Why have some seen the 1950s as a time period of conformity?
Conformity

• Behavior in accordance with socially accepted standards. (parents, government, schools, and society)
1950s

• https://archive.org/details/DateWith1950
Well-Defined Gender Roles

The **ideal modern woman** married, cooked and cared for her family, and kept herself busy by joining the local PTA and leading a troop of Campfire Girls. She entertained guests in her family's suburban house and worked out on the trampoline to keep her size 12 figure.

-- Life magazine, 1956

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The **ideal 1950s man** was the provider, protector, and the boss of the house. -- Life magazine, 1955

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1956 → William H. Whyte, Jr. → The Organization Man

A middle-class, white suburban male is the ideal.
• **YouTube - Pete Seeger Little Boxes**
  *malvina reynolds - little boxes - YouTube*
• How does mass production affect Levitt’s method?
• Does mass production produce better or worse products?
• Does it produce cheaper or more expensive products?
Suburban Living

Levittown, L. I.: “The American Dream”

1949 → William Levitt produced 150 houses per week.

$7,990 or $60/month with no down payment.
Suburban Living: The New “American Dream”

- 1 story high
- 12’x19’ living room
- 2 bedrooms
- tiled bathroom
- garage
- small backyard
- front lawn

By 1960 → 1/3 of the U.S. population in the suburbs.
Suburban Living: The Typical TV Suburban Families

The Donna Reed Show
1958-1966

Leave It to Beaver
1957-1963

Father Knows Best
1954-1958

The Ozzie & Harriet Show
1952-1966
Television

1946 → 7,000 TV sets in the U. S.
1950 → 50,000,000 TV sets in the U. S.

Mass Audience → TV celebrated traditional American values.

Truth, Justice, and the American way!
Federal Highway Act (Interstate Highway System)
Factors Encouraging Suburbanization

- **Mass-produced low-cost housing** (Levittown)
- G.I. Bill – low interest, 0% down loans
- **Post-war economic prosperity** → **Consumerism**
- Baby Boom - 1957 → 1 baby born every 7 seconds
• Harry Truman

1945 to 1953

• 22nd Amendment (1951) - a person can only be elected to be president two times for a total of eight years
Television and Gender Roles

• YouTube - leave it to beaver
• YouTube - folgers coffee ad
Progress Through Science

1957 ➔ Russians launch SPUTNIK I

1958 ➔ National Defense Education Act - funding to improve American schools (Science & Technology)
Progress Through Science

Atomic Anxieties:

→ “Duck-and-Cover Generation”

Atomic Testing:

→ 1946-1962 → U. S. exploded 217 nuclear weapons over the Pacific and in Nevada.