

THE CRAFTSMAN MOVEMENT: ITS ORIGIN AND GROWTH: BY GUSTAV STICKLEY



FEW weeks ago I was showing a friend of mine over the new Craftsman Building, explaining my plans for its development—describing all the interesting things I hoped to bring together there. And after listening to me for a while, he said:

“Tell me, what makes you do this? Why do you want to move into this big place? Do you realize the enormous load you are shouldering, how many more problems you will have to solve, and what a difficult undertaking this will be to carry through? You’re getting on in years; you’ve reached an age when a business man usually begins to think about retiring and settling down to a quiet life. Instead, you are taking on harder work and bigger responsibilities. Why do you do it?”

“Because I can’t help it,” I told him. “A movement that has grown as this one has, must keep on growing. People need it; they wouldn’t let me stop even if I wanted to.”

As I think the matter over, it comes to me more and more clearly that here lies the true explanation—that it is a *movement*, and not merely an individual enterprise. It must either grow or decay; it cannot stand still. For a movement is like a tree—if it once gets a firm hold in the soil, if it has its *roots in the ground*, it cannot help growing. Barring accidents, nothing can stop it.

In every vital movement this principle of growth is seen, and the Craftsman Movement is no exception. Its development has been a matter of natural, logical expansion. First it had to be rooted in the soil of actual physical conditions, to be the outgrowth of real spiritual needs. It had to push its way up toward the light of a definite ideal. It sent forth one branch after another, each new development suggesting still wider and more varied growth. And like the tree, each branch had to be hardy, had to weather rebuff and criticism just as the branches of the tree have to withstand storms and insects and other natural foes. Moreover, its growth had to be more or less in line with the thoughts and wishes of the people, for the public tendency, in a general way, is right, and the wind that sways and determines the growth of any democratic movement is always the *zeitgeist*, the “spirit of the times.” Because of these things its present stature has been reached.

Fifteen years ago this Movement started. It had its origin in a few simple chairs. Yet such sound principles of craftsmanship inspired their conception, and such popular response did their making invoke, that out of this seemingly insignificant beginning developed all that the word “Craftsman” now implies.

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TODAY the Craftsman Movement stands not only for simple, well made furniture, conceived in the spirit of true craftsmanship, designed for beauty as well as comfort, and built to last, it stands also for a distinct type of American architecture, for well built, democratic homes, planned for and owned by the people who live in them, homes that solve the servant problem by their simple, pleasant arrangement, and meet the needs of wholesome family life. Big, light, airy living rooms that foster the social spirit are a part of its purpose; it holds as essential the open fireplace as the natural nucleus for happy indoor life. The plain yet decorative woodwork and built-in fittings that help to simplify housework and produce a restful, homelike atmosphere are inherent in its plan. The sheltered places for outdoor dining, rest and play, and the healthful sleeping porch which is coming to be recognized as so vital a part of the modern home are inevitably a part of the Craftsman home. It stands, too, for the companionship of gardens, the wholesomeness of country and suburban living and the health and efficiency which these imply. It aims to be instrumental in the restoration of the people to the land and the land to the people. It is always for progress, for scientific farming, for closer coöperation between producer and consumer, and less waste in both agricultural and industrial fields. It stands for the rights of the children to health and happiness, through an education that will develop hands as well as heads; an education that will give them that love and enthusiasm for useful work which is every child's rightful heritage, and fit them to take their places as efficient members of a great democracy. Civic improvement is close to its heart, political, as well as social and industrial progress; it desires to strengthen honest craftsmanship in every branch of human activity, and strives for a form of art which shall express the spirit of the American people.

And now as the Movement reaches the next stage in its evolution, the opening of the new Craftsman Building, it seems only fitting, for the information of those who may not be familiar with its various activities, that I should offer this brief explanation of its origin and growth.

I had always been interested in wood, even before I became interested in furniture, for as a farm boy out in Wisconsin I used to make wooden ax helms, yokes for the oxen, runners for the sleigh—whatever happened to be needed for the task in hand. In fact, in the making of these rough farm implements lay the germ of what I have accomplished in later years.

After the farming I took up stone masonry, and it was the hard daily labor with this stubborn material that made me appreciate so keenly the responsive, sympathetic qualities of wood when I began

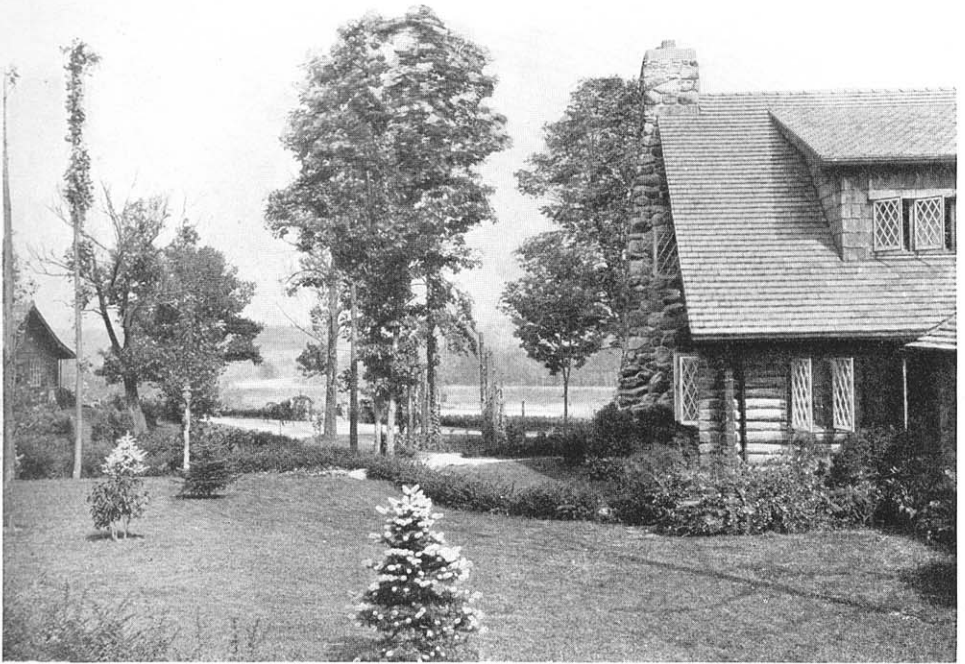


A BEAUTIFUL PICTURE IN ONE OF THE MEADOWS IS MADE BY THE LONG ROADWAY THAT LEADS TO THE WOODLANDS AND A GROUP OF REGISTERED HOLSTEINS FEEDING CONTENTEDLY IN SPITE OF THE CAMERA.

A ROADWAY LEADING TO PASTURE LANDS: THROUGH IT ONE GETS A GLIMPSE OF THE VALLEY AND THE HILLS BEYOND: THE EYE HELD TO THE VIEW BY MASSES OF FLOWERS ON EITHER SIDE AND TALL PILLARS COVERED WITH IVY.



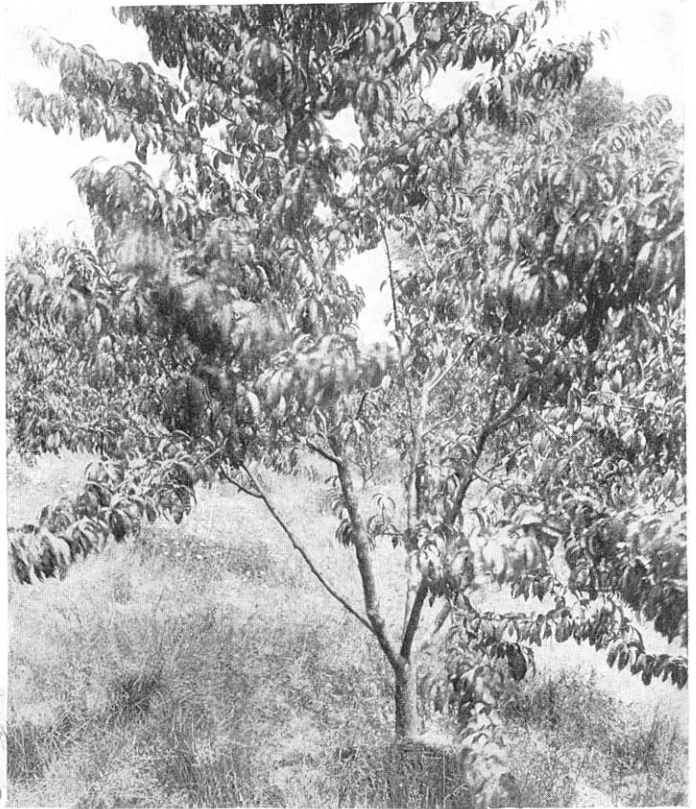
THE STEPS LEADING FROM THE GARDEN ARE BUILT NATURALISTICALLY OF ROUGH STONE, AND GENTLY FOLLOW THE LAY OF THE LAND: THE CEDAR POSTS ON EITHER SIDE OF THE PATH WILL EVENTUALLY DEVELOP INTO A ROSE COVERED PERGOLA. THE HEART OF THE GARDEN WHERE THE ROSES ARE PLANTED: THE DISTANCE SHOWS THE NATURAL FOREST THAT CLOSES IN THE PROPERTY ON ONE SIDE.



A VIEW FROM THE SIDE OF THE HOUSE WHERE A SUGGESTION IS GIVEN OF THE WIDE VALLEY IN THE DISTANCE AND AN INTERESTING GROUPING OF THE TREES.

ONE EDGE OF THE GARDEN IN WHICH THE BEAUTY OF THE ARBOR VITÆ HEDGE IS ESPECIALLY EVIDENT: BEYOND IS A GLIMPSE OF A COMFORTABLE SEAT, AND TANGLES OF BRILLIANT FLOWERS ARE IN THE FOREGROUND.

AN INDIVIDUAL PEACH TREE IN THE EXTENSIVE ORCHARD OF CRAFTSMAN FARMS, THE FRUIT SO ABUNDANT AS TO BEAR DOWN THE BRANCHES AND APPEAR FROM A DISTANCE LIKE GOLDEN PINK CHEEKED BALLS: THE TREES ARE NOT ALL OF THE SAME VARIETY, SOME COMING INTO BEARING EARLIER THAN OTHERS, A FACT WHICH GREATLY FACILITATES THEIR HARVESTING AND EXTENDS THE SEASON OF PLEASURE FOR WHICH THEY ARE RESPONSIBLE.



A VIEW DOWN ONE OF THE VISTALIKE ROWS OF THE PEACH ORCHARD AT CRAFTSMAN FARMS: THE ROWS ALTERNATING AT RIGHT ANGLES WITH THE PEACHES ARE PLANTED WITH APPLE TREES, ALSO HUNG AT THIS SEASON WITH SOUND, INVITING FRUIT HASTENING TO RIPEN.

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afterward, at the age of sixteen, to learn the cabinetmakers' trade. It was like being with an old friend, to work in wood again! I began to study its beauty more carefully, to note its varied grains and textures, the way it lent itself to sturdy simple forms and soft finishes, and these things filled me with enthusiasm for the work.

AT FIRST the furniture I made was on the usual conventional lines; but as the years went by and I experimented with the various forms of construction and design, I began to understand better what good furniture and true craftsmanship meant. I tried to make pieces that would be first of all practical and comfortable, that would last a man's lifetime without being much the worse for wear; the kind of things one could take pride in handing down to one's grandchildren. I wanted them to be beautiful, too, not with the superficial prettiness of applied ornament, but with that inherent decorative quality which comes from good proportions, mellow finish and harmonious coloring. And to these ends I tried always to choose strong, serviceable materials, with the sort of texture, design and coloring that would result in a genuine, homelike charm.

I did not realize at the time that in making those few pieces of strong, simple furniture, I had started a new movement. Others saw it and prophesied a far-reaching development. To me it was only furniture; to them it was religion. And eventually it became religion with me as well.

Thus, unconsciously, a Craftsman style was evolved and developed, a style that gradually found its way into the homes of the people, pushing out a branch here, a branch there, first in one direction and then in another, wherever it met with sympathy and encouragement.

The next thing that naturally suggested itself was the need of a broader medium of expression for these ideas of craftsmanship and home-making; the need of some definite, organized plan for reaching people who, I felt sure, would be interested in what I was trying to accomplish; some means of getting into direct communication with them, of entering, so to speak, into their very homes. And so, in October, nineteen hundred and one, the Craftsman Movement sent forth another branch, full of hope and promise—the first number of **THE CRAFTSMAN Magazine**.

At the start it was only a small illustrated pamphlet, devoted largely to an exposition of Craftsman ideals. Gradually, however, as the little monthly found its way to sympathetic readers, its circulation, size and interest increased. From Syracuse, where for the first six years it had been published, I brought it to New York; for the metropolis, with its wider interests and activities, seemed the natural

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place to secure the material I needed, and to get in touch with progressive men and women who were accomplishing significant things in the various fields of work and art.

In the magazine I have striven from the beginning to present the work and opinions of others in sympathy with my ideas, as well as my own suggestions regarding home-making, and point of view about the problems of the day. In as direct, authentic and beautiful fashion as I could, I have set forth what seemed the best and most representative work of artists, craftsmen, architects and other workers in significant fields, both in this country and abroad; reviewing and illustrating whatever I believed would prove helpful to those men and women of America who needed stimulus to spur them on to finer achievement.

But a healthy movement, like a healthy tree, does not grow merely in one or two directions. And while the magazine was sending out its branches and spreading its influence over American homes wherever it could reach throughout the country, the main trunk of the movement was sending forth still other branches.

FOR all this time the original source of the movement, the furniture, had been developing and finding its way to home-loving people who wanted simple, serviceable things. And as the demand grew, I became more and more interested in every detail of the home environment, for I saw that the way a man's house was planned and built had as much influence upon his family's health and happiness as had the furniture they lived with. Besides, such unassuming furnishings as mine were out of place in elaborate over-ornamented interiors. They needed the sort of rooms and woodwork and exterior that would be in keeping with their own more homelike qualities. They suggested, by their sturdy build and friendly finish, an equally sturdy and friendly type of architecture. This being the case, why not build the kind of homes that would be in sympathy with the Craftsman ideal? Thus was evolved what has since come to be known as Craftsman architecture.

I planned these houses with a big living room because I believed in having a comfortable place for general family life, large enough to eliminate that sense of friction which is so apt to invade a cramped and narrow home. In this room I planned a generous fireplace, because I knew that people were longing to return to the oldtime comfort and hospitality that centered so pleasantly around the open hearth. And this fireplace became one of the most characteristic features of my plans—even developing later, after much scientific study and experiment, into a means of heating and ventilating the whole house.

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The rest of the space in a Craftsman house I arranged compactly, with as few partitions as possible for the sake of economy and the simplifying of work. More often than not the rooms were all on one floor, to eliminate the trouble of stair-climbing, and special attention was paid to the kitchen and other parts where the maid or housewife would have to spend much time, and which consequently should be light, cheerful and convenient.

Then the question naturally suggested itself—why build homes in the city? Why live in tall buildings, in rows and solid blocks, with a minimum of air and light and garden space, when there is so much beautiful country within reach? Why not live where there is plenty of fresh air and sunshine, plenty of room to grow flowers and vegetables, to rest and exercise out of doors? Why not get “back to the land?”

Thinking and working along these lines, the houses I planned naturally began to take on certain aspects of country and suburban living—big porches for outdoor work and rest and play, dining porches, sleeping balconies, pergolas and other garden features that would link the interior closely with the outdoor life.

The next thing that suggested itself was that people, instead of living in houses built merely for speculation, should plan and build and *own* their own homes—even the people who could afford only a little four or five-room cottage or bungalow. And it seemed to me that if these homes were to be *theirs* in the fullest sense of the word, they must give their own time, thought and energy to the planning of each detail, and then make sure that the architect and builder carried out their ideas in an economical, practical and beautiful way.

These opinions I naturally expressed in *THE CRAFTSMAN Magazine*, where each month I published one or more of my house designs, thus making them available to readers in every part of the world. I published floor plans and perspective views of both interior and exterior, with practical advice as to construction, finish, furnishing and decorating schemes. People began to look more and more to this magazine as a source of encouragement and aid. Men and women who were expecting to build and furnish their own homes would write to me for plans, ask my advice about different methods of construction or different kinds of wood finishes, or want me to make suggestions for interior decorations and color schemes. And out of these inquiries and their answers, Craftsman Service developed—another branch of the constantly growing Craftsman Movement.

As I was continually advising people to build their own homes in a simple, practical fashion, the next thing that inevitably suggested itself was that I should *actually help them to do it*; show them the

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various building materials, point out the qualities and uses of each, explain the different methods of construction, teach them how to choose the most serviceable and appropriate things, how to plan wisely and build well.

So I began to bring together for their inspection samples of building materials, paints and finishes, miniature models of cottages and bungalows, and household devices of various kinds. But I soon found that three floors occupied by my architectural, editorial and circulation forces were quite inadequate to allow a suitable display or to accommodate with comfort all my visitors. It became necessary to move into more spacious and convenient quarters; hence the Craftsman Movement has branched out into the new Craftsman Building.

This building is now the Craftsman home. Here are the show-rooms for furniture, metal work and fabrics made in my cabinet and metal workshops at Eastwood, New York. Here is *THE CRAFTSMAN* Magazine with its several departments. Here are the drafting rooms of the Craftsman architects; the bureaus of Craftsman Service—architectural, gardening, agricultural and real estate; the home-builders' library, the lecture hall, the club rooms for Craftsman subscribers, and the homelike Craftsman Restaurant.

More important than all, perhaps, here is the big Craftsman Permanent Home-builders' Exposition, occupying five floors and including in its scope everything that the homemaker might need to see and know, from brick and mortar to wall coverings and stencil designs, from ice-boxes and vacuum cleaners to garden tools and rustic furniture. And all so conveniently and systematically arranged that the visitor may pass from one exhibit to another in logical order, or inspect some particular feature on which information is desired—with always an expert within call ready to give the necessary advice or explanation. Such an exposition as this must surely prove invaluable to the American homemaker; and surely it is a fitting culmination for all the Craftsman activities.

Thus, like the tree, out of what seemed a small and insignificant beginning, has the Craftsman Movement grown. Not because I consciously willed or planned it; not because of great capital or prestige; but simply because it had its *roots in the ground*. It grew out of actual spiritual needs and physical conditions. It drew life from the warm, fertile soil of the people's interest and enthusiasm. And it depends upon their continued love and help, as well as upon my own endeavor, to keep its branches green, to make it grow into still farther-reaching strength and still wider efficiency.