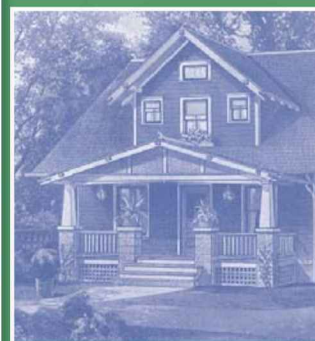
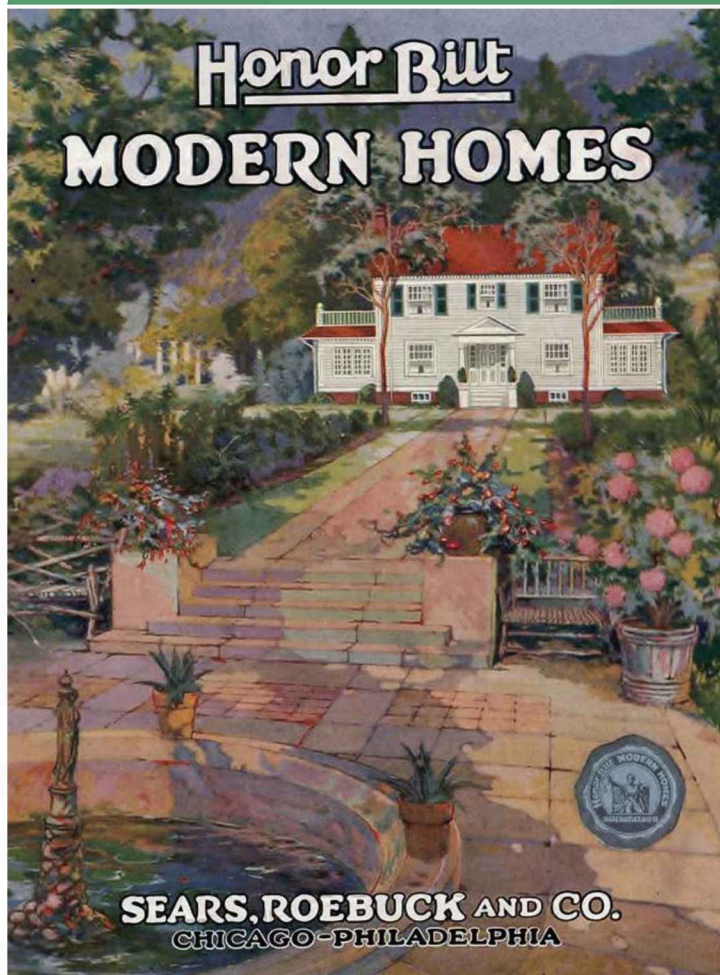




Walking/Driving Tour



SEARS CATALOG HOMES



OVERVIEW OF SEARS HOMES

In 1895, the idea of a self-assembled, mail order home was realized by companies such as The Hodgson Company, Aladdin Homes, Montgomery Ward, and of course the largest and most successful of these enterprises – Sears, Roebuck and Company. Before Sears even began selling kit homes, Richard W. Sears (founder of Sears, Roebuck and Company) already had a distinct advantage over these competitors. Sears could boast that one out of every four Americans was already a customer at Sears.

Between 1908 and 1940, the Sears Roebuck specialty catalog offered more than 450 different models of 'kit' homes and many variations of them with prices ranging from \$146.25 for the Golden Rod Cottage up to \$5,140 for the Magnolia – the grandest of all the kit homes.

The average kit home had 30,000 parts, not including nails, screws, etc. It included everything except the lot, foundation, and energy to assemble it. Each pre-cut piece was perfectly shaped, no sawing was required, and all parts were number-keyed to a blueprint. These ready-to-assemble homes reflected the American taste of the period complete with modern conveniences such as indoor plumbing and electricity. They were shipped mostly by rail car to buyers across the country.

When the Sears Modern Homes Department closed in 1940, the sales records and promotional materials were destroyed, leaving it up to individual communities and homeowners to identify Sears Homes. Alongside Elgin and Carlinville, Downers Grove boasts one of the largest collections of Sears Homes within Illinois with nearly 150 homes.



For more information about Sears Homes, visit: <http://www.searsarchives.com/homes/1908-1914.htm>

For more information about historic preservation in Downers Grove, visit: <http://www.downers.us/govt/historic-preservation>

DOWNERS GROVE SEARS HOMES

Establishing a home's identity can be tricky. It is unusual to find a house in its original condition. Many have been remodeled or the original floor plans may have been customized or reversed. Also, some Sears models are similar to those offered by other mail-order companies. On the walking tour, you will notice many homes which have characteristic features similar to the Sears models. To the best of the Village's knowledge, the homes listed in the brochure have been determined to be Sears Catalog Homes. Unique architectural features to notice during the walking tour are shown in the brochure.

Many Sears Homes include details such as:

- unique shaped steps on the side of the chimney exterior
- a half moon door with a 180 degree arch
- a cat slide roof
- a crescent or eyebrow window under the eaves
- double-hung windows with a single pane bottom and multiple pane top
- arches over vestibules
- narrow pane windows

TOUR OF SEARS HOMES



Each home description will have a numbered symbol which coincides with its location on the map.

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WHITEHALL

Offered 1912 – 1926
Cost \$687 – \$1,863



4706 Highland Avenue

Designed with economy in mind, the home features six rooms and one bath. The dining and living rooms are connected by a large cased opening, which appears to make one large room. The front façade features a two-story bay window and a full-width front porch with wood columns. Recent renovations altered the front steps and front door.



A skilled but mostly anonymous group of architects designed the 447 different kit homes for Sears.

Each of the designs could be modified in numerous ways, including reversing the floor plan, building with brick instead of siding, and many other options.



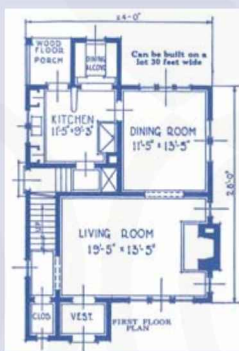
BARRINGTON

Offered 1926 – 1929
Cost \$2,329 – \$2,606



911 Lincoln Street

This Barrington model features six rooms and one bath and was built as a rental unit just prior to the Depression. The living room features a fireplace flanked by high casement windows, while a breakfast nook is provided in the rear. The home is in the English Country Revival style with the practical interior of American architecture. The Barrington model is similar to the Brookwood model and is identical to the Cambridge model, with the only difference being the exterior siding.



In 1910, only 10% of homes had electricity. By 1930, that number jumped to 70%, providing a more convenient home for buyers.

BROOKWOOD

Offered 1932 – 1933
Cost \$1,328

3 4540 Forest Avenue



The two-story Brookwood model features six rooms and one bath. The Brookwood model is similar to the Barrington model but does not feature a fireplace nor a breakfast nook.

A 1950's addition has been added to the west side of the original home. During construction of the addition, uncovered plaster bedroom walls had notes written on them about President-elect Roosevelt visiting President Hoover at the White House in December 1932.

7 4905 Parkway Drive



This Brookwood model, unlike the 4540 Forest Avenue Brookwood model home, does not feature an addition. The steeply pitched vestibule roof with an arched window opening is the primary feature

of this property. The home was built by Otto Hummer, founder of the Downers Grove Park District system, and is adjacent to historic Prince Pond.

CORNELL

Offered 1925 – 1938
Cost \$1,360 – \$1,785

4 4605 Forest Avenue



The Cornell model includes six or seven rooms and one bath. Originally, the home featured a full-width front porch supported by brick piers. A renovation to the home eliminated

half of the original porch. The rectangular layout of the house permitted this model to be placed on narrow lots.

6 4819 Prince Street



The Cornell model features a front dormer, hipped roof, and a front porch, which has been enclosed. The home features numerous windows, which made the Cornell a popular model. A side addition

was made to this house incorporating the same materials as the original structure.

5

AVONDALE

Offered 1911 – 1912
Cost \$1,198 – \$2,657



4808 Forest Avenue

This modern bungalow includes six rooms and one bath. The home's exterior features include a projecting bay, a front porch with tapered columns, and a hipped roof. Interior features include a built-in buffet and mirror in the dining room, a living room fireplace flanked by window seats, and a beamed ceiling in both the living and dining rooms. A rear addition blends in with the historic home.



Central heating, indoor plumbing, and electricity were all new developments in home design that 'Modern Homes' incorporated, although not all homes were designed with these conveniences.

8

ARLINGTON

Offered 1913 – 1922
Cost \$1,294 – \$2,906



4817 Linscott Avenue

This Arts and Crafts Style home includes seven rooms and one bath. Originally constructed with a wrap-around front porch with tapered, paired columns, this porch has since been enclosed. The interior features include beamed ceilings in the dining room with a fireplace in the living room.



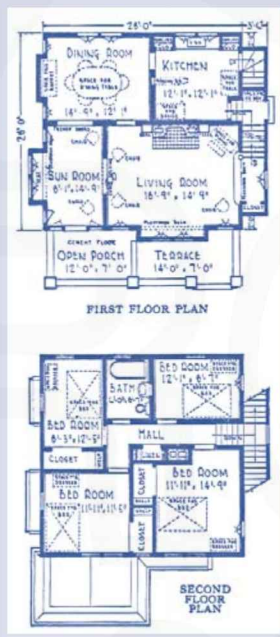
In the early 1930s, bungalows such as the Arlington model, became the house of the future. In a new bungalow home, living rooms and dining rooms were essentially one room, separated by only colonnades or an arch. Kitchens were also made smaller and more efficient with an increased emphasis on organization.



4743 Saratoga Avenue

The Alhambra home includes eight rooms and one bath. Original catalog renderings show the Alhambra with many Spanish Revival details that were not built on this house. But it does detail a stucco exterior with a front dormer, overhanging eaves, and an open porch and terrace (which has since been converted to living space). The living room features a fireplace while the dining room has built-in sideboards. The Alhambra model is similar to the Monterey model, but with a different roof and porch design.

This Sears home was built in 1924 at the prominent corner of Saratoga Avenue and Prairie Avenue in the E.H. Prince Subdivision. This home is one of the largest kit homes in Downers Grove.



1240 Chicago Avenue



This model includes seven to nine rooms and one-and-a-half baths. This Colonial Revival house includes a small front porch with stately pilasters and a sun parlor on the west

façade with a balcony above. The interior includes a fireplace in the family room and French doors throughout the ground floor.

1340 Gilbert Avenue



This home includes a gabled front porch and, in addition to a sun parlor on the east side, it also features a dining porch on the west façade. Both house extensions include balconies above.

This home is the largest Sears home in Downers Grove.



4641 Seeley Avenue

The Colchester model includes five or seven rooms and one bath with an optional second floor. The front façade features a round-arched front door, a crescent window in the front gable, and a brick chimney. Interior features include a fireplace in the living room and a telephone room in the main hall.



In the 1920s over 5,000 people moved to

Downers Grove and the real estate market was booming. The 1920 population was 3,543 and in 1930 it was 8,977. During

that time, Chicago residents who were tired of paying rent were moving to the suburbs, including Downers Grove.

Our Liberal Easy Payment Plan



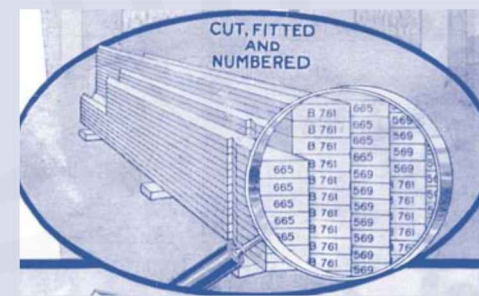
4716 Lee Avenue

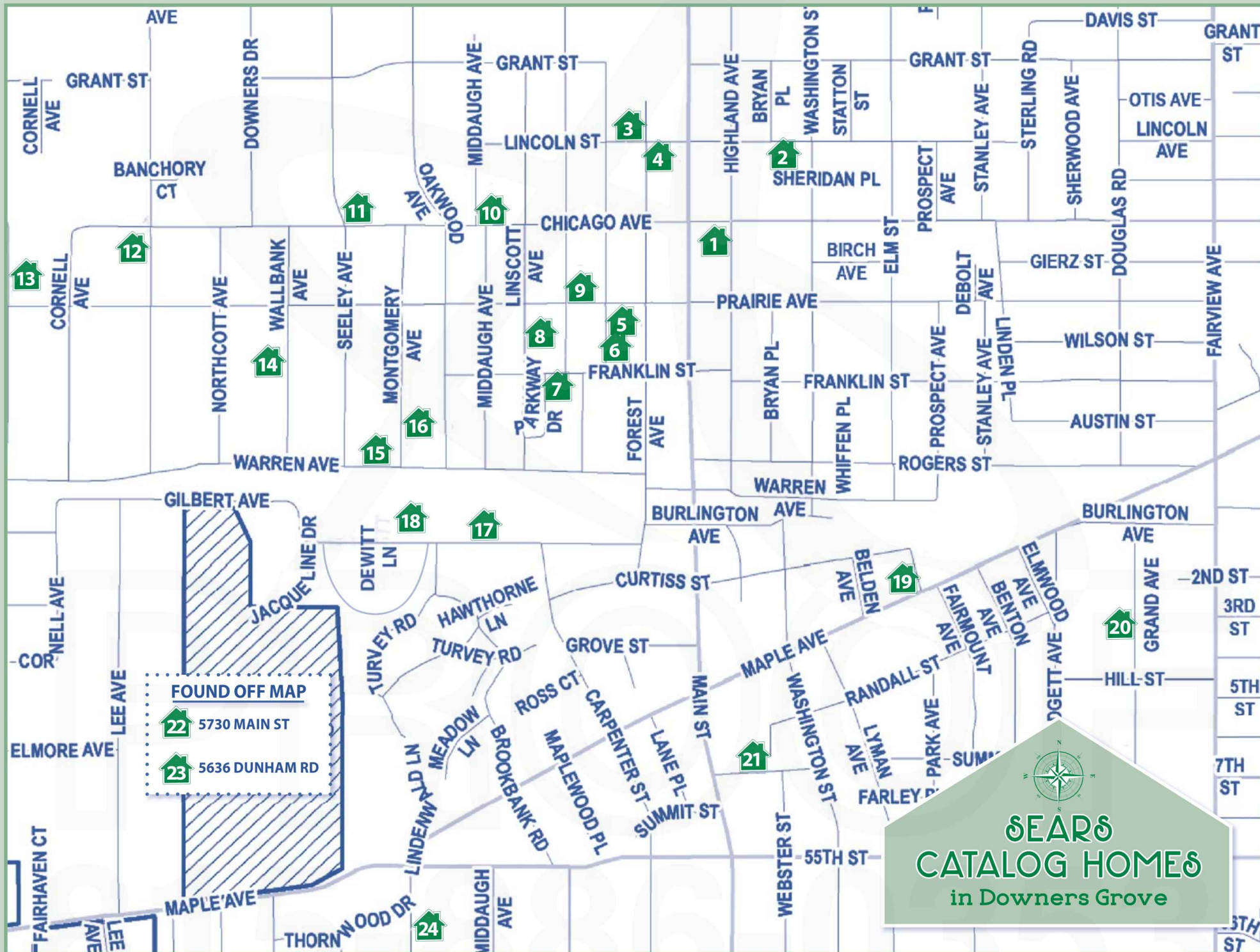
This Country Revival influenced home includes six rooms and one-and-a-half baths. The steep front gable façade features a recessed entrance porch with a stone surround. The front façade also features a shed dormer. The interior includes a breakfast alcove off of the kitchen.



An easy way to identify if a home is a

Sears Catalog Home is to look at the lumber. Most Sears' lumber was stamped with a letter and a number. Between 1908 and 1910, Sears sometimes used local mills who supplied lumber when demand was high so not all lumber will have those details.





13

AURORA

Offered 1933
Cost \$989 – \$1,110

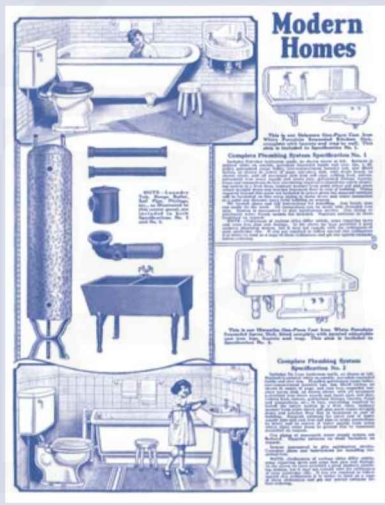
4725 Stonewall Avenue

This English Country cottage style home includes six rooms, one bath, and a built-in basement garage, which was rare in 1933. The front entrance extends out from the main house with a gable. The front façade features a prominent stone chimney. The home was built in 1933 by volunteer firemen for their chief.



Towards the end of Sears offering its kit homes, their popularity

was shown by the many children who learned to read by only using the Sears Roebuck Catalog and the family Bible. In many rural homes, those were the only two books in a household.



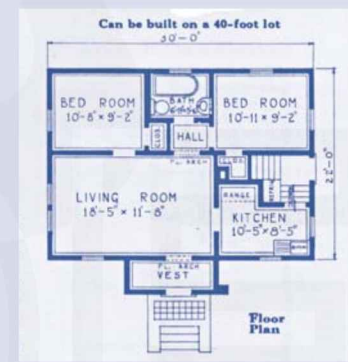
14

ROCHELLE

Offered 1929 – 1933
Cost \$1,170

4832 Wallbank Avenue

Described in the 1932 catalog as "Americanized English architecture", the Rochelle includes four rooms and one bath. The double gable front façade is a unique feature along with the arched front door. The home was recently renovated with a large addition on the north façade to provide an attached garage and additional living space.



In 1929, Sears' popularity was booming as they were shipping an average of 250 units per month just from Cairo, IL.



Due to the state of the economy between 1929 and 1931, many Village residents were without jobs, and money was scarce. The entire community worked together to find jobs for the unemployed and provide food and coal to those in need.

15

MOUNT VERNON

Offered 1921 – 1925
Cost \$851 – \$1,221



1416 Warren Avenue

The Mount Vernon model includes four rooms and one bath with a gabled front porch and hipped roof.

The interior features a fireplace in the living room and breakfast alcove off of the kitchen.

The Mount Vernon model is one of a few Sears homes that was not a pure kit. The four outside walls were small enough to be constructed in a mill and shipped with the rest of the kit. This was called a Simplex Sectional Home.

The Simplex Sectional Home, as the name suggests, contained simple designs. The Mount Vernon model could be assembled with basic tools and required no sawing or nailing. Simplex homes such as these were frequently only a couple of rooms and were ideal for summer cottages.



16

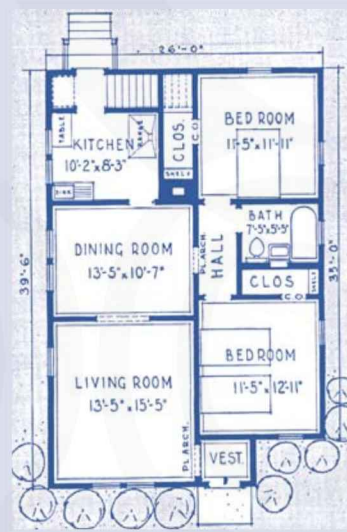
BELLEWOOD

Offered 1931 – 1933
Cost \$1,259



4927 Montgomery Avenue

This small English Country Revival cottage includes five rooms and one bath. The exterior features a steep front gable with a cat slide curve over the arched front door.



In the early twentieth century, Downers Grove attracted not only homeowners, but also a number of businesses that became pillars of the community.

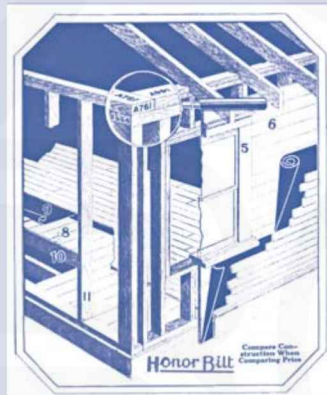


Sears was still selling mail order homes in the early 1930s but their best sellers were the modest homes such as the Bellewood model.



1244 Gilbert Avenue

This bungalow style features five rooms and one bath. The home includes a clipped-gable dormer and hipped roof. The original full-width open front porch has been enclosed. The home also features a pantry off of the kitchen.



A house kit was shipped in a railroad car, and because of the switching roundhouse and railroad sidings in Downers Grove, there was track room for the car to remain for seven to ten days as it was being unloaded. The new owners could then follow the meticulous instructions to build the house themselves, or they could have a contractor complete the house. Downers Grove has one of the largest collections of Sears homes, due in part to its convenient railroad sidings.



744 Maple Avenue



The Ivanhoe includes seven rooms and one bath. The home features two front hipped dormers and a wide front porch which extends nearly the entire width of the home. This particular Sears home is a combination of the Ivanhoe and Model 200 called Model

264P230. The home originally had a walk-in ice box with outside access.

This home in Downers Grove is a rare, fully documented Sears home with plans, construction documents, and Sears correspondence still in existence.

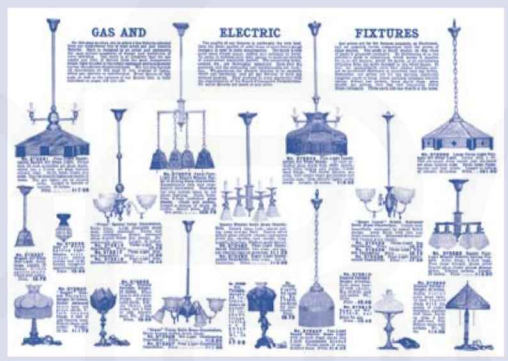


Sears estimated that the average man could erect a 'Modern Home' in about 90 days in good weather.



5210 Grand Avenue

This bungalow includes five rooms and one bath. A projecting front porch features triple columns and bargeboard trim at the gable. The home features a reception room, now commonly called a foyer.

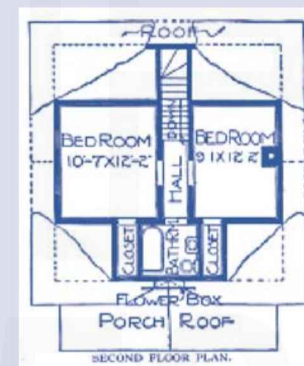
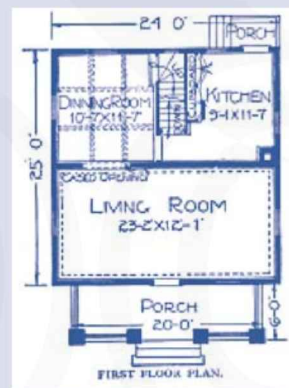


During the time Kit homes were offered, Sears homes were an attractive option and a good value, immediately drawing prospective homeowners to the possibility of having a fine new home at a modest price.



930 Summit Street

This bungalow includes five rooms and one bath. The home features a front gable and a nearly full-width front porch with concrete columns and tapered wood piers. The interior includes a beamed ceiling in the dining room.

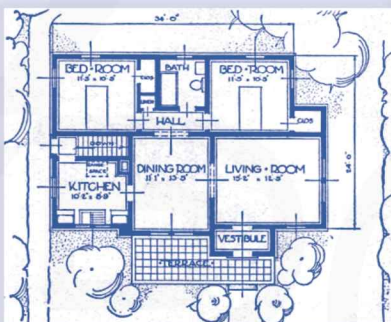


To advertise the company's new and improved line of building supplies, a Modern Homes specialty catalog, the Book of Modern Homes and Building Plans, appeared in 1908.



5730 Main Street

This English Country Revival house includes five rooms and one bath with an arched opening between the living and dining rooms. The two front gables are prominent features as well as the half-moon front door. The home is identical to the Jewel model and similar to the Roxbury model.



Sears FACT Sears offered loans beginning in 1911, and by 1918 it offered customers credit for almost all building materials as well as offering advanced capital for labor costs. Typical loans ran at 5 years, with 6% interest, but loans could be extended over as many as 15 years.

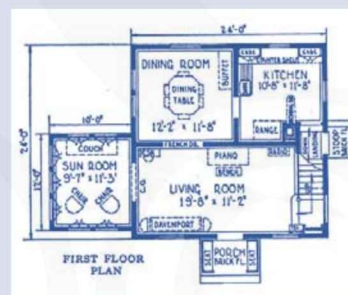


History FACT A bill for dairy products in 1934 was only \$3.44 for 18 quarts of milk and 14 jars of cream.

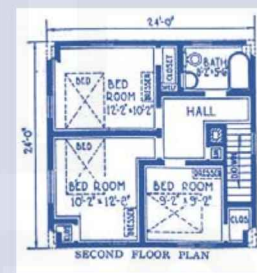


5636 Dunham Road

This Dutch Colonial style home includes six rooms and one bath with a semi-open stair and a full-width shed dormer on the front façade. This home was added onto and resembles the Van Jean model. An arch over the front door includes a crescent feature and paired columns.



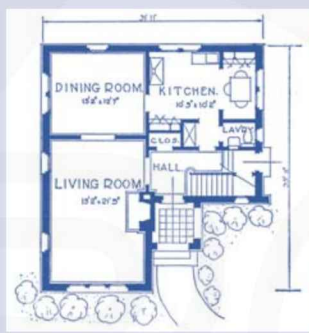
Downers Grove FACT Between 1930 and 1940, the population of Downers Grove increased by only 549 people due to the Great Depression. Families were combining households in order to survive, leading to very little real estate being sold.





5535 Dunham Road

This English Tudor style home features six rooms and one-and-a-half baths with a steeply pitched roof with a curve over the front entrance. The exterior is clad with brick and half-timbered wood and stucco. The home features a decorative telephone niche in the front hall and semi-open stairs to the second floor.



The growing middle class was leaving the city for suburbia as trolley lines and the railroad extended lifelines for families who needed to travel to the city. Likewise, companies were building factories on distant, empty parcels of land and needed to house their workers. Affordable, mail-order homes proved to be just the answer to such dilemmas.



No official tally exists of the number of Sears mail-order houses that still survive today. It is reported that 70,000 to 100,000 houses were sold between 1908 and 1940 through Sears Modern Homes program with 447 different housing styles.

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Now Built Into
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THE WAY MODERN HOMES ARE INSULATED

Air Sealed Walls
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INTERIORS - The AVONDALE

A
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Living
Room

The
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Cheery
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