"I was thrilled," Wini remembers, more than half a century later. After living in an apartment, those four rooms were like a palace."

Built at the astonishing rate of thirty a day, the homes in America's first planned community were small and affordable, often purchased with low-interest loans the government offered returning GIs. Stanley, who had just finished service in the Coast Guard, and Wini, who worked at a cosmetics counter at a local store, borrowed their down payment and occupied their \$8,000 home before their street was even paved.

Levittown's 17,000 homes were built in an assembly-line fashion—they were identical on the inside and nearly so on the outside as well. In fact, a folk tune popularized by Pete Seeger in the 1960s dismissed planned communities like Levittown as little boxes made of ticky-tacky" that "all looked just the same." But Stanley and Wini would tell you today that the home is defined by the homemaker not the house itself. You see, the people who moved into the houses were all unique, with their own ideas about what makes a house a home.