

IN FLORIDA

Modern House & Building Movers Move Historic House to New Address

by Pat Burdette & Structural Mover Staff

Unless you're more than half a century in age you probably wouldn't know the venerable Sears store used to sell houses by mail order. That's right. The Sears, Roebuck Catalog of Houses offered individuals an option to purchase a house by mail. Just send in an order, pay up to \$5,000 dollars and wait for the unassembled material to arrive by railroad boxcar, complete with pre-cut lumber, blueprints, nails, paint and assembly instructions. According to Sears house researchers more than 100,000 of the Sears "kit" houses were built in Florida and the US East Coast from 1904 to 1940. There were 450 models from which to choose that required little waiting and no expensive architect fees.

So, it was ironic that an architect, Gary Eliopoulos and his wife Toni were willing to spend \$100,000 to save a house they have no intentions of even living in from a wrecking ball. The dwelling, built in 1937 at 1125 Vista Del Mar in Delray Beach, Florida was owned by Mark Peel, who wanted to raze the structure in order to build a new house on the property, according to news accounts by staff writers

Linda Haase and Leon Fooksman of the Palm Beach Post. Eliopoulos knew the history of the Cape Cod style house and wanted to save its New England charm and character for posterity. So, they petitioned the Delray Beach City Commission to add the two-story solid wood structure to the city's Register of Historic Places.

Owner Peel, had purchased the house from Richard Amelung, who had lived in the house for more than three decades after winning the house in a poker game, and granted Gary and Toni permission to move the structure to a lot they already owned at Northeast 12th Street, also in Delray. Eliopoulos has already moved two other historic houses in the city.

Known in the Sears catalogue as the "Milford" model, the structure was complete with five rooms plus a bathroom, kitchen and breakfast area and a gable roof, all built from wood. According to writer Fooksman, the three-bedroom, Cape Cod style

house blends in more with older houses in the Nassau Park Historic District west of the beach and south of East Atlantic Avenue than it does with the newer,

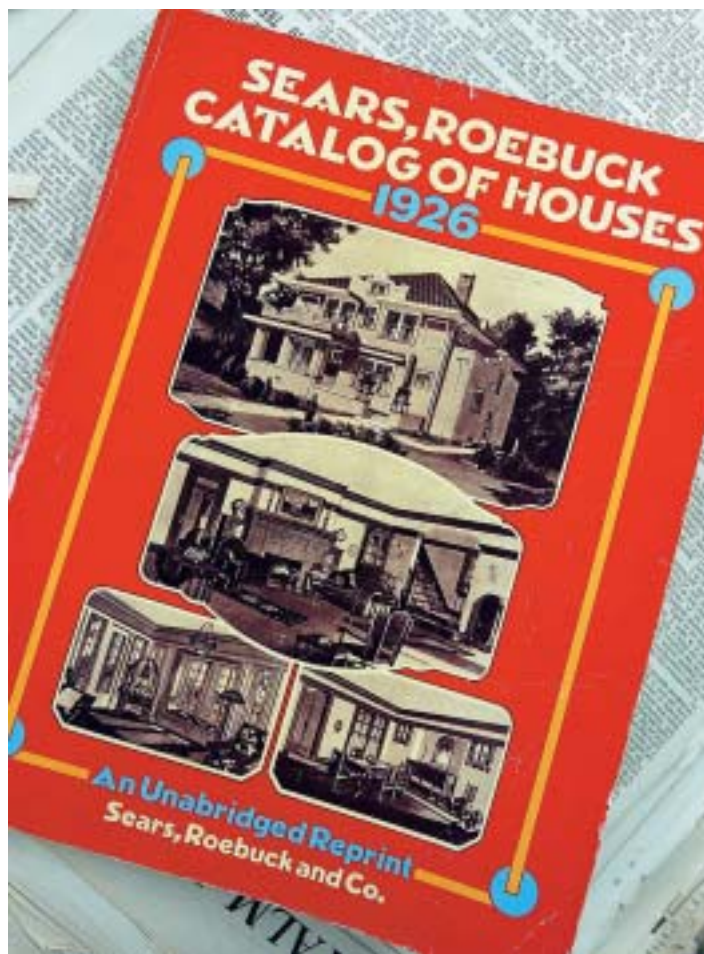


Photo by Scott Fisher / South Florida Sun-Sentinel

Sears offered 450 models by catalog

mansion-like homes on Vista Del Mar Drive.

“One of the problems with Delray is that it doesn’t feel like the ‘Village By The Sea,’” said Eliopoulos, referring to a term city officials use to describe the city. “If you can save homes like this, then you can retain the city’s image.”

“Is it even possible to move the house?” Gary asked Pat Burdette of Modern House & Building Movers of Chuluota, Florida. “I guaranteed him I would move the house if it took every dime he had”, Burdette responded. Talk about your deer in the headlights look. Not that this move didn’t have its’ share of conflicts. Small tree-lined streets, planters in the medians, round a bouts with trees in them, draw bridges, railroad tracks, traffic signals and signal arms. The move had all of them, as well as the house being built on pilings surrounded by a sea of muck.

The structure had an overall width of 32' and length of 50' consisting of two stories. It was built on auger pilings and only accessible from the two ends and the front. “After removing most of the pilings and stem wall on the front, sides and fireplace, we slid our W12 x 170 main beams into place,” said Burdette. “After positioning the W6 x 25 cross beams and 4 cribs, we were ready to load and raise the house. With steady pressure from our unified jack machine, the house slowly raised off the foundation. Then it slowly settled back down on the foundation as the



Photo by Cydney Scott / Palm Beach Post

Toni and Gary Eliopoulos are moving the house to a lot next to where they are building a new house.

cribs sank into the muck. After we did this for a while, (pressing about 2 feet of cribbing into the ground) we finally achieved enough bearing capacity to maintain an elevation until

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Photo by Cydney Scott / Palm Beach Post

The Sears catalog model was built in 1937 at 1125 Vista Del Mar in Delray Beach and occupied for more than 30 years by Richard and Bette Amelung.