



## *Context for Landmark Designation*

In the early 1900s, Raleigh experienced a period of explosive growth. Its population increased exponentially, city limits were expanded twice before 1925, and several new neighborhoods developed adjacent to downtown. Considered ‘suburban’ at the time, these neighborhoods reflected the broad socioeconomic changes the city underwent as it began the new century.<sup>1</sup> Between 1905 and 1925, five new residential neighborhoods—Glenwood, Cameron Park, Boylan Heights, Mordecai Place, and Five Points—were established on Raleigh’s outskirts. Collectively, these ‘suburban’ neighborhoods provide as much insight into early 20<sup>th</sup>-century Raleigh as does its downtown development.

Additionally during this period, local residential architectural preferences changed. Oakwood and Blount Street’s ornate Victorians fell out of favor and smaller, more efficient styles inspired by the Arts & Crafts movement began to appear, most notably the bungalow. These new styles were popularized by the kit home industry, a mail order business that sold simple, economical houses that could be erected by a homeowner or contractor.<sup>2</sup> Kit homes freed potential homeowners from hiring an architect; instead, they selected a model from the pages of a catalog and oversaw the construction process themselves, often at a reduced cost.<sup>3</sup> Kit home catalogs offered pages of appealing, up-to-date options, so it is not surprising to find a number of these architectural gems inside the Beltline. The phenomenon aligned nicely with Raleigh’s early 20<sup>th</sup>-century growth: the industry launched about the same time as Raleigh’s first suburbs were platted and reached the height of popularity in the 1920s,<sup>4</sup> just as the city’s first wave of suburban development reached its apex.

None of Raleigh’s neighborhoods are exclusively comprised of kit homes, but the form played a role in each neighborhood’s success. Some contain more kit homes than others. For example, the later suburbs, Mordecai Place and Five Points, include a larger number of kit homes than the first, Glenwood. And while Raleigh is one of many cities throughout the United States dotted with kit homes, its collection is notable for its variety and architectural integrity. The city’s collection, as described by historian Rosemary Thornton, is “*really* remarkable”<sup>5</sup> and includes a number of models from a variety of companies. Notes Thornton, “To my astonishment and delight, we’ve found an impressive number of kit homes in this part of North Carolina, including Sears, Harris Brothers, Lewis Homes, Montgomery Ward, Gordon-Van Tine and more!”<sup>6</sup> Moreover, Thornton believes Raleigh’s collection to include a number of the higher-end models offered by these companies.

The kit home phenomenon undoubtedly made its mark on Raleigh. In particular, it helps demonstrate the city’s remarkable early 20<sup>th</sup>-century growth. Developing neighborhoods on the

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<sup>1</sup> Brown, Charlotte. “Three Raleigh Suburbs: Glenwood, Boylan Heights, Cameron Park.” *Early Twentieth-Century Suburbs in North Carolina*. Eds. Catherine W. Bishir and Lawrence S. Early. Raleigh, NC: Archeology and Historic Preservation Section, North Carolina Department of Cultural Resources, 1985, 31, 37.

<sup>2</sup> Thornton, Rosemary. *The Houses that Sears Built*. Portsmouth, VA: Gentle Beam Publishing, 2004, 3-5, 10-11.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, 30-31.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, 5.

<sup>5</sup> Thornton, Rosemary. “An Abundance of Sears Homes in Raleigh (Part II).” *Sears Modern Homes*, 3 April 2011. Web. 3 January 2013. <http://www.searshomes.org/index.php/2011/04/03/an-abundance-of-sears-homes-in-raleigh-nc-part-ii/>

<sup>6</sup> Thornton, Rosemary. “An Abundance of Sears Homes in Raleigh.” *Sears Modern Homes*, 9 February 2011. Web. 3 January 2013. <http://www.searshomes.org/index.php/2011/02/09/abundance-of-kit-homes-raleigh-nc/>

edges of downtown were shaped in part by this new method of homebuilding. Moreover, the phenomenon illustrates the city's architectural transitions of the period, from massive Victorians to smaller, cozier homes inspired by the Arts & Crafts movement, and later, revival styles. Finally, Raleigh's kit homes are notable for their architectural integrity and include some of the trend's more ambitious offerings.

For these reasons, it is important that Raleigh recognizes its kit home history. Currently, one such home, a Harris Brothers Ardmore at 1807 Wills Avenue, is a Raleigh Historic Landmark. Nominating additional kit homes for landmark designation would help ensure that local examples of this uniquely American house type are preserved. More specifically, it would accomplish two things: first, provide tangible evidence of the city's expansion and changing architectural preferences over the course of the early 20<sup>th</sup> century; and second, help maintain the high level of architectural integrity present in a number of Raleigh's kit homes.

#### *What are Kit Homes?*

Also known as "mail order homes," kit homes were ready-to-assemble houses ordered from a catalog. After selecting a model, the purchaser received a complete set of blueprints and most of the materials, usually delivered by train, needed to build his house. To help make construction easier, the kit's pieces of lumber were already cut to size and stamped with letters and numbers that the builder matched up.<sup>7</sup> Today kit homes are found across the country, in large cities and small rural towns. The kit home trend significantly impacted the development of residential communities and allowed many the chance of homeownership.<sup>8</sup>

#### *Kit Home Companies*

Several companies produced and sold kit home houses beginning in the early 1900s. Below is a brief listing of the individual companies whose homes have been documented in Raleigh by historian Rosemary Thornton.

#### **Aladdin Homes**

Established in Bay City, Michigan in 1906 by brothers Otto and William Sovereign (the latter of which was inspired to produce kit homes after working for a mail order boat company), Aladdin sold over 75,000 homes between 1906 and 1981, making it one of the nation's longest-lived kit home companies.<sup>9</sup> Although based up north, Aladdin had a large mill in Wilmington, NC, which helps explain the company's widespread presence in the southeast.<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> Thornton, Rosemary. *The Houses that Sears Built*. Portsmouth, VA: Gentle Beam Publishing, 2004, 3-5, 10-11.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, 75.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, 136.

"Aladdin Company of Bay City Michigan." Clarke Historical Library, 1 June 2012. Web. 3 January 2013.

[http://clarke.cmich.edu/resource\\_tab/aladdin\\_company\\_of\\_bay\\_city/aladdin\\_company\\_of\\_bay\\_city\\_index.html](http://clarke.cmich.edu/resource_tab/aladdin_company_of_bay_city/aladdin_company_of_bay_city_index.html)

"The Aladdin Company." Bay-Journal Heritage Writings. January 2009. Web. 4 January 2013.

<http://bjmi.us/bay/1he/writings/aladdin-homes.html>

<sup>10</sup> Thornton, Rosemary. "An Abundance of Sears Homes in Raleigh (Part II)." Sears Modern Homes, 3 April 2011. Web. 3 January 2013. <http://www.searshomes.org/index.php/2011/04/03/an-abundance-of-sears-homes-in-raleigh-nc-part-ii/>

## Sears

Initially a mail order watch and jewelry purveyor, Sears Roebuck and Company's catalog was a fixture in American households and offered a wide variety of products, including home building materials.<sup>11</sup> However, disappointing sales of piecemeal lumber, millwork, and other supplies prompted a manager to suggest that Sears offer complete packages of materials paired with architectural drawings. The first *Modern Homes* catalog came out in 1908 and featured 22 designs priced between \$650 and \$2,500.<sup>12</sup> With the publication of its last *Modern Homes* catalog in 1940, Sears had offered nearly 450 designs, sold to enthusiastic do-it-yourself builders across the country.<sup>13</sup> One of the nation's most successful kit home companies, Sears's Modern Homes Department remains one of the most recognized and remembered today. It is estimated that the company sold approximately 75,000 homes.<sup>14</sup>

## Montgomery Ward

Montgomery Ward offered kit homes through their *Wardway Homes* catalog between 1922 and 1932. Montgomery Ward's homes were supplied by Gordon-Van Tine, making it difficult to distinguish between the two companies.<sup>15</sup>

## Gordon-Van Tine

A Davenport, Iowa company originally in the building materials business, Gordon-Van Tine sold between 50,000-60,000 homes between 1916 and 1947. It provided Montgomery Ward with its kit homes.<sup>16</sup>

## Harris Brothers

Based in Chicago, Illinois, Harris Brothers began as a house moving and wrecking company but transitioned into the kit home business in 1912. After relocating to Wisconsin, the company remained in operation until 1960, although it ceased kit home production during the Great Depression.<sup>17</sup>

## Lewis-Liberty

Founded in Bay City, Michigan in 1896, this company got into the kit home business in 1913. It sold approximately 60,000 kit homes before declaring bankruptcy in 1973.<sup>18</sup>

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<sup>11</sup> Thornton, Rosemary. *The Houses that Sears Built*. Portsmouth, VA: Gentle Beam Publishing, 2004, 3, 18-20.  
Stevenson, Katherine and H. Ward Jandl. *Houses by Mail: A Guide to Houses from Sears, Roebuck & Company*.  
Washington, D.C.: Preservation Press, 1986, 23.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, 20.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*, 38.

Thornton and Stevenson/Jandl tabulate the number of designs that Sears offered differently. Thornton estimates the company offered approximately 370 designs. For more information on her calculations, see page 132 of her book, *The Houses that Sears Built*.

<sup>14</sup> Thornton, 9.

<sup>15</sup> Thornton, 134.

Wolicki, Dale. "Gordon-Van Tine Magazine." Gordon-Van Tine. 2002. Web. 3 January 2013.

<http://www.gordonvantine.com/inmag.php>

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*

Thornton, 136.

<sup>17</sup> Hunter, Rebecca. "Historical Notes on Kit Homes and Pre-Cut Homes." 30 August 2007. Web. 3 January 2013. <http://www.kithouse.org/>

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*

Thornton, 136.

### **Sterling Homes**

Yet another Bay City, Michigan enterprise, this company, founded in 1915, sold between 35,000 and 45,000 kit homes before closing in the early 1970s.<sup>19</sup>

### **Standard Homes**

Although not a kit home company, Standard Homes also impacted Raleigh's early 20<sup>th</sup>-century residential architecture through its sale of plan book homes. Plan book catalogs offered complete sets of architectural drawings but did not include the materials. Instead, customers were often connected with local builders.

While working as a sales agent for Ready Cut Homes in Detroit, A. Gales Johnson compiled his own plan book in 1917. After relocating to Washington, D.C., in 1921, he founded Standard Homes Company. It quickly became one of the largest plan book companies in the nation. In 1937, Johnson set up a southern branch in Fuquay-Varina; the North Carolina branch became its own entity under William Gales in 1950 and incorporated as Standard Homes Plan Service, Inc. seventeen years later. Today the business remains family-owned and operated.

Not surprisingly, many homes in Raleigh are Standard Homes, although they have not been officially documented. Current owner/manager Leigh Cameron says there are many examples on St. Mary's Street, in Boylan Heights, Cameron Park, Glenwood, and on Fairview Road.<sup>20</sup>

### *Kit Home Architectural Styles*

In order to appeal to a wide audience, kit home companies steered clear of cutting edge architectural design. Instead, they offered proven or widely popular styles. Designs came from a variety of sources: established architects from whom it purchased plans, staff architects responsible for designing homes exclusively for the company, existing home designs, and building magazines.<sup>21</sup>

Kit home purveyors prided themselves on providing economical and efficient plans. Most homes had two or three bedrooms, one bathroom, a kitchen, and some combination of a living room, dining room, and/or dining nook. However, larger, pricier models were available. Among the grandest was Sears' "The Magnolia," a three-story Georgian with a two-story columned portico, porte-cochere, and eight rooms.<sup>22</sup> As style preferences changed, so did the pages of kit home catalogs. Some styles endured longer than others: the bungalow proved to be a returning favorite.

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<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*

Thornton, Rosemary. "Sterling Homes." Sears Modern Homes. 22 October 2010. Web. 3 January 2013.  
<http://www.searshomes.org/index.php/2010/10/22/sterling-homes/>

<sup>20</sup> "About Us." Standard Homes Plan Service, Inc. 2003. Web. 3 January 2013.  
<http://www.standardhomes.com/AboutUs.asp>

Argintar, Sybil. "Historic Research and Landmark Identification for Raleigh's Regional Kit Homes and Plan Book Houses." Unpublished report, December 2011 (revised January 2012), 2, 5-6.

Personal interview with Leigh Cameron, March 13, 2012.

<sup>21</sup> Stevenson, Katherine and H. Ward Jandl. *Houses by Mail: A Guide to Houses from Sears, Roebuck & Company*. Washington, D.C.: Preservation Press, 1986, 19, 32-35.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*, 285.

Thornton, Rosemary. *The Houses that Sears Built*. Portsmouth, VA: Gentle Beam Publishing, 2004, 104.

### Architectural style Timeline

1910-1920: bungalows and Foursquares

1920s: Tudor and Mission revivals

1920-1930s: Colonial Revivals, Cape Cods, Dutch Colonials

As noted by historian Rosemary Thornton, Raleigh's collection of kit homes includes a number of styles.<sup>23</sup> Not only does this variety make the homes visually interesting, it helps illustrate the sheer number of options available to kit home customers and demonstrates the industry's ability to cater to its customers' tastes and keep abreast of trends. A further testament to the uniqueness of Raleigh's kit home collection is the presence of a number of higher-end models.

### *Raleigh's First Suburbs*

In the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, North Carolina, an overwhelmingly rural state, experienced a period of simultaneous urbanization and suburbanization. Mushrooming towns and small urban centers were closely accompanied by the development of new residential pockets just beyond their boundaries. This development pattern meant that suburbs played a significant role in "determin[ing] the characteristic shape and ambiance of...North Carolina cities."<sup>24</sup> Suburbs eschewed the look and feel of traditional urban environments, incorporating specific planning ideas such as controlled density, winding roads, and idyllic landscape features.<sup>25</sup> Architecturally, the suburbs remained conservative, favoring classic and tasteful styles. Individual homes were either designed by architects, were speculative models, or were plan book or mail order homes.<sup>26</sup>

Raleigh's growth during this period falls in line with these development and housing trends. Between 1900 and 1910, the city's population grew 40% and city limits were extended for the first time since 1857. This impressive growth created a housing shortage,<sup>27</sup> spurring the creation of new neighborhoods just beyond the city's downtown core. The first of these 'suburbs' was Glenwood in 1905; Boylan Heights and Cameron Park followed in 1907 and 1910, respectively.<sup>28</sup> Over the next decade, Mordecai Place and Five Points developed north of downtown. Homes in these neighborhoods include architect-designed and speculative residences, as well as abodes of the mail order variety. Kit homes were cheaper than custom options and allowed the owner

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<sup>23</sup> Thornton, Rosemary. "An Abundance of Sears Homes in Raleigh." Sears Modern Homes, 9 February 2011. Web. 3 January 2013. <http://www.searshomes.org/index.php/2011/02/09/abundance-of-kit-homes-raleigh-nc/>

Thornton, Rosemary. "An Abundance of Sears Homes in Raleigh (Part II)." Sears Modern Homes, 3 April 2011. Web. 3 January 2013. <http://www.searshomes.org/index.php/2011/04/03/an-abundance-of-sears-homes-in-raleigh-nc-part-ii/>

<sup>24</sup> Smith, Margaret Supplee. "The American Idyll in North Carolina's First Suburbs: Landscape and Architecture." *Early Twentieth-Century Suburbs in North Carolina*. Eds. Catherine W. Bishir and Lawrence S. Early. Raleigh, NC: Archeology and Historic Preservation Section, North Carolina Department of Cultural Resources, 1985, 24.

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*, 22-23.

Brown, 35.

<sup>26</sup> Smith, 27.

<sup>27</sup> Brown, Charlotte. "Three Raleigh Suburbs: Glenwood, Boylan Heights, Cameron Park." *Early Twentieth-Century Suburbs in North Carolina*. Eds. Catherine W. Bishir and Lawrence S. Early. Raleigh, NC: Archeology and Historic Preservation Section, North Carolina Department of Cultural Resources, 1985, 31-33.

<sup>28</sup> Harris Edmisten, Linda, ed. *Early Raleigh Neighborhoods and Buildings*. Raleigh, NC: Raleigh City Council, 1983, 31-42.

complete control over the homebuilding process. The reason for purchasing a home from a catalog could be a financial or a personal choice. Whatever the appeal, the launch of the kit home industry came at a pivotal time in Raleigh's residential development and provided locals with a new, viable housing option.

As is the case with the majority of kit homes, Raleigh's collection was erected by individual owners one-by-one across its developing neighborhoods. The number of kit homes in each neighborhood varies and can be explained by comparing the development dates of each neighborhood with the rise of the industry. For example, it is likely that the increase in kit homes in later neighborhoods is related to the peak of the kit home industry in the 1920s. Practically, this means that Glenwood, Boylan Heights, and Cameron Park possess fewer kit homes than Mordecai Place and Five Points (excluding later in-fill). Still, the development of Raleigh's first suburbs would not be a complete story without the inclusion of this unique house type.

### **Early Raleigh Suburbs<sup>29</sup>**

#### Glenwood-Brooklyn (1905)

Purchased by: James Hinton Pou

Platted by: Riddick and Mann

Sold by: Glenwood Land Company

Listed in the National Register of Historic Districts: 1985, boundary change 2002

#### Boylan Heights (1907)

Purchased and sold by: Greater Raleigh Land Company

Platted by: Kelsey and Guild of Boston

Designated Raleigh Historic District: 1984

Listed in the National Register of Historic Districts: 1985

#### Cameron Park (1910)

Purchased by: North Carolina Trust Company and the Southern Real Estate Company

Platted by: Riddick and Mann

Sold by: Parker-Hunter Realty Company

Listed in the National Register of Historic Districts: 1985

#### Mordecai Place (1922)

Purchased and developed by: Dan and Frank Allen

Listed in the National Register of Historic Districts: 1988, boundary change 2000

#### Five Points (1913-1922)

Platted: Vanguard Park 1915, Hayes Barton 1920, Roanoke Park 1922, Bloomsbury 1915, Georgetown 1913

Listed in the National Register of Historic Districts (MPDF): 2002

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<sup>29</sup> Harris Edmisten, Linda, ed. Early Raleigh Neighborhoods and Buildings. Raleigh, NC: Raleigh City Council, 1983, 31-42.

National Register of Historic Places Nomination forms for Glenwood-Brooklyn, Boylan Heights, Cameron Park, Mordecai Place, and Five Points, Raleigh Historic Development Commission files.

### *Criteria for Landmark Designation*

Currently, Raleigh has approximately 50 identified kit homes. Not all of these homes would be eligible for landmark designation due to alterations and/or condition. In selecting kit homes suitable for designation, the following factors should be considered:

- Architectural integrity
  - Can the home be authenticated as genuine kit home from an established kit home company?
  - Is the home an excellent example of a particular kit home model?
  - Does the home maintain its original massing, floor plan, style, and/or materials or some compelling combination thereof?
- Rarity of make/model
  - Is the home a style of which few were built or few survive?
  - Was the home manufactured by a smaller or less known kit home company?
- Location
  - Is the home located in one of Raleigh's early 'suburbs,' helping to document the city's period of growth in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century and the heyday of the kit home industry?

In order to best reflect the richness of Raleigh's kit home collection, the Raleigh Historic Development Commission should recognize a small number of kit homes that satisfy most, if not all, of the above criteria. Because additional kit homes may be identified in the future, the commission should establish standards as soon as possible in order to ensure that the city's premier examples receive the benefit of designation.

### *Exemplary Kit Homes in Raleigh*

The majority of the following homes were featured on Rosemary Thornton's "Sears Modern Homes" blog in early 2011. Given her expertise and their architectural integrity, rarity, and locations, they are provided as standout examples for the commission's consideration. All factual information provided for the Sears kit homes comes from *Houses by Mail* by Katherine Cole Stevenson and H. Ward Jandl. For a complete listing of all of the kit homes identified in Raleigh thus far, refer to the spreadsheet provided at the end of this report.

#### **Glenwood**

Address: 1102 Glenwood Avenue  
Make and Model: Sears Winona  
Year Built: 1930

- Years offered: 1916-9, 1921-2, 1925-6,





1928-9, 1932-5, 1937, 1939

- 1934 catalog description: “The Winona bungalow is a popular American cottage-type home. Broken roof lines, wide overhanging eaves supported with brackets and a full front porch give it a pleasing appearance from either perspective. The outside walls are planned to be covered with beveled siding which we suggest painting white, light gray, or ivory.”
- Details and features: Five or six rooms and one bath. Asphalt shingle or wood siding exterior; wide overhanging eaves; full-width front porch. Two floor plans; arched opening between living and dining rooms; built-in sideboard in dining room.
- Price: \$744-\$1,998
- Thornton highlighted this home on her blog, stating, “This house in Raleigh is a spot on match, a rarity in a house of this age!”<sup>30</sup>

### **Mordecai**

Thornton was impressed at the number of kit homes in Mordecai, identifying ten models during her visit to the neighborhood.

Address: 1322 Mordecai Drive  
Make and Model: Sears Whitehall  
Year Built: 1924

- Years offered: 1912-3, 1916-8, 1921-2, 1925-6
- 1922 catalog description: “A neat and roomy house at a very low price. Was designed with two objects in view: economy of floor space and low cost. The dining room is connected with the living room by a large cased opening which practically makes one large room of these two rooms. Has a kitchen and a good-sized pantry.”
- Details and features: Six rooms and one bath. Full-width front porch with wood columns; projecting two-storey bay in front; front door with beveled plate glass. Cased opening between living and dining rooms.

Address: 1326 Mordecai Drive  
Make and Model: Sears Sunbeam  
Year Built: 1926

- Years offered: 1911-3, 1916-8, 1921
- 1921 catalog description: “This five-room bungalow of the Craftsman style features an open-air sleeping balcony. The stairs on the



<sup>30</sup> Thornton, Rosemary. “An Abundance of Sears Homes in Raleigh (Part II).” Sears Modern Homes, 3 April 2011. Web. 3 January 2013. <http://www.searshomes.org/index.php/2011/04/03/an-abundance-of-sears-homes-in-raleigh-nc-part-ii/>

second floor are within an arm's reach of either bedrooms or bathroom.

- Details and features: Five rooms and one bath. Full-width front porch supported by tapered square columns; open sleeping porch above. Fireplace with oak mantel in living room; built-in sideboard in dining room; open stairs.”
- Price: \$716-\$2,493
- Very similar to the Elmwood, whose sleeping porch was open. The Elmwood was typically in earlier catalogs, while the Sunbeam was also offered in later catalogs, in 1922 and 1925-6 for between \$2,425-2,707.
- Notes Thornton, “This Sears Sunbeam is a lovely example and in original condition. The tine roof is a very nice touch.”<sup>31</sup>

Address: 1332 Mordecai Drive  
Make and Model: Aladdin Plaza  
Year Built: 1927

- This home is easily matched with its corresponding catalog page.
- Its intersecting gables and elevated location make it visually interesting.



Address: 518 East Franklin Street  
Make and Model: Aladdin Shadow Lawn  
Year Built: 1922

- Located between North Oakwood and Mordecai
- Thornton, “Another beautiful kit home in Raleigh, looking much like the original catalog image.”<sup>32</sup>
- The Shadow Lawn was one of Aladdin's most popular styles.



<sup>31</sup> Thornton, Rosemary. “An Abundance of Sears Homes in Raleigh.” Sears Modern Homes, 9 February 2011. Web. 3 January 2013. <http://www.searshomes.org/index.php/2011/02/09/abundance-of-kit-homes-raleigh-nc/>

<sup>32</sup> Thornton, Rosemary. “An Abundance of Sears Homes in Raleigh (Part II).” Sears Modern Homes, 3 April 2011. Web. 3 January 2013. <http://www.searshomes.org/index.php/2011/04/03/an-abundance-of-sears-homes-in-raleigh-nc-part-ii/>

## Cameron Park

Address: 1201 Park Drive

Make and Model: Sears Argyle

Year Built: 1910

- Years offered: 1916-9, 1921-2, 1925-6
- 1921 catalog description: "The Argyle is a bungalow whose exterior appearance suggests extra-fine interior arrangement and furnishings. The front elevation, as you glance at it, bespeaks richness and comfort on the inside. The living and dining room prove this conclusively. Note the bookcase colonnade, the beamed ceiling, the massive brick mantel with the built-in bookcase on the side. Note also the extra depth of the living room and dining room, nearly 30 feet long."
- Details and features: Five rooms and one bath. Gabled front porch; notched bargeboards; exposed roof rafter tails. Beamed ceiling and fireplace flanked by built-in bookcases with glass doors in living room; paneled dining room.
- Price: \$827-\$2,150
- Notes Thornton in her blog, "Classic and beautiful."<sup>33</sup>



Address: 311 Calvin Road

Make and Model: Sears Americus

Year Built: 1930

- Years offered: 1921-2, 1925-6, 1928-9
- 1925 catalog description: "Here is a fine home that any American can be proud of and be comfortable in. It is a dignified, substantial house that will stand out among its neighbors and never go "out of style." The rooms are all good sized and well lighted and ventilated. Lots of big closets just where needed and a kitchen that will save a great many steps."
- Details and features: Six rooms and one bath. Full-width front porch with shed roof supported by tapered stucco and wood piers; exposed roof rafter tails; glazed front door. Semi-open stairs.
- Price: \$1,924-\$2,173



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<sup>33</sup> *Ibid.*

## Boylan Heights

Address: 726 South Boylan Avenue

Make and Model: Sears Americus

Year Built: 1925

- Thornton, "...here is a PERFECT example of a Sears Americus, spared the fate of the typical Americus that's been 'sided' and stripped of all architectural detail. This house in Boylan Heights is in beautiful condition. Even the porch railings are original."<sup>34</sup>
- One of Sears's best selling designs
- A compelling pair (see 311 Calvin Road above) showing a single model executed in different materials.



Address: 418 Cutler Street

Make and Model: Sears Modern Home #163

Year Built: 1908 (?)

- Years offered: 1911-3
- 1913 catalog description: "This house has two full stories and an attic. It is sided with Stonekote, more commonly known as cement plaster. It can be sided with clear cypress beveled siding if desired. A large front porch supported by massive Stonekote columns extends across the entire front. The balcony over the porch makes it a very desirable place for an open-air sleeping porch when screened in."
- Details and features: Seven rooms and one bath. Stucco exterior; full-width front porch with shed roof supported by rectangular piers; balcony above. Sliding doors between parlor and dining room; mantel in dining room; semi-open stairs.
- Price: \$1,110-\$1,280
- Notes Thornton, "Looking much like the day it was built is this Modern Home #163 in Raleigh. Every detail is perfect. And the best part-it retains its original siding, windows, and rafter tails...Every detail is perfect."<sup>35</sup>
- Possibly the oldest kit home in Raleigh, as evidenced by its model identification number (model names were introduced in 1918).<sup>36</sup>



<sup>34</sup> Thornton, Rosemary. "An Abundance of Sears Homes in Raleigh (Part II)." Sears Modern Homes, 3 April 2011. Web. 3 January 2013. <http://www.searshomes.org/index.php/2011/04/03/an-abundance-of-sears-homes-in-raleigh-nc-part-ii/>

<sup>35</sup> *Ibid.*

## Five Points

Address: 1601 St. Mary's Street  
Make and Model: Sears Alhambra  
Year Built: 1927

- Years offered: 1918-9, 1921, 1924-6, 1928-9
- 1921 catalog description: "The Alhambra is an effective Mission style of architecture. Its exterior arrangement, as well as the interior arrangement, will appeal to anyone who likes massiveness and plenty of room."
- Details and features: Eight rooms and one bath. Stucco exterior; curvilinear gables; overhanging eaves; open porch and terrace in front. Fireplace in living room; built-in sideboard in dining room; built-in seat in sunroom.
- Price: \$1,969-\$3,134
- The Spanish Mission Revival style is relatively rare in Raleigh; moreover, this house has been very well maintained.
- A more expensive model, in line with its location in the fashionable Hayes Barton neighborhood.



Address: 2122 Cowper Drive  
Make and Model: Montgomery Ward Mount  
Vernon/Priscilla  
Year Built: 1923

- Thornton also identified another Mount Vernon/Priscilla at 2135 Cowper Drive.



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<sup>36</sup> Thornton, Rosemary. *The Houses that Sears Built*. Portsmouth, VA: Gentle Beam Publishing, 2004, 104.

Address: 1824 White Oak Road  
Make and Model: Sears Maywood  
Year Built: 1928



- Years offered: 1928-9
- 1928 catalog description: “The Maywood two-story home bespeaks simplicity and worth. Designed after the finest in modern architecture, it makes an ideal home. The roof is of the cottage type, an effect produced by the projection across the middle and by the peak, attractively broken by the shingles to the front and the dormer at the side of the upper floor; combined with green shutters, a clever color contrast is obtained. The inset front porch with artistic seat and the large side porch with cement floor and pillars are features that surely please.”
- Details and features: Six rooms and one bath. Arched recessed entry; side porch. Fireplace in living room; arched opening between vestibule and living room.
- Price: \$2,658-\$2,914
- This home was not pictured on Thornton’s blog, but its unique style and limited run makes it a possible candidate for landmark designation.

### *Feasibility*

The Raleigh Historic Development Commission’s successful kit home events in May of 2012 attracted nearly 300 people, including kit home owners and those with a strong interest in the topic. It would be prudent to pursue landmarking a small number of Raleigh’s kit homes in the near future in order to capitalize upon that enthusiasm.

Reaching out to homeowners as soon as possible may prove more fruitful and lead to an increased number of landmark designations. The commission can provide kit home pamphlets from the event to homeowners, as well as links to Rosemary’s interview on WUNC and her lecture on RTN. Additionally, the kit home exhibit at the City of Raleigh Museum is slated to remain on display until summer of 2013.

### *Conclusion*

A nationwide trend, Raleigh was not immune to the kit home craze—its first suburban neighborhoods developed alongside the kit home industry. Today several of the city’s historic neighborhoods are dotted with reminders of this special period in American architectural history. Whether a cozy bungalow or a stately Colonial Revival, Raleigh’s kit homes give our downtown neighborhoods character. In addition to the homes’ nostalgic associations, Raleigh’s kit home collection helps demonstrate the city’s early 20<sup>th</sup>-century growth and architectural transitions. Moreover, it includes a number of different models from a variety of companies, maintains a high degree of architectural integrity, and showcases a number of the trend’s higher-end models.

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