From a Home in the Suburbs to a Retreat in the Wilderness: The Domestic Architecture of Frank T. Lent

Date
2012-10-13

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Abstract
The idea of home, the ownership of property, and the impact of the home on the moral character and identity of its inhabitants were important concepts in the late nineteenth century. These views were perpetuated by a wide range of supporters including writers, religious leaders, social reformers, politicians. Architects and developers became aware of these ideas and capitalized on the hopes and dreams of middle-class North America by designing, marketing and building the right kind of houses, but perhaps more importantly, by building them in the right location which most often meant the suburban areas around major cities. Architect and writer Franklin Townsend Lent (1855-1919) is but one of many architects practicing in North America who appreciated the contemporary consumers' sensibilities, and their attachment to their homes. Not only did Lent understand the importance of the concept of home, he was able to develop a design vocabulary that drew on the contemporary fascination with the American colonial period. In addition, he appreciated the consumer's desire for a beautiful home in the suburbs, and took advantage of this in his work in New Jersey notably on the development of a suburban neighbourhood called Roosevelt Manor. Lent contributed to the built environment by designing and building many suburban houses, island and seaside cottages, and other structures. He also wrote three books and several pamphlets that provide an understanding of his personal contribution to architecture in suburban American, and to the early development of resort architecture in the Thousand Island region of Upstate New York and Ontario, an area that has received very little scholarly attention. This paper will focus on the domestic architecture of Lent in an attempt to construct an understanding of this unique contribution in the context of late nineteenth century and early twentieth century society by examining his published architectural writings, his advertisements, and some representative houses that he designed and built in the United States and Canada.