

MAIL ORDER HOUSES OF 1906-1946

Historical architectural researcher Rebecca Hunter will present the program, "Do You Live in a Sears House? The Mail Order House Phenomenon: 1906-1946," on Wednesday, February 28 at 7 p.m. at the Des Plaines Public Library. The program includes a slide show on mail order homes, as well as the history and relationship of the major companies that sold the homes in the Midwest market. This is a centennial celebration program. Advance registration is required.

Precut homes by Sears and other companies were well-designed, practical and made of top quality materials. Lumber and hardware were purchased in bulk. Structural materials were then cut to exact size at the mill and shipped to the customer by rail. Parts for a typical home filled two boxcars and included approximately 10,000 numbered pieces of lumber, kegs of nails, hardware, roofing tar and shingles, paint and varnish, blueprints and instructions on how to assemble the house. Manufacturers claimed the precut system saved the builder up to 30 percent compared to the cost of standard building methods.

Hunter became fascinated by the concept of mail order homes when she discovered the book, *Houses by Mail*, at her local library. Hoping to get some exercise on a snowy day in 1997, she walked around her neighborhood, looking for a home that matched a picture in the book. Seventy houses later, she approached the Elgin, Illinois Heritage Commission with her first attempt to locate and document these mail order homes. Her first book, *Elgin, Illinois Sears House Research Project*, grew out of this intensive study.

For more information about the program, or to register, please phone the Registration Desk at 847-376-2787 or [register online](#).