

# Book chronicles economic force in Dover

## Father, son co-author 'Portable and Pre- Fabricated Houses'

By Bev Wax  
CORRESPONDENT

DOVER — McMansions are all the rage today. But a father and son from Dover want to remind residents of a simpler time and smaller houses.

Paul Tedesco, president of the Dover Historical Society, along with his son, James, have published "Portable and Prefabricated Houses of the Thirties," a reproduction history of the E.F. Hodgson Company that existed between 1892 and 1944 in the town.

A 1932 advertisement's headline reprinted in their book says it best ... "Why all the fuss about Building? ... The man who has erected a Hodgson House for his vacation home remains forever unimpressed when his friends complain about the bugaboos of building. To their moans about litter and fuss, contractors, unexpected expenses and delays, he responds with the pertinent question: 'What's all the shoutin' about?'"



COURTESY PHOTO

### Paul and James Tedesco

Hodgson developed a unique "wedge keybolting system" to assemble or disassemble portable homes. This made the walls as rigid as permanent walls. In fact, 13 Hodgson homes still exist on Dedham Street, Centre Street, Haven Street, Church Street, Meeting House Hill Road and Old Meadow Road. All these are listed in the Architectural Walking Tour of the Hodgson Houses along with the Dover Church, the 1930 Shed on Dedham Street and the Highland Cemetery, site of the Hodgson family graves.

But according to the Tedescos, Hodgson Homes, beyond being just portable, helped people to realize the American Dream by offering everyone the opportunity to own an affordable home.

They wrote the book to educate

people about the little-known company that in its heyday was America's first prefabricator, before Sears, Aladdin and Montgomery Ward.

According to the younger Tedesco, "I grew up in Dover and never knew about the E.F. Hodgson Co. until my father over a year ago really got me interested ... I enjoy doing home improvement projects and thought the homes were unique and interesting. I could not believe that all the years I lived in Dover I never knew about Hodgson or even knew the houses existed."

The younger Tedesco said E.F. Hodgson "was ahead of his time. He developed the whole idea of shipping houses for assembly in a day [or so!]."

The book is the first project fa-

ther and son have collaborated on since James was a boy and has taken more than a year and a half to complete. James suggested self-publishing the book as a way to get it out quickly. Their company, JBT Publishing, has been quite successful. Recently, the book has been favorably reviewed by Carson's Bookshelf as "an essential and very strongly recommended addition to professional and academic library architectural studies reference collections."

While the book is an invaluable look at how small businesses play an important role in the U.S. economy, the catalogs, photographs and stories are also fun to read. Paul Tedesco has led the Historical Society for some six years and said there is always a lot that goes on beneath the surface in a small town. He said, "I learn something new every day!" Famous families from around the globe, such as the Rockefellers or the Queen of Belgium, purchased Hodgson Homes.

As an author, educator and local historian, Paul Tedesco is professor emeritus at Northeastern University and adjunct professor at the University of Maryland College-

BOOK, page 22

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# Book offers glimpse of simpler times

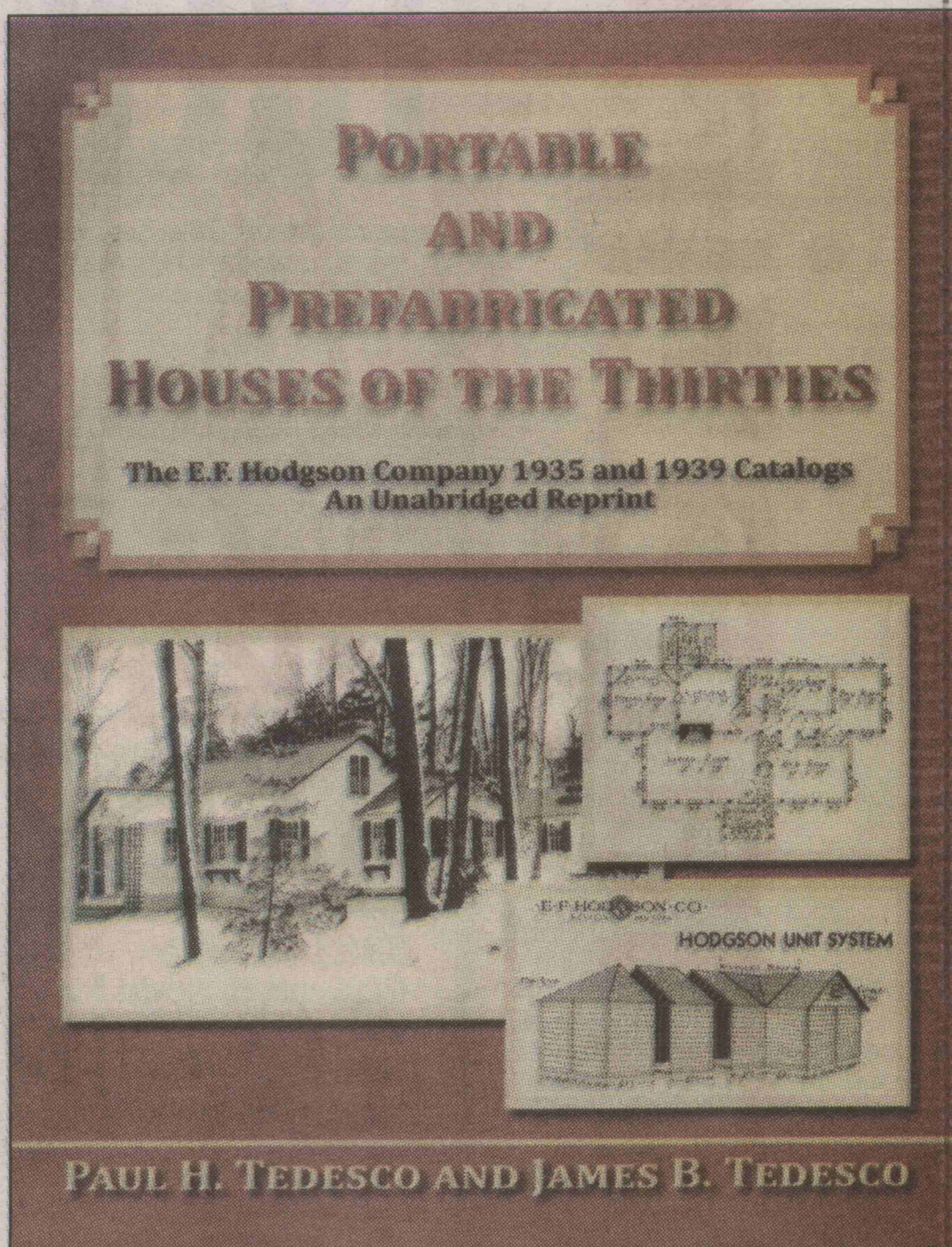
**BOOK**, from page 1

European Division. James Tedesco currently is a “creative and inventive technologist,” having graduated from Tabor Academy in Marion. He holds an A.B. degree in political science and German from Colgate University and an MBA from Northeastern.

In their spare time, the father-and-son team has worked to save and relocate a house in West Newbury, Vt. Another goal is to have a plaque placed outside the Dover Public Works building. The site was the original Hodgson factory location. They have also requested funding to restore the Weathers Hodgson Garden Shed on the Sawin Museum property.

The Tedescos’ next project is a historical postcard compilation of Norfolk County’s 28 communities relating a bit of history for each town or city.

For more information about the company, along with the location of Hodgson homes in Dover and around the world, visit [www.hodgson.com](http://www.hodgson.com). The book is for sale on [www.amazon.com](http://www.amazon.com), [www.barnesandnobles.com](http://www.barnesandnobles.com), and Prairie Avenue Bookshop, [www.prairiebook.com](http://www.prairiebook.com), the country’s largest architectural bookstore.



**This book by President of the Historical Society Paul Tedesco and his son, James, gives the reader a peek at a legendary company that was a key economic force in the community.**