In 1797, the architect Asher Benjamin published *Country Builder's Assistant*, making his book the first, but certainly not the last, architectural pattern book written in the United States. Benjamin himself would go on to author several more books of architectural patterns and house plans, competing with the publications of new generation of American architects like Andrew Jackson Downing, a proponent of the idea that homes could reflect the people who lived inside them. The desire to control and polish that reflection guided 100,000 individuals to purchase kit homes from Sears, Roebuck and Company between 1908 and 1940, and it drove the expansion of house planning guides into popular publications like *Better Homes and Gardens* Since the 1930s, *Better Homes and Gardens* has provided its readers with floorplans and elevations of new home models which readers may then take to local builders for construction. The *Better Homes* plans, like Benjamin's patterns and the Sears kits, were not meant to be dictatorial; consumers could customize the plans and parts to suit their needs and, as Downing would point out, their taste.

Today, computer-aided design allows for even greater Architectural customization, and 3D printing provides a quick way to produce physical models. These technologies are an asset to builders, and they can be for historians as well. 3D printing enables historians and students to reproduce historic home designs, experience their space and, if Downing is correct, learn about the people who lived inside. Consider the 1960 *Better Homes and Gardens* “Five Star” home plan number 2803, an international style ranch home designed by Chicago architect Louis Huebner. *Better Homes* provides the home’s floor plan and most of its interior dimensions which can then be modeled in a program like SketchUp and printed. With a model home in hand, what can a student of history tell about the life and times of its hypothetical residents?
*Better Homes* provides interior and exterior photographs of Home 2803, and while they are more attractive than an extruded plastic 3D model, they do not provide a single, complete view of the home. With a model in hand, a student can better understand how people move through the house, and they can speculate as to why the house was configured in such a way. A model would also enable its viewer (or handler) to see how the interior of the home would have interacted with different exteriors. For example, if each student in a classroom had a different model home, they could arrange them in a neighborhood and then consider to what extent the home’s many windows compromised privacy. On the other hand, placing the model in a simulated landscape of trees would reveal how the windows bring natural beauty inside. By considering what elements of design were prioritized in Home 2803, students may learn how design was used to build “the good life.”