



The Houses That Sears Built; Everything You Ever Wanted To Know About Sears Catalog Homes

Rosemary Thornton

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Between 1908-1940, Sears customers ordered about 75,000 houses out of the Sears Roebuck and Company mail-order catalogs. The houses were shipped by rail to city lots and farms all over the country.

Each "kit home" contained 30,000 pieces, including 750 pounds of nails and 27 gallons of paint and varnish. A 75-page instruction book showed home buyers, step by step, how to assemble those 30,000 pieces of house.

Today, these houses are a treasured piece of Americana and nationwide interest in Sears homes is *great*. The Washington Times recently reported (September 13, 2001) that a Sears home in Chevy Chase sold for \$816,000.

My research indicates that only 2% (approximately) of the Sears homes in the country have been discovered. *More than 70,000 Sears homes remain undiscovered and unknown.*

Because of this, our communities' best architectural treasures – our grand collection of Sears homes – are being damaged by remuddling and worse, demolished.

I hope that "*The Houses That Sears Built*" will educate and enlighten people about these hidden architectural treasures that lie silently within our cities, just **waiting** to be discovered.

There is tremendous interest in this topic and I hope this book will spur that interest even further. In my part of the country (Southwestern Illinois) these wonderful old Sears homes are still being remuddled and demolished. **This must stop.**

It is my hope that "*The Houses That Sears Built*" will inspire folks to **find** their community's Sears homes and implement policies and programs to highlight and protect these treasured bits of architectural Americana.

When you have finished reading "*The Houses That Sears Built*" **you** will be your community's expert on Sears homes. You'll learn how to identify Sears homes from the inside, outside and from courthouse documents. You'll learn the interesting details of Sears homes' construction. One chapter is devoted to the \$1 million order of Sears homes that was shipped to Carlinville, Schoper and Wood River (Illinois).

Another chapter is devoted to "The Lost Sears Homes." These are Sears homes which appeared only once in obscure Sears Modern Homes catalogs and were not included in "*Houses by Mail: A Guide To Houses from Sears, Roebuck and Company*," by Katherine Cole Stevenson and H. Ward Jandl. ("*Houses by Mail*" is the definitive field guide for identifying Sears homes and makes a wonderful companion book to "*The Houses That Sears Built*.")

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