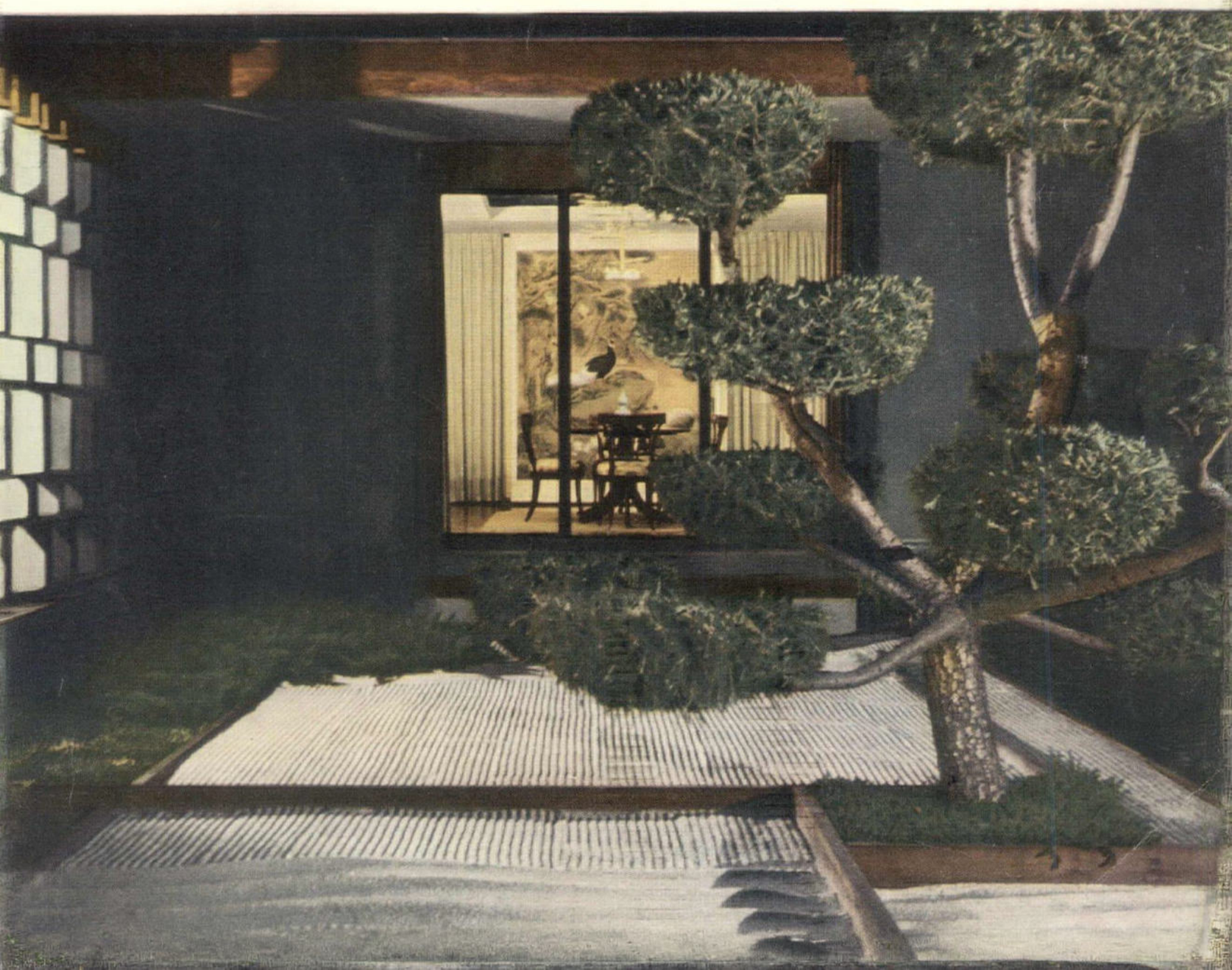
SIX DOLLARS A YEAR—ONE DOLLAR A COPY

December 1953

house + home



To hit pay dirt

1. Dig into the slope for expansion-

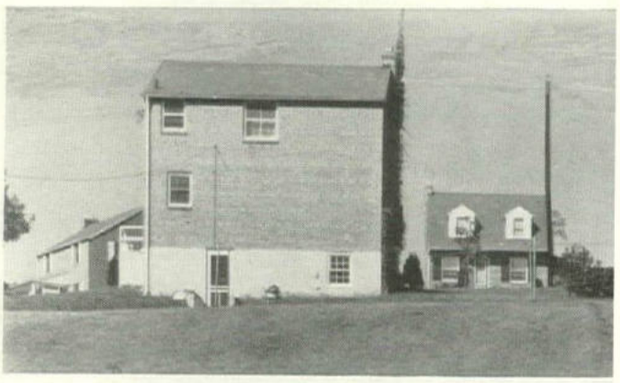
Here is how a three-man team of builder, architect and realtor dealt with the three-dimensional problem posed by a steep hillside site:

▸ ***Builder E. J. (Jack) Turner*** of Seal & Turner, Inc. was shopping around for land last year, passed a battered old "Builder's Land for Sale" sign, looked at the steep slope behind it and decided it was an excellent place—if only he could build on it. So he talked to

▸ ***Realtor Dave Pomeroy*** of Fielding & Pomeroy who was at first doubtful about the site because so many other builders had passed it up. But he knew it enjoyed an excellent location—ten blocks from downtown Media and a railroad station, three blocks from a bus line, within easy reach of two elementary schools and two shopping areas, so he suggested that Seal & Turner call on

▸ ***Architect George Hay,*** who agreed the land was desirable, was sure he could plan landscaping and houses to make the job economical for a project.

Seal & Turner bought the land, Hay designed these expandable-basement houses to fit it and Fielding & Pomeroy sold all the houses in two months.



Before *Hay designed for Seal & Turner, rear elevations on 1949 houses looked like this: tiny windows miss sweep of rolling countryside; poorly lighted basements are no invitation to indoor-outdoor living. Now see right.*

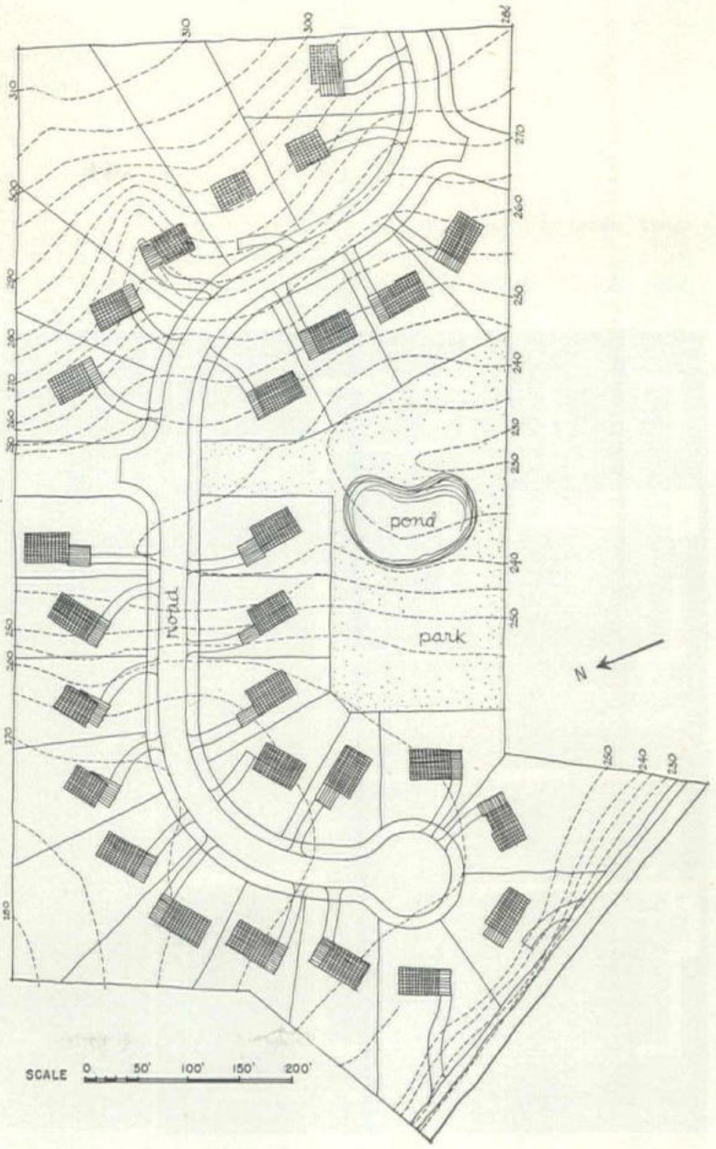
Wm. Turner

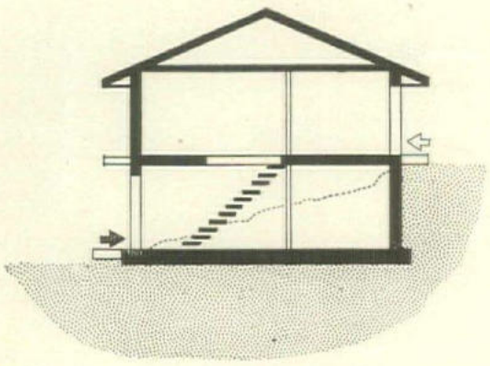
LOCATION: Upper Providence Township, Pa.
SEAL & TURNER, builders
GEORGE HAY, architect, landscape architect
G. D. HOUTMAN & SONS, engineering
FIELDING & POMEROY, sales
TRAVELERS INSURANCE CO., financing
Sales price: $14,300 to $16,650

basement houses

L. S. Williams

1952 *rear of Hay-designed house in 27-unit Edgewold has window walls on entry floor (top) and in ground-level living area facing valley view. Note two-story version of car porch economically using porch floor for roof shelter. Site plan, right, shows how houses fit contours.*





Gold in the hills. The ten-acre site cost the builders about $350 a lot, $50 less than they would ordinarily pay for a 75′ x 125′ strip of undeveloped flat land. Improvements for the 27 lots brought manufactured costs up to $1,600 per lot. "Yet," observe Seal & Turner, "we paid as much as $1,900 for the same size improved flat-land lots that weren't half as attractive."

Hay and Engineer Jack Houtman, who works closely with him on all his site-planned developments (H&H, June '52, July '53), agree that the land would not have been buildable a generation ago because of lack of versatile earth-moving equipment. Land clearing costs were $3,200 (8,000 yds. at 40¢ per yd.).

Siting of each house was completed before arbitrary lot divisions were made. Thus all houses were oriented for view and privacy, sited to give buyers uphill or downhill outdoor living areas, arranged with gradually sloping driveways to carports. Site planning and engineering cost was $154 per lot. Hay's house design fee was $50 per house.

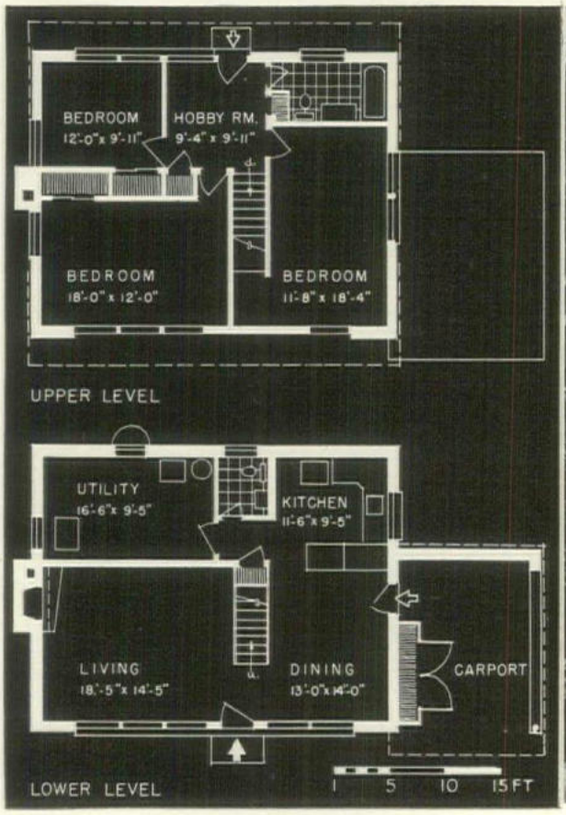
"Even if you pay as much or a little more to develop hilly land," says Jack Turner, "you end up with a more valuable, salable piece of ground every time."

Pay dirt. Builders as well as buyers profited from the improvements:

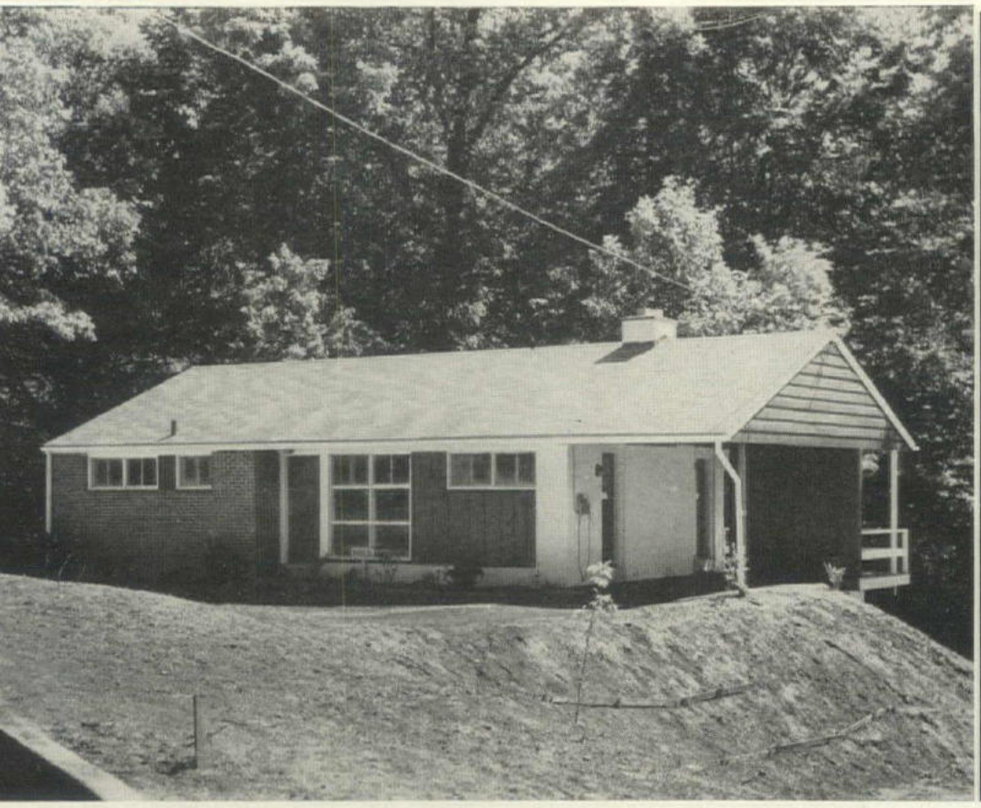
- Houses sold so fast advertising costs were only $77 per house even though all houses were sold conventionally with one-third down.
- No furnished model was needed to enhance buyer appeal of the houses.
- Builder capital was tied up only a little over six months during construction, completion time from start to sales for the entire development.
- Because of design and close-in location, the builders netted a ¾-point premium on all mortgages made by Travelers Insurance Co.

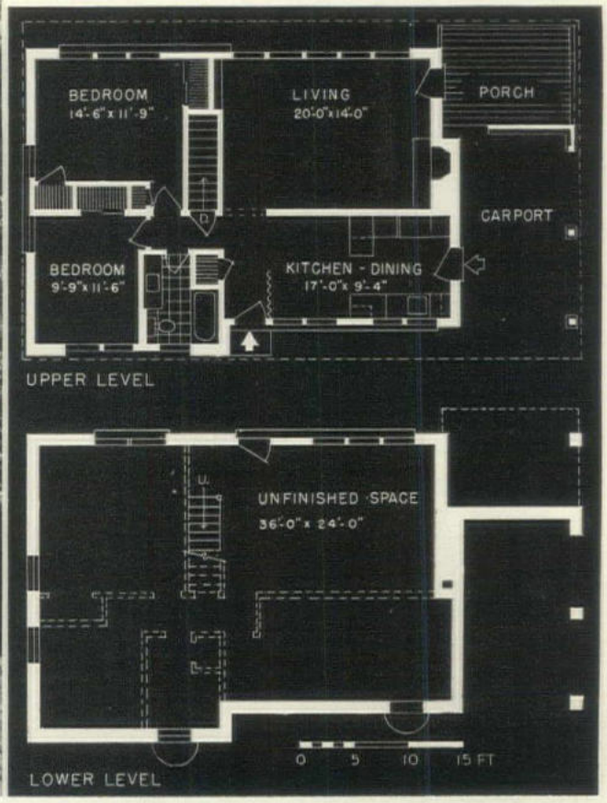
Uphill model was most popular . . .

Uphill model *sold for $15,300. Driveway was curved to lessen grade to carport. Utility, storage, bathrooms are on lower, "buried" side. Exit to rear yard is from second story.*



L. S. Williams

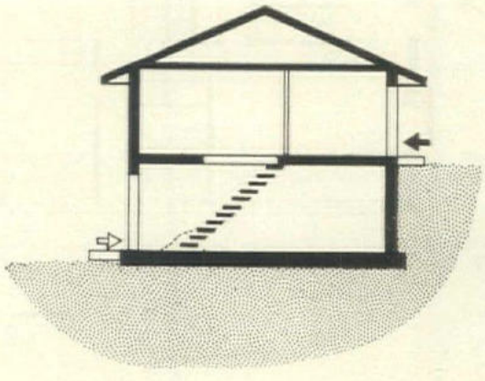




Downhill model *at $14,300, has carport almost at level of road. biggest windows facing view. All windows have standard aluminum sliding sash in standard wood bucks.*

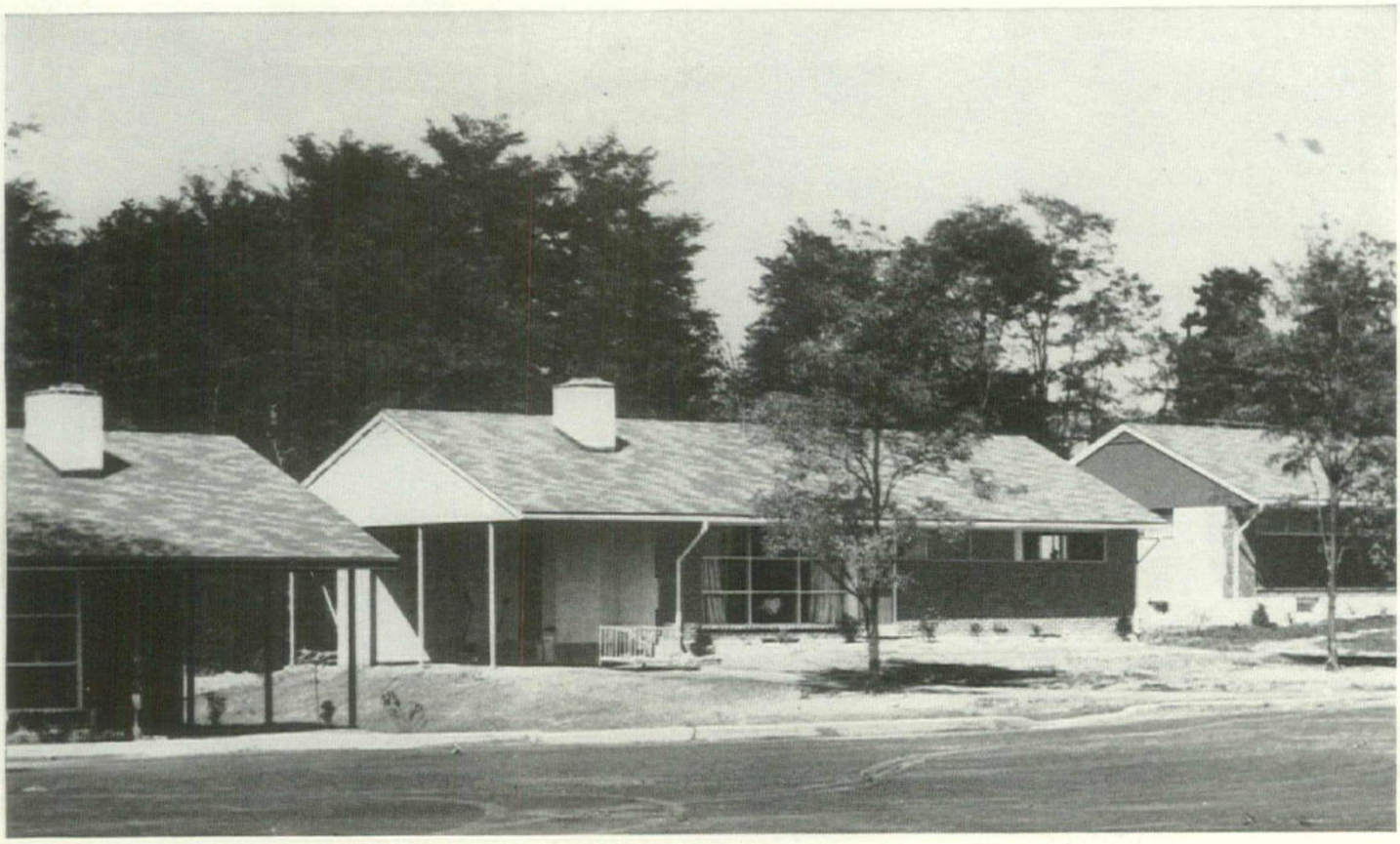
downhill houses were best buy

"The houses were such good buys," says Hay, "because, like many hillside houses, they offer more cubage than a one-story house—at a lower cost." Reason: there is more area under one roof. The basic downhill model was the most economical to build (construction materials are cheaper to move downhill than up) and the best buy at $14,300 (downstairs incomplete). Even so, half the buyers who bought them added enough—by having the expandable lower level finished—to bring their selling price as high as the most expensive houses with big porches and on choice lots. For $2,500 buyers got an additional 765 sq. ft. of living area! This illustrates that buyers will not only pay to get a usable daylight basement but will also pay extra to have it finished off. In all downhill models, rough plumbing was offered in the lower level for $75 extra.

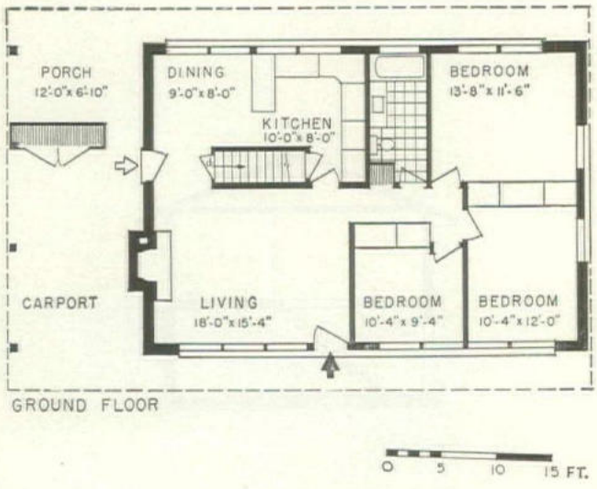


Square-foot building costs on the uphill model (1,439 sq. ft. of finished floor area) were $9.31 without carport or porch. Costs on the downhill model, which is 4′ longer, were $12.21 per sq. ft. for 993 sq. ft. of finished floor area (second level only), an amazingly low $8.14 per sq. ft. for 1,766 sq. ft. of usable space on both levels.

Fielding & Pomeroy report the main attraction of the uphill model was the extra large upstairs bedrooms. Big sales point for the downhill model: the lower floor was cooler in the summer, when all sales were made.



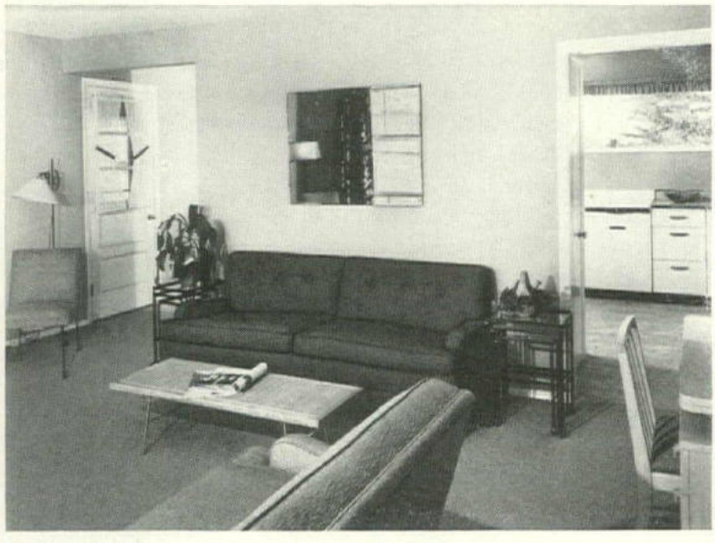
"The more scenic, the more salable"



GROUND FLOOR

Three-bedroom and carport houses in the valley bottom sold last. "The most heavily wooded lots were more scenic, therefore more salable," says Realtor Dave Pomeroy. Basic price on these models was $14,700. Because they had bigger foundations (more living area all on one floor), more partitions, they were the costliest to build.

Versatile young (33) Architect Hay did his own color coordinating in Edgewold, used strong green, Swedish red, earthy brown accents on predominantly white stucco houses, pastels on predominantly red brick houses.



***Kitchen** is in front, facing street, in downhill model (left). Living room (above) is in front of house on uphill model.*

Country living with city conveniences

"Builders Seal & Turner" says Hay, "upgraded the area around Edgewold from $10,000 houses to $15,000 houses. Most builders do just the opposite."

The adjoining area, zoned as was Edgewold for 50′ lots, had been a pleasant suburban street until after the war, when a few builders crowded some unwisely sited houses on narrow lots. Seal & Turner built on 75′ lots, believing they had much more sales appeal (actually houses look more widely spaced because of vertical as well as horizontal spacing).

Their neighborhood improvement idea was catching: owners of several houses on the main street into Edgewold built garages, put curbing in.

Neighborhood-conscious Hay, who won a regional NAHB Better Neighborhood award last year, noted that part of the site was landlocked, designed a swimming pond for children. In hot summer months advertising called attention to the one-acre park and pond. Total cost for scooping out a shallow depression with a clam shovel and building a concrete abutment to keep the hill from washing into the pond was $200. A sluice gate keeps the water at a safe level. Says Hay: "If the site is right, a similar idea could be worked out almost anywhere for no more than $500."

Heavily wooded lots *sold fastest. Builder Jack Turner, graduate in forestry, made special effort to save trees, installed pipes under driveway for water runoff when trees were in hollow (as in photo below). Note also (in same photo) how carport of center house is dropped one floor on very hilly site.*