

**From the Front Page**

# Some of Antigo's fine homes arrived here in kit form from Sears

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Many people encounter the words "some assembly required" when shopping for toys or furniture but not when buying a home. This was not true for at least three families in Antigo. They were part of the approximately 100,000 American families that turned to mail order kits for a home purchase between 1908 and 1940's.

One of these houses from a kit is at 810 Seventh Ave. It was one of their top models, the "Honor built", as described in the Sears Roebuck House catalog of 1926.

Theresa Donahue, a school-teacher, ordered that home for herself in 1927. Basic cost was \$3,278. Extras such as storm windows and doors were an additional \$116, sheet plaster instead of lathe an additional \$306 and screen doors and windows \$78. A variety of plumbing and lighting choices at various prices was available.

In 1945 the Worman family moved into the house and lived there till 1985. Of that large family only Rev. Jeremiah Worman still lives in Antigo but there are many people who remember visiting the family and admiring the interior.

Theresa Donahue was not the only family member who shopped in that 1926 Sears Roebuck catalog of homes. A brother, Dr. M.J. Donahue bought another model from the same catalog and had it assembled right around the corner, at 411 Clermont St.

While Sears Roebuck was by far the most successful company there

were several that sold home kits including Aladdin, which first popularized the idea in 1906-1907, Bennet Homes, Sterling Homes, Montgomery Ward and Gordon-Van Tine.

An example of another home built from a kit stands at 202 Superior St. It was built by Tony and Eva Walk and was first offered in the 1936 catalog of the Gordon-Van Tine Company based in Iowa. The model, called the "Bristol", is in a Tudor Revival style and was described in the catalog as "a delightful bungalow (that) will please the most critical American family."

Tony Walk saw the Bristol in Fond du Lac and fell in love with it. He got the information from the owner and immediately ordered his own kit, built the house and sold the one the family was then living in. This all happened in the early or mid 1940's. Jane (Walk) Donahue is the daughter of Tony and Eva Walk and remembers living in the house.

Tony Walk took pride in the garden and was often seen doing some landscaping. Strangers driving past would stop and admire the house. Some would ask for tours of the interior. If Tony had the time he would agree but if he was not in the mood he would say "I'm only the caretaker," and go about his work.

When Jane Walk married Mike Donahue just after he got out of the service the reception was held in that house.

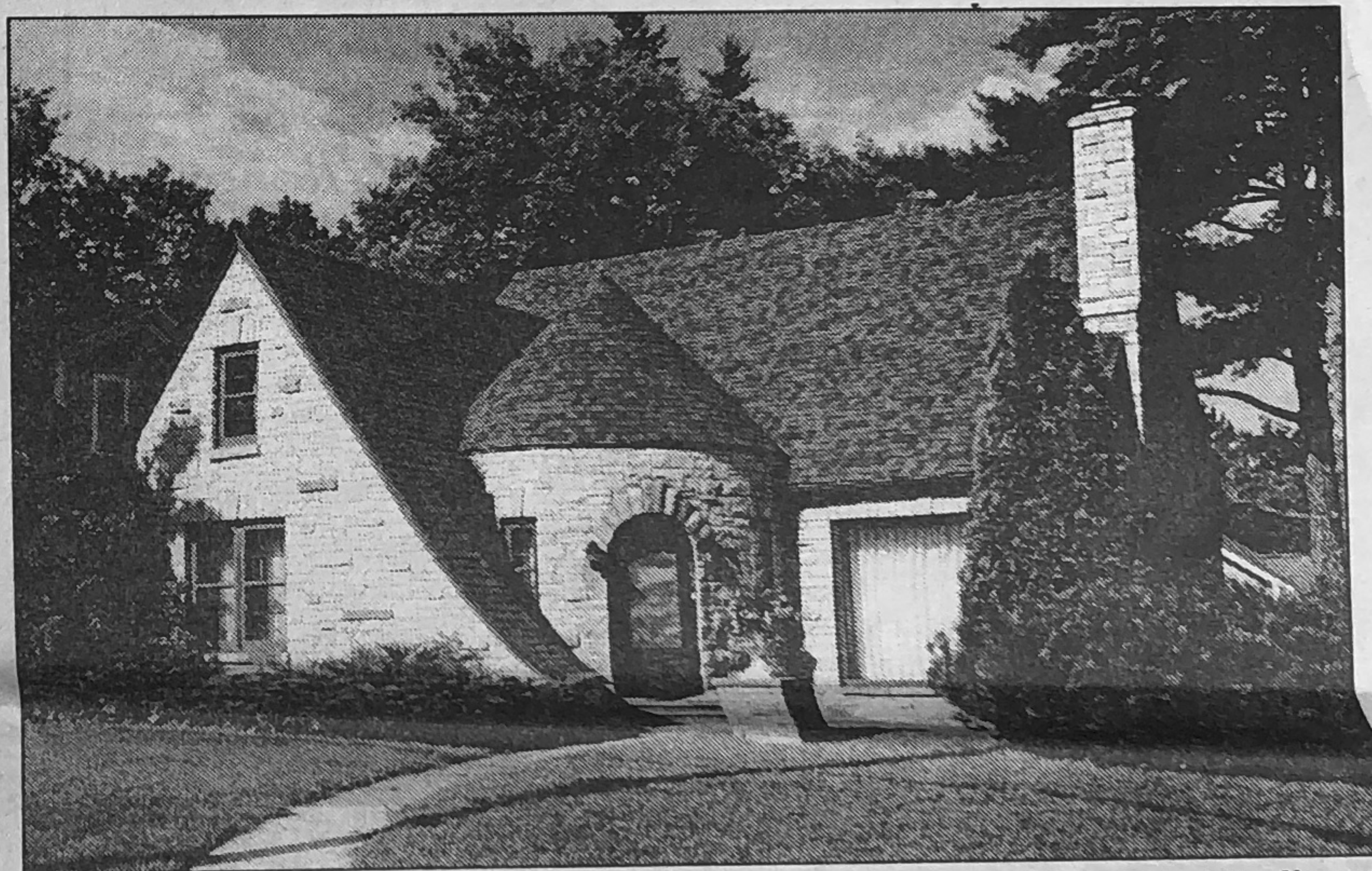
The concept of building a home from a kit was not an entirely new idea. A 16th century Italian architect published books of house plans for local builders. In America, books of plans were published in the 1840's and 1850's. In the early 20th century several companies began selling materials along with the plans.

Sears Roebuck got into the business in 1908 with the publication of a 44 page catalog of plans in 22

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The house on 411 Clermont St. just south of the Credit Union, was from the same Sears Roebuck catalog as the one around the corner at 810 Seventh Ave.



The house at 202 Superior St. at Birch Street, was built from a kit offered by the Gordon-Van Tine Company, based in Iowa.



The house on 810 Seventh Ave., across from the Middle School, is one built from a Sears Roebuck kit and described in their 1926 catalog. For almost 40 years it was the home of the Worman family.

**On the Front**

*ON THE COVER: Some members of the Worman family recently gathered at the home in which they grew up, a catalog home purchased from Sears. From left are Michael J. Worman, Rev. Jeremiah Worman, Barbara A. (Worman) Pozza, Donald J. Worman and Robert A. Worman.*



Continued

# Homes

architectural styles priced from \$650 to \$2,500 for plans, specifications and most materials down to the nails. Entire sets of lighting fixtures, kitchens, bathrooms,

plumbing and heating hardware could be selected according to one's budget and taste. Customers would either assemble the homes themselves or hire a local contractor. Sears Roebuck soon came to dominate the market. Eventually customers could choose from one of

approximately 450 patterns in sizes from mansions to bungalows and even summer cottages. Plans and pre-cut materials were shipped by rail and, if necessary, by river or mule drawn carts to the home site. The Midwest and Northeast were most common destinations but some went to the west and to isolated mountain regions. Sears Roebuck published its last house catalog in 1940.

Over 400 documented designs by Sears Roebuck alone show a variety of styles: colonial, Queen Ann, Cape Cod and even a few in the then very modern Prairie School style. Architects working for companies that sold kits were very good at adapting plans to popular tastes and budgets.

Once a kit was purchased from any of these companies, components were shipped to the customer at staggered dates so that materials arrived as needed. First to arrive was the building paper, lumber, frames and nails and the last (about a month later) the mill-work and laundry tub. An average home consisted of 30,000 separate parts, excluding nails and screws. A small home could be assembled in 352 carpenter hours and a cottage in as little as eight.

A home from a kit was desirable for many reasons. Low cost was a factor but for many it was less important than the high quality of materials that often were not available locally. In addition, many of the kits were equipped with the most modern features. In an era when power tools were unknown, having all the materials pre-cut meant the time required to assemble a home was only a fraction of that required by standard building methods.

The Sears Roebuck houses on Seventh Avenue and Clermont and the Gordon-Van Tine house on Superior Street are the only ones that I am aware of in Antigo that were built from kits but there may

be many others. There may also be cottages and barns or out buildings of various types throughout the county. It is not known exactly how many homes from kits still exist throughout the country, probably thousands. So many have been modified in subsequent years that current home owners may not even be aware of the origins of their homes. If readers are aware of any please contact me at the Langlade County Historical Museum at (715) 627-4464 or email: lchs@dwave.net.

## Creative pickling, one jar at a time

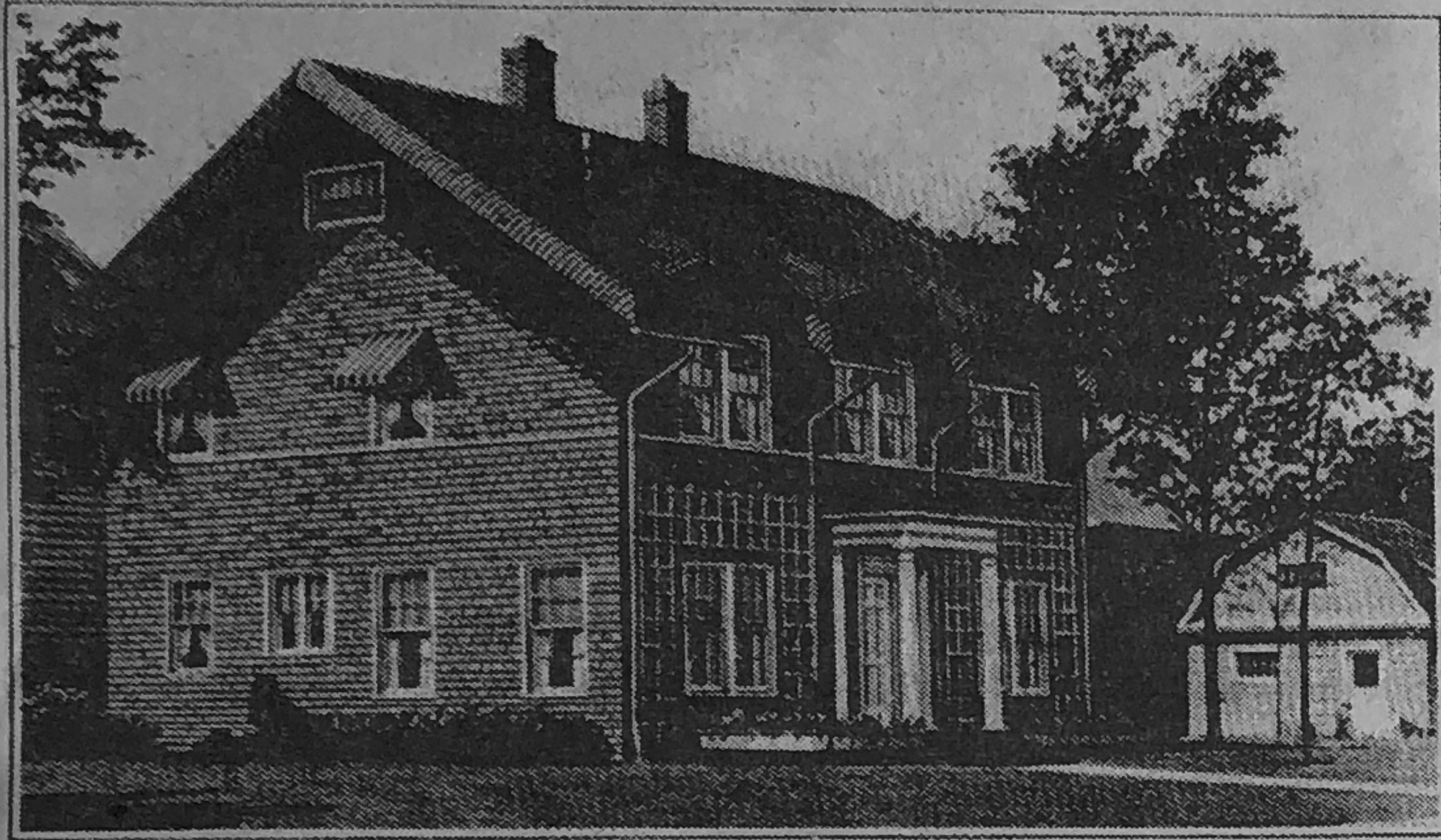
Pickle lovers can enjoy fresh-  
prep pickles in minutes-anytime  
they want. Begin with sun-ripened  
carrots, refreshing cucumbers,  
brilliant white cauliflower and tender  
green beans. Add a splash of  
flavor with vinegar and robust  
spices. For the crunch—add Ball  
100 percent Natural(r) Pickle  
Crisp(tm). A combination like this  
is not only flavorful but nutritious,  
too. Fill a Ball(r) quart home canning  
jar and let stand for 30 minutes.  
Serve right away and store  
what's left in the refrigerator. Try  
this quick to prepare recipe that  
has all the flavor and crunch of  
just picked. You can make 'em one  
jar at a time in less than an hour.  
It's convenient, delicious and  
rewarding.

### Crunchy Refrigerator Mixed Pickles

- 1 Cup (1-inch thick) Sliced Cucumbers
- 1 Cup Cauliflower Flowerets
- 1/3 Cup (1 1/2-inch thick) Sliced Carrots
- 1/3 Cup (1 1/2-inch long) Cut Green Beans
- 1/3 Cup Pearl Onions, peeled
- 1/2 Sweet Red Pepper, seeded and cut into wide strips

See Pickles Page 13

### NINE ROOMS AND BATH



Can be built on a lot 45 feet wide

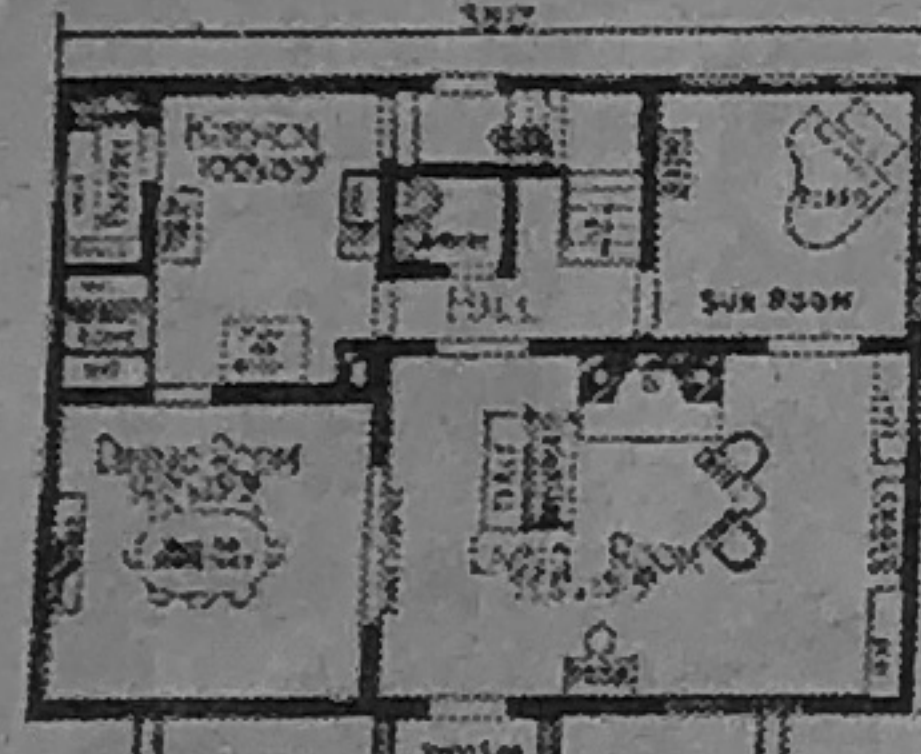
**THE HONOR** is a home that not only looks well at a distance, but makes a still more favorable impression upon closer investigation. You will recognize in this house some of the features that have made the historical colonial homes of America admired for years, together with many modern touches that add to its attractiveness. Notice the thickened eaves on the roof, the inviting front entrance, the big handsome windows and the decorative trellis. As you step closer, you will admire the cement floored porch, surrounded by flower boxes for perennial plants and creepers.

#### FIRST FLOOR

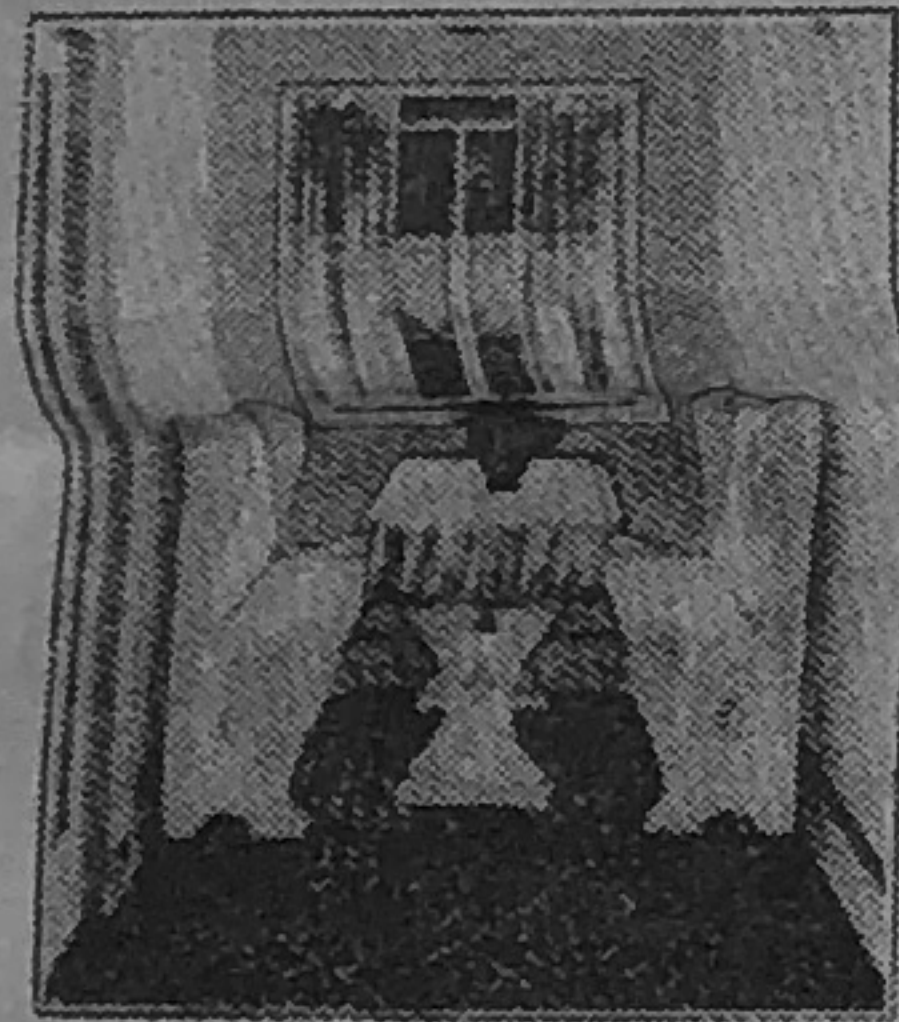
Passing up the steps to the cement porch you will find yourself in front of the graceful and inviting entrance, through which you reach the large living room. To the left a large opening leads to the dining room, and right in front of you is an inviting brick mantel. To the right in the living room is a generous space for the piano is provided between two windows, which have convenient window seats. In the dining room there is ample space for a large buffet between the two windows. From this room a door leads to the kitchen, which is admirably arranged and has a pantry and the very popular breakfast alcove. One kitchen door leads to the hall, out of which is a lavatory, and stairs to the second floor; another kitchen door leads to rear entrance and basement. Directly to the right of the hall is a good size sun room which can also be reached from the living room in the front.

#### SECOND FLOOR

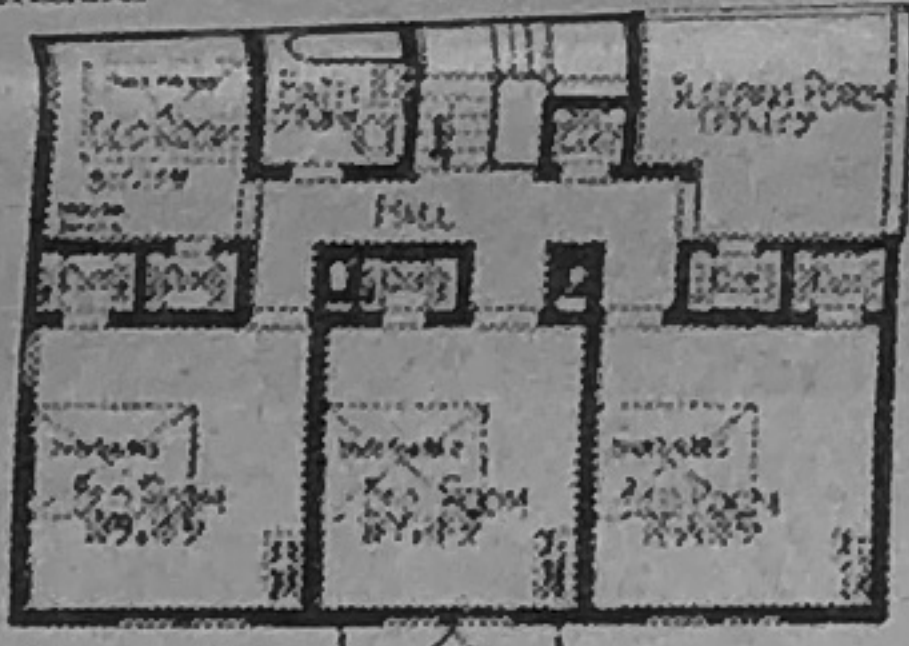
On this floor there are four large bedrooms, all provided with closets having shelves, as well as a dressing porch and bathroom. The ventilating and lighting arrangement is perfect. There is plenty of room for trunks, hats and dresses, as well as other usual furniture.



FIRST FLOOR PLAN



THE BREAKFAST ALCOVE



SECOND FLOOR PLAN

**The Honor**  
No. P13071 "Already Cut" and Fitted  
\$3,278.00

The Basement. Excavated under the entire house. Lighted by ash. Room for heating plant, storage and laundry.

Height of Ceilings. First floor, 9 feet from floor to ceiling. Second floor, 8 feet 2 1/2 inches from floor to ceiling. Basement, 7 feet from floor to joists.

#### What Our Price Includes

At the price quoted we will furnish all the material to build this aluminum house, consisting of:  
Lumber (1000)  
Roofing, Oriental Slate Surface Shingles  
Siding, Best Grade Clear Red Cedar Shingles  
Framing Lumber, No. 1 Quality Douglas Fir or Pacific Coast Hemlock  
Flooring, Clear Oak for Living Room, Dining Room, Sun Room and Hall - Clear Maple for Kitchen and Bathrooms  
Clear Douglas Fir or Pacific Coast Hemlock for Balance of Rooms  
Porch Ceiling, Clear Douglas Fir or Pacific Coast Hemlock  
Finishable Lumber  
High Grade Millwork (see pages 110 and 111)  
Interior Doors, Two Panel Design for First Floor and Two Panel Design for Second Floor. All of Douglas Fir  
Trim, Beautiful Grain Douglas Fir or Yellow Pine  
Windows, California Clear White Pine  
Mantles, Cast  
Built-in Seats  
Mantel, Sashes and Shutters  
Caulking, Putty and Glazing  
Paint for Interior Walls and Ceilings  
Paint for Three Coats Outside Trim  
Stain for Two Coats Outside Trim  
Shelves and Vanities for Lavatory, Sun and Bath  
Shelving, Extra Filler and Floor Veneer for Oak and Maple Rooms  
Complete Plans and Specifications  
We guarantee enough material to build this house. Price does not include cement, brick or plaster.  
See description of "Honor Kit" Houses on pages 12 and 13.

#### OPTIONS

Sheet Plaster and Plaster Finish, to take the place of wood lath, \$200.00 extra. See page 109.  
Screen Doors and Windows, \$116.00 extra.  
Dark Doors and Trim for living and dining rooms, hall and stairs, \$222.00 extra.  
For prices of Plumbing, Heating, Wiring, Electric Fixtures and Sashes see pages 130 and 131.

For Our Easy Payment Plan See Page 144

SEARS, ROEBUCK AND CO.

A page from the Sears catalog featuring a kit home.

### KIT 'N' CARLYLE® by Larry Wright

