

AMERICAN GOTHIC

Alec Bond, Ph.D.

I had almost dozed off, listening in the late afternoon light to the old woman tell about her childhood days, when I heard her say, "Angie's daddy, your great-granddaddy, got that house on Phebus Lane from Sears and Roebuck. Yes sir, from Sears and Roebuck. They don't make 'em like that anymore," she glared, pausing for me to deny the obvious.

"But we always heard Jeff brought a team of carpenters out to Hoosier Valley and gave them his plans, letting them live in the small outbuilding that became the smokehouse while they built the big frame . . . "

"Nope," she said shortly. "Might do that now, got enough money, but Jeff didn't hardly have two nickels to rub together, was poor as Job's turkey with a new wife and a baby on the way. He couldn't lay out for no team of carpenters."

"But if he couldn't afford carpenters in 1899 or 1900, how could he buy a complete house," I logically observed, "from Sears and Roebuck?"

"His daddy bought it **for** him, o' course," she smiled. "Perfesser, **my** daddy used to say that there's two kinds of fools: plain fools and durned fools."

As I backed out of the door, thanking her, I considered the unspoken question, "Which kind are you?" and thought, whichever story about the house is true, they surely don't make them like that anymore.