

# The Historic Dimension Series

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## Aladdin Mail-Order Homes: Magic Kit Houses

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*"Don't hesitate to send for an 'Aladdin' house because you fear it is difficult to put up. There is no back-breaking, muscle racking, sawing, measuring, figuring or fitting to do. We do all that in our mill. Your 'work' is driving nails." 1908 Aladdin Catalog, p. 1.*

At the beginning of the twentieth century, new homeowners turned away from the local architect and builder in favor of turning catalog pages to buy their dream mail-order kit home. The words "mail-order" and "kit home" may first suggest the famous Sears, Roebuck and Company homes. Most Google searches state Sears was the monopoly producer of these early twentieth-century prefabricated homes. Starting in the early 1900s, Sears competed alongside mid-western companies like Aladdin, Gordon-Van Tine, Montgomery Ward, Lewis Manufacturing, and western companies like Pacific Ready Cut. Each company redefined home construction by providing predetermined designs, pre-cut lumber, and construction guidebooks to the consumer who then built their own house. The mail-order companies competed against local contractors and lumber companies, bypassing them, and sending catalogs to millions of households, changing the American vernacular home building tradition. According to urban historical geographer Richard Harris, between 1905 and 1929, mail-order companies constructed 400,000 single-family dwellings, accounting for four percent of housing starts in America.

This brief explores the Aladdin Company, which predated its competitors beginning in 1906, and selling homes to individuals, mill companies, and speculative builders through 1981. The Aladdin Company was the longest operating mail-order home catalog business. Aladdin homes exist

throughout the United States, England, and other nations. Distinguishing an Aladdin from a Sears, Gordon-Van Tine, or even a locally crafted home is a challenging venture. This brief explores the method for Aladdin construction, pinpoints known locations of select Aladdin homes, and compares homes to the catalog images. This brief also provides an initial step for potential Aladdin homeowners to correctly identify their home with the Central Michigan University's Clarke Historical Library digitized mail-order catalog images.

### Vernacular Roots

The mail-order catalog phenomenon grew from a long tradition of plan books and architectural books that introduced standardized or vernacular house designs to architects, builders, contractors, and homeowners. Daniel Reiff reveals in his book *Houses from Books: Treatises, Pattern Books, and Catalogs in American Architecture, 1738-1950: A History and Guide*, that from the sixteenth to nineteenth century, English and American architects, craftsmen, and builders constructed homes as copies from published plan books or architectural books. Sharing house type patterns was a factor in the development of American vernacular house types. Craftsmen, local folk designers, and carpenters used these plan books for their vernacular creations. The houses created from these books were duplicates of the style and modified at the locale to meet the owner's needs.

Architectural historians Herbert Gottfried and Jan Jennings classify a vernacular home

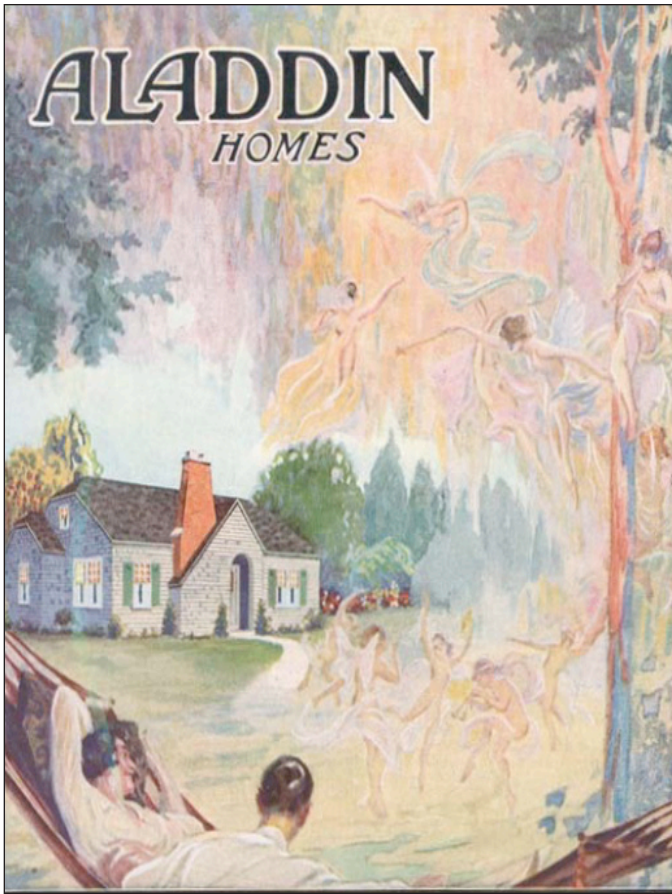


Fig. 2: The 1931 Aladdin Catalog depicts a care free couple enjoying the magic of their new kit home.

as a commonly built and mass-produced style that maintained regional variation based on designer and homeowner needs. Vernacular style home types are bungalow, craftsman, colonial revival, ranch, and split-level, to name a few. Architectural historian, Thomas Hubka, defends the ingenuity of vernacular building. Some theorists misconstrued vernacular as an unselfconscious practice due to the simplicity of form as compared to high-style architecture. The home styles we live in today evolved from folk design strategies grounded in local building traditions that created specific house types. The folk builders took preexisting styles and modified elemental designs or builder or owner preference.

The timber-frame construction of vernacular buildings in the pre-Civil War era depended on highly skilled artisans. These master builders would pass their skills to apprentices, and labor was local. Construction took longer because architects designed and modified at the building location. The mail-order homes of the twentieth century are vernacular styles just as these locally-built predecessors, but they are balloon-frame construction. The creation, production, and construction of these prefabricated homes were unlike any typical, locally-built home.

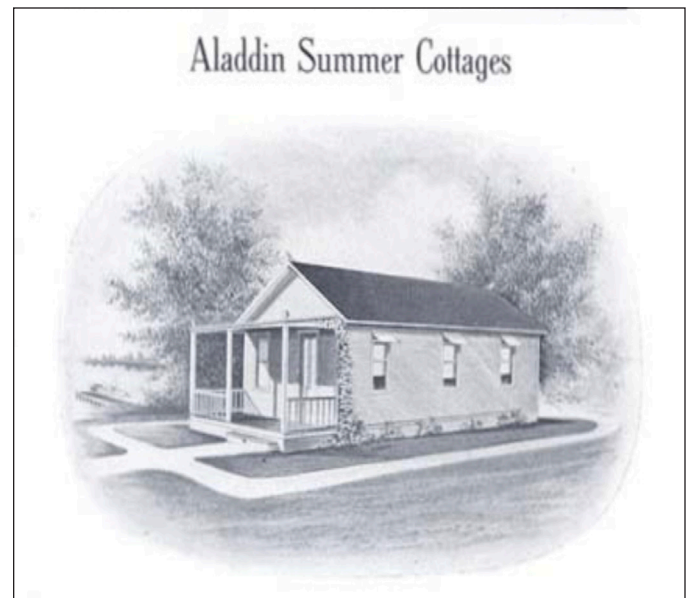


Fig. 3: In 1908, a consumer could purchase the Style F Knocked-down Summer Cottage for \$298.

### The Aladdin Company

Robert Schweitzer and Michael W.R. Davis researched and compared multiple mail-order catalog companies, including Aladdin, in their book *America's Favorite Homes: Mail-Order Catalogues As A Guide To Popular Early 20th Century Houses*. Their research is a significant keystone to understanding the competition between companies, overall sales records, and how the companies used vernacular building styles to create successful models. By 1920, Aladdin sold three-fourths as many homes as Sears. Based on existing, but not complete sales records, the estimated number of homes sold is between 50,000 and 75,000. The Sovereign brothers based their models on popular house styles and their success makes kit homes identification challenging to distinguish from locally-designed homes.

Brothers William Joseph (W.J.) and Otto Egbert (O.E.) Sovereign of Bay City, Michigan, initially founded the business as the North American Construction Company in 1906. Neither had a background in architecture, but their family owned a prosperous lumber business. Architectural historian, Jim Draeger, notes that Michigan was a prime spot to begin a mail-order catalog company because post-Civil War northern Michigan's timber supply opened to lumbering. Rail connections and areas of growth and settlement also influenced the boom of mail-order companies seeking to fulfill housing needs. The Sovereign brothers started from their mother's kitchen table by designing small buildings like garages and summer cottages. But quickly, the catalogs offered a broad range of options, more advanced than a summer cottage, and representing common vernacular styles such as craftsman bungalows or colonial revivals.

The brothers were inspired by the original story of *Aladdin and His Wonderful Lamp* when the Genie



Aladdin Dwelling House, Style E, Gambrel

Fig. 4: A 1912 Aladdin Dwelling House, Style E with a Gambrel roof creating a Dutch colonial revival.

constructed Aladdin's palace in one night. A famous story in the early 1900s, the company produced quickly built homes and invoked the Genie's magic across America. The company name changed slowly over the 1910s, as the brothers developed and heavily marketed "the Aladdin System of Construction" and called the structures "Aladdin Read-Cut Houses" (1915 catalog, p. 3). Schweitzer and Davis discovered that by 1913, the company shipped 2,400 homes, then the following year selling 1,387 more. In the peak year, 1917, the company sold an additional 3,200 homes. Aladdin was shipping homes to customers across the United States and other countries. The appealing concept of "built in a day" house like the magical Genie's palace and "Read-cut" lumber methods is evident by 1915's gross sales of \$1,100,000.

### The Board of Seven

Mail-order companies were successful because their homes copied existing vernacular home styles; thus, the public would accept their styles. The classic architect was not an element of the mail-order catalog system. Aladdin's Board of Seven, which included the Master Designer, the Master Builders, and the Factory Experts, reviewed the work of their draftsmen to create varieties of craftsman bungalows to reach broad audiences with diverse needs. The catalog stated the company promised every Aladdin house had to pass the Board of Seven's "acid test of perfection" to qualify for the catalog (1915, p. 6). The statement assured buyers that the company designed homes with structural harmony, the design reduced lumber waste, and thus improved the buyer's economy of costs.

### "Read-Cut"

The creation of mail-order catalog kit-homes represents a modern approach to mass production and consumerism

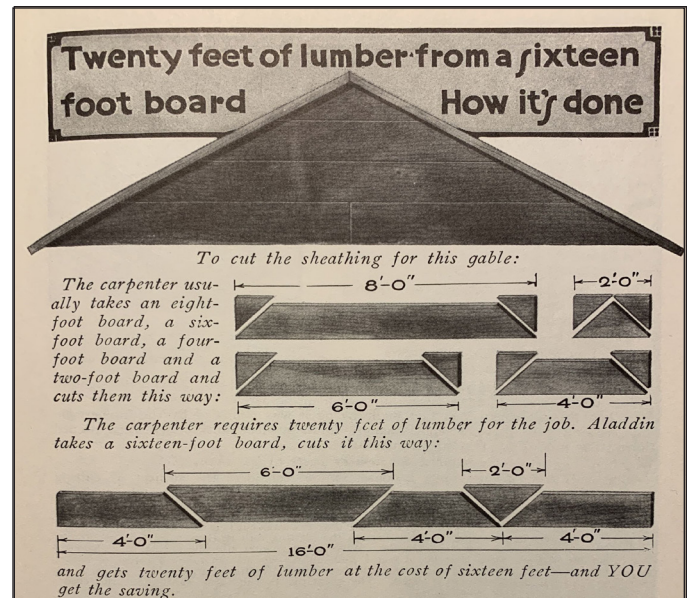


Fig. 5: The Read-cut method compared to the regular carpenter's wasteful method.

in the built environment. W.J. Sovereign created a lumbering cutting system called the "Read-Cut" system that created a predetermined plan for fitting boards together and eliminated on-site cutting and fixing. The brothers found inspiration for pre-cut, prefabricated homes through the popular pre-cut, mail-order boat companies of Bay City. Boat manufacturers promoted their goods as "knock-down," where the materials were pre-cut and mailed to the buyer, who could quickly assemble the boat with an instruction manual. W.J., who would become the designer and manufacturing lead, encouraged his brother O.E., an advertising agent, to attempt a similar method. The first products were small summer cottages and garages that a homeowner literally could build in a day.

The "Read-Cut" system was a waste reduction method that cut standard lengths of wood in new ways. In the catalog image, W.J. Sovereign drew the difference between a carpenter's cut and the "Read-Cut" system. In the picture, he claimed a carpenter used four separate pieces of lumber to achieve a needed 20 feet in length. In contrast, the Aladdin "Read-Cut" method used a 16-foot board and created cuts to yield 20 feet of usable building material.

Sovereign used multiple catalog pages to market his method. He informed potential clients that traditional construction wasted 25 percent of good lumber, equaling an 18 percent waste paid out of pocket. The "Read-Cut" method reduced waste to less than two percent. The cost savings were highly attractive to potential buyers. Aladdin's newspaper advertisements in *The Detroit Free Press* (January 25, 1920) promoted the method: "Reduce present high building costs," and claimed the buyer could "save 18% on the cost of the lumber and 30% on the cost of the labor."



*Fig. 6: The Edison model was popular in Roanoke Rapids, and subtle differences occur between each model.*



*Fig. 7: The Marsden model at 417 Jackson St, Roanoke Rapids maintains the integrity of the catalog design.*

### **The Guided “DIY” Project**

The “Readi-Cut” mail-order system changed how Americans could purchase a home. The company created the design and offered flexibility in floor plan styles. The buyer could bypass the traditional alternative of waiting on a local architect to design and build the home in favor of owning a new kit home in a month. The future homeowner could implement a do-it-yourself strategy to construct their own home without advanced knowledge in carpentry. The building materials included a detailed step-by-step construction manual. Constructing these kit houses required low skill for the most basic models. New homeowners could construct the building without purchasing expensive power tools. The Sovereign brothers democratized housebuilding by placing the capability into the hands of the owners and their families.

Aladdin touted their homes as a “Built-in-a-day” such as the summer cottages, though the more complex homes needed about a month to complete. More expensive models like the Colonial may have required local laborers. Families and speculation builders purchased these homes because of the ease of construction and attractive styles.

### **Aladdin House Styles**

Aladdin’s home styles followed the vernacular trend of existing homes and matched popular styles with every decade. Clarke Historical Library Director Frank Boles stated that if a pattern was not a success, the company cut it from the catalog. The house styles were predominantly one- or two- story craftsman bungalows. Several colonial revival types featured Dutch gambrel roofs. Easily amendable floor plans could suit the homebuyer’s lot size. The company applied names to each style home to excite and attract customers.

The designs were multiple variations of vernacular style homes like bungalows, craftsmen, summer cottages, colonial revivals, which were all popular and common styles. Aladdin followed changing architectural styles to retain relevancy in the 1950s and 1960s by adopting ranch and split-level homes. Mail-order companies could easily modify floor plans based on customer requests. Schweitzer and Davis claimed the pre-cut method was a logical step in the Industrial Revolution of home building, where on-site manual labor for calculating cuts, using power saws, and economies of scale to calculate purchasing, manufacturing, and shipping were made obsolete by the mail-order company. Mail-order companies adopted vernacular styles into prefabricated homes and eliminated the extra costs of designs, lumber waste, and contractor hours.

### **Kit Homes for Company Towns**

The Aladdin Company was a popular choice for mill villages and company towns due to the low cost of the homes and ease of construction. When mill companies expanded production, they needed worker housing, and Aladdin, Sears, Roebuck and other competitors, answered the call. In North Carolina, the Roanoke Rapids Historic District includes a variety of Aladdin house types for the mill workers, overseers, and executives. Aladdin’s designs ranged from simple to ornate, and mill companies assigned individual styles by class. A range of Aladdin homes styles exist within a mill town or an individual street. Thomas Butchko, who authored the National Register nomination, claimed the textile mill companies chose Aladdin for their “completeness, simplicity, economy of materials, and modern design” (p. 305).

Roanoke Rapids, NC, had four successful cotton mills in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century. The Roanoke Mills Plant No. 2 increased its manufacturing



Fig. 8: The William L. Medlin House at 419 Jackson St, Roanoke Rapids, is a stylized Plaza with rafter tails.

and worker base, which required more housing for laborers and executives. The Aladdin houses and locally designed vernacular homes are mixed in the neighborhoods, muddling easy identification. The illustrated examples stick out amongst their neighbors because of the style and beauty of the design. The identifiable Aladdin models in Roanoke Rapids are found predominately on Jackson, Monroe, and Madison Streets. The Edison style was a prime choice by the company, followed by the Pomona, the Gretna, the Marsden, the Princeton, the Plaza, and singular examples of the Cadillac and the Shadow Lawn. The Plaza example, located at 419 Jackson Street, draws its inspiration from the California bungalow styles of Pasadena. The Edison models vary in appearance due to changes over time from renovations.

Architectural historian Catherine Bishir believes most North Carolina bungalows are pre-cut manufactured houses from Aladdin and Sears. While these companies produced a swath of designs, it was the bungalow that was the cheapest and most popular item for customers and mill towns. Bishir believes that while the total quantity of this manufactured housing is challenging to determine based on appearance, it is likely that hundreds to thousands of kit homes exist in the Carolinas. In 1922, an Aladdin factory opened in the Love's Grove community of Wilmington, NC, located on the Atlantic Coastline Railroad. The proximity of the factory gave North Carolinians across the state easy rail line access to their new homes. Sunset Park's National Register Nomination references the *Wilmington Star's* (September 12, 1920) newspaper article promoting the company's success of selling various models to 70 residents.

DuPont Chemical Company purchased Aladdin and Sears mail-order homes after constructing its guncotton factory in the industrial city of Hopewell, VA.



Fig. 9: The 1919 catalog image is rotated, and shares the same roofline, chimney, and porch balustrades as the contemporary one in Roanoke Rapids.

The *Old House Journal* web blog discovered DuPont's initial worker housing in 1911 were bunkhouses. When business boomed with the demand for smokeless gunpowder, the company changed its point of view on worker housing to accommodate a potential influx of 20,000 people. DuPont set Aladdin homes in two adjacent labor villages; an example of early community planning with speculative housing. There appear to be more Sears than Aladdin homes or at least an assumption that most preserved styles are Sears. Though some kit house bloggers focus on Sears' popularity, a full historical record of mail-order homes requires distinguishing between company designs.

The Austin Motor Company of Birmingham, England, purchased two hundred modified "Chester" houses in November 1916. The first shipment was lost at sea when a German submarine struck the ship. The second and successful shipment arrived, and a small town of mid-western American architecture sits today in the British countryside. Aladdin used this success to offer "Sovereign City" to any company, though the Clarke staff doubts one came to fruition. Despite falling short of an entire city, Aladdin successfully focused on inexpensive, worker homes across the United States.

### Serving the Armed Forces

Aladdin sold specialty prefabricated barracks and auditoriums in government contracts for the Armed Forces during both World Wars and after. In 1917 Aladdin sold barrack buildings to Fort Snelling, Minnesota, and the officer training camp buildings for 9,000 men were completed in 26 working days. In 1942, Fort Brady had new barracks completed in record time. By 1942, Aladdin barracks existed in the Southwest Pacific, Alberta, Canada, Iceland, and in the U.S. in



Fig. 10: The Brentwood, with an enclosed porch on the left, and additional room above the porte-cochère.

Alaska, Michigan, Ohio, California, New Mexico, and Texas. Aladdin went beyond barracks to provide the Aladdin Recreation Building that held an auditorium, stage, music room, reading room, and dressing rooms.

The company designed barrack structures to be modifiable based on space needs. The company could lengthen buildings in multiples of eight feet. Aladdin custom-designed Arctic appropriate Igloo barracks, fully approved by the Navy, that sustained greater resistance to snow pressure than a similar roof of standard metal. The company marketed the prefabricated mobile depot groups as CCC like structures, i.e., the Civilian Conservation Corps camps. Army bases could purchase a two-family home for soldier families, and the houses contained a living room, bath, kitchen, two bedrooms, and three closets. Apartment buildings also provided low-cost living accommodations with three bedrooms, an adaptable living room or bedroom, a joint kitchen-dining room, and a bath for civilians or troop housing.

### Speculative Building in Greensboro

In Greensboro, NC, several examples of various Aladdin styles exist in the Fisher Park Historic District. Sears House Hunter blogger Judith Chabot researched several homes, and the *O. Henry Magazine* published an article of the recognizable Aladdin homes in May 2013. Both sources reveal the close calls of distinguishing a kit home from a locally-designed and built home. The Clarke Historical Library staff who communicated with an Aladdin Company draftsman, found the company copied many local buildings or took ideas from their competitor's catalogs.

In the 1920s, J.E. Latham, owner of Latham Cotton Company, ordered 12 Aladdin homes as a speculative build in Fisher Park on W. Bessemer Avenue, Wharton Street, and N. Eugene Street. The Latham Company advertised the models in the *Greensboro Daily News*



Fig. 11: The 1917 Brentwood catalog model shows a pediment and open porch. Notice the diamond paned windows. This model held its popularity for years.

(August 30, 1917) as "Modern Homes" on choice vacant lots. These homes were not for mill workers, Latham was in the real estate business pursuing affluent residents in Fisher Park for the poshest Aladdin models. The Aladdin sales records indicate that Latham carefully selected the homes and did not want any duplicates to assure owners they would not share styles.

The Brentwood on 318 W. Bessemer illustrates the charming and upscale character of a kit home fit for the Fisher Park neighborhood. Todd McCain built additions onto the house and modified the interior, as occurs with many homes. He preserved many of the Brentwood's essential features, such as the diamond pane windows that reflect an English flair, and the gambrel roof offers ample room in the attic and second floor. The original porte-cochère leads to the kitchen, though he added a room on top of that structure. The upper windows on the right with a balcony and small windows above the door are style indicators, despite the removal of the original gabled pediment above the arched doorway.

The Colonial model sits at 322 W. Bessemer, and is one of the Aladdin Company's grandest kit homes. The original cost in 1917 was \$1,998.00 to build, and the home reflected New England and Southern architecture. Latham sold the home and property slot to Lou M. Bradshaw for \$13,000, turning a significant profit. Key features of this home are a hipped roof, 10-bay windows, three dormers, a side porch, a semi-circular porch with a decorative pediment and columns, and wooden shingle siding. The modifications to the original design are the window addition in the center of the second-floor façade and enclosure of a second-story addition.

Other Fisher Park models are the Shadow Lawn, at 404 W. Bessemer Ave, a two-story craftsman, noted by the cross-gables, decorative and notched exposed rafter tails, shingle siding, and covered porch. The Aladdin Company flipped the 1917 catalog's floor plan for



Fig. 12A: the Kentucky in Fisher Park has no shutters compared to 12B: the 1916 catalog image.

Latham. The porte-cochère is on the right instead of the left, and flipping these plans was not unusual, as the company could accommodate their floorplans to the lot size and shape. Next door, at 406 W. Bessemer Ave, is a Kentucky with a classic centered corbelled chimney, low dormer with three small windows, six-bay, with French door entrance, and Tuscan column supports for the roof. Chabot noted Aladdin sold the Kentucky model in varying lengths from 1915 to 1919, and this house is the longest version offered at 43 feet wide.

Chabot toured the historic district and uncovered several other styles with renovations that mostly remained faithful to the original plan. Chabot could link the Aladdin sales records from the Clarke Historical Library with the Guilford County Register of Deeds for Latham's purchase to verify the homes. Latham placed the following houses on W. Bessemer Ave. At 410 is a Pasadena, with a characteristic gambrel roof and porch with a wide overhanging eave. However, the owner removed the rafter tails and constructed brick and vinyl room additions. At 412 is the Willard with a double gambrel roof and an extended porch cover. At 414 is a Winthrop, a double front gable craftsman with notable triangular knee braces mounted on the battered pier on post porch supports, two-bay, side entry home. The dining room has a bay window sticking outside of the right side of the house with a front-gabled roof. The large chimney is for the living room, set at the front of the home, expanding across the entire width of the house.

### The Mail-Order Catalogs

Fortune smiled on Aladdin homeowners and the company's history when a company employee found an extensive collection of the mail-order catalogs in a warehouse. The Clarke Historical Library houses these catalogs and digitized each. The digitized catalogs range from 1908 to the mid-1950s and are easily accessible to

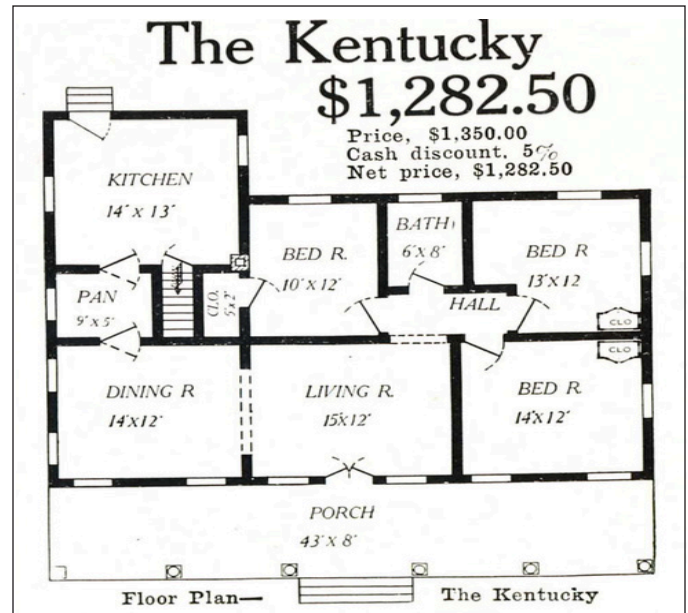


Fig. 13: The Kentucky floor plan shows a rear kitchen, which is a surprising break from the symmetrical front.

start identifying an Aladdin home. The collection also includes Aladdin's military housing. The non-digitized portion of the collection also includes sales records. The company kept detailed records of the house buyers. Unfortunately, most of the sales records circa the 1950s and to the end of the company's history were lost to time because the records from the Mississippi factories were never sent north to the central headquarters. The library staff cautions that confirming an Aladdin kit house requires more than comparing the image and floor plan.

### It Looks Like a Kit House, But is It?

The 1917 Aladdin catalog informed the prospective owner: "If you attempted to tear apart, or dissect an Aladdin house, the most expert contractor could not tell it from any other first-class frame dwelling because there is no difference" (p. 7). A kit house is not a unique building in terms of physical appearance, but these uniquely made structures offer subtle clues to their origin. The physical structure is not always readily comparable to its catalog image because homeowners alter floor plans, change siding, remove or add rooms, and enclose porch spaces. A contemporary homeowner could live in an Aladdin kit home and not know of its origins. Todd McCain's friends tipped him towards recognizing his house as a kit house because they saw equivalent homes in Danville, VA, and Chapel Hill, NC, with flipped floor plans but strikingly similar exteriors. He lived in a kit house for 11 years before finding out its secrets. McCain contacted the Clarke Historical Library and gained Aladdin sales records for Greensboro, discovering J.E. Latham purchased his home, but other speculative builders purchased Aladdin homes as well. Company records reveal that in 1919, the company sold at least 25 Aladdin homes to Greensboro residents, of which 11 are in Fisher Park.



Fig. 14A: trademark Aladdin decorative doorplate next to 1917 catalog image. 14B: Greensboro Brentwood doorknob after roughly 100 years of use.

McCain's journey to discover the secrets of his kit house is replicable for other kit homeowners.

If the historic house bears a similarity to a catalog image, whether the floorplan matches or differs, the first step is to research the house ownership. The original owner of a kit home would have ordered the house while living in a previous residence. To discover this information, consult the historical city directories at the local library, or research through the County Register of Deeds. The Clarke Library uses the original owner's previous address and compares that to the sales records to see if the homeowner made an order with the Aladdin company.

### Identifiable Features

Aladdin homes have several identifying features that are also useful, but none of these are guaranteed to still exist in an Aladdin home. Due to the age of the Aladdin homes and the commonality of renovation that takes place in most American homes, these key features could be gone. The lumber is the first clue, as the company harvested clear and knotless Oregon Fir and Yellow Pine for building materials. In each catalog's "General Specifications" pages, the company described which architectural feature had which wood type. For example, sidewalls were made of cedar siding, and the outdoor finish was yellow pine or fir. Floors were commonly constructed of pine, as found in McCain's Brentwood. The company used fir for the doors, stating it was softer than oak or birch, yet a durable hardwood capable of taking a polish. Aladdin's "Dollar-a-Knot Guarantee"



Fig. 15: The Winthrop model blends spectacularly with craftsman bungalows throughout Greensboro.

ensured the company harvested and inspected each board to yield the highest quality wood. Should the owner find a knot in the wood, the company would owe the owner the money for the defect.

Some Aladdin Kit homes came with hardware displaying the company name. Jim Draeger's article on mail-order homes features an Aladdin doorknocker in the literary figure's likeness. The Greensboro Brentwood has an Aladdin decorative doorplate, and a picture from the 1917 catalog shows the words "Aladdin Houses" set in a triangle surrounded by leaves. The contemporary doorplate has the same leaves in the corners, though, with nearly 100 years of use, the "Aladdin Houses" words and other designs have worn away.

Factory marks on the wooden elements are the hardest identifying features to find in a kit house. The factory workers marked and numbered the boards with grease pencils to allow the homeowner to identify the connecting parts. Kit house hunters suggest looking in the attic, basement, or crawl space to analyze the joists for markings. Finding any official stamp or the Aladdin name cannot be expected. McCain took his home interior down to the studs, but only found the marking "B.R." for either bathroom or bedroom. Chabot discovered house styles came in different lengths depending on specifications of the lot, therefore measuring the beams would not necessarily guarantee verification.

### Conclusion

The illustrations of Aladdin kit homes look remarkably like many other bungalows in historic neighborhoods. The Aladdin company and its competitors successfully blended their prefabricated homes in these early suburbs. Aladdin's home styles adapted with the times, but ultimately the company's strength of affordable prefabricated housing was its downfall. Director Boles



Fig. 16: The Aladdin Company could easily accommodate a lot specification and lip or alter floorplans.

stated modular housing took a page from Aladdin's business model, and their cheaper homes rose in popularity, ultimately putting Aladdin out of business. During its 75 years of operation, Aladdin left its mark in early 1920s middle-class suburbs, company towns in the U.S. and abroad, and on military bases. The company offered extremely affordable homes for the middle class, with styles evocative of popular vernacular trends, and ease of construction. Aladdin and the other kit home competitors did not dominate the built environment but altered the future for home design and construction. While the Aladdin homes are not easily distinguishable from locally-crafted homes, some clever sleuthing using the methods outlined in this brief can reveal the treasures in the landscape of bungalows.

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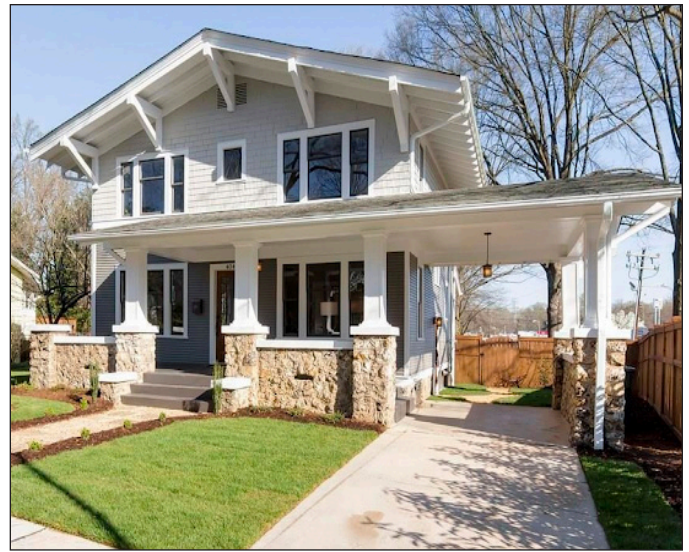


Fig. 17: This Fisher Park Shadow Lawn model's triangular knee braces and stone porch accents that match the catalog model, which costs \$1539 in 1917.

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Fig. 18: The Pomona model at 909 Madison St., Roanoke Rapids has an addition on the right elevation.



Fig. 19: The Pomona model in the 1920 catalog, the bay on the right elevation could be for a dining room.

Schweitzer, R., & M.W.R. Davis (1990). *America's Favorite Homes, Mail-Order Catalogues as a Guide to Popular Early 20th Century Houses*. Detroit: Wayne State University Press.

### Image Credits

Figure 1: The Detroit Free Press, January 25, 1920.

Figures 2 - 5, 9, 11, 12B, 13, 14A, 16, 19 - 23: Courtesy of the Aladdin Catalogs digitized by the Central Michigan University's Clarke Historical Library

Figures 6, 7, 8, 12A, 18 : Google streetview images

Figures 15 & 17: Judith Chabot's record in Sears House Hunter blog

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Fig. 20: The Palm Springs Ranch from the 1952 catalog shows Aladdin's method for following vernacular trends.



Fig. 21: The Ventura Ranch has the classic portrait window and suburban flair, from the 1952 catalog.



Fig. 22: The Bristol is a minimal traditional style, one of many in the the 1952 catalog.



Fig. 23: The Rockport marketed as "authentically Cape Cod" in the 1952 catalog.

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