

# Lamorinda OUR HOMES

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## Mail Order House

By Cathy Dausman



*The Kit House today*

*Photo Andy Scheck*

Does a 75-year-old mail order house stand out in a neighborhood residents call “eclectic”? Not if it’s the Lafayette home built by James Ford and his wife, Mary, in 1940.

The Fords, who moved to Lafayette from Oakland in 1937, saved for three years to build their 3 bedroom, 1.5 bath home. Lot, contractor and house – a kit house they ordered from the

Sears catalogue – cost them a mere \$7,500.

Not just plans, but the entire house of wood was delivered to their lot. Sears sold about 70,000 similar kit homes in 48 states between 1908 and 1940, according to Sears’ archives ([www.searsarchives.com/homes](http://www.searsarchives.com/homes)). As many as 30,000 pieces and the 75-page instruction book were shipped via rail to each site.

The wood for the Ford’s home – the Aladdin Marblehead B plan, a modified Cape Cod-style house – was cut in Oregon of clear heart redwood; each piece was labeled with paint to facilitate its assembly. It shipped south on the Great Northern, Western Pacific and Sacramento Northern railroad lines.

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