



William J. Levitt had a vision of American life. He saw neighborhoods filled with single-family homes that were moderately priced and required low down payments. His company, Levitt & Sons, built two such sprawling developments – both named Levittown – on New York’s Long Island and in Pennsylvania, just north of Philadelphia. Today, Levitt is often credited as being creator of American suburbia.

Levitt & Sons finished building the Long Island version of Levittown in 1951. Before they started building the Pennsylvania version, however, they had quietly acquired 5500 acres of farmland and woods spread through the Bucks County, PA municipalities of Bristol, Falls, Middletown and Tullytown. With the assistance of Dilworth Paxson, required land was purchased from over 170 individual landowners in small parcels. This was meant to keep Levitt’s plans quiet for as long as possible and to keep land prices from rising.

The timing for the creation of Levittown could not have been better. With the end of World War II, troops returning home to the Philadelphia/Trenton region stepped into a housing crisis. Apartments were scarce and most available houses were too expensive for veterans. But the GI Bill provided money for housing, giving Levitt & Sons an opportunity to capitalize by offering affordable housing to returning GIs and their families.

Levitt built his fully equipped and landscaped homes to cost from about \$9,000 to \$18,000. Levittown houses required only \$100 down and veterans didn’t have to put any money down for one of the neighborhood models. Mortgage payments made through the Veterans Administration or Federal Housing Administration ran about \$60 per month. Home models were mostly similar, with only modest variations in exteriors or angle of the building.

Levittown was built in 41 separate sections with 17,311 single-family homes. By summer 1952, a house was being completed every 12 minutes and families were moving in at the rate of 500 per month. The development eventually contained 171 miles of roads, 5 Olympic-sized swimming pools, baseball fields, green space, neighborhood parks, shopping centers and sites set aside for



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places of worship and schools.

House number 17,311 was completed in December of 1957 and sold in early 1958. The development of Levittown stands as one of the milestones of American life in the 20th century, and Dilworth Paxson enjoys being a part of that history.