
MURFREESBORO'S CRAFTSMAN BUNGALOW: THE EXPRESSION OF AN IDEA

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A small structure near the MTSU campus in Murfreesboro is a significant artifact representing the revolt against Victorianism that took place in the first part of the twentieth century. A log bungalow built in 1918 by Clark Woodard, instructor of industrial arts at Middle Tennessee State College, the house illustrates plans and designs publicized by Gustav Stickley in his magazine *The Craftsman*. A comparison of pages from the magazine with drawings and photographs of the Woodard house reveals the care with which the builder implemented the ideas of the editor. An imaginative examination of these architectural details and interior designs gives insight into the contemporary attempts to emphasize the family and to return to a simpler life style that was close to nature. ¹

The bungalow was first introduced after the depression of 1893 and remained popular until the Great Depression of 1930. Meeting the demand of the booming urban population for moderately-priced housing, the bungalow represented both the American dream of home ownership and the return to nature movement. This meant, among other things, the replacement of the excessive ornamentation of the Victorian period with a much simpler design. ²

The back to nature movement of the early 1900s promoted outside activities and a rugged life style, which Theodore Roosevelt popularized while president. The first rustic houses were weekend retreats or summer houses. They represented plain truth and hard reality. The materials were to be representative of their natural state without added decoration. Stucco, stones, and unpainted wood became favorite exterior materials for these homes, because they were inexpensive, functional, and required low maintenance. While the natural materials made the house part of the surrounding landscape, it was the design of the house that made a major impact on the site. The one or one-and-a-half story structure with its straight horizontal lines incorporated a low roof and extended eaves allowing it to become part of the landscape. ³

The bungalow received praise from both scientists and sociologists because it represented the new life style. The floor plan of the new design was more condensed than that of the large Victorian home. This required less space and allowed for closer family relations, which had been de-emphasized during the Victorian period. The heavy ornamentation and many large rooms of the Victorian house were replaced by a human-scale atmosphere of clean, flat, and straight lines representing the ideology of germ-free environment. The new design allowed women for the first time to pursue outside activities since this home required less time to clean. The advancement of modern technology with standardized bathroom fixtures and electric appliances also simplified housework. These new ideas and designs were illustrated in magazines of the times. ⁴

One magazine that popularized the bungalow was *The Craftsman* by Gustav

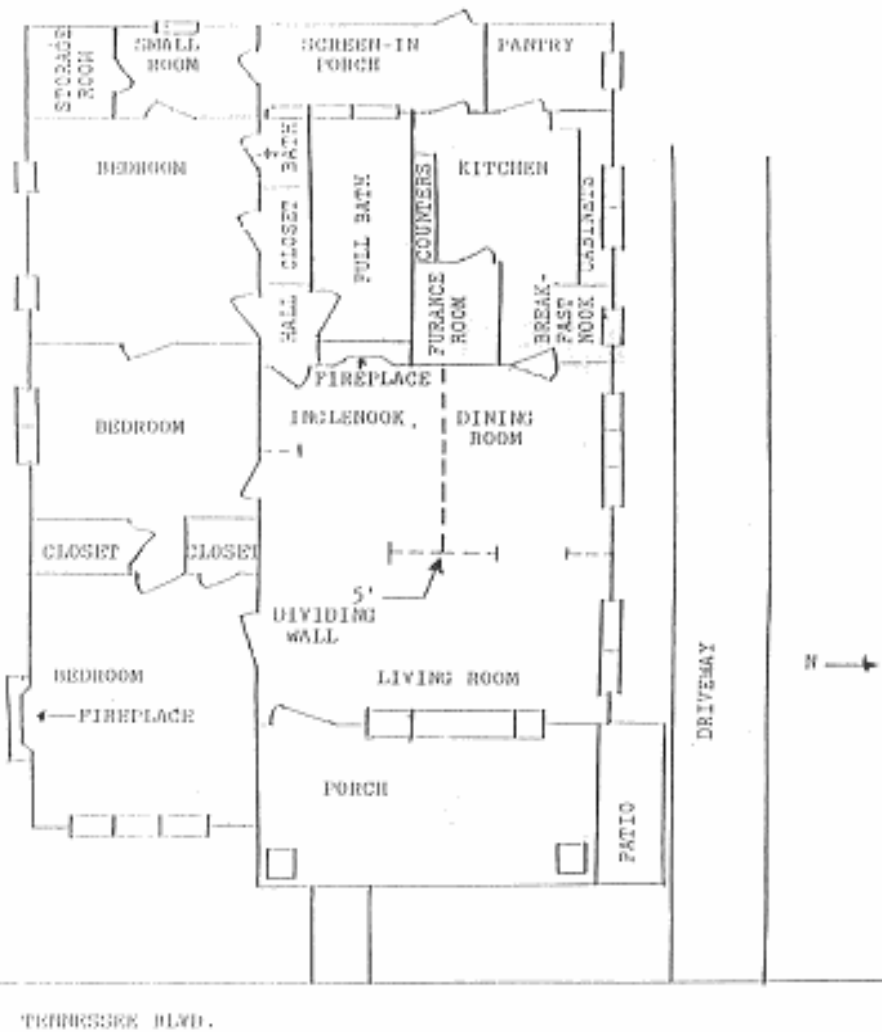


Figure 1. Floor plan of Clark Woodard's home in Murfreesboro, Tennessee.

Stickley. He first published it in 1901, offering designs and construction techniques for Craftsman furniture. In 1904 he started to show Craftsman-designed homes and floor plans, and in 1905 first applied the word "bungalow," associated with an India house design. When his magazine featured Green and Green's Gamble house in Pasadena, the style, now known as the California bungalow, became increasingly popular. Although the magazine ceased publication in 1916, its influence continued to inspire house designs among Americans until the 1930s.⁵

As an industrial arts instructor, Woodard probably subscribed to *The Craftsman* during his employment at the college to keep informed of the latest designs and techniques. This seems likely because his home features designs, materials, and construction techniques that had appeared in Gustav Stickley's magazine.

In 1914 Clark Woodard purchased a rural lot near the college, and by 1918 he had ample information to design and construct a naturalist bungalow. *The Craftsman* would send free house plans to any interested

party. Gustav Stickley encouraged readers to modify designs to meet their special needs and site. A comparison of Mr. Woodard's floor plan (fig. 1) with Stickley's 1909 Simple, Straightforward floor plan (fig. 2) shows similarities in the layout. By making some alterations to Stickley's floor plan it becomes Woodard's floor plan (fig. 3). Stickley's floor plan is a two-story Craftsman home, but by placing the two levels side by side it creates Woodard's home. The Woodard floor plan continues to encompass all the major features of the Stickley's design. The rural atmosphere near the college provided the ideal location for Clark Woodard's bungalow.⁶

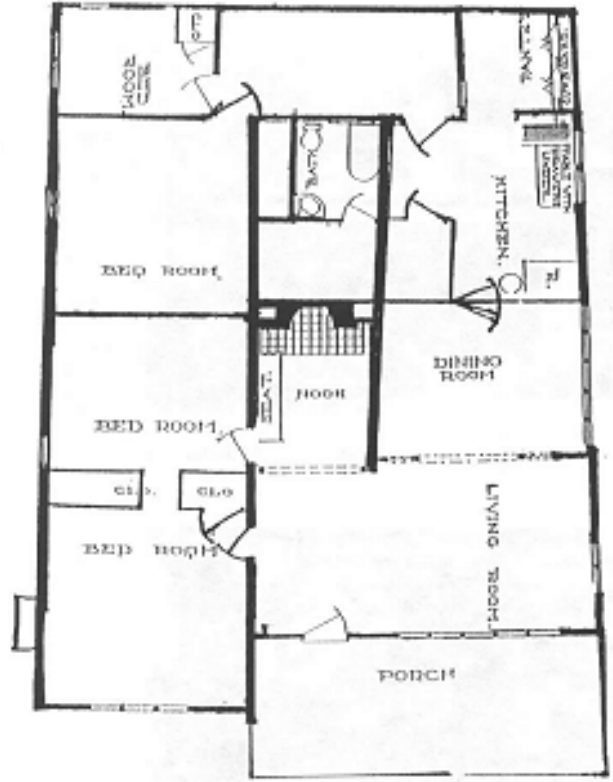
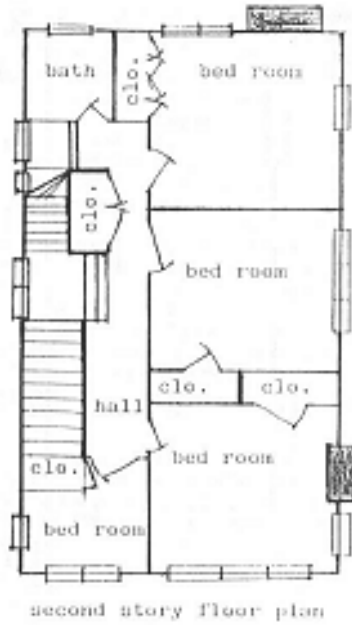
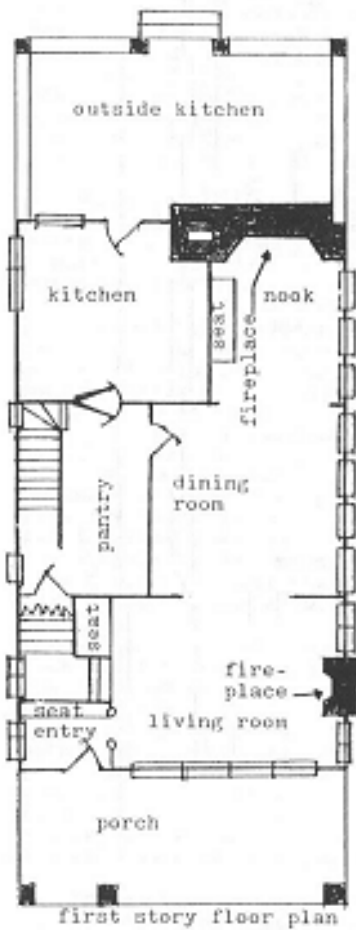


Figure 2. Gustav Stickley's simple, straightforward design from 1909, based on Gustav Stickley, *Craftsman Homes: Architecture and Furnishings of American Arts and Crafts Movement* (repr. New York: Dover, 1979), 55.

Figure 3. Gustav Stickley's 1909 design simply rearranged to show similarities between Stickley's design and Woodard's design.



Figure 4. Front view of Clark Woodard's log bungalow.

Woodard incorporated natural elements, recommended by Stickley, into his bungalow. The one-story house is constructed of unpainted red cedar logs with stucco-covered corner posts, columns, and fireplace (fig. 4). The horizontal lines of the logs give a further enhanced by the low roof with its extended eaves. Stickley published a lengthy article in *The Craftsman* praising the benefits of his log home. He also tells how to place a concrete foundation for a log home without its being visible. In the same article Stickley expresses his preference for chestnut as a wood in the home, a wood readily available in his area.⁷

These elements are apparent in Woodard's home. The foundation for the red cedar logs is not visible (fig. 5). The technique of hiding the foundation from view requires



Figure 5. Southeast view of Clark Woodard's log bungalow, no visible foundation material noticeable.

knowledge and appreciation of design that he probably received from reading *The Craftsman*. Another special feature he included in his home was the use of chestnut for the interior woodwork in the dining, living, and inglenook complex and for the front bedroom. Since chestnut was no longer available in Middle Tennessee, he must have ordered it from the local lumber yard at great expense.⁸

Gustav Stickley based some of his ideas on the India bungalow. In this design every room opened on a verandah which had clerestory windows under the eaves for cross-ventilation. Stickley sometimes used clerestory windows under the eaves, which prevented harsh light coming through the windows. Even though the windows in the Woodard house are not clerestory, there are several higher-

than-normal windows.⁹

The floor plan of an India bungalow sets the four corner rooms out from the main house, creating recessed porches. Gustav Stickley adapted the recessed porch idea in a 1908 summer cabin floor plan, but referred to it as an open-air dining room. Porches were important features in the bungalow because they connected nature to the interior of the home. The large porch was designed to be used as another room, either as a second living room or a sleeping room during pleasant weather. These areas were usually furnished with wicker furniture because of its light and airy quality. Clark Woodard's home has a rear recessed porch, which is accessible from the kitchen, a rear room, and the outside (fig. 1). The large front porch and adjoining small patio have ample space to accommodate wicker furniture during pleasant weather, bringing nature into the family's living space.¹⁰

The bungalow's condensed floor plan made use of all available space. The living room replaced the front and rear parlors, hall, and library characteristic of the Victorian house. The living room was an open area that contained a private area called the inglenook. Here was the fireplace, the heart of the house, creating an image of closeness among family members. The living room opened into the dining room, which also served as a multipurpose room. It was connected to the kitchen by a swinging door that allowed easy access to the dining room while keeping out food odors. The kitchen had built-in cabinets and modern appliances, reducing the amount of required space. Daily meals were moved from the dining room to breakfast nook in the kitchen, further reducing the amount of housework. In the bungalow there were two or three bedrooms, which were located upstairs or opposite the dining room and kitchen. Built-in closets became a common feature that maximized available space and cut down on required furniture. The bedrooms were accessible to the bath that was located in the back of the house. The bath had also become more condensed and more functional than in older homes.¹¹

Clark Woodard used these ideas in designing his floor plan. He located the open living room at the front of the house with an inglenook, which is centrally located, accommodating the hearth of the family, the fireplace. The dining room is directly behind the living room. The complex of living, dining room, and inglenook is separated by a five-to six-foot wall. The area creates a sense of openness but still retains a sense of privacy in the different areas. The kitchen, connected to the dining room by a swinging door, is ample size even with its built-in cabinets. A breakfast nook is situated in an out-of-the-way location so as not to interfere with kitchen duties. A pantry and rear porch are accessible from the kitchen. The three bedrooms are situated on the south side of the house with the rear bedroom having a half bath. All bedrooms have built-in closets, most of which are lined with red cedar. A small hall from the inglenook leads to a full bath located in the rear of the house. (The floor plan for Clark Woodard's house is illustrated

in figure 1).

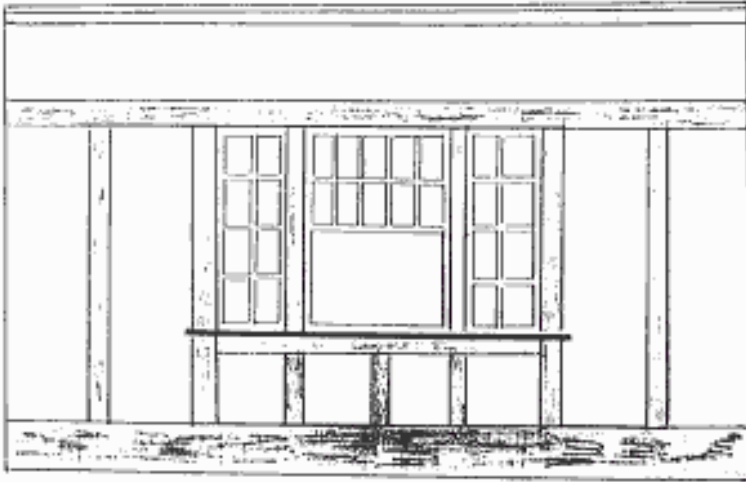


Figure 6. A sketch of the living room wall in the Woodard home showing the paneling effect created by wood trim, and how this incorporated the window.

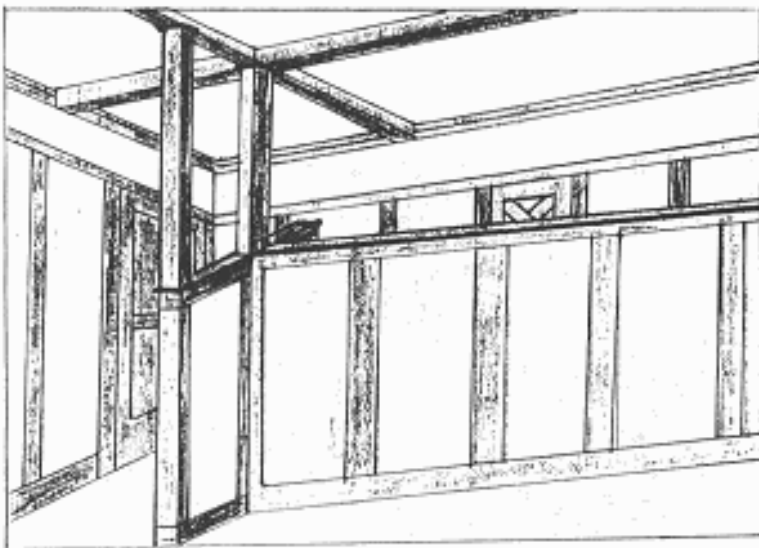


Figure 7. A sketch of the interior in the Woodard home showing the unity created by wood beams and picture molding for a large open area. Also the five foot wall creates privacy in the different areas.

Gustav Stickley believed that the interior of the home was more important than the furniture. The new floor plans allowed him to make functional designs that used natural materials. He created a sense of unity in the home by using woodwork to connect the different areas. By careful placement of wood trim, windows and doors became part of the wall design. The use of wood trim and plaster gave the walls a panel effect. The plaster was finished rough and painted in light, earth tone colors, because when light strikes rough plaster, it creates a sense of depth and luster. Wood beams and picture molding connect large open areas, creating a sense of unity among the rooms. The space between the picture molding and the ceiling was the only recommended area for wallpaper or painted design. The built-in cabinets made the home more functional by minimizing the need for furniture. The lumber used in the home was of American woods: oak, chestnut, and maple, for example. These woods were finished so they would have a lustrous quality to them. The wood received a dark stain or was fumed with ammonia. To create a unified color, the entire room would be fumed with ammonia after the installation of the woodwork. The technique produced the appearance of aged wood.¹²

Stickley's ideas for the interior are illustrated, in the placement of wood trim in the Woodard home. A panel effect, which incorporates the window and doors into the design (fig. 6) is created in the main living area. These panels are of rough textured plaster. The wood beams and picture molding in these rooms tie the area together (fig. 7). The space between the picture molding and the ceiling is the area where Stickley permitted wallpaper or painted

design. The built-in cabinets in the Woodard home consist of cedar-lined closets and a mantel with two compartments for storage. The front bedroom is very different from the other bedrooms. It is the only one that has a fireplace, a closet that is not cedar-lined, a saloon type door, and chestnut woodwork. The location of the room at the front of the house, in addition to the other features, leads one to believe that it served as an office or a multi-purpose room. The wood trim in the living room, a dining room, inglenook, and front bedroom is chestnut, which has a lustrous finish, probably obtained by the ammonia process. The type of wood, its finish, and its placement reflect knowledge that Woodard probably gained from *The Craftsman*.

Gustav Stickley was interested in the total design of the house, which included everything from the floor plan to the design of the tablecloth. Since he wanted complete harmony, he also recommended the style of light fixtures for the

house. Clark Woodard carried out this idea as well with his light fixtures for his house (fig. 8 and 9).¹³

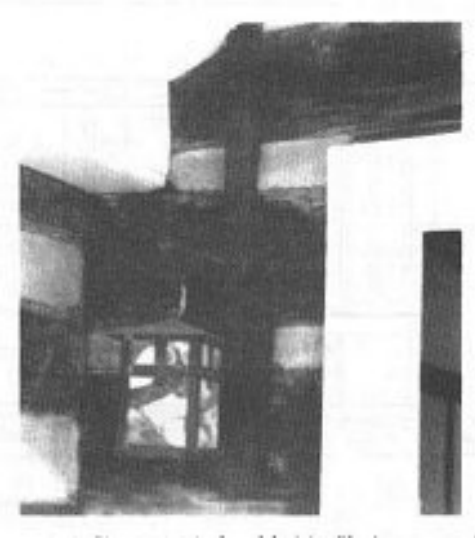


Figure 8. A craftsman style light fixture on the left side of the front door; notice the use of wood and art glass in the construction.

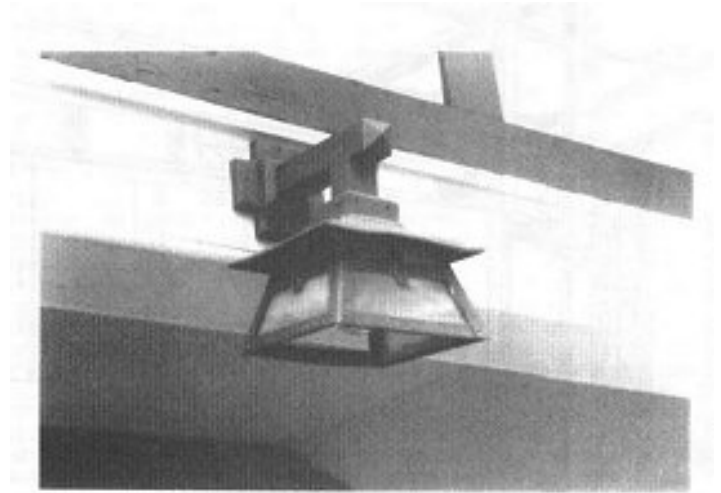


Figure 9. A craftsman style light fixture on the front of the house; notice the use of wood and art glass in its construction.

Thus, Gustav Stickley's magazine *The Craftsman* influenced the designs of American houses through its articles and floor plans. An example is the Woodard house, which features materials, designs, and ideas that were illustrated in his magazine. Woodard, like many other middle-class Americans, continued to find the bungalow the ideal home, because it meant the new life style of the twentieth century. He and his wife lived in this house the rest of their lives. The ideology that the bungalow came to represent was that of traditional values and family. This ideology became so set in the minds of the general public that still today Americans continue to compare their lives with these standards even though the bungalow is no longer in vogue.¹⁴

NOTES

All photographs and drawings are by the author.

1. Rutherford County (TN), Deed Book, Book 60, 205; Real Estate Appraisal Card.
2. Lee and Virginia McAlester, *A Field Guide to American Houses* (New York: Knopf, 1990), 453-4; Clifford Edward Clark, Jr., *The American Family Home, 1800-1960* (Chapel Hill and London, U of North Carolina P, 1986), 192, 131-2.
3. Clark 151, 173, 180.
4. Clark 156-57, 179, 182-83.
5. Mary Ann Smith, *Gustav Stickley, The Craftsman* (Syracuse, NY: Syracuse UP, 1983), 77, 83; Dell Upton and John Michael Vlach, ed. *Common Places: Readings in American Vernacular Architecture* (Athens, GA and London:

U of Georgia P, 1986), 81, 88.

6. Gustav Stickley, *Craftsman Homes: Architecture and Furnishings of the American Arts and Crafts Movement*, (Reprint, New York: Dover, 1979), 55; Smith, 96.

7. Stickley 74; Smith 111, 113-14, 116.

8. Mr. Gary Davis, Sr., interview by author, Murfreesboro, Tennessee, 10 April 1992.

9. Upton and Vlach 81.

10. Clark 173, 183; Stickley 85.

11. Clark 163, 167-69, 190; Stickley 129, 131, 135-36; Upton and Vlach 83.

12. Clark 176; Stickley 40, 145-47, 185-89; Smith 77, 82, 127.

13. Stickley 162-64.

14. Rutherford County (TN), Will Book, Book 4, 116.

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