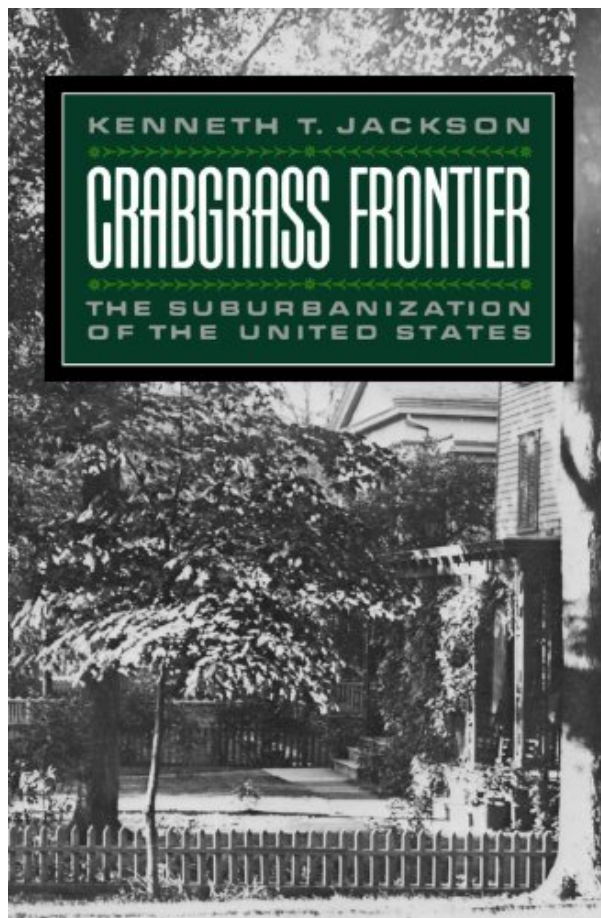
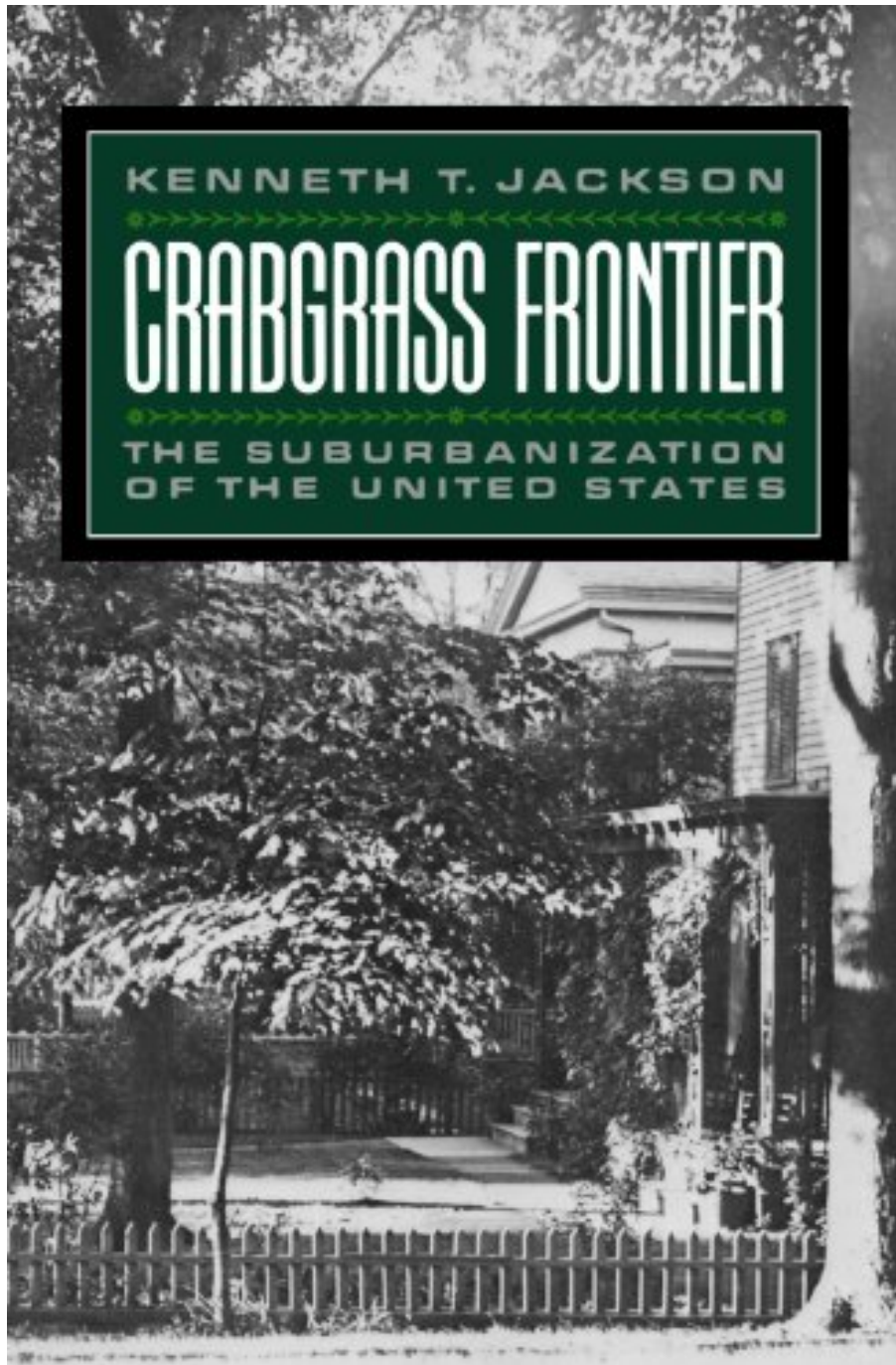


**CRABGRASS FRONTIER: THE  
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## Review

"A compelling narrative.... Jackson traces the consequences of the predominantly North American process [of suburbanization] through three centuries of technological, economic and social innovation."-- Philadelphia Inquirer

## About the Author

Kenneth T. Jackson, Professor of History at Columbia University, is the author of The Ku Klux Klan in the City, 1915-1930; Cities in American History; and a number of other books.

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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.

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- 396 pages

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## Most helpful customer reviews

61 of 62 people found the following review helpful.

Explanations before condemnations

By A Customer

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. By placing the reader firmly in a world where the word "cab" connoted a horse and carriage and where "pollution" meant horse-dung, Jackson makes us aware that the suburbs arose out of a legitimate desire to improve living standards in a very real way.

In sharp contrast, to so many books on the same topic \_The Crabgrass Frontier\_ is not a vitriolic condemnation of selfishness or race-paranoia or consumer-madness. It is a cultural commentary on certain 19th mores which -- when taken to their logical extreme (as they were in the 20th century) -- have a profound effect on the geography of the modern American city.

24 of 26 people found the following review helpful.

History of Suburbanization in America

By S. Pactor

It's an acknowledged classic in the field of Urban History, but it's twenty years old and the last quarter of Crabgrass reads like it. Delores Hayden has covered the same ground in her more recent "Building Suburbia". The approach is historical, Jackson takes each period of suburbanization in chronological order. In terms of explanation for why America is so suburban, he focuses on government policy and the unique characteristics of the American middle class mind. Also, the fact that land is cheap is important. Readers may want to check out Building Suburbia for a more recent treatment of the same subject.

23 of 29 people found the following review helpful.

Fine job, maybe the best available of it's kind of book

By A Customer

Very illuminating study of the growth of suburbia in American history. However, the book is not without flaws. The editing of this book is rather poor (ie. the balloon house construction method is referred to as ballroom construction method) with at least a dozen typos, probably due to the fact that the author suffered the loss of a teen-aged son in a car wreck just as he was finishing the book. He devotes little time to the radical demographic changes in suburbia since World War Two, a situation leading to a barren lack of continuity in suburban towns. The author shies away from most racial causes of the rise of suburbia and urban ethnic and racial transformations. Still, Professor Jackson brings to life what most Americans consider a mundane, dull subject. This is a job well done- I wish he'd write another.

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