

Co-operative Housing Yesterday and Today **By David J. Thompson**

La Familistere de Guise 1845-1968

La Familistere de Guise was the concept of a cooperative firm begun by Jean Baptiste Godin in the 1840's. He was impacted by the utopian ideas of Fourier, Cabet and Owen. Godin happened to be a successful businessman and inventor. His workshop grew from 32 workers in 1846 to almost 2000 by 1880. Their stoves, ovens and cast iron appliances became the brand leader in France and throughout Europe. In 1880 the entire firm and the housing he had built for 1000 of the worker families was transferred into one flourishing cooperative. The cooperative existed for almost 100 years as one of France's most successful and unique firms until the advances in electric and gas appliances meant an end to its product line. Although Godin merged into Le Creuset in 1968 it remains one of the best names in France.

For almost fifty years Godin was visited by princes, politicians and philanthropists. They all wanted to replicate Godin's philosophy of building community while making healthy profits. His precise methods for providing cooperative housing for workers took into account windows and light, fresh air circulation, ample apartment sizes, covered indoor courtyards, glass roofs to allow sunshine in and keep rain out, allotments for families to grow fresh food, a modern laundry with hot water and even a swimming pool. Of course, each apartment had the very best and latest Godin stove. All these modern touches were unknown to most in the middle of the 19th Century. Godin set up a cooperative store, a credit union, day care center, theater, library and elementary school. Many industrialists copied his ideas at some level but no one replicated the size and success of the cooperative venture he had envisioned. Today, the entire site is being transformed into the National Museum of Utopia. Godin's work impacted many of the progressive employers and governments of Europe, city planners, the Garden City movement and the worldwide cooperative housing movement.

Anchor Estates (Humberstone Garden Village), Leicester, England

The land on the outskirts of Leicester was purchased by a group of workers who were all employed as co-owners of the Anchor Boot and Shoe Cooperative in Leicester, England. As members of a worker owned cooperative they hoped to create home ownership opportunities for themselves. They wished to have homes close to the countryside and away from the smoggy air of the industrial cities. They were impacted by two models in particular. The first was La Familistere created by Godin in Guise, France (see other story and images). This model gave them the strength to know that working families could own and control their own housing. The other creation was that of Port Sunlight in Cheshire. Lord Lever built this village for his employees in 1888. The village was owned by Lever Brothers and the homes were rented to the employees. Port Sunlight is known for its community features and open space.

Anchor estates is composed of 96 single family homes (some stand alone, some semi-detached and some rows of three or four homes). The Estate is controlled by a board elected by the members. Anchor Estate owns all the land and all the homes. They also

lease land to a neighborhood store and a church, operate a meeting hall and make available land for community gardens, playing fields and open space. The homes can be passed down to family members and some homes have been in the same family for three generations. The Anchor Boot and Shoe Cooperative raised funds from local sources which were matched by the Co-Partnership Tenants, Ltd. The members invested their own money to begin building the homes a few at a time. Legal protections have ensured that Anchor Estates has remained as a cooperative and the lowest cost home ownership in Leicester. All homes are required to be owner occupied. Shares are transferred at par value when member leave the co-op. The co-op's budget covers all reserves necessary to maintain the houses in good shape.

Unite d'Habitation, Marseilles, France, Architect and Planner Le Corbusier

In the aftermath of World War II, the Swiss architect, Le Corbusier was given the go ahead to build his dream apartment city. Provided with land in Marseilles he proceeded to build one of the most famous apartment blocks in the world. The original intent was to provide low cost cooperative housing for civil servants brought in to rebuild the war ravaged Marseilles region. Unite opened in 1952 with 337 apartments in one massive linear building on nine floors. Today Unite houses 1600 people. Within the one block building there is a hotel, restaurant, library, small shopping mall, art studio, gym, children's pool and a school. The units are now all privately owned but the building is run as a cooperative. Most units at the now chic address are too expensive for civil servants and many are now rented due to their wonderful views of the Mediterranean. Unite highlights the dilemmas of providing land, resources and funds for a social purpose that without legal protection later becomes market rate and no longer owner occupied.

Dos Pinos Housing Cooperative, Davis, California

Dos Pinos was created as a limited equity cooperative in 1985 as a way to provide permanently affordable home ownership in Davis. There are 60 units (1, 2, and 3 bedroom units) with a community room, office, laundry and swimming pool, community gardens and open space. The density of 15 units per acre is the highest home ownership density in Davis. The housing costs at Dos Pinos are the lowest home ownership costs in Davis. Dos Pinos was developed due to a city regulation that allowed limited equity cooperatives to be built outside the allocation process. The turnover at Dos Pinos is the lowest of any home ownership tenure in Davis. If the member families at Dos Pinos were all moved to a similar apartment building in Davis (same size, same age) the 60 families would need to pay \$200,000 more per year for their housing. Dos Pinos therefore creates \$200,000 in wealth per year for its members. Members in a cooperative are eligible to deduct their mortgage interest and property taxes from their federal and state taxes.

Yolo Mutual Housing Association, Davis, California

Yolo Mutual Housing Association was created by the Twin Pines Cooperative Foundation in the 1990's to spur creation of a cooperative organization to serve the needs of low and very low income residents. The members elect a majority of the members of the board with other board members being appointed from the community. At each community there the residents elect a Resident Council which organizes many activities and has input to the board and management. By June, YMHA will be operating 176 units

of housing in Davis in four different locations. YMHA has obtained four sites from the city through inclusionary zoning. The four communities are; Twin Pines, Owendale, Tremont Green and Moore Village. Shown is the recently completed Tremont Green (36 units) and a festive occasion at the Twin Pines Community (36 units).

DACHA, the Davis Area Cooperative Housing Association

DACHA is a limited equity housing cooperative modeled after Dos Pinos. However, in the case of DACHA, the concept is being applied to single family homes available community wide rather than apartment style units at one location. DACHA now has 20 single family homes at five different sites throughout the city. The homes obtained by DACHA come through a city program that requires that a portion of each development is made available as “for sale” homes for families at 90% and 100% of median income. The homes are purchased by DACHA and kept as permanently affordable to the same income groups. The DACHA homes are the lowest cost single family home ownership opportunity in Davis. DACHA gives a first preference to households where at least one person is employed in the City of Davis or on the UCD campus. The median home in Davis is now above \$500,000 and therefore unreachable for these income groups.