



# MCHS News

January 2021

Opening Doors to Madison County History

Vol. 9 No. 1

**Historical Museum**  
715 N Main Street  
Edwardsville, IL 62025

**Hours:**  
The museum is currently closed for renovation.

**Archival Library**  
801 N Main Street  
**Telephone Hours:**  
Wed-Fri 9 am - 4 pm  
Sunday 1 pm - 4 pm  
(Reservations recommended)

**Phone:**  
618-656-7569

**Web Address:**  
madcohistory.org

**E-mail:**  
info@madcohistory.org

**About Us:**  
The MCHS museum complex, consisting of a modern archival library, a museum in the 1836 Weir House and the Helms Collection Center, is owned by the nonprofit Madison County Historical Society and operated jointly with Madison County.

The Madison County Historical Society is a 501(c)(3) charitable organization.

## The What, When, Where and Why of Sears Kit Houses

by Guest Author Judith Chabot

*Maybe you've heard of Sears houses? If you have, but weren't quite sure what they are, I'm delighted to tell you more. I've been researching Sears kit houses, and blogging about them, for a number of years. (See additional resources on page seven.) I work with a small research team that maintains a national database of Sears houses in the U.S.. While it's a hobby, it's something that we take pretty seriously, as it's really an interesting part of Americana, and the history of modern housing in our country. To date, we've found just over 13,000 Sears houses... and we're still looking.*



1914 Sear Modern Homes catalog cover

Sears houses were kits sold by Sears, Roebuck & Company from 1908 until 1941. The kits consisted of house plans and everything needed to construct the house. The kits could be ordered through the Sears Modern Homes catalogs and buyers would receive a few train-car loads of supplies shipped to their nearest train depot. The buyer was responsible for unloading the supplies and hauling them back to their already-purchased lot. Sears would send all of the framing, exterior, and roofing supplies first, so that the homeowner could construct a shelter to store the subsequent shipments of interior supplies, like flooring, wall boards, doors, and mill-work like baseboards and crown moulding. Fireplace surrounds, staircases, window trim, doorhandle hardware, lighting fixtures, stained-glass windows, bathtubs, sinks, cabinets, screen doors, screws, nuts, and nails were all part of what was purchased. And, though the heating, plumbing, and electrical supplies were a separate cost (with a small variety of options from which to choose), they were also all part of what would be received from Sears. The only thing that Sears did not supply was masonry products but, they did connect the homeowner

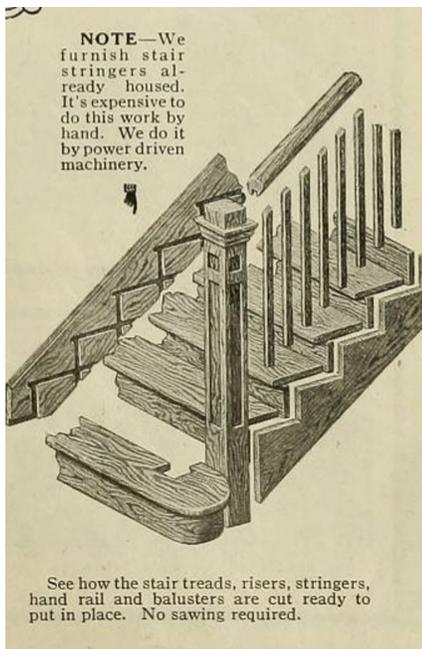
with an order through a local supplier who could procure needed plaster and brick. For this reason, standard Sears kit houses were never made of solid brick, although a single-layer brick was an option for an exterior veneer placed over a frame-built house.

Beginning in 1916, Sears added a new twist to the kit bundle: they pre-cut framing lumber and trim pieces, so that shipments were ready to be sorted, organized, and put together – no time consuming, laborious measuring and sawing were needed. No expensive trips to a saw mill were required. The pieces were labeled

with a letter/number combo, a guidebook was provided, and the whole thing could be handled by a man of average skills (Ha! I doubt that this was normally the case), and in much less time than the standard method of construction. So began Sears' new advertising campaign: buying through Sears would save you time and money – you could hang up your saw, and be ready to move in faster than your neighbor who was building his house the old-fashioned way.

In fact, in the town of Cairo, Illinois, there are two matching Sears houses, on Sears and Roebuck Road (I kid you not!),

*continued page 4*



## ABOUT US

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### VOLUNTEERS

There are abundant and varied opportunities for volunteers at either the Museum or the Archival Library. If interested, please call 618-656-7569.

### MEMBERSHIPS

Several membership levels are available to those interested in supporting the work of preserving Madison County history through an MCHS membership. Memberships run on the calendar year, Jan 1-Dec 31. Applications are available on our website, or at the Archival Library.

### PUBLICATIONS

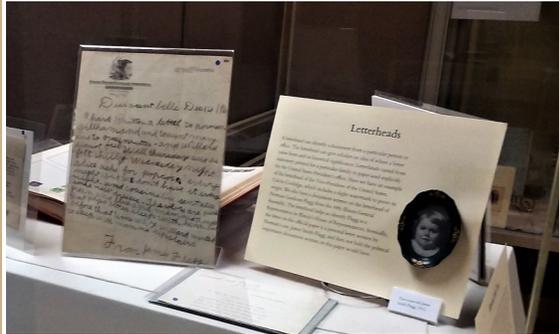
#### MCHS NEWS

6 issues annually  
Cindy Reinhardt, Editor

# MUSEUM & ARCHIVAL LIBRARY SPOTLIGHT

## NEW MUSEUM SPACE OPENS

A new exhibit, *"Ink to Paper: Exploring the Advancement of Letter Writing and its Uses,"* recently opened in the new gallery



*This letter (above left) on the stationery of Illinois Representative Norman G. Flagg is far from official business. It was written by the representative's son, James Smith Flagg, in 1916 (James is shown in 1912 at age 2).*

created in the Madison County Archival Library. In the exhibit, Intern David Thompson explores something that is becoming a lost art: letters. The exhibit looks at the instruments used to write them, the various types of letters, and even the stamps that were used to send letters. Many items in the exhibit come from the recently donated Flagg Collection.

Although the museum building remains closed for renovation, the work of the museum continues with exhibits like this one, on-line exhibits and the collection and curation of artifacts that reflect Madison County history. This latest exhibit was created by David Thompson, a graduate student in Historical Studies at Southern Illinois University Edwardsville who was hired as an intern for the Madison County Historical Museum during the fall semester. He worked under the direction of County Museum curators, Jenn Van Bibber and Mary Z. Rose.

Earlier this year, the Madison County Historical Society received a grant from the SIUE Emeriti Faculty Association that made it possible to hire Thomson for the semester. Thompson's master's thesis focuses on the use of memory in the message of public art. He is also working on a certification in Museum Studies and hopes to continue examining heirloom collections, and the oral history associated with the collections.

## NOTE ON HOLIDAY CLOSURES

The Madison County Archival Library and Historical Museum operate on the same holiday schedule as other county offices.

## WEIR HOUSE VANDALIZED

When Museum Superintendent Jon Parkin arrived for work on Dec. 11, he found that the Weir House and the Helms Collection Center had both been targeted by vandals during the night with mixed messages about "BLM" and "KKK."

Since the buildings are leased by the County, they sent maintenance employees to the campus who set to work immediately removing and covering the damage.

The Madison County Archival Library building, located next door to the museum building, was not damaged.



*Other buildings in Edwardsville were also vandalized the same night. The police do not have a suspect as yet. (Note that the windows are not boarded up due to vandalism. Those windows have been removed and are in the process of being restored. Work on the window in the center on the second floor has already been completed.) (Photos by Jon Parkin)*

## LIBRARY OPEN TO PUBLIC

The Madison County Archival Library is open to the public Wednesday-Friday 9 a.m. – 4 p.m. and Sunday 1-4 p.m. Numerous restrictions are in place due to COVID-19, including a mask requirement and limits on the number of visitors allowed in the building at one time. Due to the latter, it is strongly advised that patrons call 618-656-7569 for a reservation before visiting the Library.

Patrons are also encouraged to call with questions about Madison County history when staff might be able to assist in order to avoid a visit. They are also able to accept artifact and document donations at this time.

## RECENT NEWS

### Merry Christmas to Us!

The MCHS Board was especially pleased to receive two large donations just before Christmas that, combined with other donations received to date, will guarantee that work on the museum can continue uninterrupted this winter.

There is still much to be done so all gifts are greatly appreciated.

### Asadorian Leaves Board

The MCHS Board is grateful to Norma Asadorian for her dedicated service to the Board of Directors from 2015 to 2020. Norma is a historian who brought expert organizational skills and extensive knowledge of Madison County history to the Society. Thank you, Norma, for your hard work!

### SIUE Projects

Work continues on two MCHS projects with work coordinated by SIUE students. The first is a Route 66 Driving Tour application being developed by an intern and the second is a class project attaching QRC codes to history towers

that will be later be distributed to locations throughout Madison County.

### Guest Author Judith Chabot

MCHS is grateful to St. Louisan Judith Chabot who shared her extensive knowledge of Sears homes in this issue of the MCHS News. An educator of French language and culture by profession, Chabot puts her research skills and love of history to work, helping to locate and document Sears kit houses around the country.

After learning that her mother grew up in a Sears house in Massachusetts, built by Chabot's Polish immigrant great-grandparents, she joined a small group of researchers who maintain the *National Database of Sears Houses In the U.S.*

The task is a labor of love, combining history, research, houses, and aesthetics, and is an important support to the documentation of the intriguing societal phenomenon of mail-order kit houses. Her research and blog have been cited in articles in numerous national publications and websites, in-

cluding the *Wall Street Journal*, *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette*, *Atlas Obscura*, North Country Public Radio, and Southern Illinois University, that document the history of kit homes in the United States

Chabot has provided a list of resources for additional information, including her blog, Sears House Seeker, <http://www.searshouseseecker.com/>

### Documents Transferred

For many years, MCHS had in its possession the Civil War papers of Patrick Joseph (J.P.) Melling. These included a roster and other documents of the 144th Illinois Volunteer Regiment, Company B that should have been part of the State's records more than 150 years ago.

On December 19, their long journey to the State Archives was completed when the records were turned over to David Joens, Director of the Illinois State Archive. They will now be added to other records of the 144th Regiment so that researchers may find all the records in one location. *Cont. page 8*

## 2021 NEW AND RENEWING MEMBERS

(2021 Membership Year)

November-December ♦ Thank you for supporting MCHS!

### \$250+ Benefactor

Gordon & Holly Broom

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Society  
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## 2020 DONORS FOR MUSEUM RENOVATION

November-December ♦ Thank you for your generosity!

Nelson Lee Benezé  
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# THE DEVELOPMENT OF SEARS KIT HOUSES (CONT FROM PAGE 1)

one constructed with 281 ¼ hours of carpenter labor (using the Sears pre-cut kit), and one requiring 509 hours of carpenter labor (built the standard way). Photos were taken throughout the stages of construction, and Sears used this in advertising the pre-cut method (see sample illustrations). The advertisement used four full pages of the Modern

Homes catalog to show, right there in black and white, the benefits of their pre-cut kits.

You may wonder why these houses were built in Cairo. In 1911, Sears bought a big lumber mill in the town of Cairo, and that's where their framing lumber was shipped from (though they also had a big mill in South Mansfield, Louisiana). Cairo was, for a number of years, a major hub of Sears kit construction. In 1912, they also purchased the Norwood Sash & Door company, in Norwood, Ohio, just outside of Cincinnati, and used that location for the construction of their windows, doors, and trim pieces.

## Houses Difficult to Distinguish

There are two truths to understand about Sears kit houses:

- 1) They are actually pretty rare, making up only about two percent of the homes constructed during their era, and,
- 2) The houses built from kits are indistinguishable from those built through the standard process using a construction company.

So, if you come upon a neighborhood full of wonderful bungalows, or full of Craftsman-style houses, don't jump to the conclusion that they are Sears houses. Some people, we've noticed, confuse the name of the Sears tool line, *Craftsman*, with the architectural style by that name and think that a Craftsman style house is a Sears house.

For example, unless you have developed a really good eye for recognizing the several-hundred models offered by Sears, you'd never know what house on a block with a kit house mixed in with other 1920s or 30s houses, was from a kit from Sears. All of the house designs of the era of kit homes, were of similar styles – Sears, and the other kit companies, were not offering anything unique. They were hoping to meet the needs and desires of the same folks who were buying from the lumber companies. And, like all of the companies, Sears offered homes of many sizes and styles.

## Homebuilders Had Many Options

In the 1910s, 1920s, and 1930s, American families were moving to the outer neighborhoods of cities, and then to areas just outside of cities, bringing growth to suburban and rural areas. This was made possible thanks to the addition of automobiles, suburban train lines, and the expansion of factories in areas outside of cities. As the need for suburban

**3** 52½ HOURS carpenter labor completes the framing. No lost time—no waste material.

**3** 243 1-6 HOURS carpenter labor has been spent. Notice how the waste material is starting to pile up. Look at picture No. 3 on opposite page.

**4** 158½ HOURS carpenter labor—house all enclosed and under roof. You can be living in your home 30 days sooner if you build the "Honor Bilt" way.

**4** 356½ HOURS carpenter labor. Think of the waste of material and labor.

**5** 281¼ HOURS carpenter labor on the "Honor Bilt" house.

**5** 509 HOURS carpenter labor (41 days for one man) longer than was necessary.

The above advertisement demonstrates how much faster a Sears home could be constructed by comparing construction of these Cairo, Illinois, homes. Both are the "little Rodessa" design. As can be seen, the Sears, pre-cut kit could be assembled in nearly half the time. Below are samples of stamped lumber used after 1916 to make construction easier. (Chabot)



**IMPORTANT**

We do not handle hemlock, spruce or inferior timber. We furnish for our "Honor Bilt" Modern Homes dry yellow pine, the strongest lumber for framing the wood that lasts for years.

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Pieces numbered to correspond with the numbers on the plans.

## THE DEVELOPMENT OF SEARS KIT HOUSES (CONT FROM PAGE 4)

housing grew, construction of neighborhoods of modest homes was needed. The majority of this need was met by developers, who bought up land, then developed neighborhoods with paved roads, sewer, water, and electric. They organized construction companies that offered booklets of modest-to-elaborate house plans for American home buyers to work with (these were “plan books,” i.e., books of plans only, not the plans and supplies bundled kits that Sears or other kit companies supplied). This was the norm in the era of kit houses.

Kit houses, themselves, were not the norm. Most people did not build through kits. The majority of people bought a lot in a neighborhood, or in a rural area, and then went to a local lumber yard or construction company, looked through their booklets of house plans, and then left the rest to the construction company. The contractor ordered standard-length lumber through the lumber yards, measured, cut, and constructed the house. That was the standard way our American towns were built.

## WHERE TO FIND SEARS HOUSES

So, where have we found Sears houses around the country? That’s a good question – because, we haven’t found them everywhere. And, I say *found*, because there are no records from Sears, telling who bought their houses, or where they were built. Our national database is a list of homes that we, and a few other researchers, have found through various research methods. It is not a list of all of the existing or ever-built Sears houses, as there is no such resource.

Of the 13,000 that we have found to date, there are almost none in the western U.S., For example, the numbers dwindle drastically west of the Mississippi River. Most of the southern states have only a handful (we’ve literally only found one in the state of Mississippi). In some states, where we’ve found a good number, they are concentrated in one or two communities, and not found at all in others.

In Missouri, for example, where I am the primary researcher, my searching through mortgage records has netted us close to 100 in the vast, greater St. Louis and St. Louis County area, There are only two in St. Charles County, and none at all in most of the other counties.

However, there are certain areas around the country, where they are much more plentiful (though still making up only a small percentage of houses built). We have found lots of Sears houses in Pennsylvania, New York, New Jersey, Indiana, Michigan, northern Kentucky, and parts of West Virginia. In Washington D.C. and the nearby suburbs in Maryland, we have found, compared to most other places in the U.S., large numbers of Sears houses (again, though, only accounting for a small percentage of houses built). The two states with the largest numbers of Sears houses found, to date, are Ohio (2700+), and Illinois (2300+)—and that is probably due to the location of the Sears owned Norwood Sash & Door company, near Cincinnati, and Sears corporate headquarters in Chicago.

Because Sears was based in Chicago, many of the suburbs outside of the city of Chicago have Sears houses dot-

Sears kits, and kits from the numerous other companies offering them, were not responsible for the growth of housing in middle-class America but, they were a smart and sometimes more-affordable option for young families. In the 1920s and 1930s, Sears didn’t create suburban neighborhoods, or offer unique designs—they just offered an option that met an already-established need for housing.

Because of the pre-cut system, and the concept of ordering everything for an entire house all at once, kit houses were an intriguing option for many families. For families with a man who knew how to build, they offered a huge savings. Many buyers did build the houses themselves, or along with help from friends or relatives. However, the majority of suburbanites contracted with a construction company to do the building. In fact, mortgage financing offered by Sears, almost always included an amount to cover construction costs. The added cost of labor doubled the cost of the final product.

ting the landscape, here and there. Somewhat inexplicably, the small suburban town of Elgin, Illinois, about 45 minutes outside of Chicago, has over 200 Sears houses. Noted researcher Rebecca L. Hunter, who lives in Elgin, did an exhaustive search of the Sears houses in her town, and compiled a research report (see page seven), with images, of all of the Sears houses. She also found houses built by other kit companies in Elgin.

Elsewhere in Illinois, Carlinville, in Macoupin County, has the next largest concentration of Sears houses, with 148, in a six-block area. These were part of a large purchase of 192 house kits in 1919 by Standard Oil Company. They were all constructed, one after another, on the six blocks of streets where Standard Oil bought land to provide housing for their employees. More can be learned about Carlinville’s Sears houses in a series of blog posts by Rosemary Thornton (see page seven). Notice that only 148 of the 192 houses purchased were built in Carlinville. The remainder were built in Madison County.



*The above authenticated Sears Randolph, #3297, located at 651 W. Frisco in Webster Groves, Missouri, was built in 1932. The Randolph, with five rooms and a bath, was first featured in the 1931 catalog as “already cut and fitted.” The Randolph could be purchased with monthly payments of just \$45-\$60.*



# MADISON COUNTY KIT HOUSES

In Madison County, Wood River is well-known among Sears house fans for the 24 Sears houses that Standard Oil built there (24 of the 192 purchased in 1919). Most of these houses line South Ninth Street.

While we're glad that they are still standing, and in good repair, quite a few of these have lost their original old-house charm. The addition of vinyl siding, and the removal of interior elements during modernization projects, often covered original details that we recognize in Sears houses such as distinctive pillars that were only offered by Sears. Interior elements, such as special Sears hinges and door handle hardware, were often removed when hollow-core replacement doors were added.

Though I wish that I could say that Madison County, Illinois, is full of Sears houses, that is definitely not the case! However, there are some. I did mortgage research in Madison County, and I found only three houses with mortgages from Sears—one in Alton, one in Madison, and one in Venice. Though mortgage research is a very good (though complicated) way to find Sears houses from some eras, and in some neighborhoods, and it does document with certainty, that the house in question was from Sears, there were many Sears houses built without financing from Sears.

I have found an unusual brick veneer Sears Elsmore, at 212 E. Main Street, in St. Jacob, Illinois, for example, without a Sears mortgage (catalog & house pictured below).

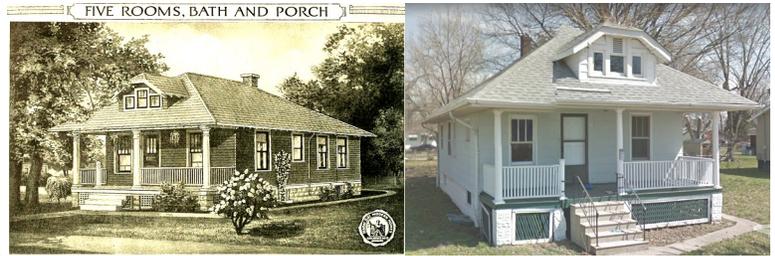


In Alton, Illinois, there have been a number of probable kit houses found by Rosemary Thornton, and they are available to see through a virtual tour using a brochure that can be downloaded from the Alton Area Landmarks Association (see page 7). Several of those on that list, are from other kit house companies, which is always nice to find. We of doubtful about some on the list, because there are many "lookalikes" to Sears models, offered by plans-only companies.

Those that our research team support as being probable Sears houses are the #118 at 815 Douglas Street (shown below); the Lakeland multi-family building on East Sixth Street; the Marina on Evergreen Street; the Roseberry



on Berkeley Avenue; the Lorain on La Salle Drive; the Jeanette on South Rogers Avenue (mistakenly labeled as a Parkridge); and the Sears Starlight on Clawson Street. The Starlight is the one that had a Sears mortgage. It was purchased in 1926 by Ralph J. Beilsmith and his wife, Isabella. And...guess whom he worked for? Standard Oil Company!



The one Sears house that I found in Madison, Illinois, (shown above) is also a Sears Starlight, at 1116 Iowa Street. It was built in 1924, by Mike (Demeter) Ramach and his wife, Annie, who were immigrants from Yugoslavia. Mr. Ramach worked for National Lead Company.



In Venice, the Sears mortgage that I found, was connected to a Sears Columbine model, at 532 Washington Street (see above). Built in 1925, it was the home of August W. Daniels and his wife, Mary. Mr. Daniels was a railroad engineer and may well have heard about Sears houses through transporting them.

The charming Madison County town of Edwardsville has two or three really nice examples of probable Sears houses. These are not documented, but they are very good matches. Two are in the historic Leclaire neighborhood.



The first, is a Sears Hazelton bungalow, at 409 Franklin Avenue. You can see many interior photos and learn more about its 1920s residents, Edward and Anna Burk, in one of my blogposts (see page seven). Edward was a machinist at the U.S. Radiator Corporation, a major employer in the area at that time, and Anna drove a 1919 Auburn Beauty-Six automobile.

The second is a Sears Whitehall at 1014 Troy Road. The Whitehall is a very early model from Sears, whose look changed just a bit after its first appearance in the catalogs

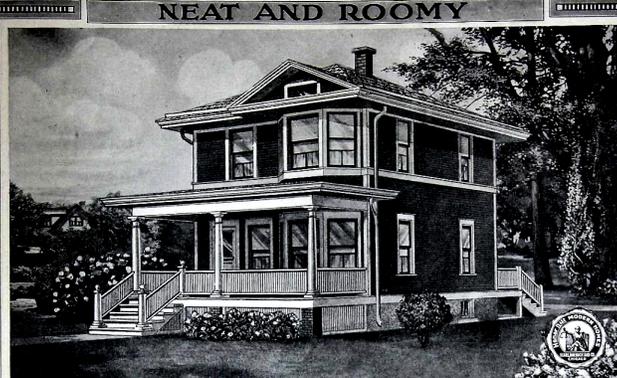
# MADISON COUNTY SEARS HOUSES (CONT FROM PAGE 6)

in 1912. It was a popular choice for the Standard Oil Company that bought quite a few of the Whitehall kit, for their neighborhoods in both Carlinville and Wood River. They built 20 in Carlinville, and four in Wood River.



The Sears Whitehall, above, at 1014 Troy Road was in the Village of LeClaire when built in 1913. LeClaire annexed to Edwardsville in 1934. The house was built for Reuben Glass, an Edwardsville native who worked for the N. O. Nelson Company in LeClaire. (Reinhardt)

**NEAT AND ROOMY**



**The WHITEHALL** Honor Bill **\$1,465<sup>00</sup>**

No. 3035 "Already Cut" and Fitted.

At the above price we will furnish all the material to build this six-room house, consisting of lumber, bats, shingles, mill work, flooring, porch ceiling, siding, finishing lumber, building paper, eaves trough, down spout, sash weights, hardware and painting material. No extras, as we guarantee enough material to build this house. Price does not include cement, brick or plaster.

**A NEAT and roomy house at a very low cost. Contains six good size rooms and bathroom. Front door opens into the living room. A stairway from the living room leads to the second floor. The dining room is co-nected with the living room by a large cased opening which practically makes one large room of these two rooms. Has kitchen and good sized pantry. Inside entrance to the basement.**

**First Floor** The front door is 1 1/2 inches thick, glazed with leveled plate glass. Living room, dining room kitchen and pantry on first floor. Double floors in all rooms. Porch floor is clear edge grain fir.

**Second Floor** The stairway from the first floor opens into a hall on the second floor from which any one of the three bedrooms or bathroom may be reached. Bedrooms are well lighted and each has a good size clothes closet.

**Height of Ceilings** Basement, 7 feet from floor to joists, with cement floor. First floor, 9 feet from floor to ceiling. Second floor, 8 feet 6 inches from floor to ceiling.

We furnish our best "Quality Guaranteed" mill work, described on pages 120 and 121. Interior doors are five-cross panel, with

trim and flooring to match, all yellow pine, in beautiful grain and color. Windows are made of clear California white pine, with good quality glass set in with best grade of putty. Porches have fir edge grain flooring.

Build on a concrete foundation and excavated under entire house. We furnish clear cypress siding over good wood sheathing and best grade black rubber shingles, framing lumber is clear quality yellow pine. All windows glazed with "A" quality glass.

Paint for two coats outside. Varnish and wood filler for interior finish. Stratford Design hardware, see page 129.

**OPTIONS**

Sheet Plaster and Plaster Finish to take the place of wood lath, \$24.00 extra.

Fire-Proof Shingle Roofing, Red or Sea Green in color, instead of wood shingles, \$28.00 less.

Screen Doors and Windows, \$41.92 extra, \$46.63 extra galvanized wire, \$24.07 extra.

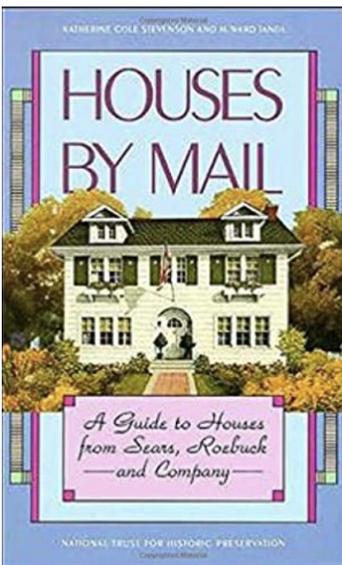
This house can be built on a lot 24 feet wide. It is built on a concrete foundation. Windows, plumbing, wiring material, gas or electric fixtures are not included. Write for plans, mentioning the Whitehall Model, Home No. 3035 in your request.

Built at Gary, Ind., Davenport, Iowa, Laporte, Ind., Moorestown, N. J., Eastwood, N. Y., Hadley, Penn., Cresco, Iowa, and West Point, Va.

**SEARS, ROEBUCK AND CO. CHICAGO**

## LEARNING MORE ABOUT SEARS HOUSES

If I've piqued your interest, no need to stop here. We recommend the book, *Houses By Mail* (Stevenson/Jandl), published by the National Trust for Historic Preservation, which tells the background of the story of Sears houses and provides a catalog image of almost every model offered by Sears.



If you prefer to see the real catalogs, there are quite a few available online through Archive.org. I've pulled together links to all of them on a blog post that you can access from the side bar of my educational blog, *Sears House Seeker*. I've also included suggested books and additional resources on that page.

To see images of still-existing, actual Sears houses, blogs that focus on them are a must. I've provided a list of the best ones also on the side bar of my blog.

The following is a list of resources referred to in this issue of the MCHS News:

Judith Chabot's blog, *Sears House Seeker*: <http://www.searshousesseeker.com/>

Article by Rosemary Thornton about the Sears mill in Cairo: <https://searshomes.org/index.php/2010/08/02/sears-modern-homes-and-the-mill-in-cairo-illinois/>

Elgin Sears House Project: <http://www.idaillinois.org/digital/collection/newgailbord01/id/7432/rec/1>

Carlinville's Standard Addition: <https://searshomes.org/index.php/2013/09/26/a-sad-story-that-needs-a-good-ending-carlinvilles-standard-addition/>

Standard Oil Company Housing in Wood River: <https://madison-historical.siue.edu/encyclopedia/standard-oils-company-housing-in-wood-river-illinois/>

Alton Area Landmarks Association brochure on Sears Homes: <http://www.altonlandmarks.org/>

Sears House Seeker blog on the Edwardsville Hazelton: <http://www.searshousesseeker.com/2018/04/the-sears-hazelton-in-edwardsville.html>

Finally, I administer the Sears Modern Homes page on Facebook. This is not an interactive group, just a page where, every few days, I post photos of kit houses that we've found through our research.

If you know of a Sears house, please feel free to contact me through my blog, or at [SearsHouseSeeker@gmail.com](mailto:SearsHouseSeeker@gmail.com).



# Madison County Historical Society

*Opening Doors to Madison County History*

801 N. Main Street  
Edwardsville, IL 62025

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## MCHS ONLINE CALENDAR

Details on how to view this event will be made available closer to the date with information posted to the MCHS website and facebook page plus in news releases to local newspapers.

### Feb. 14, 2021 - The Story of John Anderson

Presenter: Eric Robinson

John Anderson killed a slaveholder while escaping slavery in Missouri in August 1853. This program ties into various issues regarding the Fugitive Slave Act of 1850 and the international abolitionists' role in the anti-slavery fight in America.



## CIVIL WAR PAPERS

(CONT FROM PAGE 4)

The Illinois State Archive is making both digital and hard copies of the records which will be donated to MCHS for use by local researchers.

Company B was organized in Alton on Oct. 21, 1864, near the end of the Civil War. Men were mustered out less than a year later in July 1865. The 144th served garrisons in St. Louis as well as at the Alton Civil War prison. Although they did not serve in combat, a significant number of men were lost to disease. To learn more about these papers and Company B, go to the online exhibit on *Civil War Stories* at <https://madcohistory.org/online-exhibits/>.

## EDITOR'S TIP

When building a family tree or doing research on ancestry.com., familysearch.org or other genealogy websites, be careful which sources you accept for information. Data on family trees developed by others can be used as hints, but should never be accepted as fact until you can find supporting documentation. The same is true of genealogical information posted to Find-A-Grave, where information is often added by people unrelated to the deceased.

My clearest example of why not to use family trees created by others came after interviewing a 97-year-old Madison County man for a story. I later logged on to ancestry.com to look for background information on his parents and family. Imagine my surprise when I learned that all of the trees on ancestry.com listed him as being deceased! (I sent corrections.)

The tip is: Always do your own work and document where you find information so, at a later date, you'll know how much trust can be placed in the documentation.

To join or renew MCHS membership, go to <https://madcohistory.org/membership/> or send a check to MCHS, P. O. Box 422, Edwardsville, IL 62025.; For additional information, call 618-656-1294.