

THE PYRAMID BUNGALOW

by ROB SCHWEITZER

As you approach a Pyramid bungalow, you can feel the sturdiness of the box-like structure, the symmetry of the pyramid-shaped roof. This was a popular style found in many towns across the country during the hey-day of the bungalow.

Roofs were covered with plain wooden shingles, or less often, metal roofing—or the more modern, composite asphalt shingles that were just coming into vogue. Owners often painted their roofs a solid color to compliment the overall color scheme. Or they used multicolored shingles, providing an even more picturesque touch.

The Sears “Elsmore” bungalow was pictured in color in many of the Sears Modern Homes catalogues during the period 1916 to 1928, with the body a dark green and off-white trim, the roof a light maroon, with a painted medium-gray stuccoed gable.

During this time, bricks and blocks and were replacing the stone foundations of the 19th century, and many bungalows were built on concrete block foundations. These new foundations were more cost effective, just as the compact bungalow design itself was more cost effective than its Victorian predecessors. Sometimes an entire bungalow was constructed out of concrete blocks.

Economics also determined location and lot size. As more families acquired automobiles, they moved out to the edge of the city, onto larger lots with larger houses. One type of house developed for these wider lots was the Pyramid bungalow, with one or one-and-a-half stories, and one or two bedrooms. Its

footprint was similar in plan to the Box House and Foursquare, popular three-to-five bedroom designs.

Both types often had a small roof dormer on the front facade. In the bungalow’s case, it vented the roof area. In other models, a hip dormer allowed a good-sized attic room, with three dormer windows, as in the Sterling “Miracle” style.

As in most bungalows, the chimney was an important feature, tied to the hearth-and-home feeling developed by the Arts and Crafts movement. The fireplace was the centerpiece for the living room, which had taken over from the Victorian parlor as the major room of the house. There was just enough room for a chimney – although not the massive chimneys found on many other types of bungalows.

The Pyramid did, however, provide ample room for porches – either under the main roof, as in the Sterling “Miracle” style, or attached, as in the Sears “Elsmore,” the Box Houses and Foursquare homes. The Sears home used porch railings more akin to Queen Anne homes, and gable detailing similar to Tudor Revival and Stick Style homes. The Miracle shows an Egyptian style entry door and oriental-flared roof ends. The Lewis Sylvan sported a more traditional Craftsman rustic stone porch.

All these motifs underscore the vast variation in bungalow styles that were available nationwide, with catalog companies providing a kind of democracy of choice to bungalow buyers and developers.



SEARS "ELSMORE"



LEWIS "SYLVAN"

STERLING "MIRACLE"

