

RAMSEY COUNTY
History
A Publication of the Ramsey County Historical Society

Winter, 1996

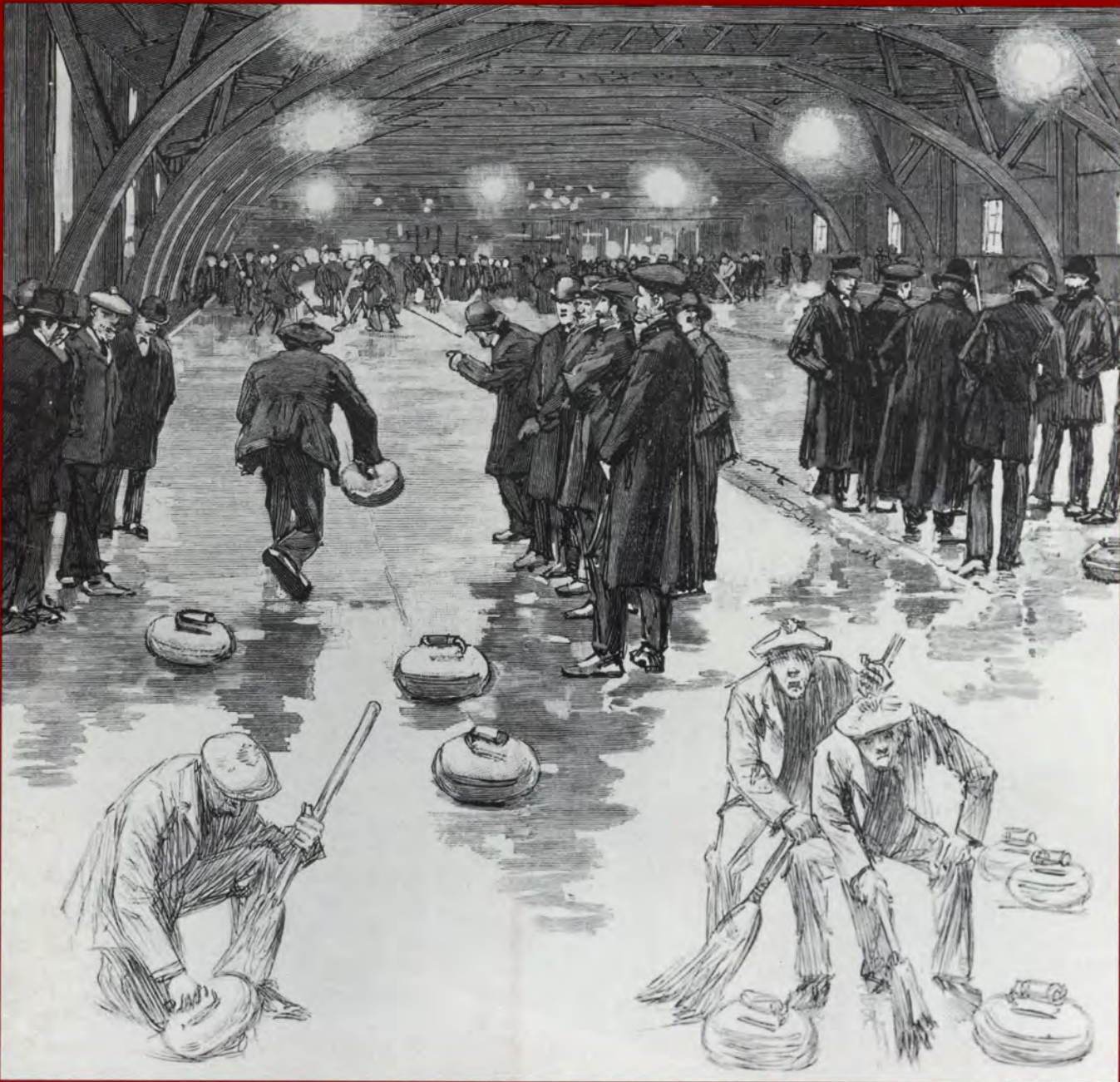
Volume 30, Number 4

The Bungalow Craze
And How It Swept
The Twin Cities—

Page 15

St. Paul Curling Club's Colorful History—

Page 4



The St. Paul Curling Club in 1892, a sketch by T. de Thulstrup for Harper's Weekly. See page 4 for the history of curling in St. Paul.

RAMSEY COUNTY HISTORY

Executive Director

Priscilla Farnham

Editor

Virginia Brainard Kunz

RAMSEY COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Joanne A. Englund

Chairman of the Board

John M. Lindley

President

Laurie Zenner

First Vice President

Judge Margaret M. Marrinan

Second Vice President

Richard A. Wilhoit

Secretary

James Russell

Treasurer

Arthur Baumeister, Jr., Alexandra Bjorklund, Mary Bigelow McMillan, Andrew Boss, Thomas Boyd, Mark Eisenschenk, Howard Guthmann, John Harens, Marshall Hatfield, Liz Johnson, George Mairs, III, Mary Bigelow McMillan, Laurie Murphy, Richard T. Murphy, Sr., Thomond O'Brien, Robert Olsen, Sally Robins, Vicenta Scarlett, Evangeline Schroeder, Charles Williams, Jr., Anne Cowie Wilson.

EDITORIAL BOARD

John M. Lindley, chairman; Thomas H. Boyd, Thomas C. Buckley, Laurie M. Murphy, Dr. Thomas B. Mega.

HONORARY ADVISORY BOARD

Elmer L. Andersen, Olivia I. Dodge, Charlton Dietz, William Finney, Clarence Frame, Otis Godfrey, Jr., Ronald Hachey, Reuel D. Harmon, Robert S. Hess, Ronald M. Hubbs, Fred T. Lanners, Jr., Don Larson, George Latimer, Lewis Lehr, David Marsden, Robert B. Mirick, Samuel H. Morgan, Marvin J. Pertzik, J. Jerome Plunkett, Peter S. Popovich, James Reagan, Rosalie E. Wahl, Donald D. Wozniak.

RAMSEY COUNTY COMMISSIONERS

Commissioner Hal Norgard, chairman
Commissioner Susan Haigh
Commissioner John Finley
Commissioner Rafael Ortega
Commissioner Richard O'Connor
Commissioner Brenda Thomas
Commissioner Richard Wedell

Terry Schutten, manager, Ramsey County

Ramsey County History is published quarterly by the Ramsey County Historical Society, 323 Landmark Center, 75 W. Fifth Street, St. Paul, Minn. 55102 (612-222-0706). Printed in U.S.A. Copyright, 1996, Ramsey County Historical Society. ISSN Number 0485-9758. All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reprinted or otherwise reproduced without written permission from the publisher. The Society assumes no responsibility for statements made by contributors.

RAMSEY COUNTY History

Volume 30, Number 4

Winter, 1996

CONTENTS

- 3 Letters
- 4 Bonspiels, Skips, Rinks, Brooms, and Heavy Ice
St. Paul Curling Club and Its Century-old History
Jane McClure
- 15 The Bungalows of the Twin Cities, With a Look
At the Craze that Created Them in St. Paul
Brian McMahon
- 19 Growing Up in St. Paul
Down St. Albans Hill in a Wooden Coaster Wagon
Arthur Mc Watt
- 23 Books, Etc.
Seth Eastman, A Portfolio of North American Indians
Dahkotah, or Life and Legends of the Sioux Around
Fort Snelling
Reviewed by Colles Baxter

A Message from the Editorial Board

Family roots are an important part of the texture of history in St. Paul and Ramsey County. Recently the Board of Directors of the Ramsey County Historical Society learned that the late Mary Daggett Sheehan (Mrs. Cyril Sheehan) made a bequest to the Society in her will in memory of her grandparents, Daniel W. and Mary Collins Kelly. Born in Ireland in 1839, Daniel Kelly came to the United States about 1844. Initially he and his brothers lived in New Jersey, but four Kelly brothers, including Daniel, migrated to St. Paul in 1856. There Kelly completed high school and then worked as a contractor hauling supplies to the West. Later he was successful in the hotel, real estate, and insurance business. Daniel Kelly died in 1922.

The Ramsey County Historical Society greatly appreciates the generosity of Mrs. Mary D. Sheehan. The lead article in this issue of our magazine tells the story of the St. Paul Curling Club. Given the population of St. Paul in the 1880s, many of the early members of the Curling Club probably knew Daniel Kelly as a business associate. Together the memory of Daniel Kelly and our article recall a prosperous era in St. Paul's history that could enthusiastically support the formation of a sporting institution such as the Curling Club just over a century ago.

John M. Lindley, chairman, Editorial Board

WARREN SCHABER 1933 - 1995

The Ramsey County Historical Society lost a good friend when Ramsey County Commissioner Warren Schaber died last October at the age of sixty-two.



A thoughtful Warren Schaber at his first County Board meeting, January 6, 1975. Photo courtesy of Jan Geisen, Ramsey County Records manager.

The Society came to know him well during the twenty years he served on the Board of Ramsey County Commissioners. We were warmed by his steady support of the Society and its work.

We remember the big things: the long series of badly-needed restoration projects at the Gibbs Farm Museum, which

he steadfastly supported, both as chair of the County Board's Finance Committee and as chair of the board itself. We also remember the little things, such as the time squirrels, trapped in the schoolhouse, chewed through the window sills and emergency funds were desperately needed for repairs. That brought a chuckle from Commissioner Schaber as he supported our request.

While he was skilled at directing the County's budgetary process, he also was a warm, generous man who understood the role history should play in the community he served so well. One of his great loves was the City Hall/County Courthouse, and he was the driving force behind the \$48 million restoration of that art deco jewel where he spent his political life. For our part, we documented the restoration, as well as the history of the Courthouse itself, in the Fall, 1993, issue of *Ramsey County History*.

He also was instrumental in negotiating with West Publishing to have the current Government Center West building donated to Ramsey County. The center houses Ramsey County's records, whose preservation is of immense importance to historians.

Warren Schaber was, in the words of John Finley, his fellow commissioner, "... the best of what you see in Ramsey County and St. Paul." He epitomized what people think of Minnesotans, and he will be missed. V.B.K.

The Bungalows of the Twin Cities, With a Look At the Craze that Created Them in St. Paul

Brian McMahon

The bungalow craze was a phenomenon that swept the country during the first twenty-five years of this century in response to a serious housing shortage. Much of the housing stock in the Twin Cities was built during those years when the bungalow style was at its height of popularity. A pent-up housing demand, expansion-minded civic policies, an energized real estate and housing industry, and an increasingly mechanized and efficient construction industry, all came together to create a preference for a new and distinctive architectural style. The modest bungalow became not just a style, but an industry.

The serious housing shortage had been created by a large influx of immigrants, a resettlement of populations from rural to urban areas, and a greatly increased percentage of home ownership. To own a house became a matter of civic and family responsibility. *The Minneapolis Journal* noted in 1916 that "Owning a home is a man's first duty as a good citizen."

Cities were poised for major expansion and development. This was the era of the City Beautiful movement which exhorted communities to "Make no small plans." Great inter-city rivalries, such as those between Minneapolis and St. Paul, were the order of the day. In St. Paul, civic leaders proclaimed:

Located at the head of navigation on the Mississippi, the richness of the valley surpassing that of the Nile, there is every reason to believe that St. Paul will be one of the leading cities of the Continent. With such prospects it is only natural that shrewd investors should be looking to this city as a place to make investments, which in time will yield handsome rewards.

St. Paul did its part in helping to meet the demand for housing. Millions of dollars of infrastructure improvements were

With the current interest in "affordable housing," this article examines an earlier national phenomenon that gave rise to one of the best loved solutions to a serious housing shortage of the past. The Ramsey County Historical Society, in conjunction with the North East Neighborhoods Development Corporation on St. Paul's East Side, has just opened an exhibit in Landmark Center, St. Paul, that tells the story, in photographs and text, of the "Bungalows of the Twin Cities." In the early years of this century, bungalows were so widely built across America that they became not just a style but an industry. (The word bungalow, oddly enough, comes from Hindi and means house in the Bengal style.)

In East St. Paul, 1920s vintage bungalows form the largest portion of the older, single-family housing stock. To enhance the value and appreciation of these cozy, gable-roofed, cottage-like houses, the neighborhood-based North East Neighborhood Corporation organized the Hazel Park Bungalow Project, with funding from the Minnesota Humanities Commission. The corporation, with a city subsidy and a bank loan, also acquired and restored a 1921 bungalow at 1679 Case Avenue in the Hazel Park neighborhood. Before-and-after tours of the house have done much to raise awareness of the livability of these older homes.

made, including grading and paving many miles of streets, perfecting the sewer system with more miles of water mains, and the construction of wood and stone sidewalks. The grid streets were ready.

The typical lot was 50 x 120 feet, a size that would accommodate the impending real estate development. The real estate investment community responded, declaring that "The real estate dealers are men who know more about building up than does Congress or any legislative community."

Speculation was rife. One journal reported that "In Hamline, in the district east of Snelling and north of Minnehaha, acre lots were offered for \$1,400. A young man bought one of these and rearranged the acre into five lots about 45 x 160 feet, aggregating \$2,100, giving him a profit of 50 percent on his original investment."

The demand for housing was clear, during those years early in this century. Civic policy was expansion-oriented, with investment in infrastructure given a high priority. Land for development was avail-

able. All that was needed for the bungalow revolution to take place was available financing for the new housing industry and a construction technology that could create affordable houses.

The financing fell into place as a financial marketplace evolved. It was a combination of individual homeowners, small private developers who built houses on speculation, corporations that constructed company towns, the federal government (building for the first time subsidized housing for skilled workers during World War I), large housing manufacturers who provided financing on their homes, and banks and private mortgage lenders.

Finally, the housing industry itself rose to the occasion. Construction technology exploded during the first thirty years of this century, more so that at any other time in history. House construction was converted from a predominantly handcrafted activity to a manufactured process. Power tools were introduced, powered first by gasoline, then by electricity. There were new materials: sheetrock, particle board,

and asphalt shingles. Within a short time, entire houses were rolling off the assembly line into railway cars, pre-cut and labeled, to be shipped to a site and assembled by do-it-yourself carpenters.

A major housing boom was underway and today homey, sturdy little bungalows line block after block, mile after mile, of Twin Cities neighborhoods. The dramatic changes in the housing and real estate industry, and the impact of population shifts coincided with wide upheavals throughout the entire country. Electricity, telephones, cars, airplanes, radios, worldwide war, women's right to vote, national department stores, Einstein's theory of relativity, the Armory Art Show, even Walt Disney's first animated cartoon all created a new age. The Victorian age faded into history and it was time for new symbols, new fashions, new styles. The bungalow was the most ubiquitous form of that new architecture.

Bungalow and Craftsman homes share many design characteristics: simplicity, honest and straightforward use of materials, harmony with environmental setting, low-slung elevations and roof lines, exposed and often decorated rafters and structural brackets supporting overhanging eaves, open and expansive floor plans, and connections between indoors and outdoors with the use of porches, stoops, pergolas, and verandas. This approach was in marked contrast to the excesses of the late Victorian period, which often featured dark and subdivided interiors, and an exterior sporting an overabundance of gingerbread ornament.

Bungalows are found coast to coast, in cities, suburbs, and rural areas. There are regional variations, with the California bungalow being more open and sprawling than its Midwest counterpart. The style was equally adaptable to modest prefabricated workers cottages and beautifully detailed and costly residences for the wealthy. Bungalows could also be designed as an amalgam of other styles, such as Tudor bungalows, Spanish bungalows, and the like.

Conventional lore (and some scholars) define bungalows as structures restricted to one, or perhaps one-and-a-half stories. However, there are numerous two- and three-story examples from the period that



A row of bungalows lines Capitol Avenue near Dunlop (now Englewood) in a housing development built in 1931. Minnesota Historical Society photo.

are described as bungalow by their architects. The term bungalow has come to mean more than the building type. It also is an idea which embodies the philosophical and artistic vision of the age. Consequently it becomes more difficult to determine a building's style or type. However, with a clearer understanding of the historical period, problems with definition can be turned to the far richer experience of really understanding the true significance of the bungalow.

The bungalow style satisfied the need for a new architectural form in harmony with the sensibilities of the new age. In addition to its novelty, there were several other factors cited to explain its popularity. As a style, it was perfectly suited for an urban, suburban or rural setting. The housing demand was largely driven by an immigrant population from predominantly rural areas, and by a population shift from American rural areas to cities.

The bungalow, with its use of natural and basic materials and its simple rustic appearance, was ideally suited for this market. Buyers felt comfortable with the bungalow's architectural form and it quickly became the signature American style. Immigrants, with no previous knowledge of the style, chose bungalows as their first American homes, and felt secure with this popular choice. The work ethic of immigrants, and their remarkable willingness to sacrifice for the benefit of future generations is embedded in the fab-

ric of these houses, which they built with their own hands.

Another large segment of buyers consisted of families who were moving from city apartments to their first house. The one-story bungalow floor plan was similar to the typical city apartment, and was marketed on that basis.

Finally, changing lifestyles led to a great reduction in reliance on servants; consequently, houses needed to be smaller and more efficient. The compact design of the typical bungalow fulfilled this requirement. The bungalow also was relatively easy to construct and maintain, and it was affordable.

People who were interested in building a bungalow had a number of options. They could purchase one of the monthly builders magazines which often carried a featured house with a complete set of architectural drawings and materials list. They could bring these plans to a local lumberyard or builder. Often, the lumberyard also would be able to provide house plans and a complete lumber package.

Another option would be to send away for a catalogue which would have illustrations of numerous houses. The reader could pick one and purchase a complete set of working drawings from these plan services. There were a number of these in the Twin Cities, the most prominent being *Keith's Book of Plans* in Minneapolis. One national publisher, Gustav Stickley, who published *The Craftsman* magazine,



The bungalow Alfred Zuber built with his own hands at 1679 Case Street in the St. Paul neighborhood of Hazel Park. The North East Neighborhoods Development Corporation acquired and restored the house as part of their Bungalow Project. Photo courtesy of Helen Mohwinkel.

claimed that in 1915 more than \$20 million of new construction was generated as a result of plans from his magazine—this at a time when the average new home cost approximately \$3,000.

By 1908 Sears, Roebuck, and Company was publishing *Home Catalogue* offering manufactured houses which were delivered in a boxcar complete with everything needed: precut lumber, blueprints, detailed step-by-step directions, plumbing, shingles, furniture, lath, electrical equipment, even the paint and nails. About 450 styles of Sears catalogue houses were built between 1910 and 1940, and an estimated 100,000 exist today.

The architectural profession was becoming increasingly concerned about the large number of houses that were being built without their professional services, and what they perceived was a proliferation of substandard designs, and they took steps to regain a market share. They established a new entity called The Architects Small House Bureau, Inc., a national effort headquartered in Minneapolis, that created, in effect, an architecturally sanctioned home catalogue. From 1919 to 1942, the Architects Small House Bureau provided plans that built an estimated 5,000 houses, many of them in the Twin Cities. A number of them were built on Lafond Avenue in St. Paul

by the Midway Corporation.

Most bungalows, even after seventy-five years, continue to provide an excellent housing option. In fact, they are being rediscovered by an enthusiastic group of new admirers who prefer the modest scale, charm, and character of this now historic housing type. (Bungalow districts have been created in a number of states.)

The affinity shown by this new group of homeowners to their bungalows parallels the philosophical attachment shown by the original generation of homeowners. Neighborhood groups throughout the country are organizing bungalow clubs which sponsor house tours, informational newsletters, and seminars. Locally, there is the Twin Cities Bungalow Club and the Hazel Park Historic House Club. There also are several new national magazines catering to this new and growing audience, including *American Bungalow*.

Brian McMahon is project manager at the North East Neighborhoods Development Corporation and the organizer of the Bungalow Project. He is a graduate of the Pratt Institute School of Architecture and attended the Columbia University Masters Program in Historic Preservation. He was previously restoration coordinator at the South Street Seaport in New York City.

The Zubers and Their Hazel Park Bungalow

Helen Mohwinkel of St. Paul is among the thousands—perhaps millions—of Americans who grew up in a bungalow. Her memories of those years, and of the love and labor her father dedicated to creating his home, are undimmed by the passing years.

Alfred Zuber emigrated to the United States from Switzerland around 1915. Although he was a skilled carpenter, he went to work instead as a motorman for the St. Paul streetcar system. Eventually, however, he found carpentry work installing cabinets in the St. Paul Hotel and the Ramsey County courthouse, among other projects.

He and his American-born wife, Amanda, bought two lots at 1679 Case Street in St. Paul's Hazel Park neighborhood. There he would build his house, the bungalow recently acquired and restored as part of the North East Neighborhoods Development Corporation's Bungalow Project.

With the birth of their first child, Helen, Alfred Zuber erected a temporary one-room shack at the rear of the lot, with no water, electricity, or heat. The family lived there a year while Zuber built their house. Helen Mohwinkel believes that her father constructed the house entirely by hand without any power tools. Although the foundation was excavated by using a horse-powered scoop, her father's hand saw, which she still has, was the principal tool used during construction.

The house has all of the characteristic bungalow charm, with much natural woodwork and distinctive built-in features, and it is relatively intact. The front porch was partially enclosed in the 1940s, and a half bath was more recently added off the living room. Helen Mohwinkel's son, Bud, remembers helping his grandfather actually dig out the cellar to extend the foundation. There was a driveway to the east of the house, but that second lot was sold in later years as grass mowing and maintenance took its toll.

The upstairs was well preserved. Zuber and his wife occupied the front bedroom where two more daughters were born.



The Uriel, "a neat home with five comfortable rooms..." the house the Sloans chose from the catalogue. Their daughter, Anne, and her husband, George Jaglowski, bought the house from her mother in 1952. Photo from the 1922 Sears Home Catalogue.

Helen Mohwinkel remembers that at first there was no hot water, and she had to bring hot water from the kitchen to the old claw foot bathtub on the second floor.

The heating system was fueled by coal, delivered by horse-drawn wagons to the cellar window at the northeast corner of the house, under the dining room alcove. Originally there was a large floor grate in the living/dining room that allowed heat to rise from the gravity heating system in the basement. Helen Mohwinkel remembers her mother putting her bread to rise in a bowl that she set on the floor next to the grate.

She also remembers her family's garden with its corn, raspberries, blackberries and apple tree. The family kept chickens. An ornamental fish pool in the backyard held large goldfish that were moved to the basement during the winter.

Helen Mohwinkel ended her own years in her family home with her marriage in 1939.

A Sears Mail Order House in Roseville

More than 100,000 mail order homes were shipped throughout the country by Sears, Roebuck, and Co. in the first quarter of this century. A concerted effort has been made, as part of the North East Neighborhoods Development Corporation's

Bungalow Project to locate houses in the Twin Cities that could be documented as Sears houses. Three have been located: two in Minneapolis and one in Ramsey County, built for Reuben and Ada Sloan in 1923 on County Road B in Roseville.

Anne Jaglowski, the Sloans' daughter, remembers that when she was eight years old, truckloads of Sears materials were delivered and two local carpenters assembled all the parts by hand without the use of power tools.

The Sloan family was living on thirty acres adjoining the house site in a log cabin her father temporarily erected. (They had been living in tents.) Roseville at that time was open farm land. The cabin attracted considerable notoriety, and was featured in a May 23, 1920, *Pioneer Press* article that commented on its inexpensive cost of \$58. The cabin was constructed from trees felled on the family land. Measuring only 14 feet square, it nevertheless sufficed for the family of five until their Sears house was completed. The only heat came from the kitchen range.

The Sloans selected the Uriel model, featured in the 1921 and 1922 Sears catalogue and described as:

A neat home with five comfortable rooms and a bath, conservative and economical. The wonder of the house is how exactly right all

the little points are. It has a grade entrance and space for an ice box on the same level as the kitchen floor. The front bedroom and kitchen have cross ventilation. The bathroom is entered from a little hallway and not directly from the living room and is unusually well arranged. There are two big closets, a kitchen pantry and all rooms are well planned to accommodate furniture.

The home was priced at \$1,300 to \$1,527, depending on the options. The Sloans selected a pared down version that included a bathroom which was used for storage. Anne Jaglowski recalled that the house did not have indoor running water until 1943—twenty years after it was built—and that up until that time it was the children's responsibility to draw water from the well. With Roseville a rural farming community, Anne Jaglowski went a mile each way to a one room schoolhouse, which she attended along with about thirty other children. There were five students in her eighth grade graduating class.

Anne and George Jaglowski bought the house from her mother in 1952 and made some modifications to fit the needs of their young family. The porch was closed in, and the attic was expanded to allow for more bedrooms. In about 1969 the house was moved to a different site on the original thirty acres, as the Jaglowskis sold off part of the land.

Anne Jaglowski still lives there. She was able to document it as an authentic Sears mail order house because she has the original Sears blueprints and the exposed lumber in the basement clearly shows the numbering system used by Sears, Roebuck and Co. All parts of the house, when originally shipped, were pre-cut; numbers stamped on the materials corresponded to the numbering system on the blueprints. This made it relatively easy, even for carpenters of modest skill, to erect a Sears home.

"The house is more convenient now," Anne Jaglowski says, "but it was home in 1923 and it is still home in 1995. All the happiness and tragedies that took place in the house—two weddings, two deaths, four babies—made this little house a real home."

Brian McMahon



Easy to build. This is a partially finished bungalow in St. Paul in 1906. Minnesota Historical Society photo. For more about the bungalow craze of the early years of this century, see page 15.

R.C.H.S.
RAMSEY · COUNTY · HISTORICAL · SOCIETY

Published by the Ramsey County Historical Society
323 Landmark Center
75 West Fifth Street
Saint Paul, Minnesota 55102

NON-PROFIT
ORGANIZATION

U.S. Postage
PAID
St. Paul, MN
Permit #3989