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English Cottage Style Homes in America: Expressions of Architectural, Technological and Social Innovation

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LOYOLA UNIVERSITY CHICAGO

ENGLISH COTTAGE STYLE HOUSES IN AMERICA:
EXPRESSIONS OF ARCHITECTURAL, TECHNOLOGICAL, AND CULTURAL
INNOVATION, 1889–1929

A DISSERTATION SUBMITTED TO
THE FACULTY OF THE GRADUATE SCHOOL
IN CANDIDACY FOR THE DEGREE OF
DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

PROGRAM IN HISTORY

BY

AUDRA BELLMORE

CHICAGO, ILLINOIS

MAY 2014

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I dedicate this work to my loving husband Michael and our son Miles.

I would also like to thank Dr. Patricia Mooney-Melvin, the chair of my dissertation committee; Dr. Susan Hirsch; and Dr. Theodore Karamanski for their help and support through this long process.

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INTRODUCTION

I was born in an English Cottage Style house on a tree-lined boulevard in a streetcar suburb of Detroit. This home was built by my great-grandparents in 1924. Other Cottage homes in the neighborhood mixed with brick Tudors and bungalows, set back from the street with wide green lawns and garages hidden off alleyways. Several blocks away, Cottage Style apartment buildings set off the main commercial strip called Woodward Avenue, where Cottage shops, gas stations, and diners lined the highway. About a half of a mile away, the Detroit Zoo also built in the 1920s, featured a rambling pattern of Cottage park buildings, surrounded by perennial gardens and stone pathways. A little bit further away, the rolling hills of the English Style Cranbrook campus, built by Detroit News President George Gough Booth, presented a pretty mix of Cottage arts and crafts studios, school buildings, faculty homes, and an English village church. My first school was a low, stucco and brick building with casement windows and an Arts and Crafts fireplace just inside the entry, with colored tiles that looked like jewels. Living in this setting, it was difficult for me to reconcile the incongruity of my world with those childhood maps of the United States that always designated Michigan with the image of a car. Many years later when I lived in England, a friend's parents took me to see a country house open to the public designed by the famous Arts and Crafts architect Charles Voysey. They thought I might like it. Little did they realize that it would bring back memories of my first home so far away. This visit later prompted a curiosity, an

investigation, and a material culture study focusing on how and why elements of the English built environment, specifically Cottage architecture, ended up in my part of the world.

While dating and classifying buildings according to their architectural style is a long-standing practice, considering style with reference to its context is a recent form of study. Today, historians look at style as an element in a broader picture, relating buildings to the social and cultural history of their period. This dissertation analyzes the English Cottage Style home and argues that it represents a physical manifestation of the aspirations, values, and lifestyles of an age, characterized by social, economic and technologic forces. Initially, cottages in England housed country laborers and farmers. By the late nineteenth century, Arts and Crafts Movement artists and architects rediscovered rural cottages, as part of an anti-urban crusade against the evils of unattractive and unhealthy industrialized cities. Led by socialist thinkers such as “Simple Life” promoter Edward Carpenter and Arts and Crafts leader William Morris, cottage preservation and renovation became a popular aspiration for middle-class intellectuals and professionals seeking to escape defiled urban centers. Soon, historic cottages became a model for modern cottages and small country homes located within commuting distance of railways and towns. Architects of the mature phase of the Arts and Crafts Movement called the English Domestic Revival, focused on the revitalization of regional cottage traditions accompanied by the application of up-to-date building standards and materials. English Architect Charles Francis Annesley Voysey was particularly influential in introducing individualized modern cottages, based on medieval regional tradition, into the English

architectural vocabulary and in popularizing these simple country homes in Arts and Crafts publications reaching Europe and America (Fig.1, Tilehurst Cottage).



Figure 1. Tilehurst Cottage, C.F.A. Voysey (1903).
RIBA Library Photographs Division.

The cottage design principles and technological improvements promoted by Voysey eventually served as an inspiration for more modernist designers and his support of concrete construction coincided with a desire by English and American housing reformers to provide economical, safe, healthy, attractive homes. Concrete houses of all types were endorsed in early twentieth century building advertisements and periodicals. Larger development of Cottage homes appeared in suburban and experimental garden communities throughout England. Cottages were publicized as affordable and manageable models for new single-family home owners, Arts and Crafts Movement designers such as the architects of the Detroit Society of Arts and Crafts utilized English models to create unique Cottage Style residences and public buildings, showcasing the decorative art of local craftspeople. Another American, Arts and Crafts pioneer Gustav Stickley used the English cottage as a model for the modest- sized homes he designed

and published in his journal, *The Craftsman* (1901-1916). By the 1920s, modern English Cottages were promoted as ideal homes in plan books, pre-cut housing catalogs, and magazines. The Cottage home's charming appearance was also used to advertise a plethora of products in the booming home periodical market, such as *Better Homes and Gardens*, *Garden and Home Builder*, and *House and Garden*.

The Depression and World War II brought an end to the English Cottage as a popular home style in America. It was replaced by plainer, repetitive Colonial homes, marketed by the Federal Housing Association and speculative developers looking to build fast and cheap. The housing style choices they made were designed to satisfy the demands of returning servicemen, a burgeoning population, and a new homogenized suburban psychology which emphasized uniformity over individuality and innovation. The housing selections offered to middle class Americans advanced as well as reflected the cultural and social ideology of a new age.

Methodology

This study will cover the period from approximately 1899, the publication date of the first article displaying one of architect Charles Voysey's innovative cottages to an international audience, to the year 1929, effectively the end of the period of construction of Cottage Style housing, or indeed English Style housing as a whole in America. Within a chronological framework, chapters will be organized topically, beginning with a background history of the Arts and Crafts Movement in Britain and later focusing on Cottage Style architecture and design as one of the most visible manifestation of its ideals. Subsequent chapters will focus on how the Cottage Style developed in the United States and why it was an important symbol of early twentieth century housing reform and

medieval, Anglo Saxon idealism in a time of mass industrialization, immigration and urbanization.

The dissertation will make use of a variety of both textual and visual sources. Cottage architect Charles Voysey was a prolific writer, as well as designer, and many fine examples of his scholarship exist in professional architectural publications of the period, such as *The Architectural Record*, *The British Architect*, *The Studio* printed in England, its American spin-off *The International Studio* and Gustav Stickley's *The Craftsman*. Other primary source materials include popular architectural books of the period, such as Allen Jackson's *The Half Timber House*¹ and Joseph Nash's *The Mansions of England in the Olden Time*,² which promote Cottage design, lifestyle and nostalgia for medieval English design. Popular periodicals of the day such as *Better Homes and Gardens*, *House and Garden*, *Garden Home Builder* and *House Beautiful* will be heavily reviewed for both articles, visuals, and advertising images focusing on Cottage Style design. Other archival sources include the collections of prominent American Arts and Crafts promoters and designers such as Albert Kahn, George Booth and Eliel Saarinen. An analysis of built environment sources will figure prominently in this study. Many fine examples of Cottage Style and Cottage influenced buildings survive today. For buildings which have not survived, archival images will be used as representation. Secondary sources will focus on a wide selection of contemporary architectural criticism

¹ Allen Jackson, *The Half-Timber House* (London: Whitley and Sons, 1912).

² Joseph Nash, *Mansions of England in the Olden Time* reprint Charles Holme and C. Harrison Townsend eds. (London: The Studio, 1906).

An adaptation of E. McClung Fleming's model for the study of material culture forms the basis for this project.³ Fleming's model provides for a thorough and systematic investigation of the basic properties of an artifact, in this case Cottage Style buildings: history, material, construction, design, and function. Four operations ranging from the factual to the abstract are performed upon these properties. The four operations include: identification, evaluation, cultural analysis, and interpretation/significance. The resulting knowledge is a culmination of the information gained from performing the four operations. The artifact itself becomes a source for knowledge about culture and social history. Fleming's model is well suited to this study. While it allows for a concise description of an artifact, it does not limit itself to an exercise in aesthetic connoisseurship. It proceeds to address the larger cultural and social issues, which extend beyond mere concern with the material items themselves.

The dissertation examining Cottage Style buildings will also utilize a case study approach. One chapter will be limited to a study of the Detroit Society of Arts and Crafts. Limiting the study to an arts and crafts society located in a single urban metropolis will not be absolutely representative of the development of Cottage Style buildings and their relationships to overall American culture. However, the utilization of Cottage Style design by members of the Detroit Society of Arts and Crafts was of particular significance to the built environment of the Detroit metropolitan area. Mass production of automobiles promulgated wealth and population growth. Local architects reacted against these forces of industrialization by creating buildings, which emphasized traditional

³ E. McClung Fleming, "Artifact Study: A Proposed Model," *Winterthur Portfolio* 9 (1974): 153–173.

craftsmanship over machine-made ornament, individuality over mass development, and rural character over the urbane.

Chapter one provides a brief background of the Arts and Crafts Movement, focusing on its formation in England in the mid nineteenth century as a reaction against the abuses and intrusions of industrialization and urbanization on Great Britain. Once agrarian in nature, Britain was the first industrialized nation. The resulting incursions on the landscape and on the work and home life of factory workers promulgated an interest in reform by theorists such as Thomas Carlyle, Augustus Pugin, and John Ruskin. A later generation of artists combined theory with practice and came up with tangible solutions to factory life such as a return to handmade craft and cottage living, which echoed and revered rural preindustrial English life.

Chapter two focuses on how contemporary English Cottage dwellings developed in Britain in the late nineteenth century. Loosely based upon traditional, medieval, rural buildings, modern “cottages” similarly stressed a simplification of design, a rationalism of plan, and structural integrity. The prime promoter of the Cottage Style was London-based architect Charles Voysey. His country cottages were Gothic in spirit, yet modern in function. While he used the Cotswold dwelling of the seventeenth century as his inspiration, Voysey created a genuine new style, which came to embody English Arts and Crafts design of the late nineteenth century and represented an antecedent of modernist design of the early twentieth century. Rooms were created for functional purposes with windows to catch the light. In response to this new freedom of planning, Voysey’s whitewashed concrete exteriors became more plastic and fluid. Released from the burden of creating a symmetrical elevation, a new sense of abstract design was apparent in his

groupings of masses and roof forms. Voysey's cottages, based on tradition and outwardly so simple in appearance, were forward-looking. Voysey, as well as later members of the English Arts and Crafts Movement, promoted the Cottage Style out of a concern for housing reform. The simple rural styling, clean lines, economical use of concrete, and suburban settings of these modern cottages reacted against housing conditions of the day which were characterized by overcrowded urban environments and the fussy, overindulgence of typical Victorian design.

Architectural historian J. M. Richards has remarked of Voysey that "for the first time since the Industrial Revolution, English architecture provided a model, which extended far beyond Britain."⁴ Indeed, this dissertation will demonstrate that the influence of Voysey's architecture, with its effortless, unaffected nature and almost complete lack of period ornament, was not lost on American architects of the day. The Cottage Style served as an inspiration to Arts and Crafts architects and to avant-garde modernist designers in the United States. Specifically the rambling, horizontal emphasis of Voysey's high style residences, built for the suburban, professional elite, were eventually adapted to a narrower lot and proliferated throughout America's modest housing developments of the 1920s.

As the Cottage Style spread to the United States. American architects received firsthand knowledge of the English Arts and Crafts Movement, and specifically of Voysey, through a growing British architectural press. An examination of these publications reveals that Voysey's houses were exhibited in the United States in *The Architect* from 1888–1916 and, from 1889–1918, in *The British Architect*. His designs

⁴ J. M. Richards, *An Introduction to Modern Architecture* (London: Cassell, 1961), 115.

appeared in *The Studio* as well, published in America as *The International Studio*.

Voysey's influence also found its way to America through a furniture maker and publisher from New York named Gustav Stickley. Voysey became a contributor to Stickley's *The Craftsman* magazine, established in 1900.⁵ A survey of this publication reveals that Voysey's designs and his articles were frequently exhibited within its pages. In 1912, Voysey wrote an article on "The Quality and Fitness in Architecture and Furniture." In it he declared that "fitness is divine law, and by fitness we mean not only material suitability, but moral fitness-that which expresses our best thoughts and feelings, and our purest moral sense. We must recoil at all forms of dishonesty."⁶ Voysey's manifesto resonated with Americans. While the *Craftsman*'s audience was wide and often middle class, the more elite members of the various Arts and Crafts societies, which had sprung up in the United States since the development of the Boston Society of Arts and Crafts in 1897, were particularly eager for its rhetoric. I suggest that they were quick to discover Voysey within its pages.

In chapter three, using a case study of Detroit, Michigan, I argue that the Detroit Society of Arts and Crafts (1906), an organization created to "develop and maintain an appreciation of beauty in itself and to encourage good and beautiful work as applied to useful service,"⁷ was particularly successful in introducing the Cottage Style into the American architectural vocabulary. The Cottage Style's emphasis on traditional materials, of being rooted to nature, simplicity, function, and fine individual

⁵ *The Craftsman* was published from 1900–1916.

⁶ Charles Francis Annesley Voysey, "The Quality and Fitness of Architecture," *The Craftsman* 23, no. 3 (1912): 174–182.

⁷ George Gough Booth, "The Organization and Purpose of the Society of Arts and Crafts," in *The Detroit Society of Arts and Crafts Announcement* (Detroit: Society of Arts and Crafts, 1917).

craftsmanship embodied the spirit of the Arts and Crafts Movement in Detroit, a city soon characterized by frenetic, man-made, production-line development.

I contend that the appeal of the Cottage Style in Detroit represented a backlash against the new Fordist influence. Once Henry Ford invented the process for the mass production of automobiles in 1903, Detroit experienced phenomenal industrialization and population growth. Ford offered the unheard of wage of five dollars per day, prompting immigrants and workers from all over the country to move into the city to secure these good-paying jobs.⁸ Automobile factories and automobile-related industries sprang up throughout the city. By adopting the Cottage Style, influential Detroit architects, primarily those affiliated with the Detroit Society of Arts and Crafts, reacted to the disconcerting pace of urban industrialization and social change. In particular, the homes of the architects of the Detroit Society of Arts and Crafts serve as a platform for their ideals, utilizing a local form of the Cottage style and highlighting the work of individual craftspeople. In this study of Detroit and its built environment, I will focus on three influential architects working in the area at the time: George Gough Booth, first President of the Detroit Society of Arts and Crafts and owner of the *Detroit News*; innovative industrial designer Albert Kahn; and eminent modernist Eliel Saarinen. Through an examination of the work of these three men, it is possible to plot the progression of Cottage design in Detroit, from its beginning as a style ideologically based in Arts and Crafts philosophies to its most powerful conclusion as a transitional form, which would anticipate early modernist design.

⁸ Alan Nevins, "The Five Dollar Day," in *Ford: The Times, The Man, The Company* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1954): 512–541.

In chapter four, I maintain that the popularity of middle class Cottage Style homes from 1900–1929 was influenced by improvements in concrete reinforcement technology, which developed in the late 1800s. Most of Voysey’s Cottages were comprised largely of stucco. The roughcast stuccos were created with heavy aggregates added to Portland Cement mortar for a pebble-dash or roughcast effect. Voysey liked this type of stucco for its economy as well as for its naturalistic effect. Architecture critic Horace Townsend explained, “Mr. Voysey’s preference for roughcast is based, so he tells me, mainly on its economy. He considers a nine inch brick wall faced with cement roughcast is as warm and weather-tight as any much more expensive construction.”⁹ Although a purist in many ways, Voysey saw the practicality and frugality of concrete and was happy to utilize it in his constructions. This economy allowed for widespread construction of Cottage Style homes by speculative developers in England.

Mass production of Portland Cement in America was developed in the 1870s but a major thrust in concrete housing did not occur until after 1880 with improvements to reinforcement technology. During its peak popularity, from about 1900 to 1930, thousands of single-family concrete homes were built across the country. Publications such as *Radford’s Cement Houses and How to Build Them* (1908) and *Portland Cement’s Beautiful Homes of Concrete Masonry* (1910) helped the average homeowner select their own concrete home. Because of the preponderance of stucco or stucco-like exterior wall coverage, Cottage Style homes lent themselves particularly well to highly affordable concrete construction techniques and flourished in America during the early twentieth

⁹ Horace Townsend, “Notes on Country and Suburban Houses Designed by C.F.A. Voysey,” *The Studio* 16 (1899): 158.

century in part due to these innovations. In *Portland Cement's Plans for Concrete Houses* (1920) nearly half of the plans displayed are in the Cottage Style, including the cottage on the cover (Fig.2).¹⁰ Concrete became an easy alternative to traditional stucco made of clay and lime and helped to create the smooth, fluid exteriors of Voysey inspired cottages.

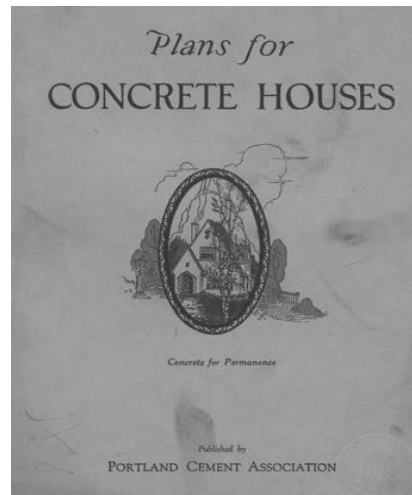


Figure 2. *Plans for Concrete Homes*. Portland Cement Association

Chapter five explores the Cottage Style as a manifestation of social reform in England and America during the Progressive Era. Reformers felt improvements in housing conditions promoted improvements in character, health and even morality. In England, intellectuals such as writer Edward Carpenter revered the English cottage and country life as a retreat from urban society. Carpenter's "Simple Life" movement focused around life at his own cottage farm Millthorpe, which became a center for radical reformers and a model for their own country retreats. One regular visitor to Millthorpe, planner Raymond Unwin, was inspired to create experimental garden communities in the Cottage Style. With his partner Barry Parker, Unwin's Letchworth stands as a model for

¹⁰ *Portland Cement's Plans for Concrete Houses* (Chicago: Portland Cement Association, 1924).

garden communities in the United States, such as Forest Hills Gardens, New York. Both the simplification of life professed by Carpenter and the English Garden City Movement inspired American craftsman Gustav Stickley in his campaign for what he termed the “Democratic home,” or affordable, manageable, livable single-family homes.

Chapter six focuses on the use of Cottage Style homes as a symbol of the ideal American home. Eventually, avant-garde movements for small, single-family homes such as Stickley proposed gave way to similar promotions by nationally endorsed professional organizations such as the Architect’s Small House Service Bureau and Better Homes in America. Both groups promoted cottages and other small homes for an emerging middle class. Soon, popular house and garden magazines of the teens and twenties published images of Cottage homes for a mass audience. Magazines such as *Better Homes and Gardens*, *House Beautiful* and *House and Garden* frequently featured stories on proper English details, materials, decoration, and garden types for cottage homes.¹¹ By consulting these publications homeowners received advice on how to create their own cottage retreat, away from the perceived evils of urban life. Additionally, cottage images were widely used in advertising during the teens and 1920s, their peak period of popularity. A survey of popular magazines reveals that Cottage Style dwellings were used as background icons to sell everything from roofing materials and cyclone fencing. These images and many others proliferated in household and builders magazines throughout the 1920s, firmly establishing Cottage homes as ideals in America.

¹¹ *Garden and Home Builder Magazine* (1924–1925) (later named *Garden Home Builder*, 1925–1928; later named *American Home*, 1928–1978), *Better Homes and Gardens* (1924-present), *House Beautiful* (1896-present), and *House and Garden* (1901–1993).

Cottage Style homes were also prominently displayed amidst the pages of popular house plan catalogs, such as Sears, Aladdin, Sterling, Radford, and Loizeaux. The Sears mail-order house catalog alone reached more than 30,000 homes by 1925. In 1930, the Architect's Small House Service Bureau published a pattern book entitled *Correctly Designed English Type Homes*, which features a modest Cottage Style home on the cover (Fig.3). Due to this proliferation of English sources, one is likely to turn up cottage examples wherever middle-class homeowners chose to live and work during the period of peak popularity, from World War I through the late 1920s.¹²

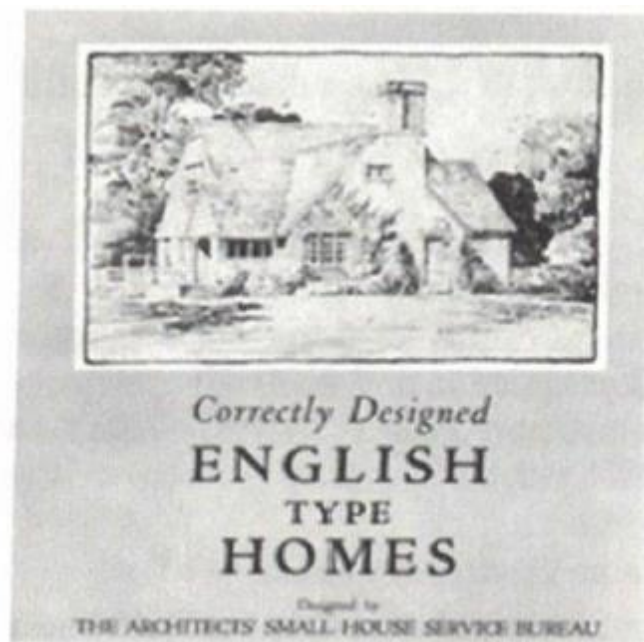


Figure 3. Cover of *Correctly Designed English Type Homes*, 1930.

¹² Cottage Style homes appear in a variety of publications including pattern books, catalogs for pre-cut homes and periodicals from approximately 1903, the year architect Harvey Ellis designed a cottage for *The Craftsman* to about 1929, the year of the American stock market crash precipitating a general decline in home construction.

The popularity of the Cottage home coincided with a new desire for suburban retreat. Like Voysey's own home in The Orchard, Cottage homes in England were primarily country homes, whose simple nature was well suited to more rural areas. A similar relationship is seen in the United States. American Cottage homes flourished in the suburbs. Suburban locations were clearly more in keeping with the rustic simplicity and irregular massing of these structures. Furthermore, suburban locations more closely reflected the flavor of England. I argue that to many Americans, England inspired a feeling of nostalgia, during a time of industrialization, immigration, and urbanization, which together generated great social change.¹³ Fear of new ethnic differences, influenced many Americans to promote Anglo-Saxon heritage as an ideal. I suggest that the popularity of the Cottage Style, with its associations to medieval rural England, was a manifestation of an anti-industry, anti-ethnic, and anti-urban sentiment.¹⁴ As evidence for this contention, I refer to the countless images of English rural life popularized in early twentieth-century publications. Books such as Allen Jackson's *The Half-Timber House*¹⁵ promoted the décor and culture of the medieval period. Illustrators such as N.C. Wyeth, painted storybook visions of the Arthurian legends. Periodicals such as *British Country*

¹³ For general studies on the idea of nostalgia see: Arthur P. Dudden, "Nostalgia and the American," *Journal of the History of Ideas* 22(Oct-Dec. 1961): 516; Jay Winter, "Sites of Memory, Sites of Mourning: The Great War in European Cultural History," *The Journal of Modern History* 70(June 1998): 444; Marco Duranti, "Utopia, Nostalgia and World War at the 1939-40 New York World's Fair," *Journal of Contemporary History* 4(October 2006): 665.

¹⁴ For studies commenting on Anglo-Saxon ethnocentrism in design see: T.J. Jackson Lears, *No Place of Grace: Antimodernism and the Transformation of American Culture, 1880-1920* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1981); Suellen Hoy, *Chasing Dirt: The American Pursuit of Cleanliness* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995); Patricia West, *Domesticating History: The Political Origins of America's House Museums* (Washington D.C.: Smithsonian Institute Press, 1999); and John Stilgoe, *Borderland: Origins of the American Suburb, 1820-1939* (New Haven, Conn: Yale Univ. Press, 1988).

¹⁵ Jackson, *The Half-Timber House* .

Life offered Americans a view of English country cottages.¹⁶

Cottage home construction slowed drastically in the U.S. after 1930, as did all home building during the economic depression. During the 1930s, the Federal Housing Authority (FHA) promoted a set of building standards and uniform Colonial-based styles, which could be built quickly and cheaply. After World War II, returning servicemen flocked to purchase homes in speculative developments, such as Long Island New York's Levittown, which utilized similar guidelines in home construction, streamlining the FHA and GI Bill home loan process. Although Cottage homes were economical, their quaint decorative appeal could not compete with box-like, no-frills contemporary homes. The cozy suburban Cottage was passed by in favor of less picturesque styles. However, the initial principles espoused by Charles Voysey, which promulgated the development of the Cottage Style in the United States, lived on in another form. Voysey's ideals regarding functionalism and restraint inspired a whole group of designers who formed the first Modern Movement. These architects were attempting to produce a new style owing little to the past. Voysey's simple treatment of the home based on Arts and Crafts principles coincided with this new desire and became a model for the avant-garde.

Initially, the Cottage Style represented the ideals of reformist designers. Later, it was seen as an ideal American home, built for a middle class market. Both as an inspiration for Modern designers and as a popular American home style, which has survived in abundance in early suburban communities across the country, the Cottage Style has had a profound influence on early twentieth century residential architecture in America.

¹⁶The periodical *British Country Life* was first published in 1897.

CHAPTER ONE

THE ARTS AND CRAFTS MOVEMENT UTILIZES THE TRADITIONAL ENGLISH COTTAGE AS A MODEL FOR NEW COUNTRY HOMES IN ENGLAND AND AMERICA

A Brief History: The Roots of Arts and Crafts Architecture

Arts and Crafts was an international art movement which thrived between 1860 and 1910, inspired by English social criticism and reform which reacted to the effects of industrialization including: the shift from agrarian to urban life; the uniformity and brutality of factory work; and the degradation of the manufacturing landscape. The success of industrialists led to problems among the people who worked in, or lived anywhere near, their factories. The theoretical writings of Englishmen A. W. N. Pugin, and John Ruskin led to the development of an anti-industrial, anti-urban movement of artists and architects who explored medieval English regional traditions for solutions to modern social and housing problems.¹

In the late eighteenth century, England became the first and leading industrialized nation. The advance of invention and industry transformed British economic development from an agricultural economy to an ordered, urban nation of wealth and

¹ For general information on the history behind the Arts and Crafts Movement in England see Rosiland P. Blakesley, *The Arts and Crafts Movement* (London: Phaidon, 2006); Leslie Bowman, *Virtue in Design: A Catalogue of the Pavelsky/Evans Collection and Related Works at the Los Angeles County Museum of Art* (Los Angeles: Los Angeles County Museum of Art, 1990); Wendy Kaplan, *The Arts and Crafts Movement in Europe and America: Design for the Modern World* (New York: Thames and Hudson, 2004); Wendy Kaplan, *The Art That is Life: The Arts and Crafts Movement in America, 1875–1920* (Boston: Museum of Fine Arts, 1987).

prosperity. Pride in the industrial spirit pervaded English life and is still considered one of the great achievements in English history. However, by the middle of the nineteenth century, the reality of the life of the people working in the laissez-faire factory system in what poet William Blake described in his *Jerusalem* (1804) as the “dark satanic mills,”² became clear. Factory work was dehumanizing, including rampant child labor and wildly unsafe conditions for all workers. Economic historian and reformer Arnold Toynbee pointed out that, “Free competition may produce wealth without producing well-being.”³ English intellectuals led a change in perception by evaluating the miserable side of the capitalist economy.

As organized manufacturing grew, urbanization also expanded. The population in English cities quickly rose throughout the nineteenth century. For instance, London’s residents grew from 864,000 to 4.5 million between 1801 and 1901.⁴ This massive rise in population generated significant health and housing issues such as overcrowding, pollution, and disease. Factory waste and effluence made cities and manufacturing towns dirty and ugly. Lack of control over building construction created poorly made and maintained housing. Lack of housing regulation resulted in the extreme overcapacity of these structures. Inadequate sewage disposal systems caused deadly cholera epidemics.⁵

² William Blake, *Jerusalem: The emanation of the giant Albion* (Princeton, New Jersey: William Blake Trust/Princeton University Press, 1991).

³ Arnold Toynbee, *Lectures on the Industrial Revolution of the 18th century in England* (London: Rivingtons, 1884), 205–6.

⁴ Mervyn Miller, *English Garden Cities: An Introduction* (Swindon, England: English Heritage, 2010), 1.

⁵ Four cholera epidemics struck Great Britain between 1832 and 1866, which were part of a world-wide pandemic. Gilbert, Pamela K, “On Cholera in Nineteenth-Century England,” *BRANCH: Britain*,

It was no wonder that by the mid nineteenth century a complex set of solutions was required to solve the effects of industrialization on the built environment.

The Industrial Revolution of the nineteenth century marked a key change in the history of architecture and design. Influenced by the 17th century Enlightenment idea that artists were thinkers and educators, design became a powerful force for societal change, during a time of intense dissatisfaction.⁶ Marxist philosophy, which attributed poor social and living conditions to the process of material production, stimulated poetry, philosophy, art and design, as a source of transformation.⁷ Rosalind P. Blakesley maintains that for the first time in history people started to ask questions about the way they lived and about the buildings in which they lived.⁸ It was the age of the theoretician and architects wrote about their ideas as well as committing a plan to paper.

This new ideology inspired an intellectual interest in the buildings of the past, specifically an antiquarian study of the Gothic Style, directly contrasting the dominance of classicism before 1820. Nineteenth century French architect and theorist Eugene Emmanuelle Viollet-Le-Duc (1814–1879) argued that architecture from the sixteenth century onwards was merely a reproduction of the forms of hierarchical, classical antiquity.⁹ On the other hand, Gothic Revival architecture, as exemplified by the Gothic

Representation and Nineteenth-Century History, accessed March 15, 2013.

www.branchcollective.org/?ps_articles=pamela-k-gilbert-on-cholera-in-nineteenth-century-england.

⁶ See: Martin J. Wiener, *English Culture and the Decline of the Industrial Spirit, 1850–1980* (Cambridge, England: Cambridge University Press, 1981); Kaplan, *The Art That is Life*, 108.

⁷ Karl Marx, *Das Kapital*, trans. Moore and Aveling (London: Lawrence & Wishart, 1887).

⁸ Blakesley, *The Arts and Crafts Movement*, 24.

⁹ Robin Middleton, “Viollet-Le-Duc’s Influence in Nineteenth Century England,” *Art History* 4 (1981): 203-219.

Catholic cathedral was related to the medieval world and offered the romanticized image of a picturesque working, collective society as an alternative to the ugliness and joylessness of industrialization.¹⁰

In 1836, architect A. W. N. Pugin (1812–1881) compared the Victorian world to the medieval world in his theoretical work *Contrasts*. Pugin found the decline of design standards analogous to the diminishing quality of life caused by industrialization.¹¹ A material example of the contrast between the medieval world and the Victorian world is The Medieval Court, designed by Pugin for the Great Exposition in 1851. Set in the glass and steel Crystal Palace, amidst displays of the miracles of modern science including locomotives, printing presses, and telegraphs, Pugin’s exhibit emphasized the aesthetic of the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries. Featuring stained glass windows, gilt vessels, scrolling ironwork, heavily embroidered copes and carved font covers, the Medieval Court echoed the spirit of the Gothic age at a time of striking technological and social change.¹² According to Martin J. Wiener, “The Great Exposition itself was a core of cultural opposition represented by...Pugin’s Medieval Court.”¹³ The rapid and dehumanizing transformations triggered by industrialization inspired a yearning for a simpler past. It was the beginning of a Victorian era Gothic Revival, which expressed itself both in design and in philosophy.

¹⁰ Blakesley, *The Arts and Crafts Movement*, 15.

¹¹ A. W. N. Pugin, *Contrasts: or a parallel between the Noble Edifices of the Fourteenth and Fifteenth Centuries and Similar Buildings of the present Day. Shewing the present decay of taste.* (Reading, England: Spire Books, 2003).

¹² For descriptions of Pugin’s Medieval Court see: Blakesley, *The Arts and Crafts Movement*, 16; Wendy Kaplan, *The Art that is Life*.

¹³ Wiener, 28.

While the Medieval Court popularized the Gothic, it is the extent of Pugin's work, predominantly seen in his domestic architecture, which serves as a connection between the Regency classicism and the heavy embellishment of Victorian design, with future consequences for the architecture of the Arts and Crafts Movement. Although Pugin possessed no formal architectural training, he grew up in a household surrounded by artists and architects. Pugin was educated in the principles of Picturesque Style, which embraced asymmetry, natural planning, the effects of light, and the importance of correlating ideas with design. Of particular importance to Pugin was the architect Joseph Nash, who employed his father A. C. Pugin as a commercial artist and watercolorist. From 1838–1849 Nash published four volumes entitled *Mansions of England in the Olden Times*, which presented a series of illustrations, ranging from medieval castles to sixteenth century mansions.¹⁴ Nash's images of rambling homes, manicured landscapes, and garden buildings stimulated Pugin's interest in historic architecture and in the appeal of domestic life.¹⁵

Pugin's other great influence was the Gothic period. Pugin converted to Catholicism in the 1830s and embraced Gothic Style as the true Christian architecture. According to Leslie Green Bowman, "Pugin admired Gothic architecture and condemned the subsequent neoclassical composition of order and symmetry as artificial violations."¹⁶ Nikolaus Pevsner has argued that, "Pugin transferred the equation of Christianity and

¹⁴ Joseph Nash, *Mansions of England in the Olden Time* reprint Charles Holme and C. Harrison Townsend eds. (London: The Studio, 1906).

¹⁵ Paul Atterbury, *A. W. N. Pugin Master of Gothic Revival* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1995), 34.

¹⁶ Leslie Greene Bowman, *Virtue in Design: A Catalogue of the Palevsky/Evans Collection and Related Works at the Los Angeles County Museum of Art* (Los Angeles: Museum Association, Los Angeles County Museum of Art, 1990), 17.

Gothic into architectural theory and practice. His adherence to Gothic Style mirrored his reverence for a pre-reformation England.¹⁷ Influenced by this passion, Pugin adopted two primary standards of design, “1st there should be features about a building which are not necessary for convenience, construction or propriety; 2nd, that all ornament should consist of enrichment of the essential construction of the building.”¹⁸ However, the most important theory that developed from his work as a writer was the idea that the analysis of the art of an era could judge the worth of the society creating it. Pevsner continues, “With him, to build in the forms of the Middle Ages was a moral duty.”¹⁹ With this lofty ideal, Pugin designed a number of churches and residences in the Gothic Revival Style including St. Chads Cathedral in Birmingham, St. George’s Cathedral in Southwark, and the Palace of Westminster in 1844.²⁰ While Pugin’s adherence to the Gothic rose from a criticism against modern civilization and a longing for a medieval Catholic past, his work expressed the fundamental principles of structure, natural planning, harmonizing with light and landscape, and, most importantly, the association of theory and design that became the basis of the architecture of the Arts and Crafts Movement.

At the same time that Pugin was designing picturesque Gothic churches and country homes, an art critic and writer named John Ruskin emerged as the spokesperson for a new artistic crusade, later named the Arts and Crafts Movement. Ruskin was an Oxford scholar and social theorist dedicated, like Pugin, to the principles of rural Gothic.

¹⁷ Nikolaus Pevsner, *An Outline to European Architecture* (New York: Penguin, 1979), 381.

¹⁸ A. W. N. Pugin, *The True Principles of Pointed Christian Architecture* (London: Henry G. Bohn, 1841), 3.

¹⁹ Pevsner, *An Outline to European Architecture*, 381.

²⁰ Atterbury, *A. W. N. Pugin*, 36–54.

Ruskin's first book was the five volume *Modern Painters* (1843–1860).²¹ Ruskin's next work was the influential *The Seven Lamps of Architecture* (1849) in which he determined a series of seven standards, which he claimed was essential to good architecture including: sacrifice, truth, power, beauty, life, memory, and obedience.²² Ruskin was also well-known for rejecting the Industrial Revolution, firmly blaming the troubles of society on the dehumanizing effects of factory production.²³ Wiener contends that “material production for Ruskin's disciples was in itself no virtue, and preoccupation with it clearly a vice. He helped shift concern from production of goods per se to the *manner* of production and the uses to which productive powers were put.”²⁴ As Ruskin wrote in one of his many addresses:

It is verily this degradation of the operative of the machine, which, more than any evil of the times, is leading the mass of nations everywhere into vain, incoherent, destructive struggling for freedom...their universal outcry against wealth, and against nobility, is not forced from them either by the pressure of famine, or the sting of mortified pride...it is not that men are ill fed, but that they have no pleasure in work.²⁵

Ruskin related the social unrest of the century directly to the system of labor in a capitalistic society.

Ruskin also led a revolution in art. He admired simple Gothic, pre-industrial forms and decorative designs based in the natural world. He claimed machine-made

²¹ John Ruskin, *The Works of John Ruskin: Modern Painters*, V.1–5 (London: John Wiley and Sons, 1890).

²² John Ruskin, *The Seven Lamps of Architecture* (London: Smith, Elder, and Co., 1849).

²³ John Ruskin, “The Nature of Gothic, and the Function of the Workman Therein,” in *The Stones of Venice* (London: George Allen, 1905), 149–53.

²⁴ Wiener, 39.

²⁵ Ruskin, “The Nature of Gothic,” 151.

goods were repetitious and lacked inspiration. He advocated a return to creative hand labor. In *The Stones of Venice* Ruskin devotes a chapter to “The Nature of Gothic,” focusing on the importance of joy in work and abhorrence to industrial labor. He argued in it that, “we have much studied and much perfected of late, the great civilized invention of the division of labour; only we give it a false name. It is not, truly speaking, the labour that is divided, but the men.”²⁶ Ruskin was the first supporter of the ideals which became the force behind the Arts and Crafts Movement: simplicity, an emphasis on the indigenous, reverence for the individual craftsman, and a synthesis of art and nature.

Ruskin developed one of the first utopian communities called the Guild of St. George (1871), basing its concept on the medieval craft guild. The Guild established a cooperative farm near Topley, Sheffield; another in the Wyre Forest, Worcestershire England; and a settlement of cottages in Barmouth, Wales. The Guild endorsed hand work and sold its goods becoming the model for later Arts and Crafts organizations.²⁷ To Ruskin, “the workman ought to be thinking, and the thinking man often to be working.”²⁸

Ruskin influenced other intellectuals and reformers of the period, most meaningfully a young man named William Morris (1834–1896). Both a scholar and a hands-on craftsman, Morris also combined theory with practical application. According to Pevsner, it was Morris who took the “step from theory to practice.”²⁹ While Ruskin primarily wrote and lectured about art, Morris established a successful business which designed and produced decorative art including furniture, wallpaper, stained glass, fabric

²⁶ Ruskin, *Stones of Venice*, 196.

²⁷ Bowman, *Virtue in Design*, 17.

²⁸ *John Ruskin, Vol. 2* (1851), 170 in Bowman, *Virtue in Design*, 17.

²⁹ Pevsner, *An Outline to European Architecture*, 391.

and carpets. Like Ruskin, Morris became a forceful opponent of the machine and maintained that handmade art and craft was the solution to many social problems. Morris wrote, “Civilization has reduced the workman to a skinny and pitiful existence, that he scarcely knows how to frame a desire for any life much better than that which he now endures.”³⁰ Like Pugin, Morris believed that the quality of art depended on the quality of the society which produces it. Morris wanted to reform society through craftsmanship: “The cause of art is the cause of the people.”³¹ Morris delivered this message in a series of publications and public lectures.

Morris was also a leader in the new socialist political movement. In 1883, Morris joined the Social Democratic Federation the organization in which he remained a member throughout his life. In 1884 Morris founded the Socialist League. The ideological basis for Morris’s new politics was Marxism. According to art historian Carole Silver, “Morris shared with Karl Marx the view that the division of labour and commodity production had caused the alienation of the human being from both self and social realization.”³² In 1899, Morris declared himself a Communist: “I call myself a Communist...The aim of Communism seems to me to be the complete equality of condition for all people.”³³ Specifically, Morris believed that machines affected the condition of workers by reducing

³⁰ May Morris, ed., *The Collected Works of William Morris* (London: Longman Green, 1914), 18.

³¹ William Morris, “Art and Socialism” in Norman Kelvin ed. *William Morris on Art and Socialism* (Dover Publications, 1999).

³² Carole Silver, “Setting the Crooked Straight” in Katharine A. Lochnan, Douglas E. Schoenherr and Carole Silver eds. *The Earthly Paradise: Arts and Crafts by William Morris and His Circle from Canadian Collections* (Ontario, Canada: Art Gallery of Ontario, 1993), 14.

³³ *Ibid.*, 148.

them to slavery as mere machine minders. He longed for the day of the individual, pre-industrialized, autonomous craftsman.³⁴

Morris gathered many followers in the new Arts and Crafts Movement. They were anxious to abandon Victorian overindulgence for a simplicity and unity of design, reminiscent of the work of the medieval guilds. One member of the new Arts and Crafts Movement was architect Philip Webb. Like his friend and mentor Morris, Webb educated himself in the aesthetic principles of the Middle Ages and began to study traditional, medieval rural dwellings. It was on this basis that Webb designed the Red House for William Morris and his bride Jane Burden in 1859. The Red House was a return to the regional tradition, which relied upon simple massing, color, and materials. The Red House also served as a showcase for Morris's decorative art, expressing a unity of design which encompassed all aspects of the home, including the house and everything in it. Bowman argues that in the industrializing world, "the home took on a protective role for its occupants; sheltering them from the coal-fired urban landscape...the home was seen as an inner sanctum for the preservation of beauty, religion, and morality."³⁵ For Morris, design was a critical component in stabilizing the domestic environment. Through the unification of interior decorative art and architecture and the creation of a harmonious whole based on tradition, the Red House represents the first expression of Arts and Crafts architecture.³⁶

³⁴ See: Katharine A. Lochnan, Douglas E. Schoenherr and Carole Silver eds. *The Earthly Paradise: Arts and Crafts by William Morris and His Circle from Canadian Collections*, 14; Wendy Kaplan, *The Art that is Life*; Rosalind P. Blakesley, *The Arts and Crafts Movement*; Eileen Boris, *Art and Labor: Ruskin, Morris, and the Craftsman Ideal in America*.

³⁵ Bowman, *Virtue in Design*, 19.

³⁶ See: Blakesley, *The Arts and Crafts Movement*, 22; Kaplan, *The Art that is Life*, 35

Philip Webb is a key figure in the history of the development of Arts and Crafts architecture. Like Morris, Webb was passionate about traditional craftsmanship, inspiring a study of historic, rural building technique. According to architect William Lethaby, Webb “was deeply interested in “ the common tradition of building.”³⁷

Webb’s contemporary and fellow architect in Morris’s new movement was Norman Shaw. Wiener points out that, “Morris’s generation of architects found what it was looking for in an adaptation of English domestic building styles between the late Middle-Ages and the Hanoverians, particularly as seen in the country. Their model became the rustic farmhouse or cottage.”³⁸ But while Webb created fine but few buildings, Shaw produced a great volume of work, much of which was featured widely in publications of the 1870s and 1880s. Shaw’s *Sketches for Cottages and Other Buildings*, documenting country dwellings, appeared in 1878.³⁹ As a friend of Morris and a colleague of Webb, Shaw was in the forefront of the domestic architecture movement. Shaw created a new style based on tradition: “Instead of seeking foreign idioms, or unearthing archaic phrases from early poets, he reverted to the pure vernacular.”⁴⁰ Shaw was also the focus of a series of articles which appeared in *The Studio*, February 1896–September 1896, entitled *The Revival of English Domestic Architecture I–IV*. In the series, the author describes Shaw’s work, “There, from the modest one-story cot to the village shop, the small mission church, or the roadside hostel, you find designs for

³⁷ W. R. Lethaby, *Phillip Webb and his Works* (London: 1935) in *The Arts and Crafts Movement in the Cotswolds*, ed. Mary Greensted (Phoenix Mill, England: Sutton Publishing Company, 1993), 60.

³⁸ Wiener, 65.

³⁹ Richard Norman Shaw and Maurice B. Adams, *Sketches for Cottages and Other Buildings* (London: W. H. Lascelles, 1878).

⁴⁰ “The Revival of English Domestic Architecture: I,” *The Studio* 7 (February 1896): 28.

unpretentious but beautiful building, employing simple materials in frank and unaffected manner.”⁴¹

However, Shaw’s work represents a departure from the socialism of Morris’s Arts and Crafts ideal, for his clientele was drawn from England’s newly rich who romanticized the middle ages during a time of increased industrialization and institutionalism. Shaw was the principal architect for Bedford Park, the new suburban London development of the 1880s. Here, Shaw created an Arcadian neo-medieval world for a generation of “City businessmen looking for a quiet corner to commute from...quietness was what they wanted.”⁴² While Shaw’s work drew from the Gothic vernacular, he incorporated fake timbering, hipped gables, dormers, mullioned windows and great chimneys, creating a historicized old English look.

By the 1870s, Shaw’s work expanded from old English to incorporate a ménage of free classical and Renaissance motifs to the Queen Anne Style that architectural historian Mark Girouard describes as “a kind of architectural cocktail, with a little Queen Anne in it, a little Dutch, a little Flemish, a squeeze of Robert Adam, a generous dash of Wren and a touch of Francois.”⁴³ Shaw and many of the architects of this period lost sight of the objectives of the Arts and Crafts Movement. Rather than focusing on the simple lines and structural integrity of rural buildings as Philip Webb had done, the Movement, popularized by Shaw, became preoccupied with the false trappings of eclecticism and medievalism.

⁴¹ Ibid., 29.

⁴² Wiener, 66.

⁴³ Mark Girouard, *Life in the English Country House: A Social and Architectural History* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1978), 216.

Late 19th Century Architects of the English Domestic Revival Set a New Trend

Based on a Modest Rural Tradition

By the 1890s, a new wave of the English Domestic Revival developed. The architects at the forefront of this movement were disenchanted with medieval historicism and stressed a simplification of design and rationalism of plan, based upon the tenets of true Gothic period buildings without being copies of them. They were restating the ideals of Pugin and Ruskin in a new form. The English Domestic Revival marked a moment of transition from historicism to the modern movement. It was the final epoch in English Arts and Crafts architecture. The new generation of English Domestic Revivalists achieved distinction from approximately 1890 to 1920. It was during this time that British designers established a trend in modern housing design, which was based in a love of nature and rural traditions.⁴⁴

The architecture of the Cotswold region, most specifically the Cotswold cottage, home to rural laborers and farmers, became a model for a middle-class house type, which proliferated throughout England and beyond. The Cotswold region, located in west central England, incorporates six counties including: Gloucestershire, Oxfordshire, Somerset, Warwickshire, Wiltshire and Worcestershire. The rolling hills of the local area, while unsuitable for crop farming, were right for raising sheep. A prosperous medieval wool trade established which climaxed in the seventeenth century when new industrial centers developed in the north of England. By the late nineteenth century, the area

⁴⁴ See: Blakesley, *The Arts and Crafts Movement*, 18; Wendy Hitchmough, *C. F. A. Voysey* (London: Phaidon, 2005), 16.

declined as agricultural workers sought manufacturing jobs in cities.⁴⁵ Arts and Crafts artisan and promoter, C. R. Ashbee wrote in 1904 of the area around his workshop in the village of Chipping Campden, “The population of Camden alone has dropped 25 percent in 30 years. The little roofless houses and empty cottages are the practical illustration of the economic fact.”⁴⁶ Rural Cotswold communities were broken-up and traditional ways, including building practices, were nearly lost.

The traditional architecture of the region was characterized by the use of local limestone, worked by master masons into simple Gothic based perpendicular forms with tall gables, which blended with the sweeping hillsides and ridges. The simple elevations lacked unnecessary ornamentation and carvings, deriving beauty from the color and texture of the stone. In 1905, architect and scholar Edward Guy Dawber wrote in his popular work documenting the local architecture *Old Cottages, Farmhouses and Other Stone Buildings in the Cotswold District* that, “The cottages, like the manor houses, the churches and farmbuildings, are all built of the native stone, and all are gabled and picturesque. Perhaps nowhere is there any architecture more perfect in its simplicity and grace than found in these old English villages.”⁴⁷ The logical, uncomplicated interior plans were based on practical family use and featured open halls, and homely inglenooks.⁴⁸ Dawber further stated, “carving is almost entirely absent, but when it is

⁴⁵ Catherine Gordon, “The Arts and Crafts Architecture of the Cotswold Region,” in *The Arts and Crafts Movement in the Cotswold*, 60.

⁴⁶ C. R. Ashbee, *Campden School of Arts and Crafts, Report for 1904–5*, Victoria and Albert Museum Library, 32 in Greensted, 60.

⁴⁷ Edward Guy Dawber, *Old Cottages, Farmhouses and Other Stone Buildings in the Cotswold District: Examples of minor domestic architecture in Gloucestershire* (London: B. T. Batsford, 1905), 1.

⁴⁸ *Ibid*, 14-15.

used in the building, it tells its purpose and has point and meaning and justifies its presence.”⁴⁹

The simple design principles, upon which Cotswold buildings were based, were in alignment with the basic Arts and Crafts principles Ruskin advocated. Ruskin revered the medieval craftsman. The Cotswold vernacular style exemplified craftsmanship. The beauty of the traditional buildings comes from the shaping and lying of the stones. The mingling of the structures amidst fields and hills was evocative of the romanticized view of medieval England espoused by Ruskin and William Morris.⁵⁰ Also, the quality of the local Cotswold housing stock, which remained relatively untouched due to agricultural decline, was essentially English and stimulated the national pride honored by Arts and Crafts Movement leaders, at a time when European tastes dominated design.⁵¹ The staunch simplicity and practicality of the Cotswold Cottage form, along with the use of local stone, handmade bricks, rubble walling, and thatch were in alignment with the Arts and Crafts idea of “honesty” at a time when goods in general could be made and decorated cheaply by machines.

In addition to the moral and social reasons, which attracted Arts and Crafts designers to the Cotswold vernacular, there were other reasons which drew architects of the English Domestic Revival to the region. First, the Cotswolds’ location was easily accessible by train from London; a convenient distance to city amusements and work opportunities, yet far enough away to offer a tranquil escape from urban life. Second, the

⁴⁹ Edward Guy Dawber, “The Stone Buildings of the Cotswolds,” *The Builder* (1893): 387 in *The Arts and Crafts Movement in the Cotswolds*, 59.

⁵⁰ Greensted, *The Arts and Crafts Movement in the Cotswolds*, 59.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, 3.

Cotswold region came to be associated with William Morris and his colleagues in the Arts and Crafts Movement. Morris was one of the first in a large movement of middle-class city dwellers who were drawn to the Cotswolds' region. In 1871, Along with friend and painter Dante Gabriel Rossetti, Morris purchased a lease on a stone manor named Kelmscott. Morris's Cotswold home and craft business drew many other artisans to the area. Morris lived at Kelmscott for the rest of his life.⁵²

While the natural beauty of the Cotswolds inspired Morris's decorative designs, the qualities of his new home inspired a major preservation movement. Morris wrote warmly about his home,

The roofs are covered in the beautiful stone slates of the district, the most lovely covering which a roof can have, especially when as here, and in all the traditional old houses of the countryside, they are sized down, the smaller ones at the top and bigger towards the eaves, which gives one the same sort of pleasure in their orderly beauty as a fish scales or a bird's feather.⁵³

His appreciation of the local architecture was not limited to manor houses, but extended to all forms of traditional Cotswold buildings including village churches, barns, and out buildings.

Admiration for the local buildings inspired Morris to try to save them. In 1876 he founded the Society for the Protection of Ancient Buildings (SPAB), England's first documented preservation organization and a prime force behind the study of medieval structures and ruins.⁵⁴ SPAB became an important voice for the dissemination of the ideals of Morris and his colleague, architect Phillip Webb. Meetings were held in London

⁵² Elizabeth Cumming and Wendy Kaplan, *The Arts and Crafts Movement* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1991), 16-18.

⁵³ J. W. Mackail, *The Life of William Morris. Vol. I* (London, Longmans, Green & Co., 1899), 231.

⁵⁴ Blakesley, *The Arts and Crafts Movement*, 49.

and many of the leading Arts and Crafts architects of the day joined the group including C. R. Ashbee; Guy Dawber; William Lethaby; Ernest Gimson; Detmar Blow; Alfred Powell; and Ernest and Sidney Barnsley.⁵⁵ SPAB undertook a variety of projects. Gradually, cottage alterations and repair work was executed on behalf of SPAB, which developed a program to report on buildings under threat. Derelict rural buildings became a national problem related to the problem which occurred during the transition from an agricultural society to an industrialized one. In 1905, Guy Dawber wrote, “Centuries ago the Cotswolds were one great sheep-walk from end to end, and what with the wool from his sheep, and the grain from his fields, the Cotswold farmer was well-to-do. But now, alas! those times are no more, and the great barns stand empty, or are allowed to fall into ruins; but they speak very eloquently of the days when this district was one of the wealthiest and most prosperous in all England.”⁵⁶ In 1919, SPAB architect Alfred Powell wrote a report entitled *Report on the Treatment of Old Cottages*, in which he rallied the preservation community to “assist and be assisted in making a stand against the condemnation and demolition of these works of art.”⁵⁷

Like Morris, many of the SPAB architects working in the Cotswolds lived in the area. Guy Dawber practiced in Bourton-on-the-Hill and wrote articles popularizing the region in publications such as *The Builder* and *The British Architect*. In 1926, Dawber established the group The Council for the Preservation of Rural England.⁵⁸ Furniture

⁵⁵ Greensted, *The Arts and Crafts Movement in the Cotswolds*, 60.

⁵⁶ Dawber, *Old Cottages, Farm-Houses, and Other Stone Buildings in the Cotswold District*, 2.

⁵⁷ Alfred Powell, F. W. Troup, Charles C. Winmill, A. R. Powys, *Report on the Treatment of Old Cottages* (SPAB, 1919), 8 in Greensted, 71.

⁵⁸ Greensted, *The Arts and Crafts Movement in the Cotswolds*, 59-61.

makers Sidney and Ernest Barnsley and their good friend Ernest Gimson lived and worked out of the village of Sapperton, which became a center for craft activity when the three men set up home and shop in adjacent cottages and a series of former farm buildings.⁵⁹ Most notably, C. R. Ashbee, founder of the London based Guild of Handicraft, traveled to the Cotswold market town of Chipping Campden on a Guild outing and romanticized about getting back to crafts roots in the country, “Better to leave Babylon and go home to the land.”⁶⁰ In 1902, Ashbee led a group of 70 guildsmen and their families to the “City of Sun” as he called Campden, where the group leased village cottages and worked out of an abandoned silk mill, converted into work rooms and show rooms.⁶¹ Ashbee was a metal worker, a wood worker, and a trained architect. An ardent socialist, Ashbee was highly influenced by Walt Whitman, Ruskin and Morris while studying at Cambridge. Inspired by his work with SPAB, Ashbee undertook a number of restoration projects in and around Chipping Campden, including Brooklyn Cottage, High House, and Woodroffe House.⁶²

The high quantity of traditional buildings which survived in the Cotswold region after a century of agricultural decline and rural depopulation left Cotswold buildings dilapidated but largely intact, due to their sturdy limestone construction. An array of original structures decorated the countryside, ready for repair and restoration by city

⁵⁹ Ibid, 29–30.

⁶⁰ Crawford, *C. R. Ashbee* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1985), 104.

⁶¹ Annette Carruthers, “The Guild of Handicraft: Craft at Chipping Campden,” in *The Arts and Crafts Movement in the Cotswolds*, 46.

⁶² Crawford, *C. R. Ashbee*, 63.

dwellers searching for a weekend retreat or country home.⁶³ Apart from their obvious aesthetic and historic value, the country cottage met a growing demand for small, affordable single-family homes in the country. As the middle class grew in number, due to industrialization and the development of new professional and clerical related employment, the desire of urbanites to leave the city also grew. “What kind of children will these be who have never picked buttercups and daisies, who read in poems of the song of birds that they cannot hear, and of the beauty in the seasons which they only know by the vicissitudes of heat or cold?”⁶⁴ Also, with industry and manufacturing, cities had become unhealthy and dirty places. Generally, these home seekers were not rich members of the aristocracy, but rather persons of somewhat modest means who required equally modest accommodation. The cottage or small country home filled the need and kept Arts and Crafts’ architects busy upgrading existing properties.

From Workman to Gentleman: The Cottage Becomes an Acceptable Transitional House and a Model for a Popular New Form of Small House

Modest cottage structures became the models for a new type of single-family home construction. The rustic country cottage, once the home of the humble farm laborer became an acceptable and comfortable home for the middle-class gentleman on retreat. It was a logical step from the preservation and restoration of historic Cotswold cottages to the erection of new ones, using the traditional form as a model.

While busy with cottage restoration and alteration work, C. R. Ashbee also created a standard for new cottage designs. His work was influenced by the need to

⁶³ Greensted, *The Arts and Crafts Movement in the Cotswolds*, 61.

⁶⁴ “The Evolution of Village Architecture,” *The Studio* (April 1897): 181.

upgrade laborer's homes and also by the growing demand for weekend properties.⁶⁵ True to his socialist sentiments, Ashbee advised "The little house will not serve us unless the man who lives in it is given a wage that makes life worth living."⁶⁶ As such, Ashbee strove for affordability, practicality and beauty in his cottage designs. He felt that both the restoration of old cottages and the construction of new ones would contribute to the revitalization of the countryside and prevent further rural depopulation.

Ashbee emerged at the forefront of the new movement addressing the need to provide reasonably sized and priced single-family homes. To help spread the cause; Ashbee published *A Book of Cottages and Little Houses for Landlords, Builders, Architects and Others* in 1906.⁶⁷ In it, he presented a number of cottage designs, several of them constructed in and around Chipping Campden, including, Izod House (1902), a cottage constructed from using the rubble of two former cottages, and Daintree (1902), both located in in Park Lane Campden. Outside Campden, Ashbee designed Catbrook, a row of laborer's cottages, from 1902–1906.⁶⁸ Ashbee's own cottage plan book was one of a number of similar works which appeared in the architectural press at about this time. Others included, Arthur Martin's *The Small House: Its Architecture and Surroundings* (1906)⁶⁹ and J. H. Elder-Duncan's *Country Cottages and Weekend Homes* (1907).⁷⁰

⁶⁵ Greensted, *The Arts and Crafts Movement in the Cotswolds*, 71.

⁶⁶ C. R. Ashbee, *A Book of Cottages and Little Houses for Landlords, Builders, Architects and Others* (Batsford, 1906), 110.

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*

⁶⁸ Greensted, *The Arts and Crafts Movement in the Cotswolds*, 66-67.

⁶⁹ Arthur Martin, *The Small House: Its Architecture and Surroundings* (London: Alston Rivers, Ltd., 1906).

Architectural periodicals were also filled with reflections on cottages, small houses, artist's cottages, and "the artistic house," basically a quaint euphemism for a charming little house. In "An Artists House," architect and author M. H. Baillie Scott contends,

It is given to few artists to build a large house, and so in the accompanying plans it has been the aim of the author to try and secure comfort and beauty outlay...A small house is not necessarily uncomfortable, and there are still cottages and farmhouses left in the country to prove the fact. To build one however, it is necessary to clear our minds from conventional ideas and to base the plan on our own actual habit of life.⁷¹

Similarly, in "An Artistic Treatment of Cottages," Horace Townsend argued for the careful treatment of the small house to remain in character with the surrounding countryside. According to Townsend, "It is to be a small house in the country-not a small country house";⁷² he continued "The original plans for cottages which have been thus treated by the architect...are primitive and simple to a degree."⁷³ He promoted the laborer's cottage as the ideal get-away, where one or no servant would do.⁷⁴ Indeed, this marks a transitional time of the middle classes scaling down to a form of less complicated, servant less house. The laborer's cottage form of simple hall, with room on either side, a kitchen in back, or loft above was a fitting model for one's own "stake in the country...for a few hundred pounds."⁷⁵

⁷⁰ J. H. Duncan, *Country Cottages and Weekend Homes* (New York: John Lane & Company, 1907).

⁷¹ M. H. Baillie Scott, "An Artist's House," *The Studio* 9 (October 1896): 31.

⁷² Horace Townsend, "An Artistic Treatment of Cottages," *The Studio* 6 (October 1895): 31.

⁷³ *Ibid.*, 32.

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, 33.

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, 33.

The idea of a small cottage home for the middle-class continued to be a popular topic in the artistic publications of the period. In 1902, *The Studio* ran a competition for the design of country cottages, costing no more than 750 pounds, and “not intended for occupation, at a remunerative rent by the artisan, a workman or farm labourer. . .the building was to be of the nature of what have of recent years, near London and other cities, been known as ‘week-end’ cottages.”⁷⁶ According to James Macaulay, it may have been *The Studio* competition that inspired Charles Rennie Mackintosh to design a *Country Cottage for an Artist* in 1902.⁷⁷ Macauley further speculates that Mackintosh’s cottage was most likely based upon Charles Voysey’s previous design of 1891 for an artist’s cottage, later named the Forster House, a commission for author E. M. Forster. Like so many other architects and designers of the period, inspired by Morris and his eloquent essays documenting the area, Macintosh visited the Cotswolds. Specifically in Macintosh’s case, a trip to the North Cotswolds in 1894 was his first sketching trip outside of his native Scotland.

The English Arts and Crafts Movement of the late nineteenth century inspired a period of influential architectural design called the English Domestic Revival. The Revival architects were concerned, like Ruskin so many years before and later William Morris, in the basic principles of honesty and simplicity in design, reacting against the superficial ornamentation and needless complexity of High Victorian tastes. Also, the Revival architects found their expression in a sense of national pride which used English regional traditions and nature for its inspiration, particularly in the untouched hills of the

⁷⁶ *The Studio* (1902): 24.

⁷⁷ James Macaulay, *Charles Rennie Mackintosh* (New York: W. W. Norton and Company, 2010), 229.

Cotswold countryside. And finally, the Revival architects found fulfillment in craftsmanship and manual labor. Related to this, the small worker's cottage became a symbol of the ideal home, inspiring an important preservation movement in the Society for the Protection of Ancient Buildings, and later using the same small country cottages as models for a new form of modest single-family housing.

CHAPTER TWO
THE INNOVATIVE COTTAGE DESIGNS OF THE ENGLISH DOMESTIC
REVIVAL REFLECT AND INFLUENCE HOUSING REFORM
IN ENGLAND AND AMERICA

In the late nineteenth century a revitalization of the English Arts and Crafts Movement occurred called the English Domestic Revival. Focusing on architecture, this mature phase of the Arts and Crafts desired to establish a national style, based on the regional cottage vernacular. Considerations such as simplicity, affordability, function, rural setting, and use of natural materials were important to architects who anticipated a new architecture grounded in tradition and the landscape, rather than the manipulation of academic styles. Architects of the English Domestic Revival were influenced by conditions in England's overcrowded, disease-ridden industrial cities. Their work coincided with the efforts of health and housing reformists who responded to housing problems by advocating design simplicity and an anti-urban bias. New suburbs, garden cities, planned communities, and traditional country cottages offered an escape from degraded urban centers. The English countryside became a symbol, popularized in literature and art, of an ideal life. According to prominent English architectural historian Sir Nikolaus Pevsner, the most influential architect of the English Domestic Revival was

Charles F. A. Voysey.¹ Voysey's simple, unadorned white, roughcast cottages and small country houses, designed primarily for middle-class, professional commuting clients spoke to the vernacular tradition, while also transcending locality, moving English architecture toward a modern focus on individuality in design. The influence of Voysey and other architects of the period coincided with increased access to architectural exhibition, an increase in architectural publication, and the manufacture and commercialization of decorative art. Voysey's message of truth and economy in design was heard through these mediums on the continent and in America. In Germany Voysey's cottages were promoted by German architectural writer Hermann Muthesius and received by an audience eager for a simple modern aesthetic. In America, innovative California architect Irving Gill most represented a connection to Voysey, designing his own minimalist white concrete boxes and echoing Voysey's concerns for honesty and healthfulness. By 1940, a life's work was celebrated when Voysey was awarded the Gold medal from the Royal British Institute of Architects, the highest honor given to a British architect, recognizing him as a pioneer of modernism.

Idealizing Country Life

Members of the English Domestic Revival looked back to the original Gothic promoters, Augustus Pugin and John Ruskin, sharing their view of an idealized life in the country and rural traditions. Great importance was placed on "good building," which included sound construction, use of local materials and labor, and rational planning and design, and lack of superfluous or false ornament. This new generation of Arts and Crafts

¹ Nikolaus Pevsner, "Charles F. Annesley Voysey, 1858-1941: A Tribute by Nikolaus Pevsner," *Architectural Review* (March 1941).

architects primarily designed small country homes and cottages for a burgeoning middle-class, made up of professional and business people (lawyers, doctors, writers, artists and publishers). These clients were generally self-made, rather than of the English aristocracy. The logic behind the small country home was that by designing without unnecessary ornament, solid houses and furnishings became accessible to people of relatively modest means.²

The ideal of the small English country home or cottage was a reaction to industrialization and urbanization. Industrialization and the explosive growth of cities seemed destined to sweep away rural tradition. English social reformer Ebenezer Howard wrote, “It is well-nigh universally agreed by men of all parties, not only in England, but all over Europe and America and our colonies, that it is deeply to be deplored that the people should continue to stream into the already over-crowded cities, and should thus further deplete the country districts.”³ By the mid nineteenth century, more than half the population lived in towns and England became the world’s first major urban nation.⁴ In his account of life in Manchester, England, whose network of canals and mills facilitated industrial development during the early nineteenth century, Friedrich Engels wrote of slums that accompanied the urbanization and industrialization process.

Right and left a multitude of covered passages lead from the main street into numerous courts, and he who turns in thither gets into a filth and disgusting grime, the equal of which is not to be found-especially in the courts which lead down to the Irk, and which contain unqualifiedly the most horrible dwellings

²Martin J. Wiener, *English Culture and the Decline of the Industrial Spirit, 1850–1980* (Cambridge, England: Cambridge University Press, 1981), 66.

³ Ebenezer Howard, *Garden Cities of Tomorrow* (London: Faber and Faber LTD., 1946), 42.

⁴ Mervyn Miller, *English Garden Cities; An Introduction* (Swindon, England: English Heritage, 2010), 1–3.

which I have yet beheld. In one of these courts there stands directly at the entrance, at the end of the covered passage, a privy without a door, so dirty that the inhabitants can pass into and out of the court only by passing through foul pools of stagnant urine and excrement.⁵

These over-industrialized and ugly urban centers, where pollution and disease ran rampant, lacked beauty and promoted interest in country life, or at the very least of a *sub-urban* life offering a semi-rural setting, within a reasonable commute to the city, as an antidote.

Housing conditions also generated health concerns. As towns grew without proper zoning laws, no construction codes, and inadequate systems of sewage and waste disposal, disease, particularly cholera, ran rampant throughout the crowded streets.⁶ One of the greatest problems of the cities was to keep their people alive. An early Victorian period poster printed by the Dudley Board of Health proclaims: “Being so full, no one who has died of the cholera will be permitted to be buried after Sunday next.”⁷ It is no wonder that people dreamed of moving away.

Ironically, while industrialization dirtied, demeaned, and diseased much of English city life it also created a large pool of professional jobs and a large middle class who possessed the means to attain a better life in a modest country home. Most country homes were not the grand houses of the old-fashioned gentlemen aristocrats. Instead, the dream houses of the new country gentlemen resembled the home of London attorney

⁵ Friedrich Engels, *The Condition of the Working Class* (London: Swan Sonnenschein & Co., 1892), 45.

⁶ Nigel Paneth and Peter Vinten-Johansen, “A Rivalry of Foulness: Official and Unofficial Investigations of the London Cholera Epidemic of 1854,” *American Journal of Public Health* 88, no. 10 (October 1998): 1545–1553.

⁷ Poster: The Dudley Board of Heath, Dudley, England, 1849. The Bridgeman Art Library.

Soames Forsyth in John Galsworthy's novel *The Man of Property* (1906), the first of the Forsyth Saga trilogy. The house Soames builds called Robin Hill is within easy commuting distance to the city and comprises just a couple acres of land.⁸ Likewise, *Howard's End* (1910), written by E. M. Forster, is the name of a country cottage that becomes the dream house of a middle-class London family. Howards End attains almost mythical proportions as a place of refuge from the anxieties of urban life. Visiting the house, the heroine Margaret Schlegel was moved to say, "Here had lived an elder race, to which we look back with disquietude. The country which we visit at weekends was really a home... In these English farms, if anywhere; one might see life steadily and see it whole."⁹ It was a literal sentiment, which reflected the feelings of many city dwellers disenchanted with inner city life.

There was a striking increase in the publication of novels, poems, monographs, magazines, and popular art work focusing on country locations and subjects in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. According to Wiener, in these writings a popular image of England, which gave pride of place to the countryside, particularly the southern "home" counties, which encircle metropolitan London.¹⁰ Wiener cites "the southern metaphor," as a fascination with country life. Specifically country cottages became the embodiment of the image.¹¹

⁸ John Galsworthy, *The Man of Property* (London: William Heinemann, 1906).

⁹ E. M. Forster, *Howards End* (London: Putnam, 1910), 29.

¹⁰ The "Home counties" include: Buckinghamshire, Hertfordshire, Essex, Berkshire, Middlesex, Surrey, Kent, and Sussex.

¹¹ Wiener, *English Culture and the Decline of the Industrial Spirit*, 42.

Middle-class interest in Arts and Crafts country houses was promoted in the highly successful magazine publication *Country Life* (1897–present). *Country Life* popularized the English ideal of domestication and the romantic view of rural life. Week after week, images of the work of English Domestic Revival architects “mellow, dignified, creeper-clad, lawn encompassed, and bathed in perpetual sunshine,”¹² filled the pages of *Country Life*, giving broad exposure to their work. Hitchmough contends that, “Country Life brought suitable architects and their designs to the attention of these men who ‘cannot all hit upon an old manner house or find a farmhouse which will bear conversion.’”¹³ In fact, *Country Life* publisher Edward Hudson commissioned Arts and Crafts country house designer Edwin Lutyens to design two of his own homes, Deanery Garden (1901), and Lindisfarne Castle (c.1900) as well as the *Country Life* headquarters in London. From the first issue, *Country Life* carried a section of property advertising which catered to the discriminating house-hunter, “Ideally perfect old country cottage, where hollyhocks rise up over the hedges and rosy apples hang from gnarled trees.”¹⁴ In these property pages, *Country Life* glamorized rural life and made successful businessmen long to live in it, secure in the knowledge that by buying land and a country house, one became at least a sort of gentleman. Rowbotham continues that “*Country Life*’s campaign must have swayed many prospective clients in search of a country cottage.”¹⁵

¹² Mark Girouard, *Life in the English Country House* (New Haven: Yale Univ. Press, 1979), 303.

¹³ In Wendy Hitchmough, *C. F. A. Voysey* (London: Phaidon Press Limited, 1995), 40.

¹⁴ E. B. S., “Country Cottages,” *Country Life* 3 (February 19, 1898): 195–7.

¹⁵ Sheila Rowbotham, *Edward Carpenter: A Life of Liberty and Love* (London: Verso, 2008), 118.

According to Malcolm Bradbury, a “deep vein of rural nostalgia,”¹⁶ ran through art and literature in the later nineteenth and early twentieth century in Britain. Popular artist and children’s book illustrator Kate Greenaway (1846–1901) created an idealized landscape where children frolicked in pastoral scenes. Greenaway created a world centered on English village life.¹⁷ Her rural depictions must have been inspirational to a generation growing alongside striking industrial growth. Greenaway’s images of country homes which included white stucco cottages, neat gardens, and all manner of landscape accoutrements (arbors, trellis, seats) are also significant (Fig. 4).¹⁸ Greenaway’s village scenes were reproduced in children’s books, greeting cards, calendars, wallpaper, china, and fabric. Greenaway’s world was prized by a public sentimental for traditional rural life.



Figure 4. *May Day*, Kate Greenaway

¹⁶ Malcolm Bradbury, *The Social Context of Modern English Literature* (Oxford University Press, 1971), 46 in Wiener, *English Culture and the Decline of the Industrial Spirit*, 50.

¹⁷ Sara R. Danger, “Producing the Romance of Mass Childhood: Kate Greenaway’s Under the Rainbow and Education Acts,” *Nineteenth-Century Contexts* 31, no. 4 (2009): 312.

¹⁸ Kate Greenaway, *Under the Window* (London: Routledge, 1879), 15.

One of Kate Greenaway's contemporaries in children's illustrated literature was socialist artist Walter Crane (1845–1915). Like Greenaway, Crane's work primarily featured country themes and garden motifs, common throughout a generation of nursery rhymes and children's stories (Fig. 5).

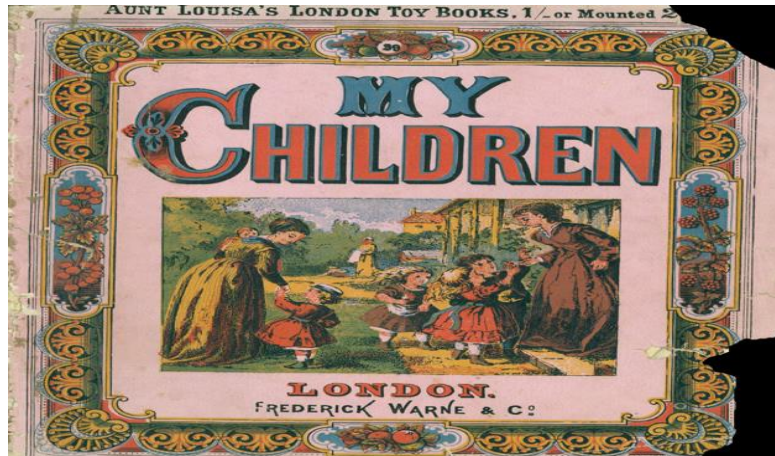


Figure 5. Cover art for *My Children* by Walter Crane, 1873.

Politically, Crane was a leading proponent of the Arts and Crafts Movement.¹⁹ He was a member of the London based Art Worker's Guild and the Arts and Crafts Exhibition Society, which he founded in 1888. Like his mentors, John Ruskin and William Morris, Crane shared a reverence for rural life and a disdain for the squalor of life subjugated by mass industry. Eileen Boris observes that Crane "...attributed the dismal state of applied art to an industrial system that subsumed the personal element in production so that making no longer grew out of the organic necessities of life."²⁰ At a

¹⁹ Wendy Kaplan, *The Art that is Life: The Arts and Crafts Movement in America, 1875–1920* (Boston: Museum of Fine Arts, 1987), 55–57.

²⁰ Eileen Boris, *Art and Labor: Ruskin, Morris, and the Craftsman Ideal in America*. (Philadelphia: Temple University Press), 15.

general meeting for the Society for the Protection of Ancient Buildings, Crane complained,

Some of us appear to be trying to turn England into another America, forever scheming railways where they are not wanted, cutting down trees, and clearing away old dwelling places, and insulting even the green fields with advertisements. Anything that interferes with extra percentages is as dust in the balance to such.²¹

Even in Crane's day, commercialization had eroded much of Old England. And yet, Crane hoped, "still does England hold of those delightful places full of the pathos of old time, where each dumb thing of wood or iron, or copper, each fragment of faded tapestry seems to have the speech of romance."²² Crane's idealism both echoed and influenced the English middle class to live in the country.

The "English way of life" was an image exemplifying countryside and tradition promoted by literature, poetry, magazine publication and popular artwork. However, this self-image was a construction. Wiener claims that truer image of Victorian Britain would have emphasized the experience of 18th and 19th century industrialization as its prevailing feature.²³ Britain was the first industrialized nation and yet it remained meaningfully rural in image. Richard Wollheim described England as, "a collective, unalienated folk society, rooted in time and space, bound together by tradition and by stable, local ties and symbolized by the village."²⁴ Raymond Williams further observed that in Britain "there is

²¹ Society for the Protection of Ancient Buildings, "Report and General Meeting," (1898): 66–7 in Wiener, *English Culture and the Decline of the Industrial Spirit*, 71.

²² Walter Crane, *William Morris to Whistler* in Wiener, *English Culture and the Decline of the Industrial Spirit*, 72.

²³ Wiener, *English Culture and the Decline of the Industrial Spirit*, 56-60.

²⁴ Richard Wollheim, "The English Dream," *The Spectator* 206 (March 1961): 334 in Wiener, 42.

almost an inverse proportion in the twentieth century between the importance of the working rural economy and the cultural importance of rural ideas.”²⁵ Why was the quest for “Old England” so important? Wiener suggests that in the late 1800s a psychic balance occurred when rural values became a necessary compliment or alternative refuge from the pace and constraints of modern urban life.²⁶ In other words, as the agricultural economy gave way to the industrial economy in Britain, the importance of rural regions shifted from a practical one to a symbolic one. The fascination with the rural world depicted in various art forms emerged as an antidote to the seeming unending advance of industrialization and urbanization.

Ideas about Housing and Health Reform Influence How to Build and Where to Build

While the romance of old England was ever present in the public’s mind, the need to provide healthier and better houses for workers of all classes was of practical importance. In 1777, architect John Wood working on a survey of a country estate observed, “These habitations of that useful and necessary rank of men, the labourers, were the most offensive both to decency and humanity.”²⁷ Conditions in towns were not much better. The expansion of industry including cotton and woolen mills in places like Birmingham and Manchester necessitated the building of row upon row of attached housing built back to back and two deep without bathrooms and kitchens.²⁸ Harold Platt,

²⁵ Raymond Williams, *The Country and the City* (London: 1973) in Wiener, 48.

²⁶ Wiener, *English Culture and the Decline of the Industrial Spirit* , 49.

²⁷ Margaret and Alexander Potter, *Houses* (London: John Murray Albemarle Street, 1948), 22.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, 28.

n his study of industrial towns, describes Manchester as both an environmental and social calamity with housing, “unfit for human habitation even by contemporary standards of decency.”²⁹

England’s Public Health Act of 1875 finally asserted public control over building standards and gave local authorities power to enforce building regulations. Walls had to be a certain thickness and damp proofed. Other regulations concerned sewage disposal and drainage. Each home had its own water closet, water pumped into a kitchen sink, and a copper tub for washing clothes. Housing built according to these laws during the last quarter of the 19th century comprises the inner suburbs of most English cities. Such accommodation provided to the working and middle-classes offered a great improvement in their standard of living. However, these houses were still narrow in frontage, with sites extending between fourteen and seventeen feet wide, allowing only one room width and two rooms deep, with a kitchen extension out the back. In many cases, only a narrow court existed between properties, restricting light and views. Consequently, while improvements in house construction for the working and middle classes were in the works, many lacked foresight and further contributed to crowded conditions.³⁰

Additional attempts to improve living conditions inspired The Housing of the Working Classes Act of 1890, which empowered local authorities to build houses themselves, for the first time. This formed the roots of what is now known as subsidized

²⁹ Harold Platt, *Shock Cities: The Environmental Transformation and Reform of Manchester and Chicago* (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 2005), 296.

³⁰ Potter and Potter, *Houses*, 32.

housing (later called Council Housing in England).³¹ Such activities were influenced by the efforts of late nineteenth idealistic reformers such as Antony Ashley-Cooper 7th Earl of Shaftsbury, who persuaded Parliament that health, housing, and town planning were the responsibility of all. Influenced by such observations, English social reformers of the day launched a campaign to improve inner city health and housing conditions. Lord Shaftsbury was an early and significant supporter of improving housing conditions for poor people affected by industrialization. English housing historians Margaret and Alexander Potter have claimed that “It was the activities of Lord Shaftsbury...and other outstanding idealists who fought for better living conditions in the nineteenth century which succeeded in persuading parliament that education, health, housing, and, later, town planning, were the responsibility of all.”³² In 1833, Shaftsbury introduced a bill into the House of Commons limiting the age of child workers in factories to age nine and declares that no person under the age of eighteen could work more than ten hours per day. He followed with reforms limiting the employment of women and children in mines and boys employed as chimney sweeps. By the 1850s, Shaftsbury turned his attentions to the miserable conditions of urban slums and the improvement of houses. He promoted the construction of low-income housing and in 1872 organized the building of the Shaftsbury Estate near Battersea, London, and the nation’s first government subsidized housing development. His interest in better-quality housing was so significant that he built a

³¹ Ibid., 34.

³² Ibid.

model village of cottages for poor residents, charging only one shilling per week rent, on his own country estate in Winborne St. Giles.³³

Like Lord Shaftsbury, other early housing reformers were greatly concerned with the conditions of the poor in cities. Octavia Hill developed social housing projects in London financed by her friend Ruskin; old houses in the city were cleaned, renovated, and rented to the poor for a minimal amount. Hill was also at the forefront of preserving open spaces in London, including Hampstead Heath. As she believed that city residents needed access to natural outdoor spaces for health and recreation. Hill, in particular, was engaged as well in a very practical experiment to rebuild slum areas and open playgrounds.³⁴ Another London reformer, George Peabody, founded a trust for providing better housing conditions and the East End Dwelling's Company carried out pioneer flat-building in the poorest parts of London. By 1909, the Town Planning Act also gave local authorities the power to draw up and enforce town plans, which addressed density (the number of houses or persons per acre) in accordance with local characteristics and needs.³⁵

Other reformers tried to build new towns instead of renovating old ones. Early model villages included Port Sunlight near Liverpool, Bourneville near Birmingham and Letchworth Garden City in Hertfordshire. The homes of Port Sunlight adhered to an irregular cottage plan constructed in a peaceful village setting. Bourneville, founded by chocolate manufacturer George Cadbury, featured informal semi-detached terraced

³³ Ibid.

³⁴ Miller, 23.

³⁵ Potter and Potter, *Houses*, 34.

housing and cottages, influenced by cottage architects C. F. A. Voysey and M. H. Baillie Scott.³⁶ The grandest model village scheme was Letchworth Garden City, promoted by social reformer Ebenezer Howard. Letchworth's cottage plan was a reaction against the overcrowding of Victorian towns, and incorporated a rambling design, adhering to a fixed size and population limit. Shops, public buildings and English Cottage Style houses, which varied in spacing, size and appearance, characterized the area. The idea fascinated people tired of the restricted monotony of the attached and semi-detached terraced housing in towns and cities.³⁷ According to Margaret and Alexander Potter, "Letchworth, Port Sunlight and the other new villages were part of the growing romantic interest in pre-industrial England and in the obvious dissatisfaction with city life, however improved by the new building and zoning standards established by Parliament."³⁸ The people with enough money to move out of the inner cities, escaped to suburbs, country towns and model villages.

Charles Voysey and the Modern Cottage: "Good Buildings" Reflect the Mission to Reform in England and America

One of the foremost architects of the new move to the country was cottage architect Charles Francis Annesley Voysey (1857–1941), a leading proponent of the late nineteenth century revitalization of the Arts and Crafts Movement called the English Domestic Revival, "It is always to Voysey that we return when we analyze the history of this remarkable period, as the man in whose work we find the germ of all that was of

³⁶ Miller, *English Garden Cities*, 10.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, 18–22. More on Letchworth in chapter five.

³⁸ Potter and Potter, *Houses*, 35.

permanent value in the English Domestic Revival.”³⁹ Voysey’s influential white cottages designed for an emerging middle class stressed a simplification of design, a rationalism of plan, an economy of material and a strong belief in the rural ideal, all principle tenets of the Arts and Crafts ideal, first expressed by John Ruskin in the mid nineteenth century. Voysey’s country homes marked a progression from the medieval cottage restorations undertaken by William Morris and other members of The Society for the Protection of Ancient Buildings and later by the new cottage constructions rendered by Arts and Crafts architects, designed primarily as week-end homes and artist’s cottages. Voysey’s “cottages” were substantial yet manageable, single-family homes placed in nature, with an eye for quality, simplicity, and economy. Voysey’s designs were published in the leading architectural periodicals of the day highlighting Arts and Crafts architects, including *The Studio* and *The Craftsman*, and influenced both the development of suburban English Cottage designs in England and America and to the formation of an avant-garde modern movement, with broad implications on early twentieth century housing reform.

Charles Voysey was the son of a controversial Anglican minister, the Reverend Charles Voysey. According to Hitchmough, Reverend Voysey’s beliefs “accommodated both the scientific and philosophical developments of the age.”⁴⁰ In 1869, Reverend Voysey’s was charged with heresy for refusing to preach the hell dogma. He was thrown out of the Church of England and later founded the Theistic Church in London, which he

³⁹ J. M. R., “Obituary, C. F. A. Voysey,” *The Architectural Review* (1941): 59.

⁴⁰ Hitchmough, *C. F. A. Voysey*, 10.

oversaw for forty years.⁴¹ His son displayed similar independence within the architectural profession, where he developed a principle of individuality in design, lacking absolute historical or classical antecedent. Another strong influence on Voysey was a reverence for Gothic construction. As a boy, Voysey attended Dulwich College in London leaving at the age of sixteen in 1873, to pursue architecture studies, as an assistant in the firm of J. P. Seddon, a church restoration specialist.⁴² Voysey went on to work as a draftsman in the firm of Saxon Snell and George Devey. In both firms, Voysey worked with Gothic period buildings and came to admire them for their structural integrity. To Voysey, Gothic was the embodiment of English style based on the beauty and solidity of individual craftsmanship. The love of Gothic was shared by Arts and Crafts forerunner Ruskin, a friend of the Reverend Voysey and a visitor to the Voysey home.

The work of architect Charles Voysey reflected the reform-minded mood of the day and influenced the design of future suburban housing in both England and in America. Voysey led the new wave of architects of the English Domestic Revival who set out to rediscover the English countryside and the related English past, motivated by dissatisfaction with urban society. As Mark Girouard points out, “dislike of the present led them to the past, dislike of the town to the country. As an antidote to the present they recreated the past as an ideal world of preindustrial simplicity.”⁴³ The English Domestic Revival rejected medieval historicism and stressed the humble atmosphere and modest-scale, suggestive of rural folk life. Unlike, some of the earlier Arts and Crafts architects

⁴¹ Ibid., 11.

⁴² Ibid., 15.

⁴³ Mark Girouard, *Sweetness and Light: The Queen Anne Movement, 1860–1900* (Oxford: 1977), 5 in Wiener, 64.

such as Philip Webb and Norman Shaw, Voysey was not a member of the Society for the Protection of Ancient Buildings. Voysey was neither a preservationist nor a revivalist. He was an individualist who used regional Gothic period rural buildings as models for new simple homes, rather than as restoration projects. Voysey rejected Continental classicism, feeling it was unauthentic for English architecture. To him, Classicism was a “foreign importation.”⁴⁴ Voysey wrote, “Sham arches and columns that carry nothing but disgrace would be drummed out of existence; Stone shells would no longer hide the iron embryo of architecture. Broken pediments and symmetrical facades would cease to satisfy us. Architecture learnt on the drawing board and measured off by the yard would be delegated to the world of Academys and collectivism.”⁴⁵ Voysey wrote that before 1874 and the advent of the Arts and Crafts Movement, “Styleism was rife. When a client called for a design the first questions asked were, ‘What style do you want? Next, what period of that particular style? Where is, and what is the site like, and what is the nature of the soil and aspect, were questions of secondary importance.’”⁴⁶ Voysey, on the other hand, demonstrated innovative, solid building practices, with an eye for the region, including landscape, traditional forms and local craftsmanship, feeling them to be morally superior to classically derived styling.

Voysey designed one hundred and eight individual country residences for an emerging middle class.⁴⁷ Voysey’s new houses, loosely based upon Cotswold dwellings

⁴⁴ David Gebhard, *Charles F. A. Voysey: Architect* (Hennessey & Ingalls, 1975), 4

⁴⁵ Charles F. A. Voysey, *Individuality* (London: Chapman & Mason, 1915), 108.

⁴⁶ C. F. Annesley Voysey, “1874 and after,” *The Architectural Review* (October 1931): 91.

⁴⁷ Hitchmough, *C. F. A. Voysey*, 230.

of the seventeenth century, was called Cottage Style. Voysey's clients were often artists, writers, and other urban professionals who wished to return to the country, nature, and simplicity. According to Alan Johnson, "his stylistic independence appealed to Avant-Garde clients at a time when individualism in architecture was generally admired."⁴⁸ However, while the desire to own a country cottage was popular, the desire to be primitive was not. Voysey's "cottages" displayed a traditional rural feel, adapted to modern needs. Sophisticated in their simplicity, Voysey's comfortable country houses often displayed an enchanted quality, borne out in their low exterior walls, high pitched roofs and towering chimneys. He used roughcast stucco, slate tiles and shingles, patterned brickwork, and rows of mullioned windows to place a building within its country landscape like it belonged there.

Truth and Economy

Voysey's philosophical inclinations were intertwined with his design principles. Johnson claims that, "Voysey's adherence to Puginian doctrine distinguishes him from his many architect contemporaries for whom the architectural developments of the years after 1870 weakened the link which Pugin had divined between morality and architecture."⁴⁹ In 1927, *Building News* also summed up Voysey as "a man whose artistic convictions are at one with his spiritual ideas and identified with his whole attitude toward life and work..."⁵⁰ The concepts of truth and economy were two of Voysey's ideas with far-reaching implications for modern, single-family homes. In 1915 Voysey

⁴⁸ Alan Johnson, "Voysey Exhibited," *The Architectural Review* (October 1977): 2.

⁴⁹ Ibid.

⁵⁰ Anon. *Building News* (1927): 133.

wrote, “Love of truth would lead us to a more candid avowal of practical construction and check us from disguising it, or the materials of which it is made.”⁵¹ The central idea of truth can be traced to his father’s spirited stand against the Church of England and its power emerges in practical ways throughout Voysey’s work. The most obvious example of Voysey’s truth in design is the inherent simplicity of his forms. Voysey typically set forth a simple straightforward rectangular plan for his homes. The horizontal profile of Voysey’s buildings utilized wide expanses of glass and broad exterior wall surfaces to emphasize the color and texture of various building materials. This horizontality derived from a desire for harmony and the belief that long, low, straight lines represented repose, “When the sun sets horizontalism prevails, when we are weary we recline, and the darkness covers up the differences and hides all detail under one harmonious veil, while we, too, close our eyes for rest. What, then, is obviously necessary for the effect of repose in our houses is to avoid angularity and complexity in color, forms or texture, and make our dominating lines horizontal rather than vertical.”⁵² Voysey likened a well-balanced home to a well-balanced mind, “We may cut up our homes as we cut up our thought, with multifarious mixtures of mental pictures and emotions...”⁵³ Truth as expressed through the horizontal profile was also clearly related to Voysey’s principle of blending a house to its landscape and climate. The long, low walls conformed to the earth. The dominant roofs at once sheltered the home from the elements and also anchored the building to the ground, providing a sense of stability.

⁵¹ Voysey, *Individuality*, 108.

⁵² *Ibid.*, 111.

⁵³ *Ibid.*

Another way Voysey held to the truth was his passionate opposition to ornament. He wrote, “Have no ornament which is not sure to inspire pure and noble thought.”⁵⁴ Voysey’s compositions are stripped down to the bare essentials. “Mr. Voysey would no more dream of adding a superfluous buttress than he would add an unnecessary panel of cheap ornament.”⁵⁵ Voysey wrote, “Confusion and elaboration are often used to hide inferior material and workmanship, and create a fictitious effect of value and richness.”⁵⁶ Sparseness also characterized Voysey’s interiors. His ideal space was “a well-proportioned room, with whitewashed walls, plain carpet and simple oak furniture, and nothing in it but necessary articles of use, and one pure ornament in the form of a simple vase of flowers.”⁵⁷ Voysey wrote, “Oak, because it is a native tree, would be used in its native colour; no attempt would be made to make it appear old or like other woods. Wall papers and floor cloth would not be made to imitate tiles or marble. Nothing fashioned to look better than it is, would be tolerated.”⁵⁸ Voysey’s light touch was revolutionary and in dramatic contrast to typical highly ornamented Victorian and Edwardian interiors. Hermann Muthesius describes Voysey’s interiors as ones of, “underlying atmosphere of delicate, almost timid, modesty that recoils in horror from sudden flights of fancy.”⁵⁹ Voysey’s approach to interiors was also reflected in the exteriors of his homes. Invariably

⁵⁴ Anon., “...Makes the Artist,” *The British Architect* 70 (1908).

⁵⁵ “The Revival of English Domestic Architecture, The Work of Mr. C. F. A. Voysey,” *The Studio* 11 (1897): 20.

⁵⁶ Voysey, *Individuality*, 111.

⁵⁷ Charles Voysey, “*The English Home*,” *British Architect* 75 (January 27, 1911): 69.

⁵⁸ Voysey, *Individuality*, 109.

⁵⁹ Hermann Muthesius, *The English House* (New York: Rizzoli, 1979), 42. *Das Englisch Haus* was originally published by Wasmuth, Berlin in 1904.

clad in white washed concrete stucco or white Portland cement, their simplicity was unfussy, clean, and tranquil to the eye.

The interior details of his homes also reflected Voysey's idea of truth and buildings reflecting a sense of moral symbolism. Voysey wrote, "the fireplace is the eye of the room to which you look and gravitate as to the embrace of a friend, so it should be clear, open, frank and large, deep set if you will, but simple and true, not clogged with innumerable surfaces and textures..."⁶⁰ Voysey's wide front doors also held a symbolic importance. He believed that "doors should be wide in proportion to height, to suggest welcome-not stand-officially dignified, like the coffin lid, high and narrow for the entrance of one body only." Voysey believed that a house should "receive its guests with composure and dignity," and once through the wide doorway visitors usually entered a central hall, which Voysey revered with symbolic importance.

Voysey's concern for the mental well-being of his clients also expanded to care for their physical well-being and coincided with the health and sanitary reforms of the period. Voysey opened up spaces allowing freedom of movement and air, particularly in the main living rooms. Bands of casement windows reflected the light. Plain wood floors, white walls, and simple oak furnishings were easy to clean. Easy homecare limited the need for many, if any, servants thus saving his client's money.

Indeed, the principle of economy was another primary guiding force in Voysey's work. According to Muthesius, "Of all the English architects he is the one most interested

⁶⁰ Voysey, *Individuality*, 110

in economy.”⁶¹ Providing sound yet affordable construction was a challenge Voysey satisfied by evoking the homely farmhouse and traditional yeoman country cottage. He was building houses that “compare favorably in cost with the miserable shams of the jobbing builder.”⁶² The clearest example of Voysey’s value of economy was size. Voysey primarily built country homes of modest size. Voysey eliminated space in passages and less important rooms to save room for the more important main living areas. Voysey also built his houses with low ceilings at a maximum of nine feet. While giving a comfortable effect, the main reason was economy. Muthesius claimed, “From the point of view of economics this is one reason why the English house is so cheap. And they are a welcome aid to Voysey in his efforts to build as economically as possible.”

Voysey also used straightforward, inexpensive building materials. Precious marble and stone were eschewed in favor of more economical choices. Roofs were made of local slate. Interiors highlighted unvarnished pine for floors, doors, trim work and cabinetry. Open living spaces limited interior walls. Necessary walls were painted white. The whitewashed exteriors of Voysey’s homes were made of solid, affordable concrete, which made his cottages accessible and within economic reach of new middle-class clients. The broad roughcast concrete exteriors, which characterized the majority of Voysey’s homes, were also an economy as Horace Townsend explained in another *Studio* article. According to Townsend, “Mr. Voysey’s preference for roughcast is based, so he tells me, mainly on its economy. He considers a nine inch brick wall faced with cement

⁶¹ Muthesius, *The English House*, 42.

⁶² “Obituary,” *Architects’ Journal* 93 (1941): 125.

rough-cast is as warm and weather tight as any much more expensive construction.”⁶³

Catherine Gordon has suggested that Charles Ashbee, architect and Arts and Crafts spokesman, could ignore tradition completely and, like Voysey, he often chose to build in rough-cast irrespective of locality... partly for reasons of economy but also, because of its unpretentious neutrality and lack of regional identity.”⁶⁴

Another economizing technique was the use of buttressing on lower floors, “Mr. Voysey employs these buttresses to save the cost of thicker walls for the lower story of his buildings. That they chance to afford pleasant looking shelters for a garden seat and break up the wall surface happily, giving the façade a certain architectural pattern of the shadows he realizes, and is, beyond doubt delighted by the picturesque qualities.”⁶⁵

According to Alan Johnson, the low cost of Voysey’s projects were a major factor in attracting his clients. In a practice uncharacteristic of his architectural colleagues at the time, Voysey estimated the cost of his proposals and “inconspicuously printed it in the description which accompanies the illustration.”⁶⁶ Voysey offered this important bit of information, albeit discreetly, to his patrons. Voysey’s cottage style began to develop in

⁶³ Horace Townsend, “Notes on Country and Suburban Houses Designed by C. F. A. Voysey,” *The Studio* 16 (1899): 158.

⁶⁴ Catherine Gordon, “The Arts and Crafts Architecture of the Cotswold Region,” in *The Arts and Crafts Movement in the Cotswolds*, ed. Mary Greensted (Phoenix Mill, England: Sutton Publishing, 1993), 67.

⁶⁵ “The Revival of English Domestic Architecture, The Work of Mr. C. F. A. Voysey,” *The Studio* 11 (1897): 20.

⁶⁶ Alan Johnson, “C. F. A. Voysey and the Architecture of Moral Reform,” *American Architecture Quarterly* 9 (1977): 27.

1888 with the publication of a cottage design in *The British Architect* (Fig.6).⁶⁷



Figure 6. Cottage design. *British Architect*, 1888. RIBA Library Photographs Division.

The elevation is asymmetrical, long and low, its horizontality accentuated by a recessed ground floor. Windows are set into mullioned bands. The wide front door is recessed behind a modified Tudor arch. The arrangement is interposed by a small tower over the stairwell. The open interior plan contains a picture gallery and a living room on the ground floor. These themes became the foundations of Voysey's later work.⁶⁸

In 1894, a similar and highly representative work "An Artist's Cottage," appeared in the pages of *The Studio* "The cottage...so typical an example of a style he has carried out in many similar instances..."⁶⁹ Here, Voysey paid particular attention to cost.

According to Voysey, "This cottage was designed some years ago to be built of the best materials and in a sound and durable manner, yet as cheaply as possible. Indeed, the spacious cottage home was designed to be constructed for no more than 800 pounds. The principle economy of the construction lay with the use of concrete cement, which was used to build floors, to mix into rough-cast for outer wall surfacing, and to inlay and

⁶⁷ C. F. A. Voysey, "A Cottage for M. H. Lakin Esqre. At Bishops Itchington near Warrick," *The British Architect* (December 7 1888): 7-9.

⁶⁸ Hitchmough, *C. F. A. Voysey*, 35.

⁶⁹ Charles Francis Annesley Voysey, "An Interview with Mr. Charles F. Annesley Voysey," *The Studio* 1 (September 1893): 234.

embed structural timber framing for strength, where a much less supportive concoction of lime would traditionally have been used. To build finely, but of low cost was of the highest consideration to Voysey and it was an idea in alignment with both the overall Arts and Crafts idea of creating simple homes and the social necessity of providing affordable housing to the middle classes. Voysey stressed that, “The habit of being merely tenants, on short leases, of our homes has fostered the vice which crowds foolish and useless objects, . . . into rooms ugly and uncomfortable in themselves.”⁷⁰

One of the finest examples of Voysey’s Cottage Style and the epitome of his principles of truth and economy was called The Orchard (1899) (Fig.7), a house he designed and built for his own family in Chorleywood, a rural suburb just off the Metropolitan subway line minutes from his London office. Like many of his clients, Voysey lived in his country cottage and commuted to work in the city.⁷¹ The Orchard represents a culmination of Voysey’s design philosophies. Lines of red tile weathering and bands of casement windows emphasize its strong horizontal elevation. The home is rooted to the surrounding landscape by its low foundation. Its massive chimney lends the appearance of solidity and the abstract groupings of masses make the house look as if it has grown organically over time. The Orchard, like all of his houses, was an experiment to create a building that was Gothic in spirit yet modern in function. While using the traditional medieval structure as his model, Voysey created a genuine new style. Outwardly so simple in appearance, The Orchard and similar constructions, advanced

⁷⁰ Charles Francis Annesley Voysey, “An Artist’s Cottage Designed by C. F. A. Voysey,” *The Studio* 4 (October 1894): 34.

⁷¹ C. F. A. Voysey, “Mr. C. F. A. Voysey’s House,” *The Architectural Review* 10 (1900): 32.

English domestic architecture, a step toward the reality of the present.



Figure 7. “The Orchard” (1899). Victoria and Albert Museum Library

Voysey and Modernism

Wendy Hitchmough proposes that Voysey was the “precursor of modernism.”⁷² She argues that Voysey’s long, low, white stuccoed country houses, with their stretches of mullioned casement windows fancifully set beneath sweeping tiled roofs, served as an inspiration to Modern European designers. As early as 1893, J. S. Gibson argued in *The Studio* that, “few decorators or architects of our generation have less obviously borrowed from the antique than Mr. Voysey...with its insistent absence not only of ornament as one might be deemed meretricious, but of all mere ornamentation...”⁷³ The popular magazine *Country Life* championed Voysey’s unpretentious retreats as the “ideal cottage

⁷² Hitchmough, *C. F. A. Voysey*, 223.

⁷³ J. S. Gibson, “Artistic Houses,” *The Studio* 16 (September, 1893): 221.

in modern garb.”⁷⁴ Yet Voysey’s designs, so inspiring to the avant-garde, were firmly based in his deep regard for traditional Gothic Medieval forms and for the moral idealism which they implied. Voysey sought purity through the language of architecture. Voysey utilized the unpretentious form of the traditional cottage vernacular and rendered it modern by stripping away needless ornamentation and allowing spaces to stand on structural integrity and quality of craftsmanship.

In 1940, the year before his death, Voysey was awarded the Gold medal from the Royal British Institute of Architects, the highest honor bestowed upon an architect in England. World War I had initiated a halt to architectural building in England. When the war ended, Voysey’s Gothic-based buildings were out of fashion and he mainly worked as a designer of textiles. However, in the 1930s a rediscovery of his work occurred and he was glorified as a pioneer of Modern architecture. Nevertheless, Voysey was not comfortable with this designation. In 1935 Voysey wrote in a letter published in the

Architect’s Journal:

It has more than once been stated and printed that I was in a measure the instigator, pioneer, or original cause of the modern movement in architecture; in some way responsible for the square, roofless buildings we now see, unfortunately, not only in our own country. I am sure that those who express such a view have no intention of libeling me.⁷⁵

While Voysey denied his influence on European Modernism, the relation exists. In the early 1900s, German architectural writer Hermann Muthesius introduced Voysey’s work to European Architects and designers in his book *Das Englisch Haus*. Voysey also exhibited in Europe in 1892 in Paris and in 1902 in Turin. His designs were published in

⁷⁴ “Country Cottages,” *Country Life* 3 (February 1898): 196.

⁷⁵ C. F. Annesley Voysey, “Letter to Editor,” *Architect’s Journal* 81 (March 14, 1935): 408.

in the 1890s in France, Germany, and Belgium. According to *The Architectural Review*, English Domestic Architecture was, "...a revelation to the Academy-ridden Continent,"⁷⁶ which had not experienced a Gothic, nor a vernacular, revival, "the casual rather than conscious characteristics of English Cottage planning-appeared to Continental eyes as a kind of inspired asymmetry."⁷⁷ "The movement towards a new sanity and a visual aesthetic (modernism) which flourished on the Continent in 1918...owes one of the biggest debts to Voysey and Mackintosh's pioneer work."⁷⁸ "Voysey demonstrated just how far one could go in stripping and reorganizing traditional vernacular form."⁷⁹ Gebhard goes on to suggest that the true modernists took Voysey's idea but went one step further, throwing aside all tradition. Gebhard claims that Voysey's most direct connection with 20th century architecture does not lie with the modern but with the imagery and ideas behind the Spanish Colonial Revival Movement in Southern California in the 1920s.⁸⁰ Like Voysey's Gothic models, the Spanish Colonial Revival was based on the traditional vernacular architecture of the region, including indigenous adobe buildings and the missions of the Spanish colonization.

Specifically, the work of American architect Irving Gill (1870–1936) represents a direct link to that of Voysey's in England. Both men looked to the preindustrial for

⁷⁶ J. M. Richards, "Obituary, C. F. A. Voysey, 1857–1941," *Architectural Review* 89 (March 1941): 112–113.

⁷⁷ Ibid.

⁷⁸ Ibid.

⁷⁹ Gebhard, *Charles F. A. Voysey Architect*, 26.

⁸⁰ Ibid.

inspiration to build, “simple, affordable, and hygienic housing.”⁸¹ Like Voysey, Gill was primarily a designer of residences and built over one hundred houses. Gill was the son of a builder in Syracuse, New York. He trained in Chicago with Louis Sullivan, eventually moving to San Diego, California for his health in 1893.⁸² Enamored of the landscape and the regional architecture, Gill utilized the simple forms and surfaces of the local adobe buildings as his model for a new stripped style, which according to Blakesley, “prefigured the modern style.”⁸³ Gill’s homes, like Voysey’s, were unadorned and white inside and out, set restfully against the blue California skies. White set off the fundamental geometric shapes of his designs. Like the Gothic architects, Gill admired structural simplicity and wrote, “Any deviation from simplicity results in a loss of dignity. Ornaments tend to cheapen rather than to enrich, they acknowledge inefficiency and weakness.”⁸⁴

Gill shared another important quality with Voysey; a desire to connect social ideals and the use of symbolism. David Handlin maintains that Gill’s “units of architectural language had a basis in nature and was endowed with a higher significance.”⁸⁵ In a sentiment which greatly recalls Voysey, Gill wrote, “The straight line was associated with the horizon and was a symbol of greatness, grandeur and

⁸¹ Rosalind P. Blakesley, *The Arts and Crafts Movement* (London: Phaidon, 2006), 236.

⁸² David Handlin, *The American Home: Architecture and Society, 1815–1915* (New York: Scott Foresman and Company, 1981), 299.

⁸³ Blakesley, *The Arts and Crafts Movement*, 236.

⁸⁴ Irving Gill, “The Home of the Future: The New Architecture of the West: Small Homes for a Great Country,” in Barry Sanders ed. *The Craftsman: An Anthology* (Santa Barbara and Salt Lake City: Peregrine Smith, Inc., 1979): 310.

⁸⁵ Handlin, *The American Home*, 298.

nobility. The arch recalled the dome of the sky... The circle was the sign of completeness... and the square was the symbol of power, justice, honesty and fitness.”⁸⁶ Gill had a basic language and adapted it to all of his buildings, whether it was the substantial residence of a commercial tycoon, as in the Dodge House in West Hollywood (Fig. 8), or in a grouping of cottages for low-income residents in Sierra Madre (Fig.9).

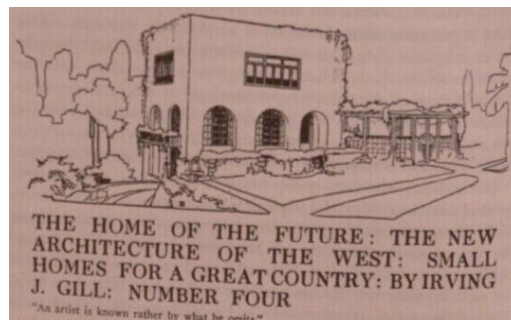


Figure 8: Dodge House, Los Angeles, California. Architect: Irving Gill. “The Home of the Future,” *The Craftsman*.

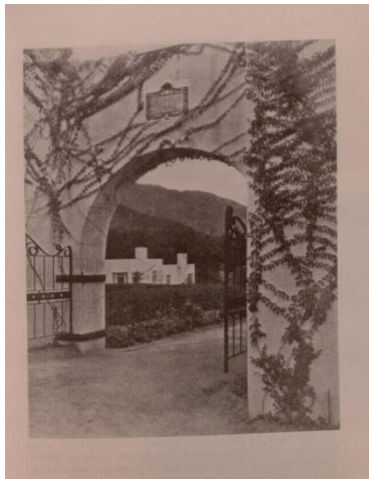


Figure 9: Sierra Madre homes. Architect: Irving Gill. *The Craftsman*

⁸⁶ Gill, “The Home of the Future,” 310.

Gill was also at the forefront of a movement to create affordable and manageable modern American Cummings and Wendy Kaplan state that, “He considered such minimalism to be both aesthetically and ethically correct. Gill was deeply concerned with low-cost housing and believed it would be more viable with less attention to useless ornament and more to structure.”⁸⁷ Gill’s ideas on health and sanitary design echoed Voysey’s. Gill wrote, “In California we have long been experimenting with the idea of producing a perfectly sanitary, labor-saving house, one where the maximum of comfort may be had with the minimum of drudgery.”⁸⁸ To this end, Gill designed homes without wooden moldings and casings, with rounded corners to eliminate dust. Sink drain boards were fashioned out of magnesite with rounded cornices. Bathtub areas were encased in magnesite. Ice boxes were filled from the outside to eliminate ice men from walking into the kitchen tracking dirt into the kitchen. Letter boxes opened from within and garbage cans were separated from living areas. Gill wrote of designing kitchens for convenience homes. Elizabeth and economy of labor.⁸⁹ To the end, Gill maintained his principle of a link between highly individual collections of work frequently credited as anticipatory of modernism.

**America Discovers English Arts and Crafts and the Work of Charles Voysey
through Increased Exhibition, Commerce, and Publication**

The influence of the English Arts and Crafts and of Voysey’s work in particular,

⁸⁷ Elizabeth Cummings and Wendy Kaplan, *The Arts and Crafts Movement* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1991), 128.

⁸⁸ *Ibid.*

⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, 311.

was not lost on American architects of the period, such as Irving Gill. It is safe to say that during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, knowledge of Arts and Crafts movement designers reached the United States through the increased exhibition, commercialization, and publication of their work.

In 1875, William Morris established Morris and Co. With workshops based in Surrey, Morris's goal was to unite the crafts, including pottery, textiles, metal work, glass work, decorative painting, book binding, etc. It was the first commercial enterprise to display Arts and Crafts work. In 1877, Morris & Co. opened a retail showroom in London to reach more customers. The London showroom was a place of inspiration to other designers who were seeing Arts and Crafts work for the first time. Hitchmough indicates that Voysey attributed Morris and Co. and its retail outlet with laying the foundation for the commercialization of his own wallpapers and textiles.⁹⁰

One of the many organizations, which followed Morris's example of producing a diversified selection of decorative goods for sale, was The Century Guild, founded by another Arts and Crafts architect/designer A. H. Mackmurdo in 1882. In a similar approach in 1884, the Arts Worker's Guild was formed. The Art Worker's Guild was a private member-elected group which brought together architects, painters, designers, and decorative artists. The Guild sponsored lectures, debates, and demonstrations of craft work. According to Hitchmough, the Guild also revoked "the artificial divisions which had grown up between painting, sculpture, architecture and the decorative arts. Painters were encouraged to produce cartoons for stained glass and tapestry while architects

⁹⁰ Hitchmough, *C. F. A. Voysey*, 18.

explored every craft from decorative plaster to metalwork.”⁹¹ In 1887, Guild members organized the Arts and Crafts Exhibition Society, as a vehicle to display and sell their work. The Exhibition Societies’ first show in 1888 took place at New Gallery in London and highlighted over five hundred items. Popular writer and Arts and Crafts supporter George Bernard Shaw wrote of the exhibition, “It has been for a long time past evident that the first step towards making our picture galleries enduring is to get rid of the pictures... signboards all of them of the wasted and perverted ambition of men who might have been passably useful as architects, engineers, potters, cabinet-makers, smiths, or bookbinders.”⁹²

Charles Voysey was a member of both The Art Workers Guild and the Arts and Crafts Exhibition Society, where he stood out as both an architecture and decorative designer. Voysey sold his first wallpaper design to manufacturer Jeffrey & Co. in 1883.⁹³ Throughout his career he produced designs for wallpaper, fabrics, carpets, and tiles. While he preferred plain white walls for his own houses, Voysey felt wallpaper was acceptable for rooms which were less than perfect.⁹⁴ Voysey commented that “a wallpaper is of course only a background, and were your furniture good in form and colour a very simple or quite undecorated treatment of the walls would be preferable.”⁹⁵ In 1896, *The Studio* observed that Voysey had become to wallpaper what “Wellington

⁹¹ Wendy Hitchmough, “C. F. A. Voysey & the Art of Good Publicity,” *Style 1900* 13 (Spring-Summer 2000): 57.

⁹² George Bernard Shaw, *Pall Mall Gazette* 44 (August 12 1886): 1.

⁹³ Hitchmough, *C. F. A. Voysey*, 58.

⁹⁴ Kaplan, *The Art that is Life: The Arts and Crafts Movement in America*, 82.

⁹⁵ “An Interview with Charles F. Annesley Voysey, architect and designer,” *The Studio* 1(1893).

had become to the boot.”⁹⁶ Hitchmough contends that “Voysey’s decorative designs provided his young practice with an essential source of income.”⁹⁷

Voysey’s decorative works were displayed by the Exhibition Society, along with his furniture designs, to a wide audience in London, including tourists from America and Europe. The first American Society to model itself on the Exhibition Society was the Boston Society of Arts and Crafts (BSAC) in 1897. The BSAC displayed and sold the craft work of its members and collections from abroad. Soon, similar societies developed in Chicago, New York, Minneapolis, and Detroit. Typically, the Exhibition Society exhibited on a triennial basis. Voysey’s work, including architectural drawings, furniture, wallpaper, and carpet, featured in exhibits in 1893, 1896, 1899, and 1903.

Another prominent commercial venue for Voysey and other Arts and Crafts designer’s work was the Liberty Shops. Liberty & Co. on Regent Street in London began selling oriental textiles in 1870. From about 1890, Liberty also began selling Arts and Crafts furniture, textiles, metal work, and pottery.⁹⁸ Liberty sold machine made versions of silverwork from Charles Ashbee’s Guild of Handicraft, as well. Another shop, Heals of the Tottenham Court Road, also sold Arts and Crafts work, mainly textiles, and typically less expensive than in the Arts and Crafts workshops, making Arts and Crafts goods more widely accessible.⁹⁹ Voysey recognized that without “the retail marketing of Morris’s own shop and that of Liberty, the market for his wallpaper, fabric, and furniture

⁹⁶ *The Studio* (1896) in Wendy Hitchmough “C. F. A. Voysey & the Art of Good Publicity,” *Style 1900* 13 (Spring-Summer 2000): 55.

⁹⁷ Hitchmough, *C. F. A. Voysey*, 31.

⁹⁸ Kaplan, *The Art that is Life*, 55.

⁹⁹ Blakesley, *The Arts and Crafts Movement*, 82.

designs would not have existed.”¹⁰⁰ Commercial shops such as Liberty & Co. and Heals increased the accessibility of Arts and Crafts goods.

Arts and Crafts design was also widely supported in a flourish of new arts and architecture related publications which developed in the late nineteenth century, including professional periodicals, popular magazines, and books. In 1884, the Century Guild published the first Arts and Crafts periodical called *The Century Guild Hobby Horse*.¹⁰¹ According to Blakesley, *The Hobby Horse* “became the first magazine in Britain to see itself as a work of art, spawning a host of similarly self-conscious publications and establishing graphics and book production as an important part of Arts and Crafts design.”¹⁰² In 1893, a new periodical called *The Studio* (later called the *International Studio*) became the most prolific disseminator of English Arts and Crafts ideals.¹⁰³ In its first issue, Charles Voysey was highlighted in, “An Interview with Mr. Charles F. A. Voysey, Architect and Designer.”¹⁰⁴ Voysey featured in *The Studio* seven more times from 1893 to 1905.

English periodicals specifically devoted to architecture also appeared in the late nineteenth century including *Academy Architecture*, *The Architect*, *The Architectural Review*, *The British Architect*, *The Builder*, *The Builder’s Journal* and *Architectural*

¹⁰⁰ Ibid., 18.

¹⁰¹ *The Century Guild Hobby Horse* was published from 1884–1892, with four issues published as *The Hobby Horse* in 1893–4.

¹⁰² Blakesley, *The Arts and Crafts Movement*, 55–56.

¹⁰³ *The Studio* ran from 1893–1968. In 1968 its name changed to *The Studio International* and continues to the present.

¹⁰⁴ “An Interview with Mr. Charles F. A. Voysey, Architect and Designer.” *The Studio* 1 (1893): 231–237.

Record, and *The Journal of the Royal Institute of British Architects* (RIBA) and all included material on Arts and Crafts. In America, *The American Architect and Building News*, *The Craftsman*, *House and Garden*, *The House Beautiful*, *The Ideal House* featured Arts and Crafts architectural work. In 1904, Langford Warren commented in *The Boston Architectural Review* that “it is not too much to say that no other nation has succeeded in developing a domestic architecture having the subtle and intimate charm which in the English country house makes so strong an appeal to the love of home as well as to the love of beauty.”¹⁰⁵ Warren’s article which featured Voysey and other contemporary English architects extolled the “notable revivification of the old traditions and...application of the old forms to the needs of modern domestic life.”¹⁰⁶ Warren continued that “our own best work, like that of England, will be done by founding it on the sound traditions of England’s past, modifying these traditions frankly and fearlessly in the spirit of the old work to meet our new wants and new conditions.”¹⁰⁷ Voysey’s roughcast, long-windowed, low-roofed houses were also widely exhibited in the United States in *The Architect* from 1888 to 1916 and from 1889 to 1918 in *The British Architect*.

Popular English magazines also highlighted Voysey’s designs. According to Hitchmough, in one of the magazines first issues, *Country Life* “identified the pressing

¹⁰⁵ Warren, H. Langford, “Recent Domestic Architecture in England,” *Architectural Review* 11 (1904): 5.

¹⁰⁶ *Ibid.*, 12.

¹⁰⁷ *Ibid.*, 12.

demand for country cottages.”¹⁰⁸ Voysey’s modern cottages were highly promoted to *Country Life*’s readers as, “comfortable and lasting, with a curiously home-like appearance, that makes them harmonize with pastoral scenery in a way few modern houses have done before.”¹⁰⁹ From 1898 until 1927, Voysey’s cottage designs were featured five times in *Country Life*.

Architectural books featured Arts and Crafts architectural work, as well. German architect Herman Muthesius was instrumental in publicizing English Domestic work to a wide audience. Muthesius was appointed by the German government to their embassy in London in 1896 to observe and write about British architecture and decorative art. For seven years he traveled throughout Britain and gathered material for his three-volume work, *Das Englisch Haus*, which analyzed the regional architecture.¹¹⁰ According to Muthesius, “It is most instructive to note...that a movement opposing the imitation of styles and seeking closer ties with simple rural buildings, which began over fifty years ago, has had the most gratifying results.”¹¹¹ Muthesius pointed out that it was Voysey who stood out amongst the English domestic architects, “At all events Voysey is the most individualistic of the busy domestic architects in London today.”¹¹² According to Hitchmough, Voysey achieved, “an influential position in the German speaking world by keeping Hermann Muthesius and the editors of *Dekorative Kunst* and *Modern Bauformen*

¹⁰⁸ Hitchmough, “C. F. A. Voysey and the Art of Good Publicity,” 59.

¹⁰⁹ E.B.S, “Country Cottages,” *Country Life* 3 (February 19, 1898): 195.

¹¹⁰ Kaplan, *The Arts and Crafts Movement in Europe and America*, 70.

¹¹¹ Muthesius, *Das Englische Haus*, 10.

¹¹² *Ibid.*, 43.

supplied with exquisite images of his buildings.”¹¹³

Sir Nikolaus Pevsner (1902–1983), a German born British architectural historian was the author of numerous books on modern and English architecture including: *Pioneers of the Modern Movement: from William Morris to Walter Gropius, An Outline of European Architecture* and the forty-six volume series, *The Buildings of England* (1951–74). As the editor of the *Architectural Review* and as a professor of architectural history at the University of London, Oxford University and Cambridge University, Pevsner stood at the forefront of architectural discussion throughout from the 1930s to late twentieth century. Hitchmough maintains that Voysey owed much of his lasting reputation to his rediscovery by Pevsner in the 1930s.¹¹⁴ In a tribute to Voysey at the time of his death in 1941, Pevsner wrote, “The Voysey of about 1890 was the leading European representative of the stage in architecture and design following that of Morris.”¹¹⁵

In 1894, Voysey began writing himself. Voysey’s first article was “Domestic Furniture” for *RIBA*, the journal of the Royal Institute of British Architects.¹¹⁶ In 1895, Voysey followed with “The Aims and Conditions of Modern Decoration,” for the *Journal of Decorative Art*.¹¹⁷ Voysey’s extensive list of publications in journals resulted

¹¹³ Wendy Hitchmough, “C. F. A. Voysey,” *Crafts* (May/June 2001): 28.

¹¹⁴ Hitchmough, “C. F. A. Voysey: The Art of Good Publicity,” 56.

¹¹⁵ Nikolaus Pevsner, “Charles F. Annesley Voysey, 1858–1941: a tribute by Nikolaus Pevsner,” *Architectural Review* 89 (May 1941): 112.

¹¹⁶ C. F.A Voysey, “Domestic Furniture,” *R.I.B.A. Journal* 1(1894): 415–418.

¹¹⁷ C. F. A. Voysey, “The Aims and Conditions of Modern Decoration,” *Journal of Decorative Art* 15(April 1895): 82–90.

in a lengthy monograph called *Reason as the Bases of Art* (1906).¹¹⁸ In 1915, he followed with a book called *Individuality*, in which according to Alan Johnson, “C. F.A. Voysey became imbued with individualism as a way of life and eventually sought to promote it in his book.”¹¹⁹ Furthermore, John Betjeman wrote, “It is a work of more importance than any detailed biography could be, for it expounds the religion of the architect and the consequent reverence with which he made his buildings.”¹²⁰

Voysey’s work reached America through both British and American publications. In 1903, Voysey was featured in a special issue of *House and Garden* magazine highlighting the work of Arts and Crafts designers in England,¹²¹ including an article focusing on his own work, “Some Recent Work of C. F. A. Voysey, an English Architect.”¹²² Voysey was also frequently exhibited in *The Craftsman* (1901–1916), a monthly journal which became the most influential promoter of the Arts and Crafts Movement in America. In a 1909 *Craftsman* article entitled, “Arts and Crafts in America: Work or Play,” Ernest Batchelder argues that “Arts and Crafts sought to demonstrate the value of art combined with honest workmanship when applied to useful service.”¹²³ Indeed, *The Craftsman* magazine included many philosophical and practical articles on

¹¹⁸ C. F. A. Voysey, *Reason as the Bases of Art* (London: Mathews, 1906).

¹¹⁹ Alan Johnson, “Voysey Exhibited,” *Architectural Review* (October 1931): 2.

¹²⁰ John Betjeman, Charles Francis Annesley Voysey: The Architect of Individualism, *The Architectural Review* 70 (October 1931): 95.

¹²¹ Edward W. Gregory, “The Seventh Exhibition of Arts and Crafts in London,” *House and Garden* 3 (April 1903): 208–213.

¹²² M. B., “Some Recent Work of C. F. A. Voysey, an English Architect,” *House and Garden* 3 (April 1903): 255–260.

¹²³ Ernest A. Batchelder, “The Arts and Crafts in America: Work or Play,” *The Craftsman* 16, no. 5 (1909): 544.

the meaning and implementation of an Arts and Crafts design in America.

The Craftsman was the brainchild of Syracuse, New York furniture-maker Gustav Stickley who admired the ideas and work of William Morris and other Arts and Crafts designers in England. Stickley traveled to England in 1895 and again in 1896 to see in person the work he admired in British art and architectural publications. David M. Cathers argues that before his expeditions to Europe, Stickley was a typical nineteenth-century furniture manufacturer of the time, “producing Victorian parlor suites and Chippendale reproductions.”¹²⁴ T. J. Jackson Lears maintains, “The stolid, ambitious son of Scandinavian immigrants, he worked in his uncle’s chair factory and rose quickly to become manager and foreman. His appetite for self-improvement led the young journeyman woodworker to read Carlyle, Ruskin and Morris.”¹²⁵ The expeditions to Europe transformed Stickley as a designer and craftsman. In London, Stickley attended the Arts and Crafts Exposition of 1895, featuring the work of the most innovative furniture makers of the movement including Charles Voysey, C. R. Mackintosh and M. H. Baillie Scott.¹²⁶ According to Freeman, “Stickley never met Ruskin or Morris...but Stickley did meet Cobden-Sanderson, Lethaby, Parker, Unwin, C. R. Ashbee, Voysey,

¹²⁴ David Cathers, *Stickley Craftsman Furniture Catalogs: Unabridged Reprints of Two Mission Furniture Catalogs* (New York: Dover Publications, 1979), iv, introduction.

¹²⁵ T. J. Jackson Lears, *No Place of Grace: Antimodernism and the Transformation of American Culture, 1880–1920* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1981), 54.

¹²⁶ David Cathers, *Stickley Craftsman Furniture Catalogs: Unabridged Reprints of Two Mission Furniture Catalogs* (New York: Dover Publications, 1979), iii.

Heal, Henry etc...”¹²⁷ Stickley returned to America with a stationary case designed by Voysey and a spark of inspiration.

Stirred by what he had seen abroad, Stickley transformed his design work to reflect Arts and Crafts principles. In 1901 Stickley renamed his furniture company from The Gustav Stickley Company to The United Crafts, reflecting a new interest in English socialist ideals and suggesting a worker’s cooperative similar to Charles Ashbee’s Guild of Workers at Chipping Campden. However, while Stickley experimented with worker’s shareholding from 1900–1904, he remained the company’s sole owner. For the Grand Rapids Trade Show of July 1900 Stickley’s designs developed from typically ornate late Victorian pieces to rational white oak constructions, which revealed joinery and natural wood grain, based on English Arts and Crafts work. Between the years 1901 and 1913, Stickley produced a series of furniture catalogs, increasing his market beyond traditional furniture shows. David Cathers maintains that the furniture catalogs were always intended as to be instructive as well as promotional. Soon, Stickley extended his publishing efforts from furniture catalogs to intellectual work by forming the influential journal *The Craftsman: An Illustrated Monthly Magazine for the Simplification of Life* in 1901.

From 1902 until 1912, Voysey was featured extensively in *The Craftsman*. In 1902, he was cited, “among the architects, the conspicuous leader in the Movement.”¹²⁸ In “An Artistic Use of Holly” (1903), Stickley displays an inlaid cabinet designed by

¹²⁷ Freeman, *The Forgotten Rebel: Gustave Stickley and his Craftsman Furniture* (Watkins Glen, NY: Century House, 1966), 44.

¹²⁸ A. D. F. Hamlin, “L’Art Nouveau, its Origin and Development,” *The Craftsman* 3, no. 3 (1902): 141.

Voysey, imported from England and exhibited in the Arts and Crafts Exhibition of March 1903.¹²⁹ Again in 1903, three of Voysey's wallpaper designs are exhibited in, "The Child Benefited by Simple Toys."¹³⁰ In 1905, Voysey received special attention in an article in *The Craftsman* by Antoinette Rehmman, "The Modern House Beautiful—An Exhortation." In it Rehmman wrote, "The Modern English House, designed by such men as Voysey, Baillie Scott, George Walton, Lutyens, and Brierley is a very good solution of the problems of modern life."¹³¹ In 1906, Voysey's "Design for a Country House," is seen in the article, "A Row of Craftsman Houses."¹³² In 1908, items from the Annual Arts Exhibition at the National Arts Club, New York City are exhibited with, "designs influenced by Voysey."¹³³ Also in 1908, Stickley cited Voysey's designs in an article promoting industrial training schools for boys.¹³⁴

In the following period of 1910 to 1912, Voysey continued to be a popular feature in *The Craftsman*. Both his designs and his viewpoints were highlighted in a number of articles, furthering his influence in America. In 1910, English architect Barry Parker wrote in his article, "Modern Country Homes in England," "Mr. C. F. A. Voysey once suggested that, 'architecture was not the art of fitting the requirements of a Borough

¹²⁹ "An Artistic Use of Holly," *The Craftsman* 4, no. 5 (1903): 369.

¹³⁰ "The Child Benefited by Simple Toys," *The Craftsman* 5, no. 3(1903): 298–304.

¹³¹ Rehmman, Antoinette, "The Modern House Beautiful—An Exhortation," *The Craftsman* 7, no. 5 (1905): 569.

¹³² "A Row of Craftsman Houses," *The Craftsman* 11, no. 2 (1906): 274.

¹³³ "The Annual Arts and Crafts Exhibition at the National Arts Club, New York," *The Craftsman* 13, no. 4 (1908): 484.

¹³⁴ Gustav Stickley, "How the Government Could Aid in Bringing about a Much Needed Reform in the Industrial System in this Country," *The Craftsman* 13, no. 5 (1908): 561.

Council into a Greek temple of a Roman bath.”¹³⁵ In 1911, Voysey integration of furniture and home design was explored at length in, “Special Furniture Designed for Individual Homes: Illustrated by the work of C. F. A. Voysey.” Also in 1911 an extended article on furniture design was illustrated with exterior views of a number of Voysey’s houses including ‘Holly Mount’ at Beaconfield, ‘Littleholme’ near Kendal and ‘The Homestead’ at Frinton-on-Sea.¹³⁶ In “Modern Swiss Houses for People of Moderate Means,” Voysey and architect/planners Raymond Unwin and Barry Parker are cited as the primary designers of small houses for professional people.¹³⁷ In “Handicraft in Today’s Civilization: A Survey of Conditions in Europe and America,” Voysey is cited as inspiration for Stickley, “Mr. Stickley had the opportunity in England of talking over the Arts and Crafts problem at length with Mr. Charles F. A. Voysey, and when he returned to America he brought home specimens of this craftsman’s work, which at the time was regarded as the most significant and individual in England.”¹³⁸ Also in 1911, Voysey wrote an essay on “The Quality and Fitness in Architecture and Furniture.” In it he declared that “fitness is divine law, and by fitness we mean not only material suitability, but moral fitness—that which expresses our best thoughts and feelings, and our

¹³⁵ Barry Parker, “Modern Country Homes in England: number eight,” *The Craftsman* 19, no. 2 (1910): 177.

¹³⁶ Edward W. Gregory, “Modern Furniture, the Work of English Craftsmen,” *The Craftsman* 21, no. 1 (1911): 89–95.

¹³⁷ “Modern Swiss Houses for People of Moderate Means,” *The Craftsman* 21, no. 4 (1912): 427.

¹³⁸ “Handicraft in Today’s Civilization: a survey of conditions in Europe and America,” *The Craftsman* 22, no. 1 (1912): 302.

purest moral sense. We must recoil at all forms of dishonesty.”¹³⁹

While the *Craftsman*'s audience was wide and primarily middle class, the more elite members of the various Arts and Crafts societies, which emerged in the United States after the development of the Boston Society of Arts and Crafts in 1897, were enthusiastic for its ideas. They discovered Voysey within its pages. Like Voysey, Stickley was an intellectual and social theorist who believed that design related to high moral virtue. While Voysey borrowed from the medieval cottage for his precedent, Stickley borrowed from the folklore of early American log building and the English cottage to conjure up meanings and sentiments that appealed to a large segment of the American population.

Like *The Studio*, the voice of the Arts and Crafts Movement in Britain which widely promoted and published cottage designs, *The Craftsman* also disseminated cottage and bungalow designs for its American middle-class audience and the members of the myriad Arts and Crafts Societies in the US. In “A Cottage along English Lines,” which appeared in *The Craftsman* in 1909, the E. Drusille Ford proposed that “if we raise our conception of a home to the plain of the individual, it ceases to be dependent upon the style of a given period and becomes a law unto itself, being the satisfaction of specific needs.”¹⁴⁰ This idea echoes Voysey's principle of truth, “We cannot be too simple.”¹⁴¹ In

¹³⁹ Charles Francis Annesley Voysey, “The Quality and Fitness of Architecture,” *The Craftsman* 23, no. 2 (1912): 174–182.

¹⁴⁰ E. Drusille Ford, “A Cottage along English Lines with Certain Unusual Tendencies,” *The Craftsman* 16, no. 4 (1909): 464.

¹⁴¹ C. F. A. Voysey, “Report of a dinner given by President and Council to mark the jubilee year of his practice, *R.I.B.A Journal* 35 (November 26, 1927): 52.

“Modern British Country Homes,” which appeared in *The Craftsman* in 1910, English Arts and Crafts architect Barry Parker proclaimed that the art of building a home can be summed up “as a plea for honesty...and a conviction that a different spirit is necessary...in the practice of domestic architecture before it could again become a living art.”¹⁴² In “Two Simple Craftsman Cottages for the Accommodation of Small Families,” the author discusses the English Arts and Crafts influence with “thanks to the quickness of the American people to adopt and put into effect a new idea when once they have become convinced that it is sensible and therefore desirable, simplicity in designing, building and furnishing homes has come to be the usual thing instead of the rather eccentric thing it was only a few years ago”¹⁴³ This article also references the English Domestic architects’ call to build modest homes for middle-class families.

Voysey’s distinctive strain of comfortable, modest-sized country homes and cottages, both traditional in their vernacular antecedent yet modern in their stark simplicity, exerted a powerful and influential effect on English and American design in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Voysey’s homes reflect the Arts and Crafts mission to reform architectural design by looking back to healthier, simpler, preindustrial forms, primarily based on the rural medieval cottage. Voysey’s homes were predominantly located in the country and promoted the rural ideal associated with designers of the English Domestic Revival, who catered to middle class professionals, escaping cities made unwholesome by industrialization and mass urbanization, for a

¹⁴²Barry Parker, “Modern Country Homes in England: number one,” *The Craftsman* 18, no. 1 (1910): 3.

¹⁴³ “Two Simple Craftsman Cottages for the Accommodation of the Small Family,” *The Craftsman* 18, no. 3 (1910): 379.

restorative life in the country. Voysey was an intellectual whose widely publicized ideas about design, were related to his strong ideas about morality and honesty. To Voysey “honest” design was simple, solid, bonded to the landscape, free of excess ornamentation and based on English, not Continental precedent. Voysey’s simple homes were meant to be affordable and accessible and in that sense, his designs inspired a similar cottage movement in Europe and America, promoted in the pages of Arts and Crafts periodicals such as *The Studio* and in Gustav Stickley’s *The Craftsman* magazine. Voysey’s desire to create modest, sensible manageable yet beautiful single-family homes can be directly related to the desire for small, simple homes in the United States.

CHAPTER THREE
ECONOMICAL, SAFE, HEALTHY, AND ATTRACTIVE:
PROGRESSIVE ERA ARCHITECTS AND HOUSING REFORMERS ENDORSE
CONCRETE HOUSES

In the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, concrete houses were widely promoted by Charles Voysey and other Progressive Era architects of the Arts and Crafts Movement in Britain and later in the United States. Publications such as *The Concrete House Magazine*; *Atlas Portland Cement's Plans for Concrete Homes*; *Radford's Homes for Everyone*; articles and plans in American designer Gustav Stickley's influential *Craftsman* journal; countless building industry pamphlets; and magazine advertisements, primarily sponsored by the powerful Portland Cement Association, indicate that a concrete house was an economical, safe, healthy and attractive alternative to traditional wood or masonry construction. Specifically, concrete was a popular building material used in the residential construction of many early twentieth-century homes. Smooth or roughcast, concrete stucco characterized exteriors, while poured and reinforced concrete forms or molded blocks often formed the base walls to which this stucco was applied. Concrete floors, roof tiles, structural columns, and even garden ornaments were clever uses of this cost effective material. This chapter surveys some significant developments and innovations in the production and use of Portland Cement-based concrete, first mass produced in Britain in the 1870s. Specifically, this chapter examines how and why

concrete was used in domestic construction of all types, shapes and sizes. However manipulated, concrete became a major element in Progressive Era design.

Technological Innovations: The History of Portland Cement and its Proliferation

Historically, medieval Cotswold cottages built by English yeoman farmers were comprised largely of stucco, or what the English call “renders.” This type of stucco was made of a variety of materials, such as horse hair, straw, or hay typically mixed with a binding agent made of lime. Portland Cement, so called because when it hardened it resembled the English building stone quarried on the Isle of Portland, was patented in 1824 by English mason George Aspdin.¹ It was a much harder and more durable concrete binder than lime or any other naturally occurring cement. Cement is a finely ground mixture of limestone and clay creating a hydraulic adhesive which hardened with the addition of water. Cement is a component of concrete and is used to fill voids between pieces of fine aggregate, such as sand or crushed stone. The result resembles rock.² The development of Portland Cement and experimentation with concrete molds, blocks, aggregates as well as other improvements in concrete reinforcement technology influenced the popularity of modern Cottage Style homes in Britain and later of similarly modest homes in America. Indeed, the new developments in concrete technology allowed for a rejuvenation of the traditional cottage, so endearing to English memory, but in a more practical, low maintenance form. These homes were accessible to the burgeoning middle classes searching for a retreat from crowded, over industrialized urban centers.

¹ Aly Ahmed Raafat, *Reinforced Concrete in Architecture* (New York: Reinhold Publishing Corporation, 1958), 16.

² *Ibid.*, 15–16.

Knowledge of concrete as a construction material reached American shores in the mid-nineteenth century and builders were quick to embrace it for houses. The Joseph Goodrich House constructed in 1844 in Milton, Wisconsin was an inspiration to many American builders. Built of stone, gravel and sand mixed with Portland Cement that had been imported from England, the house was featured in a book *A Home for All, the Gravel Wall or Octagon Mode of Building* (1853) by O. S. Fowler. Fowler believed that concrete would one day revolutionize the housing industry.³ After Fowler's book, further experimentation occurred. Compared to wood, always at risk to the ravages of time, fire, and vermin, concrete's economy, promise of permanence and ability to withstand fire seemed very attractive.

Throughout the late nineteenth century, other iconic examples of experimental concrete construction appeared. In 1858, American journalist and editor of the *New York Tribune*, Horace Greeley built one of the oldest concrete buildings in America, a barn, in Westchester County, New York. In 1868, Greeley wrote, "Building with concrete is still a novelty and was far so ten years ago when I built my barn. I could now build better and cheaper, but I am glad that I need not. I calculate that this barn will be abidingly useful long after I shall be utterly forgotten."⁴ Also notably, William Ward of Port Chester, New York built Ward's Castle in 1875. Ward imported 4000 barrels of Portland Cement from England and to which he added 8,000 barrels of sand, 12,000 barrels of crushed stone, and round iron rods for reinforcement. The solid concrete walls and roof were the

³ O. S. Fowler, *A Home for All, The Gravel Wall or Octagon Mode of Building* (New York: Fowler and Wells, 1854).

⁴ Horace Greeley, *Recollections of a Busy Life*, in Raafat, *Reinforced Concrete in Architecture*, 15.

plastered in concrete stucco. Ward's Castle survives today as a National Landmark recorded as the first reinforced concrete structure in the United States.⁵

Although there was a minor boom in concrete building in the post-Civil War era, the major thrust of the concrete housing movement occurred after 1880 with improvements in reinforcement technology.⁶ From about 1900 to 1929, thousands of single family concrete homes were built across the country. Sizes ranged from small homes to country estates. Concrete's importance lie in its ability to be manipulated into a variety of forms, including block, poured molds, and stuccos. Concrete blocks were used in their simple form for utilitarian buildings as David Handlin suggests "housing for laborers, factories, and after the turn of the century, automobile garages."⁷ Inventors such as Milton Dana Morrill and Thomas Edison utilized poured concrete molds as way to solve the housing problem by offering fast, economical home construction for the middle class. Industrialists used the poured concrete method to provide affordable homes for factory workers. Concrete blocks and cast forms were also used as a base for more elaborate smooth or roughcast coverings. Handlin also discusses how architects experimented with different textures, impressing shapes, or adding colored tiles.⁸ When carefully applied, stucco could mimic stone or even marble. Architect Albert Kahn, well known for his concrete automobile factories, built for the Ford Motor Company, also designed concrete mansions for wealthy clients such as the Edsel and Eleanor Ford

⁵ "Concrete Homes of Yesterday," *Concrete Construction* 34 (August 1989): 720.

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ David Handlin, *The American Home: Architecture and Society, 1815-1915* (New York: Scott Foresman and Company), 280.

⁸ Ibid.

Estate, a grand English Cottage design located on the shores of Lake St. Clair, just outside of Detroit.⁹ In California, early modernist architect Irving Gill built cottages, apartment blocks and fashionable homes, exclusively in concrete for his varied cliental. Gill maintained that the plain surface of a simple white concrete exterior was the perfect backdrop to the landscape. As Handlin suggests, “Shadows cast by trees on plain surfaces were themselves a decorative element.”¹⁰ Whether for economy or beauty, concrete as a building material for houses was a popular choice for a diverse set of early twentieth-century designers, builders, and homeowners.

Economy

While Kahn’s grand concrete designs graced Detroit’s elite suburbs, concrete houses were mainly prized for their economy and the greatest proliferation of concrete homes, in both England and America, occurred in the small to middle-class housing markets. An exterior of Portland Cement became a low cost alternative to wood clapboarding or brick masonry. Popular roughcast stuccos were created when heavy, inexpensive aggregates, such as crushed stone were added to Portland Cement mortar for a pebble-dash effect. A refined appearance at a low cost was achieved by utilizing White Portland Cement. During the manufacturing process, this brilliant mixture which mimicked stone was prepared by processing aggregate materials which contained insignificant amounts of iron and magnesium oxide, which turn gray.

Most of the Cottage Style homes designed by innovative English Arts and Crafts architect Charles Voysey were comprised largely (or entirely) of white roughcast. Voysey

⁹ Katherine Mattingly Meyer and Martin C. P. McElroy eds. *Detroit Architecture: A.I.A. Guide* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1980), 115.

¹⁰ Handlin, *The American Home*, 282.

liked this type of stucco for its economy as well as for its naturalistic effect. As architecture critic Horace Townsend explained, “Mr. Voysey’s preference for roughcast is based, so he tells me, mainly on its economy. He considers a nine inch brick wall faced with cement roughcast to be as warm and weather tight as any much more expensive construction.”¹¹ Voysey saw the practicality and frugality of concrete and was happy to utilize it in his constructions, as early as the 1880s. Later, this economy popularized by Voysey, allowed for widespread construction of smaller suburban cottage homes by speculative developers in England. An advertisement published in *Country Life* magazine 1912, displaying a modest cottage home, Harrison-Smith Building Ltd. of Birmingham, England extolled the virtues of “Permanent Buildings in Monolithic Concrete,” as “inexpensive, sanitary, weatherproof.”¹²

According to Mervyn Miller, “Voysey’s architecture inspired much suburban and garden city housing.”¹³ Innovative English architects and garden city planners Barry Parker and Raymond Unwin also prized concrete as an inexpensive building material and used it widely in the construction of the cottages at Letchworth Garden City, England’s first garden city. According to Letchworth historian C. B. Purdom, “Cottage building became in fact the town’s first great achievement. It was shown that reasonably good homes, each with its garden, could be built to let at very low rents.”¹⁴ Consequently, concrete construction and roughcast concrete exteriors over block or brick were an

¹¹ Horace Townsend, “Notes on Country and Suburban Houses Designed by C. F. A. Voysey,” *The Studio* 16 (London 1899):158.

¹² Harrison-Smith Building Ltd. *Country Life* (October 1912).

¹³ Mervyn Miller, *English Garden Cities: An Introduction* (Swindon, England: English Heritage, 2010), 7.

¹⁴ C. B. Purdom, *The Letchworth Achievement* (London: J. M. Dent & Sons LTD, 1963), 23.

important element in the search for economy in construction at Letchworth. In 1905, the Cheap Cottage Exhibition, promoted by *The Country Gentleman* and the *Spectator* periodicals, highlighted durable housing at affordable prices. At a maximum cost of 150 pounds per dwelling, concrete houses, according to Miller, “showed that the use of innovative materials need not produce poor design.”¹⁵ A small home designed by Gilbert Wilton Fraser, built with blocks made on-site, earned “best concrete cottage.” Two other concrete cottages featured in the Cheap Cottage Exhibition, No 140, ‘The Round House,’ designed by Hesketh and Stokes and No 158, designed by John Alexander Brodie, were considered to be groundbreaking for their use in concrete panel construction.¹⁶

The Portland Cement Association (PCA), first powerful in Britain and later in America in the early twentieth century, targeted advertising at the expanding single-family housing market. From safety and security to “creak-free” floors and “lifetime cleanliness,” consumer advertising promoted every aspect of concrete’s benefits. But the PCA’s most prolific campaigning related to the economy of concrete construction. An advertisement proclaiming “It Costs so Little” explained that for only a few extra dollars per month you could have both “concrete’s warm beauty and permanence” at a lower cost, with lesser upkeep and slower depreciation.¹⁷ Another advertisement indicated that concrete homes “mean freedom from fire loss, storm damage, low upkeep costs, low heating expense, high resale value and slow depreciation.”¹⁸ Indeed, the idea of moderate

¹⁵ Miller, *English Garden Cities*, 38.

¹⁶ *Ibid*, 39.

¹⁷ Portland Cement Association, “It Costs So Little,” *The American Home* 2 (May 1937): 77.

¹⁸ Portland Cement Association, *The American Home* 12 (March 1947): 59.

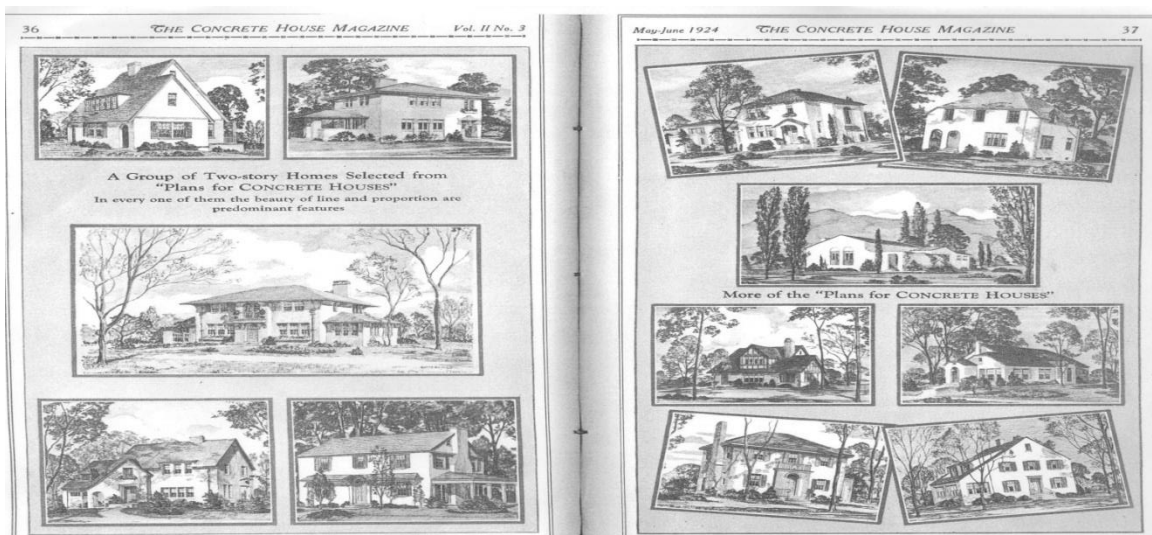


Figure 10. Portland Cement Association advertisement, (May/June 1924): 3–7.

initial costs and low upkeep reiterates throughout advertisements in popular home magazines of the period.

Articles in home construction periodicals such as *The Concrete House Magazine* also extolled the economy of concrete construction. An article entitled “Thrift Cottage Interests Chicago” suggests that Chicago’s 1924 “Own Your Home” exhibition, presenting tangible and affordable construction ideas, was the “fascinating feature” (Fig. 10). The Architects’ Small House Service Bureau provided the plans for the cottage home which was built of stuccoed concrete masonry. In addition to showcasing the latest in plumbing, wiring, and furnishings, the house demonstrated the superior advantages of concrete construction.¹⁹ Another article entitled “Concrete Block, Stuccoed, Gives Builder Most for His Money,” explained that the total cost of the walls above the foundation including the brick chimney, fireplace, and the Portland Cement exterior stucco, represented only fifteen percent of the total cost of the house. The concrete block

¹⁹ “Thrift Cottage Interests Chicago,” *The Concrete House Magazine* 2 (May–June 1924): 45.

walls alone cost only eight percent of the total cost of the house. Author E. W. Dienhart pointed out that, “In so far as the quality of house construction is measured by its permanence, by its fire safety, or by the security of the investment involved it has been demonstrated that high quality can be obtained at a cost only slightly in excess, if any, of that which is distinctly inferior in all these respects.”²⁰ Architect Milton Dana Morrill focused on the creation of low-cost housing utilizing molded concrete forms instead of wood framing. Morrill devised a system of pouring concrete from an elevated hopper into steel trough-like molds. After the concrete dried, the molds were removed and moved on to another part of the structure. This process was used to create worker’s housing for the Lackawanna and Western Railroad in Nanticoke, Pennsylvania. Other companies used Morrill’s system to build industrial housing including communities in Youngstown, Ohio; Gary, Indiana; and Rochester, New York.²¹

Inventor and entrepreneur Thomas Edison also prized concrete for its economy. Edison built a large Portland Cement mill in 1899 in New Village, New Jersey, naming it the Edison Portland Cement Company. Edison’s cement was used to construct the original Yankee Stadium and parts New York’s sewer system. Edison envisioned infinite possibilities for concrete construction including houses, their furnishings, and fixtures. Among his many projects involving concrete (Edison held forty-nine patents related to cement) was a 1908 patented system that allowed builders to cast, through a system of

²⁰ E. W. Dienhart, “Concrete Block, Stuccoed, Gives Builder Most for his Money,” *The Concrete House Magazine* 1 (May–June 1923): 3.

²¹ Handlin, *The American Home*, 29–93.

iron molds, an entire two-story concrete dwelling in a single, continuous pour.²² Edison was able to prevent segregation and produce a smooth finish which did not require a plastering. While the system was not a commercial success because of the unexpected costs related to creating and transporting the molds, several dozen Edison concrete houses were built and survive today in towns in New Jersey, Virginia, and Ohio. By 1912 the American Sheet and Tinsplate Company had adapted Edison's system, using steel molds instead of iron, to build seventy-four concrete houses for their employees in Gary, Indiana.²³ Similarly, in 1918 the American Steel and Wire Company also built one hundred poured-in-place concrete houses finished cement stucco exteriors for its employees, which still stand today in Donora, Pennsylvania.²⁴

It is not surprising that late nineteenth and early twentieth century industrialists looking for inexpensive, low-maintenance, durable homes for their workers turned to concrete. Concrete was readily available, easy to prepare, and could be manipulated into a variety of forms. Manufacturers with factories built of concrete naturally spawned further uses of the material. Additionally, the experimental nature of the medium, as set forth by innovators like Edison, appealed to modernizers looking for efficient and economical solutions to housing issues.

Fire Safety

Concrete houses were also promoted in Britain and America as extremely safe houses. In myriad colorful eye catching advertisements and articles in periodicals, the

²² David Owen, "Concrete Jungle," *The New Yorker* (November 10, 2003): 18-20.

²³ Anon., "Concrete Homes of Yesterday," *Portland Cement Association Newsletter* (Chicago: Portland Cement Association): 722-724.

²⁴ *Ibid.*

Portland Cement Association, cement manufacturers, and architectural/construction writers campaigned for the “Fireproof” house. Fire hazards increased with the congestion of modern cities and with the use of fuel oil and electrical power. As a result, protection against fire was a logical necessity. Residential concrete construction provided that protection without too much additional expense. With walls, structural elements, floors and even shingle tiles comprised of concrete, an average homeowner could “*Build Fireproof from Ground to Roof*,” as stated in a 1925 advertisement from the PCA.²⁵ Another striking advertisement featuring the photograph of a little girl looking very much like popular curly topped child star Shirley Temple, publicized by the PCA in 1939 proclaimed “Daddy says our new house can’t burn ’cause its concrete”²⁶ (Fig. 11). The same ad also exclaimed “Your family and prized personal possessions are safer in a concrete home, for concrete can’t burn.”²⁷ While this clever marketing strategy certainly tugged at the heartstrings of potential homebuilders, the sentiment was correct. Indeed, a concrete walled basement and first floor utilizing reinforced concrete could effectually control fire hazard as a first line of defense. A home built of concrete throughout including cellar, floors, walls, and roof was seen as absolutely fire safe at a time when house fires were rampant due to the lack of safety standards, fire warning and fire extinguishing systems common today.

²⁵ Portland Cement Association, “Build Fire-Proof from Ground to Foot,” *American City* (June 1925): 185.

²⁶ Portland Cement Association, “Daddy Says our House Can’t Burn,” *Time Magazine* (July 1939): np.

²⁷ Ibid.

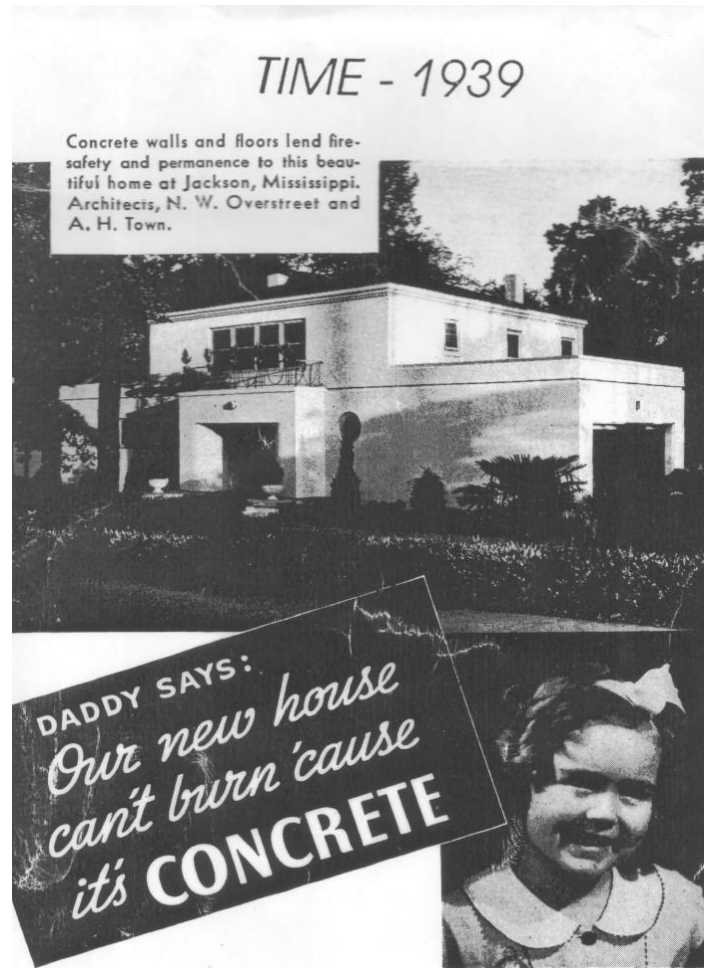


Figure 11. Portland Cement Association advertisement, *Time* (1939).

Articles about fireproof buildings appeared in construction related periodicals such as *The Concrete House Magazine*. An article entitled “Concrete Masonry Resists Fire” related an experiment by engineers at the Berks Building Block Company in Reading, Pennsylvania, where a small building constructed of 8-inch cinder concrete block was filled with oil soaked cord wood and set alight. An interior temperature of 1600 degrees was attained, but the cardboard placards fastened to the outside of the concrete masonry walls were not even scorched.²⁸ Another article entitled “Fire

²⁸ “Concrete Masonry Resists Fire,” *The Concrete House Magazine* 2 (Sept-Oct. 1924): 28.

Resistance of Concrete Masonry” detailed a demonstration sponsored by the Greater Chicago Concrete Products Association. For this demonstration an 8 foot square house was built of concrete block walls, plaster on metal lath ceiling, Portland Cement stucco, and a concrete tile roof. Filled with oak and pine planks and set on fire, an examination afterward revealed that neither the block nor the roofing tile were damaged by the fire or the water used to dose the blaze. The Fire Chief said “the intensity was much greater than could be obtained in an ordinary residence fire, and in my opinion must have reached 1500 degrees Fahrenheit.²⁹

In a similar experiment in Los Angeles in 1925, a building constructed of concrete tiles from several local plants and a ceiling of plaster on metal lath was set on fire by L. A. Mayor Cryer. All wooden window frames, joists, rafters, and roof sheathing were engulfed. While interior temperatures reached 1800 degrees, the outside of the concrete wall reportedly remained cool to the touch and not a single crack appeared in the concrete units. Demonstrations of this nature did much to teach the public about the value of fire-resistive materials in home construction.³⁰

In 1925 Arthur Capper, a United States’ Senator from Kansas broke ground for the construction of the Topeka Capital, “Ideal Fire Safe Home.” Ideal homes represented the lofty aspirations of the “Better Homes in America” movement. The result of this progressive movement was a stuccoed concrete masonry house, designed in the English Cottage Style, which served as an inspiration to better home building throughout the city. Fire safe construction consisted of cinder concrete units and Portland cement stucco.

²⁹ “Fire Resistance of Concrete Masonry,” *The Concrete House Magazine* 3 (Jan-Feb. 1925): np.

³⁰ “Los Angeles Learns How to Foil the Incendiary,” *The Concrete House Magazine* 3 (March–April 1925): 2.

Financed by the Topeka Daily Capital, the project showed off materials manufactured by local businesses.³¹

Buildings of concrete masonry and covered with concrete roofing tile were consistently proving to be highly fire resistive. As such, fire-safe construction was a strong selling point of the concrete home. Fire risk was a risk of urban life, particularly on narrow city lots. The advantage of concrete masonry construction was a viable, common sense solution to a very real problem.

Healthfulness

Concrete homes were also promoted as being healthy. The truly modern home was not only economical and fire safe, but also decay resistant, bug resistant, cool in the summer and warm and dry in the winters. Early twentieth-century advertisements in magazines frequently praised the health advantages of concrete homes. An ad appearing in *Harper's Magazine*, "Concrete for Permanence," explained that "No rat can eat through concrete, and there need be no joints nor cracks in a concrete structure to give vermin an opening. It is easily cleaned and kept sanitary."³² An ad for the Atlas Cement Company indicated that "The one material that is most economical in the long run, that is adaptable to any style of architecture that is rat, vermin, damp and fire-proof is concrete."³³ During the early years of the twentieth century, concrete homes continued to be a common feature of magazine articles and advertising.

³¹ "Fire-Tested Material Used in Topeka Capital Ideal Home," *Concrete House Magazine* 3 (March-April 1925): 2-9.

³² Portland Cement Association, "Concrete for Permanence," *Harper's Magazine* (c. 1920s): np.

³³ Atlas Portland Cement Co., *Munsey's Magazine* (1909): np.

The healthfulness of concrete as a building material was related to a popular interest in cleanliness and its health implications, which arose in response to the spread of disease, at a time when plumbing was largely unavailable in most American homes. Specifically, a general lack of water, washing facilities and proper disposal of waste was a critical problem in newly industrialized, overcrowded cities. As far back as the 1830s, following the first great cholera epidemic in the United States in 1832, uncleanness was correctly identified as the cause of most disease.³⁴ Soon, well known reformers such as Catherine Beecher and William Alcott wrote and lectured on the importance of healthy living and personal hygiene as a preventative against illness.³⁵ In the 1850s, nursing reformer Florence Nightingale blamed the deaths of most British soldiers in the Crimean War on a lack of sanitation, rather than on war wounds. Similarly, American park planner and architect Frederick Law Olmsted, appointed Secretary and Chief Executive of the US government's newly formed Sanitary Commission, during the Civil War, also attributed the widespread death of soldiers on dysentery and typhoid.³⁶ Olmsted worked to educate and organize the disgraceful living conditions at Army camps. Post war, Olmsted continued to be a health reformer, planning parks and experimental suburban living communities, based on English Garden Cities, a movement which highly utilized the use of concrete as a building material in modern cottage construction.³⁷

³⁴ Suellen Hoy, *Chasing Dirt: The American Pursuit of Cleanliness* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995), 24.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, 23.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, 39.

³⁷ John Stilgoe, *Borderland: Origins of the American Suburb: 1820–1939* (Yale University Press: New Haven, 1988), 287.

Later reformers, such as Jane Addams in the 1880s, continued to extoll the necessity of personal cleanliness and homecare to the immigrant communities living in the cramped tenements around her Hull House settlement house on the south side of Chicago. Addams, like Olmsted was influenced by British reform movements, including the settlement house that Charles Ashbee established at Toynbee Hall in London. In 1888 Addams visited Toynbee Hall, where she observed practices which might be useful at Hull House.³⁸ In her history of hygiene in America, social historian Suellen Hoy quotes Addams in 1892, as saying, “that the whole Italian neighborhood adjacent to Hull House possessed only three bathtubs.”³⁹ Dolores Hayden furthers, “Ninety-seven percent of the Chicago tenement units were without bathtubs, despite the fact that many of their almost one million residents were employed in slaughterhouse work.”⁴⁰ As a result Addams and fellow reformers in the Chicago Municipal Order League organized a system of public bathing facilities and showers in the school system.⁴¹

Health and hygiene was a recurrent topic of concern with housing reformers and homeowners who appreciated the value of a structure so sound, and built so permanently that there was little to decay. Concrete construction offered a solid, serviceable sense of permanence and healthfulness, which played into the early twentieth century interest in both housing reform and health reform. Safe, sanitary, single family concrete homes provided a haven from the health problems experienced in cities, including the

³⁸ Ibid,122

³⁹ Hoy, *Chasing Dirt*, 126.

⁴⁰ Dolores Hayden, *The Grand Domestic Revolution: A History of Feminist Designs for American Homes, Neighborhoods, and Cities* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1982), 153.

⁴¹ Ibid, 126.

contagious tuberculosis infection, which swept through overcrowded cities during the Victorian period. Urban overcrowding, shoddy and decaying wood construction and sewage in the streets inspired a campaign for better living conditions. It is no wonder that concrete manufacturers, homebuilders and the powerful Portland Cement Association marketed to homeowners. They had a wide and interested audience, promulgated by decades of fear and illness related to a lack of oversight in the home construction industry.

Style

Aesthetically, concrete stucco created visually smooth, fluid exteriors. Charles Voysey and fellow Arts and Crafts architects of the late nineteenth century prized concrete for its style. A smooth white concrete exterior produced a simple, clean look, which appealed to designers seeking to create new forms, devoid of any obvious historical associations. Charles Voysey's substantial white cottages stood as the model for a new movement, honoring British country vernacularism, yet not resorting to a similar historicism. Blakesley asserts, "The roughcast walls painted off-white and the roofs of green Westmorland slate echo local practice, in good Arts and Crafts tradition."⁴² Similarly, English architects and garden city planners Raymond Parker and Barry Unwin created cottage communities heavily constructed in concrete. At Letchworth, Parker and Unwin's prime example of the garden city, white roughcast cottages unified the appearance of its picturesque groupings. In America, pioneering San Diego, California architect Irving Gill "promoted concrete as the most appropriate material for a modern

⁴² Rosalind P. Blakesley, *The Arts and Crafts Movement* (London: Phaidon, 2006), 93.

house.”⁴³ Gill created simple white geometric box-like forms, inspired by southwestern adobe buildings. According to Handlin, Gill “wanted to create a timeless architecture.”⁴⁴ To this end, Gill worked exclusively in concrete and stucco after 1906. Like Voysey, the simple white horizontal form was the perfect backdrop for the only essential ornamentation of blue skies and lush green landscape.

In America, the Portland Cement Association and concrete manufacturers also proclaimed style to be a virtue of the concrete home. Concrete lent itself readily to a wide range of architectural styles and interpretations. Concrete walls conformed to an endless variety of shades, textures and forms. The PCA proclaimed that whether planning a California ranch, a Cape Cod, New England colonial, smart modern, or romantic Spanish concrete was adaptable to any size, floor plan, or style.⁴⁵ (Fig. 12) *Plans for Concrete Houses*, a catalog of house plans, published by the Portland Cement Association in 1925, also promoted an array of styles from the “Cordova,” a Mission Bungalow; the Spanish Style “Santa Barbara;” the Italian Style “Piedmonte;” a Tudor “The Glendale;” and a simple Chicago bungalow called “The Ardmore,” to name but a few.⁴⁶

⁴³ Ibid, 236.

⁴⁴ Handlin, *The American Home*, 298.

⁴⁵ Portland Cement Association, “Choose any Style” *American Home* (April 1948): 75.

⁴⁶ Portland Cement Association, *Portland Cement’s Plans for Concrete Houses* (Chicago: Portland Cement Company, 1924).



Figure 12. Portland Cement Association advertisement (c. 1940s).

Advertisements of the era proposed that no matter what the style or size, houses were better if built with concrete. A Portland Cement Association advertisement appearing in *American Home* magazine exclaimed that “As Colonial as Williamsburg-as up to date in construction as your 1937 car.”⁴⁷ The next year, a similar ad declares “As homey as French provincial-as up to the minute in construction as the 1938 cars.”⁴⁸ The power of the PCA advertising dollar made it clear to home buyers and home builders that concrete was the clear choice for creating the perfect home.

However, during the most popular years of the concrete home, from about 1910 to 1940, the style which occurs most often in national advertisements and plan books, including the widely distributed *Plans for Concrete Homes* is some form of the medieval

⁴⁷ Portland Cement Association, “Concrete is the Modern Way to Build,” *American Home Magazine* (1937): np.

⁴⁸ Portland Cement Association, “The Truly Modern Home is Enduring, Fire Safe, Economical,” *American Home Magazine* (1938): np.

English Style, either the English Cottage or the English Tudor.⁴⁹ English styles were the most popular form of concrete home during the peak period of concrete residential use for a number of reasons. At a very basic level, English styles simply lent themselves well to the use of concrete. Many historic English homes, in particular the homes of medieval cottage dwellers were coated in horsehair and lime stucco, an affordable alternative to masonry or wood clapboarding. During the mid-1800s, new technology produced much more durable concrete stucco, which soon replaced traditional mixtures, while offering a similar look and feel.⁵⁰ Additionally, the popularity of medieval English Style homes coincided with dramatic improvements in concrete production and reinforcement technologies. Not only was concrete now being mass produced, it was being made into a variety of new mediums and forms. While concrete stucco continued to be popular, concrete block and poured concrete forms, both easily hidden by a covering of stucco, were also widely available.⁵¹ The availability of concrete also relates to its affordability. Concrete was cheap to produce. Concrete blocks and concrete forms could be mass produced and delivered to a construction site. Handlin explains, “Poured concrete, like sod, adobe, and pise, was made of relatively inexpensive, readily available earth materials, and its manufacture, although labor-intensive, did not require expensive skilled workers.”⁵² Concrete could also be molded into decorative embellishments including

⁴⁹ Mediterranean and Spanish styles were also highly popular concrete home styles. However, they tended to be regional, concentrated in the southwest and west coast. On the other hand English styles could be found across the country.

⁵⁰ Raafat, *Reinforced Concrete in Architecture*, 16.

⁵¹ *Ibid*, 19.

⁵² Handlin, *The American Home*, 288.

cornice, quoins, or columns. Concrete stucco over lath was also simplistic in its application. The aggregates used to create a roughcast exterior were comprised of low-cost gravel.

However, the main reason for the dramatic rise in the construction of medieval English Style homes was their popularization by the Arts and Crafts Movement in England in the late 1800s and early 1900s. Arts and Crafts designers idealized the simplicity and hand craftsmanship, utilized in rural English medieval buildings.⁵³ As a part of the English Socialist Movement in politics, Arts and Crafts designers were also interested in addressing the needs of the common man and the cottage became a model for reasonable, modest homes. Clients included members of an emerging middle class, searching for decent, affordable single-family homes. A solution to the demand for modest homes lay in the recreation of housing based on the medieval cottage form, complemented by the use of modern materials and up-to-date technologies. Concrete was an ideal complement to historical precedent. While durable, abundant, affordable and eminently modern, it also mimicked the look of the traditional lime-based stuccos found in worker's cottages in England.

Nostalgia for the homes of rural England exploded in late nineteenth and early twentieth-century America, influenced by mass European immigration, an Anglo Saxon-based nativism, and a longing for what was believed to be the true roots of America. As early as the 1830s, housing reformers searched for models on household practices, furnishings, and home-style and looked to England as the exemplar of taste. Hoy states

⁵³ For general information on Arts and Crafts architecture see works by Wendy Kaplan, *The Art that is Life: The Arts and Crafts Movement in America, 1875-1920* (Boston: Museum of Fine Arts, 1987); and Rosalind Blakesley, *The Arts and Crafts Movement*.

that in the 1840s, Catherine Beecher extolled the virtues of Englishness and “reminded readers of their English heritage”⁵⁴ Beecher believed the English were “distinguished for systematic housekeeping, and for a great love of order, cleanliness, and comfort.”⁵⁵ John Stilgoe also maintains that English country homes were a strong inspiration to early twentieth-century writers and housing reformers who “rediscovered the English village.”⁵⁶ Stilgoe quotes *House Beautiful* writer Frederick Lewis Allen, “with its smooth lawns, well-tended hedges, spectacular flower boxes everywhere, the English village overwhelms the American visitor.”⁵⁷ However, it was the Arts and Crafts architects and artisans in America who drew most extensively and most pragmatically from English models. Though wistfulness for Englishness during a time of disconcerting mass immigration certainly contributed to a popularization of English styles including the English cottage, it was Progressive reform and a desire to provide simple, affordable, safe and healthful housing, as evidenced by its prolific discussion, advertisement, and manufacture, which led to the wide use of concrete as a building material during the early twentieth century.

**Gustav Stickley: The Leading American Arts and Crafts Reformer also Popularizes
the Concrete Home**

The practicality, affordability, accessibility, and simple look of concrete as a building medium was also advocated by the American Arts and Crafts Movement

⁵⁴ Hoy, *Chasing Dirt*, 21.

⁵⁵ Catharine E. Beecher, *A Treatise on Domestic Economy for the use of Young Ladies at Home and at School* (Boston: Marsh, Capen, Lyon, & Webb, 1841), 2 in Hoy, *Chasing Dirt*, 21.

⁵⁶ John Stilgoe, *Borderland*, 217.

⁵⁷ Frederick L. Allen “Our National Shabbiness,” *House Beautiful* (January 1915) in Stilgoe, 217.

designers promoting smaller homes and “cottages” to a burgeoning market of middle-class and working-class home owners. Such cottages in England were once the homes of country and estate laborers and emerged as country homes for city professionals and commuters. In America, English Cottages and other Arts and Crafts Styles (Craftsman, Four-Square, Mission, bungalows plans of various style and rustic vernaculars), were primarily modest family homes. Following in the steps of English Arts and Crafts architects, such as Voysey, whom he visited on an 1899 trip to England, American Arts and Crafts designer Gustav Stickley emerged out as the most significant promoter of the use of concrete in domestic construction next to the powerful Portland Cement Association. In fact, Stickley’s influence preceded the prime years of PCA advertisement, which flourished during the 1920s. As publisher of *The Craftsman*, “an Illustrated Monthly Magazine in the Interest of Better Art, Better Work, and a Better and More Reasonable Way of Living,” from 1900–1916, Stickley created a popular medium for espousing a variety of Socialist ideals, including how to build an affordable home, within economic reach of the common man. Within the pages of any issue of *The Craftsman*, philosophical and political articles on “Teaching Boys and Girls to Work”⁵⁸ or “The Evils of American School Systems”⁵⁹ would preside alongside recurring sections entitled “Among the Craftsman” and “The Craftsman’s Guild,” abundant with home planning, home building, home decorating, and home gardening instructions. The proliferation of concrete, cement and plaster houses within these building and design sections, is significant. Stickley, his editorial staff, and contributors displayed an obvious

⁵⁸ “Teaching Boys and Girls to Work,” *The Craftsman* 18 (April–Sept 1910): 428.

⁵⁹ “The Evils of American School Systems,” *The Craftsman* 16 (September 1909): 603.

interest in the use of concrete construction as an economical and attractive building medium.

In *The Craftsman* articles, economic concerns melded with aesthetic preferences. In “Inexpensive Cement Construction for Summertime and Weekend Cottages that the Owner May Erect Himself,”⁶⁰ two simple bungalows, built of cement mortar over truss metal laths were featured, along with a mill bill detailing all the material expenses. In “A Three Thousand Dollar House that is Conveniently Arranged and Beautiful,”⁶¹ author and contributing architect Mary Linton Bookwalter described a house made of concrete, which is “hospitable, livable, and beautiful,” and where lot, house, and interior decorations were all purchased for only three thousand dollars. With a simple floor plan, few embellishments or unnecessary projections and a chimney also plastered with a coating of concrete stucco, the homeowner achieved “good results on a comparatively small expenditure.”⁶² Handlin asserts that that “*The Craftsman*’s self-built concrete bungalows were consciously picturesque. The windows had diamond-leaded panes, the front door was carved and stouter than necessary, and the area under the eaves was covered with shingles.”⁶³ While designed for simplicity and ease of construction, the Craftsman concrete homes never lacked character and charm.

⁶⁰ “Inexpensive Cement Construction for Summertime and Weekend Cottages that the Owner May Erect Himself,” *The Craftsman* 17 (December 1909): 31–19.

⁶¹ Mary Linton Bookwalter, “A Three Thousand Dollar House that is Conveniently Arranged and Beautiful,” *The Craftsman* 13 (October 1910): 19–05.

⁶² Ibid.

⁶³ Handlin, *The American Home*, 291.

In *The Craftsman*, much emphasis was placed on the idea of “good building” and “honest craftsmanship,” and concrete construction was related to these philosophies. Part of the concept of “good building” is the idea of planning to suit the distinct characteristics of climate and landscape. In “A Plaster House with Roof Garden and Patio,”⁶⁴ the author details a Pasadena, California house “of plaster in the Mission Style modified to meet the needs of a small family of modest means.”⁶⁵ Although small, with just two bedrooms, one bath and one story, this home takes advantage of grand views with a roof top garden, sunny skies with a glass roofed solarium and warm weather with a screened in porch. A simple and inexpensive, exterior covering of white pigmented concrete stucco would never (or rarely) need painting in such fine weather. Interior walls were also of pigmented rough plaster, “without painted decoration of any kind.”⁶⁶ In other words, one did not have to sacrifice aesthetics for a house built on a budget.

Suitability to landscape was also an element in the popularity of using concrete in California and other western houses, like the one above. Although, concrete houses were built everywhere in the country, western houses utilized concrete exteriors to a higher degree. Concrete stucco gave the appearance of the traditional adobe and mud covered homes associated with Spanish colonization, which proliferated throughout the western territories, and up along the California coast. Concrete block, covered in concrete stucco offered the similar look and feel of the more traditional forms at half the price.

Additionally, California was home to a flourishing Arts and Crafts community and,

⁶⁴ At this time the term “plaster” referred to an exterior covering of concrete based stucco applied in coats upon a wooden lath base structure.

⁶⁵ Una Nixon Hopkins, “A Plaster House with Roof Garden and Patio,” *The Craftsman* 16 (June 1909): 34–49.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*

therefore, many of the concrete homes featured in *The Craftsman* are California houses. In “A Bungalow Built by an Eastern Man for his Own Use on a California Ranch” the author states “So many of our best examples of bungalow construction come from California...it is hardly surprising that when an Eastern man wants to build a bungalow after his own ideas, he goes out there to do it.”⁶⁷ Similarly, author Helen Lukens Gaut argued that “So many beautiful and unusual designs for houses come to us from the Pacific Coast that it would seem as if the West were the only home of the new American architecture.”⁶⁸ Lukins wistfully continued with “The Californian has the courage of his convictions in building the kind of house that seems to him most suitable for the climate and surroundings.”⁶⁹ The California mystique, related to the same rugged individualism, which influenced many settlers to move west, can also be related to their choice of building materials. Concrete residential construction was considered non-traditional at the time and maybe even a little daring.

Stickley’s theme of “honest building” and “honest craftsmanship” focuses on the idea that home design should be simple, lacking superfluous ornament. In “A Cement House that is Comfortable, Complete and Inexpensive,” Stickley argued that a structure’s external appearance should reflect its internal arrangement, based upon the functional needs of the occupant, rather than exhibiting false ornamentation. It was a practical reaction against the unessential frivolity of Victorian period design. An exterior of smooth, fluid concrete in its natural buff color, or possibly pigmented, was an honest,

⁶⁷ “A Bungalow Built by an Eastern Man for his Own Use on a California Ranch,” *The Craftsman* 18 (April-September 1910): 383.

⁶⁸ Helen Lukens Gaut, “An Example of Progressive Architecture from the Pacific Coast.” *The Craftsman* 18 (April-September 1910): 380.

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*

straightforward and affordable approach.⁷⁰ Stickley also described a house as “very simple and compact, with shingled roof and wall of rough finished cement, relieved by a sparing use of half-timber construction, which serves to break up the severity of the wall spaces and forms only a touch of decoration on the outside of the house.”⁷¹ Stickley’s idea of “honesty” in homebuilding also reflected his philosophy as a furniture designer. Pure mortise and tenon construction was not disguised, but upheld as part of the beauty of a piece, devoid of glue, nails or dowels.

Further related to the idea of “honest building” is the idea that a home should reflect its particular time and place, without relying on obvious historical precedent. *The Craftsman*, while influenced by both the designs and Socialist sentiments of the English Arts and Crafts Movement, was very intent upon promoting an authentic, undeniably American home. Like the English Arts and Crafts designers, who looked to the organic, simple form of the English medieval cottage dwelling as an authentic model for the new, moderate sized dwellings required by a developing middle class, American Arts and Crafts designers like Stickley developed a modest home construction, which fit their own landscape and lifestyle. Discussions on the nature of creating the ideal American home proliferated within the pages of *The Craftsman* and concrete continually appeared as the building medium of choice with which to carry out this objective. In “Two Craftsman Houses Both to be Built of Cement on Metal Lath,” the author maintains that while slightly reminiscent of the old Dutch Colonial homes, not a single feature of this concrete home “could be said to be even derived from this style. It is essentially a modern house,

⁷⁰ “A Cement House that is Comfortable, Complete and Inexpensive,” *The Craftsman* 15 (March 1909): 72–28.

⁷¹ *Ibid.*

and also essentially a Craftsman design.”⁷² Similarly, in another article detailing a plain cement cottage, the author revealed, that “Thanks to the quickness of the American people to adopt and put into effect a new idea when once they have become convinced that it is sensible and therefore desirable, simplicity in designing and building homes has come to be the usual thing instead of the rather eccentric thing it was only a few years ago.”⁷³ A concrete exterior was seen as simple, adaptable and attractive. Obvious ornamentation or historical association was unnecessary for its appeal. Concrete exteriors were modern, in the same way that many Americans in the early twentieth century were proudly modern, eschewing old world ties.

An ecological component related to the concept of “honest building” was also promoted in *The Craftsman*. Concrete represented a natural and abundant resource. Unlike wood, which was expensive, ever depleting, and therefore destructive to the environment, concrete was cheap and easy to produce. An early supporter of sustainability, *The Craftsman*'s contributing author R. Marshall stated that, “The value of this material as a building medium of modern times is beyond calculation. We have only to consider the devastation of our forests to realize the necessity of some such practical material, which is not only durable, but extremely picturesque and beautiful in the hands of the artist.”⁷⁴ Another writer, Alma Byers developed this point further when she wrote, “This has been the country of the wooden dwelling, but with the growing scarcity of

⁷² “Two Craftsman Houses, Both to be Built of Cement on Metal Lath.” *The Craftsman* 18 (April–Sept. 1910): 383.

⁷³ “Two Simple Craftsman Cottages for the Accommodation of Small Families.” *The Craftsman* 18 (April–Sept. 1910): 375.

⁷⁴ R. Marshall, “The Value of Concrete to the Modern Building World.” *The Craftsman* 18 (April–Sept. 1910): 596.

wood and the consequent high price of lumber of all kinds, it is a matter of course that attention is being more and more directed toward other building materials.”⁷⁵ It is interesting to note that the editors and contributors at *The Craftsman* recognized both the morality and practicality of utilizing sustainable materials in home construction about eighty years before it became the popular topic it currently is today.

While the bulk of concrete promotion was dominated by the powerful Portland Cement Association beginning in the 1920s, with national and international advertisements circulating in the major home and building journals of the period, *The Craftsman* represented a significant early commercial, as well as moral supporter of the medium. Its appendices were heavy laden with the advertisements of the various concrete manufacturers. For example, on two consecutive pages in the October 1909 issue, advertisements appear for Atlas Portland Cement, Atlantic Portland Cement, Dragon Portland Cement, and Aquabar “waterproofed concrete for Craftsman Homes.”⁷⁶ Indeed, in every issue of *The Craftsman*, throughout its sixteen year run, advertisements for concrete and cement manufacturers appear. And in almost every issue, a house, or house plan, is presented which shows off a concrete exterior, or some other significant element, such as concrete block construction, concrete flooring, concrete roof tiles, or even concrete garden ornaments and pergolas. In the book *More Craftsman Homes* (1912), 22 out of 49 house plans indicate “concrete,” “cement,” or “plaster” in their titles.

It is clear that concrete was promoted as an important building material by Gustave Stickley in the pages of his *Craftsman* publications. Concrete was in line with

⁷⁵ Alma Byers, “A Concrete House Design for a Warm Climate.” *The Craftsman* 18 (April–Sept. 1910): 240.

⁷⁶ *The Craftsman* 16 (July 1909): xii–xiii.

Stickley's overall concern for affordability and simplicity. The popularity of *The Craftsman*, during its fifteen year run, offered a platform for using concrete as an alternative building material, to wood or pricey masonry. Additionally, the accessibility of *Craftsman* home plans, illustrations, and descriptions made it easy for Americans to envision both the structural and decorative possibilities of concrete for homebuilding.

Conclusion

Concrete, used as a building material in the residential construction of early twentieth century homes reflects technological innovation, economic, safety, health, safety, and aesthetic considerations. Promulgated by the development of mass single-family housing for an emergent middle-class market, concrete houses provided a low-cost, durable alternative to traditional wood and masonry home construction. And true to the early twentieth century eclectic aesthetic, architectural style was not sacrificed in the concrete home, which could be manipulated into an endless variety of forms. Concrete home construction is related to socialist and Progressive reform in England and America. Arts and Crafts Movement designers in England struggled to address the need for affordable single-family housing by relying upon the model of the modest cottage of the medieval period, while utilizing concrete in place of less durable traditional elements such as lime and horsehair. Similarly, American Arts and Crafts designers searched for ways making attractive, low-cost homes for the common man. In this sense, premier American Arts and Crafts designer Gustav Stickley heavily promoted the use of concrete homes, within the pages of his influential periodical *The Craftsman*. In addition to myriad articles extolling the virtues of the concrete home, *The Craftsman* exhibited abundant advertising from early concrete manufacturers. Later concrete advertising of the 1920s

and 1930s, much paid for by the powerful Portland Cement Association, was widely published in the numerous home and building related periodicals of the period. These ads eloquently and colorfully illustrated the idea that the ideal characteristics of economy, safety, health and architectural distinction were satisfied by houses built of concrete.

CHAPTER FOUR
THE DETROIT SOCIETY OF ARTS AND CRAFTS PROMOTES
THE ENGLISH COTTAGE STYLE

The Detroit Society of Arts and Crafts (1906–1976), an organization created to “develop and maintain an appreciation of beauty in itself and to encourage good and beautiful work as applied to useful service,”¹ was particularly successful in introducing the Cottage Style into the American architectural vocabulary. The Cottage Style’s emphasis on traditional materials and its adherence to nature, simplicity, function, fine individual craftsmanship and human scale embodied the spirit of the Arts and Crafts Movement in Detroit, a city soon characterized by technological advances in manufacturing, mass production, and innovative industrial design. During the first three decades of the twentieth century, the founding architects and decorative artisans of the Detroit Society of Arts and Crafts exerted a profound influence on the residential, educational, public and church architecture of the metropolitan Detroit area.

American Arts and Crafts and American Architecture

The Boston Society of Arts and Crafts (BSAC) established in 1897 was the first American organization devoted to pursuing the ideals developed by William Morris.² In its statement of purpose, the Society declared, “The Society modeled itself on two

¹ George Booth, “The Organization and Purpose of the Society of Arts and Crafts,” *The Detroit Society of Arts and Crafts Announcement*. Detroit, Michigan, 1922.

² *Detroit Institute of Arts Bulletin*, November 4, 1948.

influential British groups: the Art Worker's Guild and the Arts and Crafts Exhibition Society. Still functioning today, the BSAC was successful in fostering a revival of silversmithing in Boston. The Society also established *Handicraft* the earliest Arts and Crafts publication in America.³ Soon, dozens of other Arts and Crafts Societies formed across the United States, including large centers in southern and northern California and Chicago. In California, Arts and Crafts groups developed two important exhibitions, the Panama-Pacific Exposition, held in San Francisco and the San Diego Exposition. The Southern California Arts and Crafts Society attracted many important artisans, including prominent ceramist Ernest Bachelder.⁴

In Chicago, a number of Arts and Crafts groups formed including: the Arts and Crafts Society, the Industrial Arts League, the Illinois Art league, and the Society of Decorative Arts. Chicago social reformer Jane Addams held meetings of the Arts and Crafts Society at Hull House, the settlement house she founded in 1889. Addams also sponsored lectures by English Arts and Crafts leaders such as book artist Walter Crane, Director of the Royal College of Art in London, and Charles Ashbee of Toynbee Hall and the Art Worker's Guild, whom she met on a visit to England to directly experience the craft revival. Like Toynbee Hall, Hull House developed craft programs to local residents, offering an escape from the dreariness of urban factory life.⁵ The department store Marshall Fields & Company sold works designed by William Morris. The Art Institute of

³ *Handicraft* ran from 1902–1904 and was revived in 1910 for a national audience.

⁴ Wendy Kaplan, "*The Art that is Life*": *The Arts and Crafts Movement in America, 1875-1920* Boston: Museum of Fine Arts, 1987), 96-98.

⁵ Elizabeth Cumming and Wendy Kaplan, *The Arts and Crafts Movement* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1991), 154.

Chicago presented many exhibitions highlighting the decorative arts. Additionally, a number of Chicago- based publications emphasized Arts and Crafts ideals including: *House Beautiful* (1896) and the *Fine Arts Journal* (1899–1919).

Arts and Crafts historians Elizabeth Cumming and Wendy Kaplan maintain that the British Arts and Crafts Movement had two manifestations in America. One “encouraged designers to look to the American landscape and past. The other was the adaptation of indigenous British styles themselves.”⁶ Southern California was the most prominent Arts and Crafts architectural center which looked to the American past and its landscape. The Spanish Colonial past was idealized in California. The Spanish mission was indigenous to the region and recalled a time when people lived closer to nature as represented in the use of locally made adobe bricks, courtyards, and patios. The other California house type, borne of Arts and crafts roots was the bungalow. California bungalows were inspired by a few sources including the small craftsman homes displayed in Gustav Stickley’s *Craftsman Magazine* (1901–1916); Asian architecture and landscapes displayed in popular Japanese prints; and the California landscape itself, which encouraged open-air living, through the use of sleeping porches, pergolas, patios, and terraces. The typical one-story plan bungalow offered an open interior, wrap around porch and broad overhanging roofs protecting the home from the sun and allowing increased ventilation.⁷

In Boston, Arts and Crafts architecture strongly adhered to British precedent. In particular, church and academic architecture idealized the English Gothic past. Two

⁶ Ibid., 108.

⁷ Ibid., 123.

native Boston architects, Ralph Adams Cram and Bertram Grosvenor Goodhue were the leaders of the Gothic Revival throughout the northeast, designing in the high perpendicular style, recalling fifteenth century English churches, such as the United States Military Academy at West Point (1902); Cathedral of St. John the Divine (1911) and St. Thomas's Church in New York City (1905–1913); and several campus buildings at Princeton University in New Jersey (1907–1929). Cram and Goodhue were both admirers of English Arts and Crafts design reform and became founding members of the Boston Society of Arts and Crafts on 1897. Cram and Goodhue utilized modern materials and conditions to express the composition and proportions of the Gothic cathedral form, rather than copying it.⁸ Cram also founded the publication, influenced by William Morris's Kelmscott Press, the *Knight Errant* (1882), which devoted itself to craft and an idealization of the medieval world.⁹ Cram and Goodhue were among the most highly admired of early twentieth century ecclesiastical architects and worked throughout the northeast, including Detroit (Cathedral Church of St. Paul, 1912–1916).¹⁰

In Chicago, the architects affiliated with the Arts and Crafts Movement developed the Prairie School of design, which responded to the flat, wide-open vistas of the Mid-West landscape. Sharing a belief that buildings should bond with their surroundings; these structures were horizontal like the prairie itself and connected to the earth with low roofs, wide overhangs and porches. Another key concept of the Prairie philosophy was the popular Arts and Crafts idea of “unity of design,” which called for furnishings to be

⁸ Rosalind P. Blakesley, *The Arts and Crafts Movement* (London: Phaidon Press Limited, 2006), 213-216.

⁹ *Ibid.*, 213.

¹⁰ *The Arts and Crafts Movement in Detroit, 1906-1976: The Movement, The Society, The School* (Detroit: The Detroit Institute of Arts, 1976), 54.

part of the overall design of a structure. The leader of the Prairie School was Louis Sullivan. Sullivan and other reform-minded colleagues across Chicago, including Frank Lloyd Wright, formed the basis for the new movement. These men also founded organizations in the city such as the Chicago Society of Arts and Crafts, the Architectural League of America and the Chicago Architectural Club.¹¹

While much of the Midwestern manifestation of the Arts and Crafts Movement was based in Chicago, other cities developed energetic societies influenced by the arts in England including Detroit, Michigan, where Arts and Crafts undertakings played a dynamic role in the material cultural development of the city. At the turn of the century, the relatively small city of Detroit was experiencing rapid growth and industrialization. New industries and workers flooded the city, creating the need for increased building activity. Industrial architecture particularly in the form of large automobile factories and factories for automobile-related businesses including those manufacturing auto parts, tires, tools, and other equipment were built throughout Detroit. From 1903, with the construction of the Packard Motor Company Plant, through the first three decades of the twentieth century, dozens of auto plants formed or upgraded their facilities. According to Hawkins Ferry Detroit was “the center for intensive experimentation in industrial architecture in the early years of the twentieth century”¹² in the United States. These early factories were characterized by cavernous open workrooms 2–3 stories tall; oversized,

¹¹ Wendy Kaplan, *“The Art that is Life”: The Arts and Crafts Movement in America, 1875–1920* (Boston: Museum of Fine Arts, 1987), 108–109.

¹² Hawkins Ferry *The Buildings of Detroit*, 114

paned windows providing natural light, and simple unadorned finishes, except in the administrative offices.¹³

New factories were part of a citywide industrial complex. Intricate transportation systems crisscrossed the city and included rail lines and sidings directly located at manufacturing sites, enabling goods to be shipped in and out on the spot. Some factories combined both rail yards and ports on the Detroit River. Water was used to ship materials, to cool machinery, and to dump waste.¹⁴ This complicated arrangement produced dislocated neighborhoods and general cut-up appearance to a once carefully designed cityscape.¹⁵

Before automobile manufacturing and its related industries emerged, Detroit was a manufacturing city. In the late nineteenth century, furniture trade, metal-works and stove factories were common forms of commerce. Early laborers and factory workers lived in small, gabled wood-framed houses, built close to the street on small lots.¹⁶ The homestead-temple house described by architectural historian Alan Gowens was a popular vernacular style based on classical design with a front-facing pediment but reduced to the the barest proportions. Backyards were utilitarian work yards. No proper zoning existed to separate residential neighborhoods from industrial areas.¹⁷

¹³ Ibid.

¹⁴ Thomas J. Sugrue, *Origins of the Urban Crisis: Race and Inequity in Postwar Detroit* (New Haven: Princeton University Press, 2005), 42.

¹⁵ Detroit was planned by Augustus B. Woodward to resemble Pierre Charles L'Enfant's radiating design of Washington D.C.

¹⁶ Sugrue, *Origins of the Urban Crisis*, 32.

¹⁷ Alan Gowens, *The Comfortable House: North American Suburban Architecture, 1890–1930* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press), 94.

As a reaction to the disconcerting pace of industrialization and its changes to the material landscape of the city, The Detroit Society of Arts and Crafts developed the “Cottage Style” in Detroit. The appeal of the Cottage Style in Detroit may be seen as a reaction against the influence of new mass production techniques and the wave of industrialization which spread across the city. Once Henry Ford invented the process for the mass production of automobiles in 1903, Detroit experienced phenomenal industrialization and population growth. Workers from all over the country moved into the city to secure good-paying jobs.¹⁸ Automobile factories and automobile-related industries emerged throughout the city.¹⁹ By adopting the Cottage Style, influential Detroit architects, primarily those affiliated with the Detroit Society of Arts and Crafts, were attempting a defense in the face of the disconcerting pace of urban production and automation.

The first group meeting of The Detroit Society of Arts and Crafts (DSAC) was held in June of 1906 in the Cranbrook Press Room of the Detroit Evening News building. George Gough Booth, President of the Detroit Evening News, was keenly interested in the Arts and Crafts Movement in England. The Cranbrook Press was modeled after William Morris’s Kelmscott Press. Before entering the newspaper business Booth owned and operated a metal smith business in Ontario, Canada. Booth served as the Societies’ first President and Patron. In Booth’s own words the DSAC was organized to “develop and maintain an appreciation of beauty in itself, and to encourage good and beautiful

¹⁸ Henry Ford and five dollars per day.

¹⁹ Ferry, *The Buildings of Detroit*, 314.

work as applied to useful service.”²⁰ In 1917, at the DSAC annual banquet, Booth also stated “to beautify our lives, to beautify the plain things of daily use, this is the simple beginning in the world of Art.”²¹ With this idea in mind, the DSAC provided a setting for local artists, craftspeople, architects and designers to exchange ideas, exhibit, and sell their work.

In 1907, the Society established a showroom in its first headquarters at 122 Farmer Street in Detroit. In the early years of the organization, the DSAC planned exhibitions of regional, national, and international handicrafts and established an annual course of lectures. The Societies’ first major exhibition in 1907 featured English jewelry, enamels, and other decorative art. The exhibition traveled to Chicago, Denver, St. Louis, Baltimore, New York, Boston, and Providence.²² In 1909, the DSAC began a campaign to raise funds for a School of Design and hosted a series of five lectures by Walter Crane, English artist and head of the Royal College of Art in London.²³ By 1911, the DSAC moved into larger remodeled quarters at 37 Witherall Street in Detroit, where it held its first annual banquet and hosted its second international exhibition of Russian peasant work. Its success clear, the DSAC incorporated in July of 1915 and raised funds for the construction of a new building at 25 Watson Street, begun on December 8, 1915 and completed in 1916. Also in 1916, the Arts and Crafts Theater Season was founded.

²⁰ *The Arts and Crafts Movement in Detroit*, 22.

²¹ “The Organization and Purpose of the Society of Arts and Crafts,” *The Detroit Society of Arts and Crafts Announcement*. Detroit, Michigan, 1917.

²² “Chronology of the Society of Arts and Crafts” *The Eleventh Annual Report of the Society of Arts and Crafts Detroit, Michigan* (Detroit, Michigan: Society of Arts and Crafts, 1917), 2.

²³ The School of Design developed by the Detroit Society of Arts and Crafts in 1910 was turned over to the City of Detroit in 1913.

Utilizing the new headquarters' stage and auditorium, a professional director Sam Hume was hired to head the Theater Department and produce plays open to the general public.²⁴

The DSAC continued to sponsor exhibitions throughout the 1920s, many in collaboration with the Detroit Museum of Art. In 1926, the DSAC was a site on the American tour of the 1925 Paris Decorative Arts Exposition. In 1932, the DSAC hosted its most popular exhibition of international folk art, featuring craft work from the many ethnic communities in the Detroit area. Specifically, the Folk Handcraft Committee (1917) of the DSAC found a developing field in the work of local foreign-born women with handicraft traditions brought from their home countries, including Italy, Greece, Romania, Armenia, Russia, and Syria. The DSAC obtained funding to buy the women linen and thread and then exhibited the work in the gallery and saleroom. In the words of Claire M. Sanders, Chairman of the Folk Handicraft Committee, "The interest that has been shown and the actual necessity for many women to increase the family income confirms our conviction that the Society should take immediate steps to preserve and give market value to the knowledge of handwork which these women possess."²⁵ The promotion of craft by local women differed from the commercialization of foreign craft products popular at the time. Kristin Hoganson stresses that the importation and consumption of foreign products in American households marks an attempt to appear cosmopolitan. While this general interest undoubtedly helped to market craft goods, the

²⁴ "Report of the Theater Season," *The Eleventh Annual Report of the Society of Arts and Crafts Detroit, Michigan*, 2

²⁵ "Report of the Folk Handicraft Committee," *The Eleventh Annual Report of the Society of Arts and Crafts Detroit, Michigan*, 17.

program was developed to further local women's interests by introducing them into the marketplace.²⁶

The DSAC's attention to women's issues may have been influenced by a largely female membership. At the time of the DSAC's incorporation in 1917, 39 out of the organization's 60 listed craftspeople were women. Similarly, the DSAC's regular membership was made up of roughly two thirds women. Women also held many of the Chair positions of the DSAC's committees. It is no surprise that the DSAC's interest in women's issues took on political form, with an interest in suffrage movement, as exhibited in the DSAC's decoration of the Women's Suffrage Section of the Detroit Cadillaqua Auto Parade in 1912 (Fig. 13).



Figure 13. Cadillaqua Auto Parade, 1912. Courtesy of the Library of Congress, Detroit Publishing Company Collection, LC D418-153, det 4a26835 <http://hdl.loc.gov/loc.pnp/det.4a26835>.

Repeatedly innovative, the DSAC in 1933 was the first gallery in America to recognize the automobile as an art form and showcased new car designs from Ford, Chrysler, Lincoln, Packard, and Hudson in the “Art in the Automobile Industry” exhibit

²⁶ Kristin Hoganson, *Consumer's Imperium: The Global Production of American Domesticity, 1865-1920* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2007), 40-41.

(1933).²⁷ Committee members included Henry Ford and his son Edsel B. Ford. Edsel and his wife Eleanor C. Ford would go to patronize the DSAC and fund a gallery devoted to modern art at the DSAC.²⁸

William Buck Stratton

The Pewabic Pottery Building

In 1907, Mary Chase Perry, a founding member of the Detroit Society of Arts and Crafts, hired fellow DSAC founding member, architect William Buck Stratton to design the Pewabic Pottery in the manner of an English guild hall on East Jefferson Avenue along the Detroit River.²⁹ Stratton was one of the first and most prolific of the Cottage architect's in Detroit. According to Ferry, "For many years architect William Buck Stratton had been attracted by the straightforward simplicity of the English Cottage Style."³⁰ The pottery was named for copper colored Chippewa Indian clay found in Michigan's Upper Peninsula. Ms. Perry's highly glazed; brilliantly colored tiles decorated the interiors and exteriors of many of Detroit's most distinguished buildings of the period, including the Detroit Public Library, the Detroit Institute of Arts and the magnificent Guardian Building.³¹ Her six iridescent glazes (rose, green, gold-yellow, purple, gold and copper) also made the pottery internationally famous. The Pewabic Pottery building is still in use as a pottery. This Cottage building is rustic, rambling and

²⁷ *Arts and Crafts in Detroit*, 169-170.

²⁸ Henry Ford, his wife, son Edsel and his wife Eleanor were long standing members of the DSAC, as indicated on the 1917 roster of members and their continued involvement in DSAC affairs, including the DSAC's modern art gallery. Edsel and Eleanor's Ford's son

²⁹ Florence Davies, "Obituary of William Buck Stratton," *The Detroit News*, May 14, 1937.

³⁰ Ferry, *The Buildings of Detroit*, 305.

³¹ *Ibid*, 300.

typically Medieval English in flavor, epitomized by the tall, colorfully tiled chimney, with chimney pots (Fig. 14). The exterior wall surfaces are half timbered and stuccoed. Its roof is hipped and steeply pitched. The first floor contains offices, a showroom, and an enormous kiln room, home to the original oil burning kilns perfected by Ms. Perry's partner Horace Caulkins. A narrow enclosed staircase leads to a second floor gallery. A labyrinth of workrooms lay beyond. Interior wall surfaces are rough textured stucco, complemented by wide unfinished oak floor boards and heavy, exposed beamed ceilings.³² The design suggests an English cottage, which appropriately reflects its function as a small handicraft industry with Arts and Crafts ideals.



Figure 14. Pewabic Pottery, Detroit, Michigan.
Architect: William Buck Stratton (1907).

³² *Arts and Crafts in Detroit*, 52.

The Detroit Society of Arts and Crafts Building

Art historian Hawkins Ferry described the building William Buck Stratton and Frank Baldwin designed for the Detroit Society of Arts and Crafts, on Watson Street in Detroit, in 1916, as “being most akin to the work of Voysey in England”³³ (Fig. 15). Ferry furthered, “The plasticity of its roof forms, the free informal groupings of windows and emphasis on craftsmanship embodied the spirit of the Arts and Crafts movement in Detroit.”³⁴ At a time when the majority of the buildings designed in the city at this time relied heavily upon revival styles the Detroit Society of Arts and Crafts building gained its importance from its subtly lines rather than from historical reference.³⁵



Figure 15. Detroit Society of Arts and Crafts Building. Architect: William Buck Stratton, 1917. Courtesy of the Library of Congress Prints and Photographs Division, Washington D.C. Detroit Publishing Company Photograph Collection, LC-D418-16, det 4a26809 <http://hdl.loc.gov/loc.pnp/det.4a26809>.

³³ Ferry, *The Buildings of Detroit*, 314.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, 266.

³⁵ *Ibid.*

Stratton and Baldwin were also among the first architects in Detroit to design in the understated Cottage Style. Baldwin's own house on Jefferson Avenue was another early example of Cottage architecture. Constructed in 1908, it displayed clean, sweeping stucco walls, sparse fenestration and overall restraint in ornamentation.

After having outgrown their rented quarters of a converted stable and courtyard, the DSAC needed a larger building to building to make, display and sell hand-wrought items, created by its members.³⁶ Large exhibition rooms, workrooms, offices, studios, lecture rooms, a library, a bindery, and a little theater completed its arrangement. An article written upon the occasion of the building's dedication appeared in *Detroit Saturday Night* dated November 11, 1916 and stated that "with the completion of the Arts and Crafts building this week, a program of events in connection with its dedication has begun. This includes an exhibition of hand-wrought jewelry, pottery, paintings, metal articles and all other things which are included in the arts and crafts cult. A series of theatrical performances has also been arranged in the little theater which is part of the building. The charm of all the exhibits and of the theatrical entertainment as well, lies in the fact that the unusual has been attempted and achieved."³⁷

The building itself was constructed of masonry, with a yellow-brown stucco exterior. Its gabled and dormered roof was covered in unglazed Pewabic tile, interpolated with chimney pots. The asymmetrically placed, grouped casement windows were comprised of small panes of leaded glass. Interiors featured heavy beams and wide oak flooring. The ground floor contained a spacious exhibition room with walls finished in

³⁶ Society of Arts and Crafts, Detroit," *Art and Progress* 4 (November, 1912): 784–784.

³⁷ "The New Home of the Society of Arts and Crafts," *Detroit Saturday Night*, (November 11, 1916): np.

wood. A large Pewabic tile fireplace with the Society's initials formed out of tile dominated the room. Nooks and cabinets held bronze figures. Deep wall bookcases held leather bound volumes with hand tooled bindings created in the DSAC's own bindery. Ceramics and pottery pieces were placed about the room on rustic oak tables.³⁸

A little theater opened off the exhibition room and both rooms were connected to the street through an arched entrance, leading into a courtyard. A proscenium arch with a square opening was the room's center attraction.³⁹ Paintings adorned the walls and the seats were stained in a variety of colors. The second floor housed a second large exhibition room, with a balcony overlooking the first floor. The third floor contained a costume department, which provided costumes for theatrical performances and private masquerades. The main floor exhibition room and little theater opened onto an inner courtyard paved with stones. On one side of the courtyard stood the individual shops of the DSAC's craftsmen, each decorated differently to reflect the personality of its artist.⁴⁰

The DSAC building was located in a fashionable residential area of the city. It operated as a gallery, shop and art school successfully for over fifty years. Today, what is left of the building sits unused in a decaying part of the city, almost completely destroyed by fire in the mid-1980s.⁴¹

³⁸ Ibid.

³⁹ Constance D'Arcy Mackay, "Why Not a Little Community Theater for Your Town?" *The Art World* (March, 1918): 528.

⁴⁰ *Detroit Saturday Night*, np.

⁴¹ Ferry, *The Buildings of Detroit*, 320.

The William Buck Stratton Residence

In 1927, William Buck Stratton and his wife Mary Chase Perry designed their own home in the Detroit suburb of Grosse Pointe (Fig. 16). This residence epitomizes the culmination of a design philosophy consistent with the Detroit version of the Arts and Crafts Movement. In the face of an increasing desire for architectural historicism, in the late 1920s, Stratton stood by the tenets of the Arts and Crafts Movement in designing his home. It is a modern building, which employs natural and hand worked materials, texture and color. While the home is united with its carefully landscaped lot, it stands out on a street of conventional, typically Colonial Revival homes.



Figure 16. William Buck Stratton residence. Architect: William Buck Stratton (1927).

Much of an earlier house was incorporated into the Stratton residence. In the *Michigan Architect and Engineer*, Stratton stated “When we decided to move from our East Grand Blvd. home in Detroit, it was quite evident that we would want to take with us many of the familiar features of the old house. So it was carefully taken down and the

different parts were separated and moved to the new lot.”⁴² A winding brick walk leads to the irregularly massed, multi-leveled house. The house is constructed of brown and beige colored brick laid in a Flemish bond. The roof is finished in unglazed Pewabic tile. Grilled windows and an old Spanish door flank a stone flagged terrace. Like Charles Voysey’s cottage houses in England, double casement windows, in a profusion of shapes and sizes are placed in order to catch the sun. According to Stratton, they were placed more for quality of light than for quantity.⁴³

The Stratton residence is composed of five related sections: the two-level central section, the two-level garage and bedroom section on the southeast side, the one level kitchen wing on the northeast side, the one-level library section on the southwest side, and the two level section on the northwest side. In the completely open lower level of the central section, the spaces are defined by structure, materials and texture. The walls were finished in natural brown cork slabs attached to masonry. A Mediterranean style dining room occupies the front of the house with latticed windows forming its entire front wall. A long tiled window shelf, created for plant pots, runs along the bottom of the casements. The floor is covered with brown Pewabic tiles. The window sills and a radiator cover are emphasized in blue tile. Originally, the walls were covered in creamy yellow cork, which ran up to the domed ceiling. Exposed wooden beams underline the covered ceiling. Solid timber beams span the living room ceiling. Three arched French casement windows shed brilliant light across the longitudinally planked floor. A fireplace, bordered in differing shades of brown and iridescent blue tiles is situated in an alcove to the left of the room.

⁴² “Interview with William Buck Stratton, “*Michigan Architect and Engineer* (June, 1933).

⁴³ *Ibid.*

The blue tiles continue as wainscoting in a passageway which leads to the breakfast room. The hearth, passageway, and breakfast room are paved in beige and brown tiles in a variety of sizes.⁴⁴

Like the inglenook configurations found in typical English medieval cottages found in England, a large fireplace dominates the hall and is set deep into the wall. Echoing a children's fairy cottage, a passageway about two feet wide, which Mrs. Stratton called her sneak-in, leads around to a narrow door at the very back of the chimney. The secret door opens into the breakfast room. A nearby book room lies at one side of the back terrace door. It is paneled in a soft brown wood. A ten foot high, concrete ceiling, cast in a prismatic form, adds an interesting touch. The walls are paneled in gum-wood. A group of leaded glass French doors look into the garden. One window at the side has a shallow, tiled iron railed balcony. A fireplace of blue Pewabic tiles lends warmth of color.⁴⁵

The bedrooms and workrooms located on the second floor of the house lie on many different levels. They all possess blue beamed rafters, which were left in the shape of the roof. Windows, planned with sensitivity to sun exposure, are scattered everywhere. The Strattons wanted to catch every ray of sun and breathe of fresh air. From a carved wooden balcony, a view of Lake St. Clair can be seen over a tile edged roof.⁴⁶

The main stairs lead upward to a landing, which gives access to two bedrooms with gabled roof beams. The east room has large French doors, with leaded glass panes

⁴⁴ Virginia Shaw, "The Delightful Residence of Mrs. William B. Stratton," *The Detroit Free Press*, October 22, 1933.

⁴⁵ Ibid.

⁴⁶ "Interview with Mr. William Buck Stratton," *Michigan Architect and Engineer*, np.

facing east overlooking the garden. A band of casement windows face south above the radiator enclosed with a sheet lead grille. Brown glazed tile window sills accent the depth of the walls. Built-in closets and drawers separate the rooms. A passage connects the two rooms to a green tile bath. From the half level, five steps reach the upper landing with east facing casement windows and a view of the loggia and library deck. A rectangular opening leads to a hall with blue painted floor and built in linen closets. An arched opening overlooks the stairs. Another bedroom is decorated with brown tile sills, a ceiling following the lines of the hipped roof and a wood plank floor stained blue. A small adjoining bath is tiled in light green with beige tile wainscoting. All tiles in the house are handmade Pewabic. Pewabic tile can be found on sills, hearths, the breakfast room floor, the dining room floor, entrance hall, stairs and landings, bathroom floors, wainscoting, tubs and shower enclosures, basins and water fountains.⁴⁷

Stratton was interested in the unification of house and garden. As such, the middle terrace of the garden, designed by Raymond Wilcox, is centered to the porch. A few broad steps lead to a brick paved square with a crosswalk and dense planting beyond. The garden was also planned for privacy. A wall of old stone and brick surrounds an orchard of fruit trees, Lombardy poplars and weeping willows, which were brought from the Stratton's old home in the city. Three levels were created in the garden, which gives the house the appearance of having been built into the slope of a hill. The upper level is the orchard. The middle level is a terrace and the lower level is the "meadow" and croquet ground. A shady pool with mossy stone steps, a rock garden, and a fountain with a band of iridescent tiles, can also be found on the lower level, amid a clutter of wildwood. A

⁴⁷ Shaw, np.

cement block wall borders the northern edge of the lot and encloses the kitchen garden north of the house.⁴⁸

The Pewabic Pottery, the Detroit Society of Arts and Crafts building, and the Stratton residence represent important documentation of the Detroit response to the Arts and Crafts Movement and also serve as an example of early modern residential design. The Pewabic Pottery, as an institution, was at the forefront of the Arts and Crafts handicraft movement in America. Likewise, its building was an early example of the American architectural communities' passion for the tenets of the English Domestic Revival, which focused on a straightforward, simple, craftsman approach to structure. Similarly, Stratton's building for the Detroit Society of Arts and Crafts displayed the same English Medieval principles but with a modern Voysey influence, borne out in its smooth stucco exterior and horizontal emphasis. Stratton's own home is a later example of Arts and Crafts detailing and decorative art, combined with a modernist, multi-leveled form. This house also marked the highpoint of William Buck Stratton's career. While he received many important commissions in the 1930s, most of his later buildings succumbed to the eclectic tastes of his varied clients.⁴⁹ William Buck Stratton was an influential architect in Detroit from 1893 to his death in 1938. According to architectural historian Hawkins Ferry, Stratton's contribution to the architectural heritage of the Detroit area was profound, yet largely forgotten in today's society.⁵⁰

⁴⁸ Ibid.

⁴⁹ Ferry, *The Buildings of Detroit*, 266.

⁵⁰ Ibid, 266.

Albert Kahn

Albert Kahn, one of America's most distinguished architects, is known principally for his contributions to the development of industrial design. Beginning with the Packard Motor Car Company in 1903, Kahn soon became the favored architect of the burgeoning Detroit automobile companies. Kahn also designed the Chalmers Motor Car Company headquarters and factory (1905), the Hudson Motor Car Company (1910), Continental Motors Corporation (1912), Dodge Brothers Corporation (1910), Buick Motor Car Company (1919), Fisher Body Company (Cleveland, Ohio, 1921), and plants for General Motors Corporation and Chrysler Corporation in the 1930s. However, Kahn's most illustrious work was commissioned by Henry Ford.⁵¹ As Ford's chief architect from 1909 until his death in 1942, his firm designed all Ford factories and administration buildings including Ford's Highland Park Plant (1909), the River Rouge Plant (1917) and the infamous Willow Run Bomber Plant (1943).⁵²

Kahn's institutional architecture included multiple buildings on the University of Michigan campus: Engineering Building (1903), Hill Auditorium (1913), the Natural Science Building (1917), the General Library (1919), the University Hospital, the William L. Clements Library (1922), Angell Hall (1922), and the Medical Building (1925). Kahn's University of Michigan projects remain as key elements of the campus plan. Kahn's commercial design included the impressive Detroit Gothic skyscraper, the

⁵¹ W. Hawkins Ferry, *The Legacy of Albert Kahn* (Detroit, Michigan: Wayne State University Press, 1987), 40–53.

⁵² Albert Kahn's firm also designed subsequent buildings and additions to both the Highland Park Plant and River Rouge Plant. After Kahn's death in 1942, his firm continued as Albert Kahn Associates and still designs for Ford Motor Companies and General Motors Corporation.

Fisher Building (1927), along with buildings for the rival Detroit Free Press (1913) and Detroit News (1915).⁵³

While celebrated for his industrial, institutional, and commercial designs, Kahn's domestic work was also extensive. Kahn began his career as a designer of houses in Detroit in 1888, exhibiting strong European influences. As large-scale industrial work took up most of his time after 1903, his residential designs were primarily reserved for friends and special clients. As a founding member of the Detroit Society of Arts and Crafts in 1906, Kahn was inspired by the rural buildings of England. The livability and simple planning of English medieval architecture appealed to Kahn. In 1907, he designed his own home on Mack Avenue in Detroit in 1907 with Arts and Crafts principles in mind (Fig. 17).⁵⁴ An architect's own home is very expressive, for it shows his or her private aesthetic preferences. According to Ferry, the Kahn residence "followed the simplified style of the second generation of the Domestic Revival in England."⁵⁵ Similar to Voysey's houses in England, Kahn's home is an abstracted version of a medieval cottage. Casement windows are placed to catch the light, with little regard for symmetry. The exterior is comprised of stucco and brick. The extensive interior woodwork is handcrafted, as is the medieval inspired furnishings, designed by Kahn.

⁵³ Ferry, *The Legacy of Albert Kahn*, 54.

⁵⁴ *Ibid*, 34.

⁵⁵ *Ibid*, 16.



Figure 17. Albert Kahn Residence (1906).
Architect: Albert Kahn.

Also in 1907, the same year he built his own home, and the pinnacle of Kahn's popularity as a domestic architect, he was hired by prominent businessman and philanthropist George Gough Booth to design his estate in Bloomfield Hills, just north of Detroit.⁵⁶ In 1904, Booth bought over a thousand acres of farmland and called it Cranbrook, after his ancestral home in Kent, England. By that time, Booth was the leader of the Art and Crafts Movement in Detroit, serving as the Society's founder, first president, and financial patron.⁵⁷ In this capacity, it was natural that Booth's views would be in harmony with Kahn's desire for simplicity and fine craftsmanship. As such, Booth also favored the Cottage Style. Kahn's own residence, his previous Cottage designs, and models from domestic architects in England became the inspiration for this rambling estate, which became the focal point for a growing suburban community.

The main residence on the estate, called Cranbrook House (Fig. 18), was designed on a much larger scale than any of Kahn's previous work. However, the structure exhibits Kahn's restraint in design and materials.

⁵⁶ George Gough Booth was President of the Detroit News and owner of the Scripps Communication Empire (later Scripps-Howard Communications).

⁵⁷ *Arts and Crafts in Detroit*, 22.



Figure 18. Cranbrook House (1909). Architect: Albert Kahn. Photographer: Audra Bellmore.

The sprawling Cottage estate home is horizontal in orientation, with rows of mullioned windows, and curved bays to catch the light. While some half-timbered effects decorate the steep, front gables, the home is primarily sheathed in a smooth, stucco exterior. Kahn's design for the estate also included many outbuildings, executed in the Cottage Style. Echoing an English Cotswold country village, barns, garages, servant and worker's cottages were spread out across the developing farmland, which extended as far as the eye could see in 1907.

George Gough Booth and the Cranbrook Estate

As the community around Cranbrook began to develop, George Gough Booth recognized the need for additional educational and religious facilities. In view of his profound interest in the arts, it was natural for him to consider education in the arts as an essential part of the community's overall needs. He decided that the beautiful grounds of his estate would be an appropriate setting for an educational campus. Arthur Pound states in his study of Detroit and its environs, "Near-by Cranbrook School, richly endowed by

George C. Booth, published of the Detroit News, strikes a serious note in this land of play as an institution materializing the duty of wealth to serve dignity, beauty, education, and social progress.”⁵⁸

The first building proposed for the new Cranbrook Institution was the Cranbrook Meeting House (1918) (Fig. 19). George Booth himself designed the Meeting House (now renamed the Brookside School) to complement the other buildings on the estate in the Cottage Style, with asymmetrically massed in stucco and stone, with an irregular slate roofline. Before moving to Detroit, Booth was employed as a metal smith in his native Ontario and never lost his love of creative work. His background as a craftsman and his

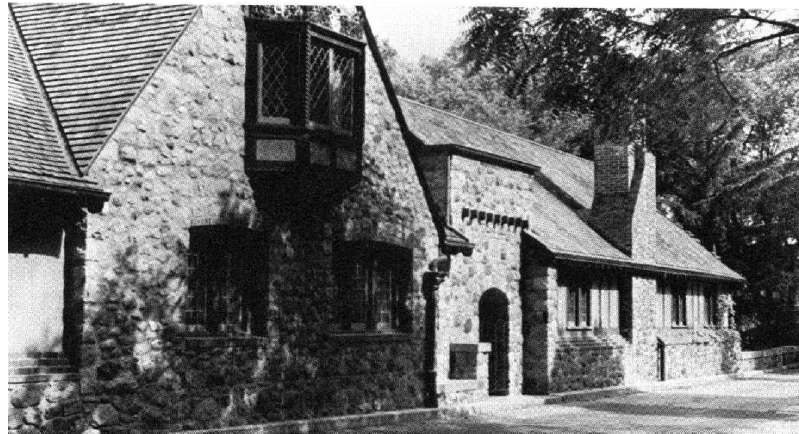


Figure 19. Cranbrook Meeting House. Architect: George Booth

passion for English village life, prompted Booth’s intense interest in the Arts and Crafts Movement. While he had no formal training, Booth developed into a highly competent “gentleman architect” who practiced in the Cottage Style. The Meeting House was not Booth’s only contribution to the expanding Cranbrook campus. By the late teens, Albert Kahn was busy designing factories for Henry Ford and George Booth took over the design and construction of many Cranbrook properties, including a new Headmaster’s

⁵⁸ Arthur Pound, *Detroit: Dynamic City* (New York: D. Appleton-Century Company, 1940), 346.

Residence (1919), adjacent to the Meeting House. His next building would be the Booth Studio (1920) (Fig. 20), an architectural studio, which served as the principal drafting facility for most of the work constructed on the Cranbrook campus for the next thirty years.⁵⁹



Figure 20. Booth Studio(1920). Architect: George Booth.
Photographer: Audra Bellmore.

All of the Booth buildings were designed in the Cottage Style, or in a version of it. A common modification was the substitution of exterior brick for stucco. However, the brick sheathing was laid in a horizontal bond pattern, which emphasized the horizontality of the structures and mimicked the smooth, plasticity of Voysey-inspired Cottage homes. It was a technique adopted in the domestic Cottage designs of other British architects and colleagues of Voysey at the turn of the century.

In 1924, George Booth established Cranbrook Parish. Booth commissioned the Boston Arts and Crafts church architects Goodhue and Associates to design the chapel of Christchurch Cranbrook, completed in 1928, on the grounds of the estate.⁶⁰ Devoid of

⁵⁹ Ferry, *The Buildings of Detroit*, 300.

⁶⁰Goodhue and Associates was the successor to the firm of Arts and Crafts architect Bertram Grosvenor Goodhue.

any precise historical precedent, Christchurch Cranbrook echoes the appearance of a church in an English country village. Sheathed in brick and set in a peaceful lakeside landscape, Booth's church houses a prize of hand crafted decorative art including: two twenty-two foot tapestries crafted by William Morris's firm Morris and Company of Morton Abbey, England. A mosaic of Pewabic tiles, created by Mary Chase Stratton, decorates the ceiling of the baptistery. A design of Pewabic tile and slate cover the floors. Ornamental leaded glass makes up the narthex screen and sanctuary windows. Frescoed murals painted by Katherine McEwen, a prominent founding member of the DSAC, cover the walls. Carved wood interior supports display an unusual assortment of figures representing traditional and popular culture including: gluttony, lust, politics, jazz, prize fighting, transportation, and prohibition. Similar to the DSAC, which highlighted the craft work of women, Christchurch Cranbrook's west window above the gallery is dedicated to womankind with figures representing important women in history, including Mary Magdalene; Clara Barton; actress's Ellen Terry and Sarah Bernhardt; Dolly Madison; and poet Emily Dickenson. The Depression and World War II caused an interruption of almost all building activity across the country including in Detroit. After the war ended, the founding members and craftsmen of the DSAC were mainly deceased. Structures such as Christchurch Cranbrook, with its wealth of Arts and Crafts architectural detail and decoration were never to be created again in Detroit. Christchurch Cranbrook was the result of three decades in Detroit when the Arts and Crafts Movement highly influenced most of the significant buildings in the city, including residences, churches, public and academic buildings.⁶¹

⁶¹ *Arts and Crafts in Detroit*, 56–57.

The work of Albert Kahn and of his patron George Booth at Cranbrook in the early years of the twentieth century represents a striking example of Cottage Style work in America, based upon the principals laid forth by British domestic revival architects, of whom Charles Voysey was the main progenitor. Voysey and his colleagues in England primarily designed single family suburban homes for a professional urban class, often commuters to London. Cottage Style developments proliferated in England; indeed, a drive through any London suburb reveals the rows of white rough-cast boxes with rounded, recessed doorways and cat slide roofs to understand the impact of Voysey's work upon the English garden suburb. However, the large private complex of Cottage buildings at Cranbrook is unique in America for its strong adherence to the Cottage Style and also for its experimental nature. Similar to the Cottage Style in England, which is credited with inspiring Modern Movement designers in Europe, Cranbrook also used the Cottage form to influence Modern design in America.

Eliel Saarinen: Blending Arts and Crafts and Modernism at Cranbrook

In order to understand the impact of Cottage architects upon the development of modern architecture in the United States, it is important to recognize the context in which they exerted their influence. From the 1880s through the early 1920s, a response to the eclecticism of myriad early nineteenth century revival forms developed. According to the ideal of modern architecture, each age possessed an authentic style, which resonated the essence of its time and place. In the middle of the nineteenth century a break in this tradition occurred, replaced by a flow of false adaptations of preceding forms. The task of the modern architect was to eschew historicism and discover new design which would suit the needs of a changing industrialized society and exemplify the advanced ideals of a

new age.⁶² Architectural historian Nikolaus Pevsner suggests that a diversity of stimuli contributed to the formation of new architectural forms, with one deep-rooted in tradition, the English Domestic Revival. The English Domestic architects of the late nineteenth century studied the simple massing, color and materials of traditional medieval rural dwellings, emphasizing a simplification of design and plan.⁶³ Pevsner proposed that C.F.A. Voysey was the most original architect of the English Domestic Revival. Voysey abandoned historical detailing and created a new style, relying upon functionalism for his inspiration. Pevsner contends that while using the English Yeoman's house of the seventeenth century as his pattern, Voysey's designs were not period imitations. He introduced comfortable simplicity, a bareness of surfaces and a consistent emphasis on horizontals, which pointed the way out of historicism altogether.⁶⁴

Historians of modern architecture seem to agree that the English Domestic Revival, exemplified by the Cottage Style, exerted strong influence on European designers of the early twentieth century. Most point to the marked innovation of English domestic architecture as a prime catalyst of the Modern Movement. The ideals of Voysey and his colleagues regarding functionalism and structure flourished at a time when Europeans were attempting to produce a new style based on form, owing little to the past. The emphasis on the simple treatment of the home clearly exhibited in Arts and Crafts principles was also in line with Modernist thought.

⁶² Henry Russell Hitchcock, *Modern Architecture: Romanticism and Reintegration* (New York: Hacker Art Books, 1970), 19–25.

⁶³ Pevsner, *Studies in Art, Architecture and Design* (New York: Walker, 1968), 135–159.

⁶⁴ Pevsner, *An Outline to European Architecture* (New York: Penguin, 1979), 390–393.

While Cottage design in England anticipated Modern design abroad, the Cranbrook Institution developed into a blending of Cottage and Modernist design elements in America. By the mid-1920s, design at Cranbrook entered into a transitional phase in which Cottage conceptions matured to nurture a new wave of Modernist design. Finnish designer Eliel Saarinen, recently arrived from Helsinki, was leading the way toward modernity from a background in the arts and crafts. After a brief time in Chicago, where he was awarded the second prize in a competition to design the new Chicago Tribune tower in 1922, Saarinen moved to Michigan where he joined the faculty at the School of Architecture of the University of Michigan. It was at the University of Michigan that Saarinen met architecture student Henry Booth, son of George Booth. Henry Booth introduced Saarinen to his father. George Booth offered Saarinen the job of designing the new Cranbrook Academy.⁶⁵

Just as George Booth was the founder of the Society of Arts and Crafts in Detroit, Saarinen had been heavily involved with the Arts and Crafts Movement in Finland, where an extensive tradition of craftsmanship thrived. This love of craft was in harmony with the ideals of the English Arts and Crafts. Saarinen also favored the values of the Movement.⁶⁶ Like the architects of the English Domestic Revival, Saarinen's writings refer to the medieval as the last period of meaningful form. To Saarinen, the medieval

⁶⁵ Wittkopp, Gregory ed. *Saarinen House and Garden*. (New York: Harry N. Abrams, Inc., 1995), 10.

⁶⁶ Ferry, *The Buildings of Detroit*, 164.

form linked with a tradition which was the “springboard to new form expressive of a new age.”⁶⁷ It is philosophy reminiscent to that of Voysey in England.⁶⁸

The first set of buildings designed by Saarinen at Cranbrook was the Cranbrook School for Boys (1925–1928). The school’s complex consists of red brick buildings displaying steeply pitched red-tile roofs, grouped around courts in the manner of a medieval English collegiate quadrangle. However, the stylistic character of the structures is a synthesis of abstract medieval forms, interposed with the clean lines of modern Scandinavian work. The result is a combination of the traditional and the modern. Saarinen won the Gold Medal of the Architectural League in 1934 for this work.⁶⁹ Saarinen’s next project at Cranbrook was the Cranbrook Academy of Art (1925–1930). Here, Saarinen also employed modified medieval expression in several buildings including: the Architectural Office (1925–1926); the Arts and Crafts Building (1928–1929); his own home Saarinen House (1928–1930); and the home of sculptor Carl Milles (1928–1930). By the time Saarinen designed Kingswood School for Girls (1929–1931) (Fig. 21), he departed from any obvious historical references to traditional medieval style in favor of an even simpler form. And yet, its smooth stucco exterior, broadly overhanging eaves and horizontal bands of windows show an obvious affinity to the plasticity of Voysey’s work, such as that of Perrycroft House (1896) (Fig.22). The Kingswood School is a transitional structure on the Cranbrook campus. From then on Saarinen maintained a sweep of clean lines and horizontal masses evocative of the

⁶⁷ Eero Saarinen, *Saarinen Door* (Bloomfield Hills, MI: Cranbrook Academy of Art, 1963). 4.

⁶⁸ Charles Francis Annesley Voysey, “The Quality and Fitness of Architecture,” 174–182.

⁶⁹ Ferry, *The Buildings of Detroit*.

International Style as in the Cranbrook Institute of Science (1935–1938), a blending of International Style and Nordic influences, where horizontal masses blend with flat roofs and bands of simple, square-cut windows. The entire form is mirrored in a pool decorated with bronze mermaid and triton figures. Saarinen's last major design for the Cranbrook campus was the Cranbrook Museum and Library (1938–1942). The Museum and Library are a blunt contrast to the earlier buildings at Cranbrook. It reflects Saarinen's full recognition of the modern form.



Figure 21. Kingswood School for Girls. Architect: Eliel Saarinen.

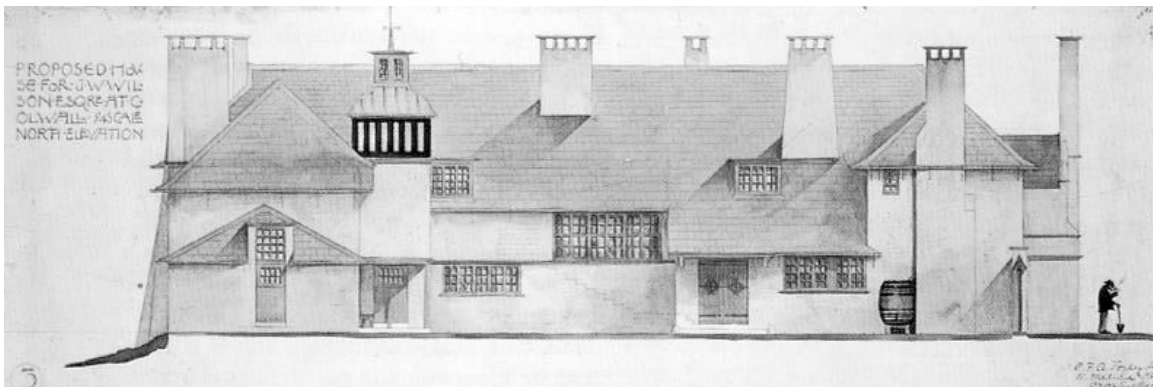


Figure 22. Perrycroft (1893). Architect: C.F.A. Voysey. Royal Institute of British Architects Library Photographs Division.

The Cranbrook campus was a unique architectural experiment, which represents the beliefs of three architects: Albert Kahn, George Booth and Eliel Saarinen. All three men were grounded in the philosophies of the English Arts and Crafts Movement, which

advocated the simple, rational treatment of buildings, as exemplified by the Cottage Style. Like the Cottage Style in England, which is credited as the major source of European Modern architecture, the Cottage Style at Cranbrook may be seen as the inspiration for a series of highly influential contemporary buildings. Today Cranbrook is considered a masterwork in American architecture. It is a National Historic Landmark and the campus continues to serve as an inspirational training ground for many eminent architects and designers.



Figure 23. The Edsel and Eleanor Home (1927).
Architect: Albert Kahn.

The Auto-Barons and Cotswold Style

The legacy of the Cottage Style in Detroit does not end with Cranbrook. Cottage influenced country homes were constructed in Bloomfield Hills and neighboring communities through the 1920s. Indeed, Albert Kahn did not entirely abandon his domestic work in favor of industrial design. In 1926 Kahn traveled to England with his client Edsel Ford, heir to the Ford Motor Company, to study medieval, Cotswold vernacular dwellings. Upon their return home, Kahn designed Ford's rambling, Cottage

Style estate on the shores of Lake St. Clair (Fig. 23). To heighten the authenticity of the project, Ford imported English masons to split stones and lay them on the roof in true Cotswold manner. Two years later in 1929, Kahn designed a home for Alvin Macauley, president of the Packard Motor Car Company. Macauley also desired the Cottage vernacular for his home in Grosse Pointe. This time the quality of the masonry was assured by the employment of Scottish masons, supervised by Cotswold foremen.⁷⁰ It is interesting that these industrial tycoons turned to simple, pre-industrial forms for inspiration in designing their own homes. Like members of the Detroit Society of Arts and Crafts, who rebelled against the Fordist influence, these founders of fortune also desired to escape the impersonal quality and fast pace of mass production, resulting from their own business interests, by returning to a native tradition.

Even Henry Ford searched for nostalgic respite against mass industrialism he created. In 1930, Ford opened the Edison Institute in Dearborn, Michigan his childhood home near Detroit. The Institute's Henry Ford Museum is a full-scale reproduction Philadelphia's Independence Hall and at 300,000 square feet stands as one of the largest museums in the world, second only to the Smithsonian in the United States. The museum contains vast holdings of Americana collected by Ford. Ferry proposes that, "As Henry Ford grew older he began to sentimentalize about the past. A man who had devoted so much of his energy to molding the present and the future at last had time to reflect."⁷¹ To supplement and provide an appropriate venue for the collections, Ford also built the

⁷⁰Ferry, *The Buildings of Detroit*, 273.

⁷¹ *Ibid.*, 307.

open-air Greenfield Village adjacent to the museum.⁷² Significant buildings from America's past are grouped around a village green. Buildings purchased by Ford and moved to the site include: Ford's own birthplace, the Wright Brother's workshop, Thomas Edison's Menlo Park New Jersey Laboratory, the courthouse where Abraham Lincoln first practiced law, Noah Webster's residence, and the Ann Arbor house where Robert Frost lived while teaching at the University of Michigan. Alongside these sites of American historic interest sits Rose Cottage, the seventeenth century Cotswold cottage Ford purchased on a trip to Gloucestershire, England. The structure was restored on its original site by local builders, dismantled, shipped and put back together at Greenfield Village by Cotswold craftsmen brought to the United States by Ford. Ford also purchased a 17th century Cotswold blacksmith shop from the same Gloucestershire village which sits.⁷³

At first glance, Rose Cottage with its Cotswold stone walls and floors and surrounding medieval style perennial garden seems out of place amongst the Greek Revival and Colonial homes at Greenfield Village. However, to Ford these houses clearly represent Anglo Saxon settlement and life in America of a selection of important men, Rose Cottage also represents Ford's view that these American's came from similar village roots in the British Isles. It is a narrow view but one which fits in with Ford's ethnocentric approach. As an employer of thousands of men and women, a majority from working class Polish and Italian immigrant neighborhoods in Detroit, Ford was certainly aware of other cultures and how they came to be in the United States. However, Ford's

⁷² Greenfield is the name of the township where Henry Ford grew up.

⁷³ *Selected Views of Greenfield Village, Dearborn, Michigan* (Chicago: Curteich & Co., c. 1950).

view that the “great” men of American history were White, Anglo Saxon, and Protestant is represented in his selection of homes, including Rose Cottage.

On a more profound level, the installation of Rose Cottage was preceded by several years, 1920–1927, of specifically Anti-Semitic rhetoric by Ford. Historian David A. Gerber describes it as “Henry Ford’s anti-Semitic propaganda campaign against the so-called International Jew.”⁷⁴ In the Ford-owned newspaper *The Dearborn Independent*, Ford wrote and published a series of propaganda articles rallying against Jews. According to author John Spargo, “It appealed to every passion, charged the Jews as a ‘race’ with every crime calculated to rouse the frenzied anger of the non-Jewish population.”⁷⁵ Ironically, business interests must have superseded such vociferous notions because Ford’s choice of architect, Albert Kahn was himself a German Jew.

Conclusion

An inevitable mixing of high and middlebrow culture followed the first waves of country house building in Detroit. Inspired by grand examples such as Cranbrook House and the Edsel and Eleanor Ford Home, middle-class Cottage influenced homes, modified to fit smaller suburban lots, were built in the Detroit area, and indeed all over the United States.⁷⁶ In fact, it would be false to suggest that the suburban Cottage Style dwelling is unique to Detroit. While the Detroit area certainly possesses a significantly large number of Cottage homes due to the influence of Stratton, Kahn, Booth, Saarinen and other

⁷⁴ David A. Gerber, *Anti-Semitism in American History*

⁷⁵ John Spargo, *The Jew and American Ideals* (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1921), 7 in *Henry Ford and the Jews*, 30.

⁷⁶ Virginia McAlester and Lee McAlester, *A Field Guide to American Houses* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1994), 356.

members of the Detroit Society of Arts and Crafts, by the 1920s the Cottage influence was felt far and wide.

What remained of the Arts and Crafts Movement in Detroit faded away in the 1930s and after World War II most architects accepted the International School of design and the machine age. The Arts and Crafts Movement begun by William Morris was seen as a romanticized past; the antithesis of modern architecture. Today, the machine ethos is accepted. The recognition of such men as Stratton, Kahn, Booth and Saarinen and their shared architectural heritage grounded in the principles of the Arts and Crafts may add to our understanding of Detroit's unique contribution to the world of architecture.

Noting the lack of a major art school in Detroit, a major city which supported both a symphony orchestra and a preeminent art museum, the Detroit Society of Arts and Crafts formed The School of the Detroit Society of Arts and Crafts in 1926. The legacy of the School of the DSAC would have a major impact on modern design and particularly on industrial design in America. Focusing on design, applied art, modeling, painting and sculpture, the school opened at the DSAC's headquarters on Watson Street in Detroit. By 1927, 280 students were enrolled in the School of the DSAC's four year certificate program. The students and faculty of the new school represent a cultural transition from the founding membership and early ranks of the DSAC, which were highly Anglo-Saxon in heritage and reflected the romantic attachment to England and the English Arts and Crafts Movement. By the 1920s, the DSAC's interest in the promotion of foreign craft, exemplified by its work with local ethnic communities and the production and marketing of foreign women's handiwork, broadened the diversity of the organization, mirroring Detroit's varied immigrant populations. The faculty of the DSAC new art school also

echoed the communities outside its doors. The head of the art department from the 1930–1950s was Turkish Born Sarkis Sarkisian. The Director of the sculpture department was Russian-born Samuel Cashen who also headed the New Deal’s Works Progress Administration’s sculpture section in Michigan.⁷⁷

During the 1930s and 40s, the School of the Detroit Society of Arts and Crafts expanded enrollment and developed an emphasis on industrial design, unsurprisingly in a city well-known for industry. In 1962, a new building located on Kirby Avenue in the heart of Detroit’s cultural center near the Detroit Institute of Art, was constructed to house the School. In an effort to compete with university art programs, the School worked for accreditation as a degree-granting institution.⁷⁸ In 1962, the Industrial Design Department became the first degree-granting department in the School. Eventually, the School received accreditation for all its programs from the National Association of Schools of Art. By the 1970s, the School was renamed the Center for Creative Studies-College of Art and Design. In 2001, the Center was renamed the College for Creative Studies (CCS). In 2006, Josephine Ford, the only granddaughter of Henry Ford bequeathed fifty million to the CCS. The gift was the largest single monetary gift to any private arts college in the country and the largest to any private college in the state of Michigan. Beginning as a grass roots movement eager to instill beauty in the everyday lives of people through craftsmanship, the DSAC grew into an art college with a fine reputation; a large student enrollment; and a large endowment.⁷⁹

⁷⁷ *Arts and Crafts in Detroit*, 32-34.

⁷⁸ *Ibid*, 35.

⁷⁹ *Ibid*, 224-226.

The Detroit Society of Arts and Crafts made a mark on the material landscape of Detroit and its environs with its development and promotion of the Cottage Style. To the early members of the DSAC, Cottage decorative art and architecture was a reaction to the dizzying pace of industrialization and urban development. Later members of the DSAC accepted the influence of the machine and the idea that artistic goods could be made in a factory, an idea the original English Arts and Crafts Movement vehemently opposed. Specifically, the DSAC promoted the idea that automobile design was art. It was an emphasis that reflected what was brewing in the American Arts and Crafts world; an accommodation to commercialization and consumerism which would diminish the idealism of Arts and Crafts in general and Cottage Style art and architecture in particular.

CHAPTER FIVE
MODEST AND HONEST: ENGLISH AND AMERICAN HOUSING REFORMERS
RECOMMEND COTTAGE LIFE AS A MODEL FOR A NEW SMALL HOUSE
MOVEMENT

Late nineteenth century English intellectuals and housing reformers, influenced by the effects of rapid industrialization and urbanization, came up with practical solutions to deal with the social problems created by overburdened living conditions in cities. Escaping to a simplified and bohemian life in a country cottage became a popular idea which appealed to an influential circle of idealistic middle-class intellectuals and artists. Specifically, socialist writer Edward Carpenter was at the forefront of a movement rallying for simplification as a solution to social and housing problems. As such, Carpenter promoted the traditional cottage vernacular as an ideal dwelling based in the country. Carpenter's "Simple Life" Movement also influenced English garden cities. Garden city planner Raymond Unwin designed self-sustaining villages in the country which widely utilized cottage homes in their planning. Similarly in America, progressive reformers employed the English garden city model for new suburbs, such as Forest Hills Gardens, New York. Designer and social critic Gustav Stickley also endorsed the English cottage as a model for modest homes in the United States. The English idea of leading a simple home life in the country appealed to Stickley, who featured the writings of Carpenter and Unwin in his Arts and Crafts publication *The Craftsman* (1901–1916).

Stickley became a leading marketer of plans for “Democratic” homes; manageable, reasonable-sized houses, available for a modest price to the emerging middle classes. It was a radical path for single-family home ownership which influenced later small house movements. The size and style of the English cottage was appropriate for middle-class homeowners searching for attractive and manageable single-family homes.

The “Simple Life” Movement

Cottage life, promoted by Progressive domestic reformers in early twentieth century America, is directly related to the development of the English socialist “Simple Life” Movement led by radical activist Edward Carpenter. Carpenter proposed in his manifesto *Civilization: Its Cause and Cure* that while civilizations eventually erode, man’s connection to nature remains basic and constant and therapeutic.¹ Carpenter continued that a connection to the land could cure the nervous disorders caused by the increasing pressures of urbane Victorian society. Carpenter’s philosophy was directly influenced by American philosopher Walt Whitman who led Carpenter to reject his conventional life as a Church of England cleric in favor of working to educate the English laboring classes in the deprived regions of the country, eventually settling in Sheffield, a manufacturing town in the north of England. Carpenter formed the Social Democratic Federation and worked on several projects, notably an effort to highlight the miserable living and working conditions of the local industrial workers.² Carpenter wrote

¹ Edward Carpenter, *Civilization: Its Cause and Cure, and other Essays* (London: Allen & Unwin, 1891).

² Edward Carpenter wrote of Whitman’s early influence in his autobiography *My Days and Dreams* (London: Allen & Unwin, 1916).

that the “giant thick cloud of smog rising out of Sheffield was like the smoke arising from Judgment Day.”³ Later, Carpenter left Sheffield and joined the Socialist League in 1884.

A turning point in Carpenter’s life occurred when his father died in 1882, leaving him a great inheritance and the ability to leave his teaching position to pursue a rural life in Millthorpe, Derbyshire. At Millthorpe, Carpenter engaged in market gardening and full-time writing, entering into a prolific era of scholarship and political activism. Of prime importance to Carpenter’s philosophies was an advocacy of the “Simple Life.” Simplification was at the root of Carpenter’s proposed cure for the increasingly complicated, claustrophobic and polluted urban life.⁴

Carpenter’s move to the country inspired related campaigns for vegetarianism, environmental protection, and animal rights. Carpenter’s country cottage became the center of a group of intellectuals, writers and radicals who visited him at Millthorpe. Through his involvement in socialist politics, Millthorpe became a center for some of the foremost scholars, writers, and activists of the period including members of the Fabian Society, the leading intellectual society in Edwardian Britain, with long-ranging political influence and a prominent membership including George Bernard Shaw, Leonard and Virginia Woolf, H. G. Wells, Emmeline Pankhurst, Edith Nesbit, and Sidney and Beatrice Webb.⁵

³ Edward Carpenter, *Sheffield Independent* (May 1889).

⁴ For general observations on the “Simple Life” Movement see: Sheila Rowbotham, *Edward Carpenter: A Life of Liberty and Love* (London: Verso, 2008); Chushichi Tsuzuki, *Edward Carpenter, 1844–1929*. Cambridge, England: Cambridge University Press, 1980; Antony Copley, *Spiritual Bloomsbury: Hinduism and Homosexuality in the Lives and Writing of Edward Carpenter*, E.M. Forster, and Christopher Isherwood (Lanhan, Maryland: Lexington Books, 2006).

⁵ Carpenter writes of his colleagues in the Fabian Society in *My Days and Dreams*.

Carpenter's philosophy of simplification became closely associated with the idealization of rural life. As urban life grew, nature offered a therapeutic alternative and stood out in stark contrast to the shabbiness of industrial and city life. Carpenter's own move to the county inspired thoughts on nature. Carpenter suggested that "men should lead the life of the open air, familiarity with wind and waves, clean and pure food, companionship with animals..."⁶ According to his biographer Sheila Rowbotham, Carpenter's decision to buy three fields at Millthorpe, a tiny, remote settlement nestling in the Cordwell Valley near the village of Holmsfield, and embark on the arduous labour of market-gardening, was indeed an extraordinary step for a Cambridge mathematician and would-be poet."⁷

Domestic life was an essential element of the "Simple Life" Movement. Carpenter proposed a simpler more manageable home. During the spring of 1883 Carpenter built his own cottage home (Fig. 24), based on the regional vernacular. Rowbotham wrote of the home, "a grey stone, two-story house with a grey slate roof built, at some speed, a few yards from the road on Cordwell Lane. It was in the style of the local farms, consisting of a sitting room, kitchen, scullery, coach house and stable in a long, thin row without any hall or corridor. Simple and serviceable, Millthorpe Cottage was the antithesis of his stylish former home, Brunswick Square in Brighton."⁸

⁶ Edward Carpenter, *England's Ideal* (London: Swan Sonnenschein, 1887. Reprint 1895).

⁷ Sheila Rowbotham, *Edward Carpenter: A Life of Love and Liberty* (London: Verso, 2008), 75.

⁸ Chushichi Tsuzuki, *Edward Carpenter: Prophet of Human Fellowship, 1844–1929*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1980), 8–9.

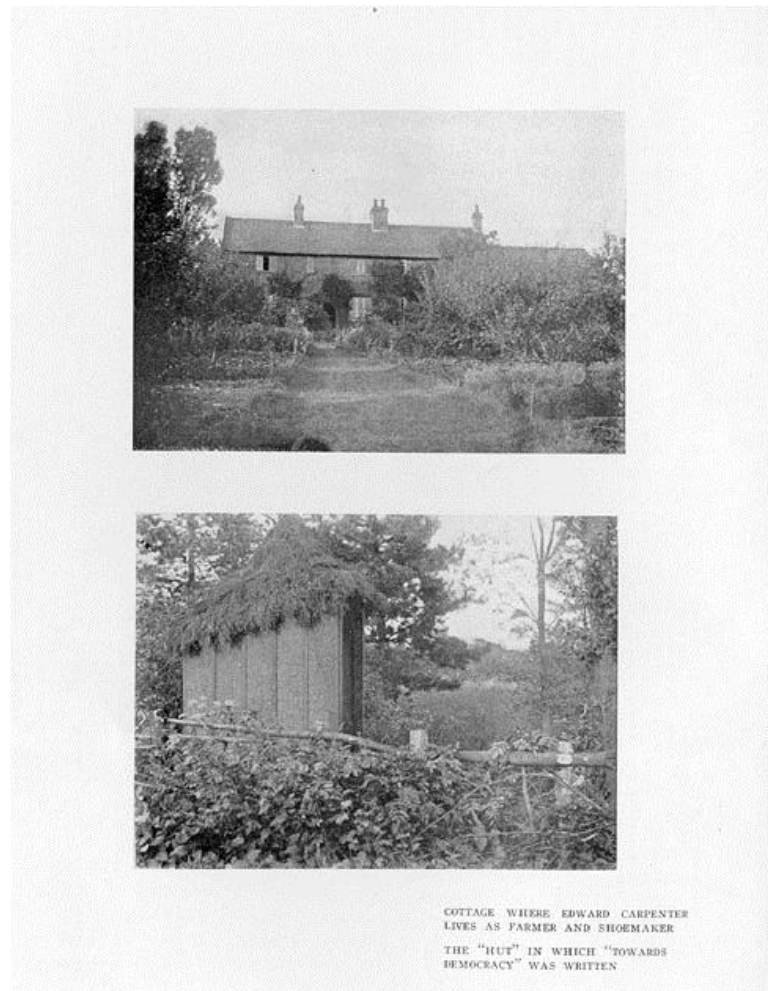


Figure 24. Millthorpe Cottage in *The Craftsman* (October 1906)

Carpenter also called for a release from the false need for material possessions. Both carefulness in the accumulation of goods and active participation in one's own domestic labor were radical concepts in Victorian England, which played out in the choice of a home. Simplifying home life also meant doing away with complex class relationships by living in a smaller home where you cooked and cleaned for yourself, rather than hiring domestic help. This idea was related to general socialist views, which denounced the exploitation of others, whether it was workshop laborers or household servants. The romanticism of cottage life helped to dignify the frugality of existence in the lower

middle class, neither poor nor rich. The “Simple Life” and the related Arts and Crafts aesthetic offered a way of life which drew extensively from this class of teachers and clerks, who needed to earn a living. The “Simple Life” offered dignity to the economic condition of a new class of modest professional with a narrow income but a desire for respectability.

The country seclusion of Millthorpe was the ideal spot to serve as a center for intellectuals, socialists and radicals of the day from Britain and abroad. E. M. Forster visited Millthorpe in 1912 and used the setting as backdrop for his homosexual love story *Maurice*.⁹ Carpenter and his live-in friend George Merrill served as models for the characters of Maurice and his gamekeeper lover. “By the 1890s, guests were arriving at Millthorpe as if they were entering the portals of the New Life.”¹⁰

Influenced by Carpenter’s own retreat to the country and inspired by his own modest cottage at Millthorpe, cottage homes in the countryside around London, accessible by new train lines, became popular retreats for Carpenter’s intellectual friends and “Simple Life” followers. Osbert Lancaster introduced the idea of the “cultured cottage.”¹¹ According to Rowbotham, “Henry Salt was the first who tried to live out Carpenter’s ideas of the “Simple Life.”¹² Stimulated by Carpenter’s descriptions of life at Millthorpe, Salt left his teaching position at Eton College and moved with his wife Kate in 1884 into a laborer’s cottage in the village of Tilford, in Surrey. Salt explained that two

⁹ Ibid., 149.

¹⁰ Rowbotham, *Edward Carpenter: A Life of Love and Liberty*, 229.

¹¹ Osbert Lambert, *Cartoon History of Architecture* (London, 1975), 130-131 in Wiener, *English Culture and the Decline of the Industrial Spirit*, 73.

¹² Ibid., 96.

principles attracted those like himself who were breaking away from conventional life to live in the country “socialism, the more equitable distribution of wealth, and simplification, the saner method of living.”¹³ Carpenter, who was in agreement on both issues, similarly supported the humanitarian causes that became Salt’s life work. Rowbotham contends, “Hardly remarkable today, it caused a minor media stir in 1884...The issue continued to be confused with socialist intellectuals who insisted on communing with nature.”¹⁴ The Salts stayed on at Tilford until 1891 and inspired a stream of country cottagers from the various socialist intellectual circles including friends like Carpenter, whom Kate considered Carpenter to be the “tutelary deity of the place;”¹⁵ George Bernard Shaw; Sydney Olivier from the Fabian Society; reformers Sidney and Beatrice Webb also Fabians; and Harold Cox who also started an agricultural venture called Craig’s Farm next door to the Salts. Like the Salts, Harold Cox was inspired by life at Millthorpe. Carpenter invested in Craig’s Farm which Cox designed as a communal farm colony. Like Carpenter, Cox brought in a local farm family to share the work. Carpenters idea of communal living in the country was beginning to spread.

At Craig’s Farm Carpenter met Charles Ashbee, cottage architect and Arts and Crafts guildsman.¹⁶ Rowbotham suggests that the utopian community in Ashbee’s novel *The Building of Thelema* (1910), “bore an uncanny resemblance to Millthorpe.”¹⁷ Ashbee visited Millthorpe in 1885 and wrote in his journal, “Agree that it was being near

¹³ Quoted in *Edward Carpenter: A Life of Love and Liberty*, 96.

¹⁴ *Ibid*, 97

¹⁵ Henry Salt, *Seventy Years among Savages* (London: George Allen and Unwin, 1921), 75.

¹⁶ Rowbotham, *Edward Carpenter: A Life of Love and Liberty*, 98.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 320.

Carpenter that had elated us out of ourselves into another world.”¹⁸ Carpenter’s cottage home at Millthorpe also made an impression on the refined young Cambridge student and developing Socialist who described it, “His cottage is simply built and furnished;-there is the house-place or kitchen in which we sat and had our meals, there is a little parlour not yet furnished and used as a granary and apple room; above are the bed rooms. The inmates of the cottage are Carpenter and his friend Albert Furnief [sic]—a labourer with his wife and daughter—quiet simple folk with a sort of natural dignity and serenity in their comportment possibly reflected from Carpenter himself.”¹⁹ The domestic and social culture of Carpenter’s modest cottage home, shared with a working couple, made an impression on the young student Ashbee who went on to work with local craftsmen in the London slums and later to renovate and design his own cottage homes for himself and his fellow guildsmen at Chipping Campden.

Carpenter’s “Simple Life” at Millthorpe Inspires Experimental Communities in England and the United States

Renovated cottage retreats and small scale cottage communal developments like Millthorpe, Craigs Farm and Chipping Campden were delightful escapes from city life, influenced by bohemian intellectuals. While the preservation of cottages and other historic structures was primary in minds of William Morris and fellow members of the Society for the Preservation of Ancient Buildings, the construction of modern cottages based on traditional precedent was the objective of the new wave of Arts and Crafts

¹⁸ Alan Crawford, *C. R. Ashbee: Architect, Designer and Romantic Socialist* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1984), 17.

¹⁹ C. R. Ashbee, *Diary, Ashbee Papers*, Kings College Library, Cambridge. Quoted in Tsuzuki, *Edward Carpenter: Prophet of Human Fellowship, 1844–1929*, 64.

designers who utilized the havens of the avant-garde as models for new, experimental cottage communities. While, Charles Voysey is seen as the premier designer of modern cottages another forerunner of the cottage revival movement was Edward Carpenter's close friend, architect and planner Raymond Unwin. Unlike Voysey, who primarily designed individual homes for middle-class professionals, Unwin was interested in designing whole communities and stands as a primary link between the "Simple Life" Movement and the related "Garden City" Movement, which developed outside of London in the first two decades of the twentieth century, and later in similar experimental communities in the United States.

Raymond Unwin's frequent visits with Edward Carpenter at Millthorpe inspired a social political reaction in the young designer which informed his planning for utopian communities. Unwin wrote of Carpenter's cottage home, "The house he has built is a long one, only one room deep, as all the rooms face south, and look over to a beautiful ford. One field is laid out in oats for the horse and wheat for fowl use, the other is in grass with a few young apple trees in it, the centre one in front of the house is planted with fruit, vegetables and flowers-lots of young rose trees-there is a stream running at the bottom where the primroses grow."²⁰ According to Rowbotham, Carpenter exerted a profound influence on Unwin in designing garden cities and early government-funded public housing ventures in England. Millthorpe remained with him as a model of an ideal life.²¹

²⁰ As quoted in Rowbotham, 82. From Unwin to Parker in Mark Swernarton, *Artisanas and Architects: The Ruskinian Tradition in Architectural Thought* (London: Macmillan, 1989), 132.

²¹ *Edward Carpenter: A Life of Love and Liberty*, 82.

Letchworth

In 1904, Raymond Unwin and his partner Barry Parker drafted a master plan for England's first planned "Garden City." Letchworth Garden City was a privately funded company founded by English social reformer Ebenezer Howard. Howard was devoted to the development of the ideal community, combining elements of both town and country. To this aim, 3,818 acres of land was purchased by Howard's company in Hertfordshire, England. The edges of the new town were comprised of a wide strip of agricultural land, which would limit Letchworth's growth. Ebenezer Howard summed it up in his 1898 book *Tomorrow: A Peaceful Path to Real Reform* (later republished as *Garden Cities of Tomorrow*), in which he proposed the ideal town as combining the benefits of city life (opportunity and amusement) with the benefits of country life (beauty, fresh air, community, low rents). His "town-country" would be planned in advance and surrounded by permanent belts of agricultural land.²² It was an idea that struck a chord with Arts and Crafts architects, who romanticized pre-industrialized life and vilified what the urban center had become. This strip of land remains England's first "green belt," a planning concept which continues to mark England's success in containing urban sprawl and maintaining the character and integrity of towns and cities, promoting the preservation and adaptive re-use of their buildings. Letchworth's "green belt" contributed to the self-sufficiency of the town and a population limit of 30,000. American urban historian Lewis Mumford wrote, "The garden city, as Howard defined it, is not a suburb but the antithesis

²² Ebenezer Howard, *Garden Cities of To-Morrow* (London: Faber and Faber, 1946), 50–57.

of a suburb; not a more rural retreat, but a more integrated foundation for an effective urban life.”²³

The town’s radiating circular plan was anchored by a public and commercial center and surrounded by a perimeter of small villages. Outside the town limits, the countryside’s historic farms were leased out to provide food for the community. Trees, shrubs and hedges were important elements for the successful integration of the town-country ideal. A maximum of twelve houses per acre resulted in a park like appearance.²⁴ Parker and Unwin’s master plan also laid out a series of building and stylistic regulations. Letchworth’s early architecture was based on Unwin’s preferred English Cottage vernacular and this architectural style set the agenda for the Garden City Movement in England and later in America. Unwin wrote that, “simple and straightforward building” and the “use of good and harmonious materials” would characterize Letchworth’s homes.²⁵ White painted roughcast walls and tiled roofs were standard for residences, particularly for grouped housing developments. Parker and Unwin’s office (1907) was a prime example of cottage vernacular design with white roughcast exterior walls, thatched roof, and sets of mullioned windows.

Other prominent cottage homes designed by Parker and Unwin at Letchworth were the Coppice (1905), Glade Home (1906), the Stanley Parker House, No. 102 Wilbury Road (1909), Tree Tops (1910), and White Cottage (1906), a picturesque

²³ Lewis Mumford in Ebenezer Howard, *Garden Cities of To-Morrow* (London: Faber and Faber, 1946), 35.

²⁴ Barry Parker and Raymond Unwin, *Town Planning and Practice: A Introduction on the Art of Designing Cities and Suburbs* (London: T. Fisher Unwin, 1909).

²⁵ Barry Parker and Raymond Unwin, *The Art of Building a Home* (London: Longmans, Green & Co., 1901).

thatched cottage. A set of early Parker and Unwin designs called the Letchworth Lane houses (1904); Laneside, Crabby Corner, and Parker's own home (1906–1935) were a series of informal, semi-detached white roughcast cottages with tile roofs and tall chimneys. According to Miller, these homes “created a norm, varied according to circumstance.”²⁶

The cottage architecture at Letchworth held wide importance and influence in Britain. The simple form and modest but comfortable size of the English vernacular cottages became an ideal model for Howard's affordable housing initiative. Later Britain's central government promoted and financed cottage developments as part of the nation's innovative low-income housing subsidy programs. Bird's Hill and Pixmore (1907–09), attached terraced housing units designed as homes for Garden City Tenants demonstrate Ebenezer Howard's and Parker and Unwin's goal to endorse the integration of tenants and home owners at Letchworth. In 1909–1910 a cost limit of 120 pounds per dwelling influenced further terraced housing. Another attempt to advance Howard's idea of social housing was the Howard Cottage Society (1911). Rushby Mead (1911), the society's first project is a landmark with site planning by Unwin and attached cottage housing designed by Robert Bennett and Wilson Bidwell. Bennett and Bidwell gained prominence as the designers of the England's first Council Housing, subsidized by the national government for low-income residents. In 1919 Britain's national government established subsidies for working-class housing and placed an obligation on local

²⁶ Mervyn Miller, *English Garden Cities: An Introduction* (Swindon, England: English Heritage, 2010), 42.

municipalities to build these homes. The Housing Act enabled the Letchworth Urban District Council to build several cottage estates in the 1920s.²⁷

In 1905, Letchworth sponsored the Cheap Cottages Exhibition, demonstrating how low income families could be housed in attractive, well-designed housing at a reasonable cost. The maximum cost for a competition home was three hundred pounds. The first contest attracted nearly 60,000 visitors to the new town. Sponsored by the *London Daily Mail*, the Cheap Cottages Exhibition led to their annual Ideal Home Exhibitions launched in 1909, presently called the Ideal Home Show. British architecture critic Jonathon Meades asserts that Letchworth marks the birth of the urban planning profession, “a social experiment that affected us all and still does.”²⁸ Meades continues that Parker and Unwin’s country cottage style inspired British architectural design for many decades, “a style which shunned urbanism to an extent otherwise unknown on this continent.”²⁹ The Cheap Cottages Exhibition was followed by another public event promoting good housing design. The Urban Cottages Exhibition (1907) showcased grouped housing arrangements. The clustering of houses revived the traditions of English Cottage building, updated by Arts and Crafts Movement architects. The most prominent architect entered in the Cheap Cottages contest was Arts and Crafts cottage architect Baillie Scott. From 1905–1908, Scott designed five homes at Letchworth, which exemplify English Arts and Crafts cottage architecture. All of Scott’s Letchworth

²⁷ Ibid., 44-45.

²⁸ Jonathon Meades, “Heaven: Folkhaven in England,” <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1qT5quikpa8>.

²⁹ Ibid.

cottages were vernacular, with prominent sweeping gables and radical, large open-plan interiors.³⁰

Social life at Letchworth greatly reflected Edward Carpenter's "Simple Life" principles and the off-beat bohemian environment Unwin observed on his visits to Millthorpe and the surrounding farms owned by Carpenter's disciples. Uncorseted, free-flowing garments for women and sandals for both sexes were typical attire and conveyed the ardent anti-urban sentiment of the community as a whole. Traditional rural celebrations such as May Day were popular social events. In 1903, a railway station was established at Letchworth, often bringing people on excursions to visit the social experiment with the promise of a better life. Sometimes visitors, including writers mocked the unusual community. British poet laureate John Betjemin portrayed Letchworth residents as idealistic, vegetarian, communal, health enthusiasts in his poem "Grouplife: Letchworth and Huxley Hall."³¹ Novelist George Orwell wrote about Letchworth in an essay, "the old pattern is gradually changing into something new" and added that "every fruit juice drinker, nudist, sandal wearer, sex-maniac, Quaker, nature cure quack, pacifist and feminist in England" lived in the town."³² A 1909 satirical cartoon sums up the typical Edwardian outsider's view of Letchworth residents (Fig. 25).

³⁰ Miller, 47.

³¹ John Betjemin, "Grouplife: Letchworth and Huxley Hall." 1958.

³² George Orwell, "England Your England" in T. R. Fyvel and George Orwell eds. *The Lion and the Unicorn: Socialism and the English Genius* (London: Secker & Warburg, 1941), 6.

Christopher School). Today, Letchworth retains much of its original character and remains a vital and evolving community.

Hampstead

In 1905, wealthy London social reformer Henrietta Barnett commissioned Parker and Unwin to design another Garden City on the northern edge of London named Hampstead Garden Suburb. Barnett worked with the poor in London's Whitechapel slums, where open sewers flowed through the crowded streets and a lack of clean water triggered cholera epidemics. As the assistant to Octavia Hill England's premier social worker and a leader in the London common land preservation movement, Barnett sought to preserve a large 323 acre section of the Hampstead Heath called Wyldes Farm. Barnett formed the Hampstead Garden Suburb Trust in 1907 and quickly broke ground on the community with "a place for everyone," accommodating a mix of upper, middle and laboring class residents in homes of varying size and status in village groupings.³³ In 1910 T. Fisher Unwin wrote, "During the past three years planning and building have been done which give ground for hope that the ideal of a saner outer London may be realized. More than one successful attempt has been made to unite modern standards of comfort and hygiene with old-world standards of proportion and refinement, to bring together the best that the English village and the English city have to give."³⁴ However, at Hampstead, Parker and Unwin's principle of creating low density housing, utilized at Letchworth, eventually led to the expansion of suburban London in the first half of the

³³ Miller, 25.

³⁴ T. Fisher Unwin, *Garden Suburbs: Town Planning and Modern Architecture* (London: Leipsic, 1910), 89.

twentieth century. Unlike Letchworth, with its goal of self-sustainment surrounded by its green belt, Hampstead was built on the edge of London promoting urban sprawl.

At Hampstead, large detached single-family homes of varying sizes graced the western boundary of the suburb. Middle-class grouped and linked housing sat on the fringe of Hampstead Heath. The Artisan Quarter, designed as tenant housing for the unpretentious resident artist and craftsman, was designed by Unwin in the northwest section of the suburb, carefully conserving old field borders, hedgerows and most trees. While styles at Hampstead varied to include Georgian and Tudor Gothic for larger homes and many public buildings, most of the detached, grouped and attached housing seen in the middle-class sections and in the Artisans Quarter reflect the cottage home idiom Parker and Unwin developed at Letchworth (Fig. 26). According to Miller, “Grouping of houses revived the traditions of English cottage building, updated through the Arts and Crafts Movement.”³⁵ According to well-known architectural historian Sir Nikolaus Pevsner, Hampstead was “the aesthetically most accomplished garden suburb.”³⁶ In 1909, cottage architect Baillie Scott designed a large corner block attached housing unit at Meadway, a middle-class section (Fig. 27).

³⁵*English Garden Cities: An Introduction*, 49.

³⁶ Nikolaus Pevsner, *An Outline of European Architecture* (Middlesex, England: Penguin Books Limited, 1943), 402.



Figure 26. “Three Examples of Cottage Architecture, Hampstead Garden Suburb,” *Garden Suburbs: Town Planning and Modern Architecture* (London: T. Fisher Unwin, 1910) 133.

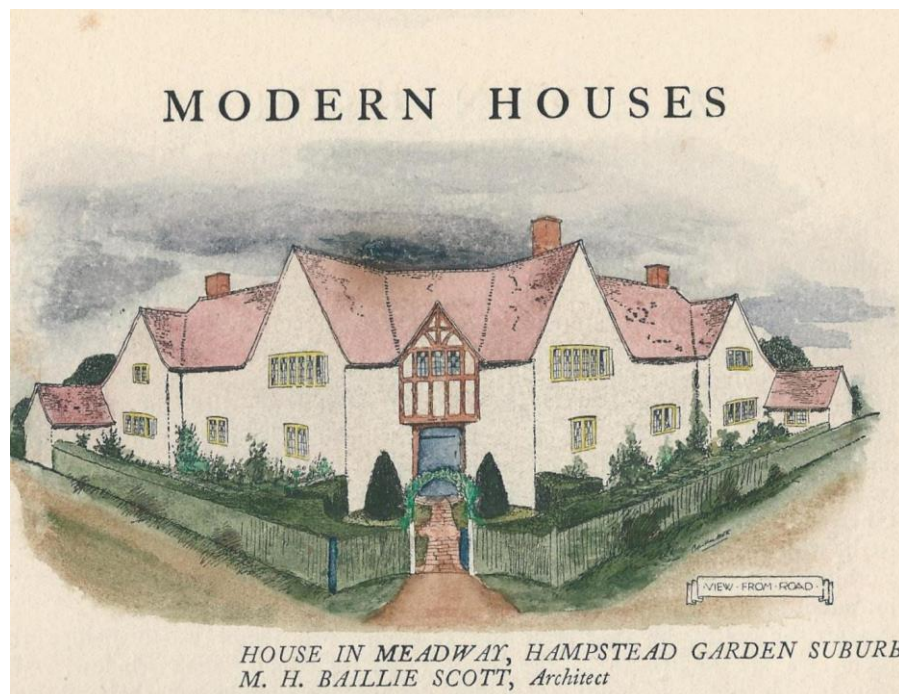


Figure 27. Meadway, Hampstead Garden Suburb. In *Garden Suburbs: Town Planning and Modern Architecture*, 85

Asmunds Place, designed by Parker and Unwin for the Hampstead Tenants Ltd, in 1907–1908, is a classic attached cottage row in cul-de-sac formation. Baillie Scott wrote in 1910: “To design a comfortable and beautiful house for a limited sum of money is perhaps one of the most difficult problems for the modern architect. . . .” It was the goal of the promoters of the Garden Suburb Development Company to find a better way of building even the smallest dwelling, based on the cottages and farmhouses of old England. Scott continued, “And so in the end we may achieve a dwelling worthy to be ranked with an Englishman’s home of the past—modest, serviceable, and full of charm withal.”³⁷

Another innovative effort to provide low-income social housing was the “Cooperative Quadrangle.” Quadrangles were attached housing, consisting of small leased apartments with communal dining arrangements modeled on the traditional university quadrangles seen at Oxford and Cambridge. Dolores Hayden asserts, “These quadrangles promised to recreate the social and physical coherence of preindustrial villages.”³⁸ Hayden proposes that English housing reformers affiliated with the Arts and Crafts Movement, such as Ebenezer Howard, and the innovative architects Raymond Unwin and Barry Parker were the first activists to develop and promote a new building type, which utilized cooperative housekeeping. Parker and Unwin’s “Cooperative Quadrangle” incorporated individual garden apartments designed in the Cottage Style with stucco walls, half-timbering and thatched roofs, with centralized dining rooms and

³⁷ Ibid., 86.

³⁸ Dolores Hayden, *The Grand Domestic Revolution: A History of Feminist Designs for American Homes, neighborhoods, and Cities* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1982), 231.

kitchens, incorporated individual garden apartments, which resembled the arrangement of preindustrial European villages.³⁹

The Orchard, designed by Parker and Unwin in 1909, was a gabled, brick Cottage Style quadrangle of flats designed for elderly residents. Another quadrangle called Waterlow Court was designed in 1909 by Baillie Scott as a tenant residence for professional women of modest means, primarily employed in education and the civil service. Reflecting the college form, residents entered through a wooden gateway into a housing quad, including a communal dining hall and common rooms. Today Waterlow Court is owned by a resident's cooperative.⁴⁰ The Orchard was demolished in the 1970s despite the protests of the Victorian Society, which considered it a premier example of social housing in Britain.⁴¹ Both The Orchard and Waterlow Court were modeled after Homesgarth Cooperative House (1909–1913) designed by H. Clapham Lander and Meadow Way Green (1915–1924) at Letchworth. There, Ebenezer Howard and Parker and Unwin developed the idea of tenant shared housing and domestic labor.⁴² Hayden furthers: “The cooperative housekeeping units in the Garden Cities proved the sensitivity of Howard and the architects who collaborated with him to the housing needs of special groups including single women, the elderly widows and widowers, childless couples, and

³⁹ Ibid, 331–332.

⁴⁰ Miller, *English Garden Cities: An Introduction*, 50.

⁴¹ Ibid, 49.

⁴² Ibid, 37.

two worker couples.”⁴³ Initially, more quadrangles were planned for Letchworth. Such cooperative housekeeping arrangements were at the heart of Howard’s utopian dream city

Forest Hills Gardens, New York

Raymond Unwin traveled to the United States on lecture tours and eventually secured a teaching position at Yale. Unwin’s speaking engagements along with his influential book *Town Planning in Practice* (1909) interested American planners and architects in developing their own experimental communities based on the English principles of planning and architectural character. The Garden City ideal in England inspired a similar interest in social experimental communities based on medieval village form in the United States. In 1909, Unwin’s work at Letchworth and Hampstead was disseminated to an American audience in an article in *The Craftsman*, “The chief object of the promoters of the garden city idea has been to bring about a spontaneous movement of the people back to the land by creating conditions that will give them the advantages of city and country life combined, and to keep the whole thing on an economic basis that will afford comfort and prosperity to people of very moderate means.”⁴⁴ Developed in 1909–1911, Forest Hills Gardens, New York located in an outer borough of New York City stands as the earliest example of a planned garden suburb in America. The influence of Letchworth and Hampstead Garden Suburb was widely felt in Forest Hills Gardens, planned by America’s pioneer landscape architect Frederick Law Olmsted and architect Grosvenor Atterbury. Like Letchworth, Forest Hills Gardens was planned as areas of grouped and attached dwellings fashioned around a series of common areas and gardens

⁴³ Hayden, *The Grand Domestic Revolution*, 237.

⁴⁴ Editor, “Rapid Growth of the Garden City Movement, which Promises to Reorganize Social Conditions all over the World.” *The Craftsman* 17, no. 3 (1909): 304.

(Fig. 28). This arrangement was in contrast to the sprawling individual nature of most growing suburbs.⁴⁵ Also echoing Letchworth and Hampstead, heavy use of English Vernacular housing types, in stucco and brick, is clearly represented at Forest Hills Gardens.

Socially, Forest Hills Gardens was intended as a community for working-class families. Set on the rail-lines, within close proximity to New York City, its residents were commuters, not communal tenants and non-conformists, as at Letchworth. While Letchworth was planned as a sustainable community, Forest Hills Gardens' residents relied on the city for their livelihood. Additionally, the attractive layout and quaint English character of its homes attracted middle to upper middle class residents to the leafy development. Rather than the experimental community for workers envisioned by Olmstead and Atterbury, Forest Hills Gardens developed into an affluent suburb.⁴⁶ In this



Figure 28. Forest Hills Gardens, New York. Example of a typical Cottage Style residence.

⁴⁵ John Stilgoe, *Borderland: Origins of the American Suburb, 1890–1920* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1988), 230.

⁴⁶ For information on Forest Hills Gardens see: Stilgoe, 225–238 and Wendy Kaplan, “*The Art that is Life*”: *The Arts and Crafts Movement in America, 1875-1920* (Boston: The Museum of Fine Arts, 1987), 126-127.

way, the community more clearly resembles Hampstead, which resides as a borough of London, not the off-beat country retreat of Letchworth.

The Letchworth, Hampstead, and Forest Hills Gardens settlements illustrate common features in their architecture, but also developments in style. At Letchworth, informal Cottage Style homes predominate. At Hampstead, Cottage Style was utilized for artisan housing and cooperative arrangements but both Queen Anne and Georgian styles were featured for larger residences. At Forest Hills Gardens, a mix of English Gothic styles was used, including Cottage Style. Parker and Unwin's initial architectural agenda at Letchworth seemed to set the tone for early garden city design, as a whole. Cottage Style expressed individual buildings and also represented the communal tone of the grouped arrangements around common land of attached and detached houses. The informal feel of an English village set in nature was the theme at Letchworth, Hampstead and Forest Hills Gardens. It was an embodiment of Edward Carpenter's idea of simplification, extended through Raymond Unwin and Barry Parker's innovative planned cities and transferred to America, through lecture and publication, for redevelopment in experimental communities in the U.S.

**Integration of "Simplification of life" Principles Extends to the United States
through American Craftsman Gustav Stickley**

English "Simple Life" principles also intrigued avant-garde Americans interested in domestic reform. Rowbotham maintains that Carpenter appealed to the bohemians in Greenwich Village "which hummed with talk of spontaneity, socialism, Eastern religion, Paganism, and sexual freedom."⁴⁷ Rowbotham continues, "Greenwich Village was the

⁴⁷ Rowbotham, *Edward Carpenter*, 354.

prime destination for the nonconformists spilling over from the Arts and Crafts colonies into the towns and cities of America. Carpenter was on their reading list along with Whitman and Tolstoy.”⁴⁸ In 1912, Emma Goldman, Greenwich Village feminist and editor of the *Mother Earth* journal, offered copies of Carpenter’s books to her readers.⁴⁹ T. J. Jackson Lears argues that late-nineteenth-century Americans discontent with modern thought and feeling “looked toward the cult of simplicity preached by the British poet Edward Carpenter.”⁵⁰

Another American interested in experimenting with ‘Simple Life’ principles was Arts and Crafts spokesman Gustav Stickley. Stickley looked to the philosophies of Edward Carpenter as a foundation for the basic beliefs of a similar movement toward simplification in the US. In 1901, Stickley referenced Carpenter in the title of his publication *The Craftsman: An Illustrated Monthly Magazine for the Simplification of Life*. From 1903–1916, *The Craftsman* published ten articles written by Carpenter and two written about him.

In 1909, Stickley reprinted a chapter from Carpenter’s *The English Ideal* as the opening essay entitled “The Simplification of Life” for his book *Craftsman Homes* (1909).⁵¹ In the introduction to the book Stickley wrote, “From the beginning of the endeavor of *The Craftsman* to aid in the interests of better art, better work, and a better and more reasonable way of living, the work of Edward Carpenter has been an inspiration

⁴⁸ Ibid.

⁴⁹ Ibid, 3

⁵⁰ Lears, *No Place of Grace, Antimodernism and the Transformation of American Culture, 1880–1920* (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1981), 143.

⁵¹ Edward Carpenter, “The Simplification of Life,” in *Craftsman Homes* (New York: Craftsman Publications, 1909): 1–5.

and an ideal born out of that sympathy of purpose which makes men of whatever nation brothers and comrades. We have from time to time in the magazine quoted from Mr. Carpenter's books at length, feeling that he was expressing our own ideal as no words of ours could."⁵² Carpenter's advancement of a modest living appealed to Stickley, "Those who desire to rest from toil in homes built to meet their individual need of rest and peace and joy, homes which realize a personal standard of comfort and beauty, those who demand honesty in all expression...may we find the true regeneration for any nation."⁵³ According to Rowbotham, "Carpenter's message of simplification and direct personal communion with nature chimed well with the outlook of radical Americans in the early 1900s. Tales of the great English philosopher living in the country near Manchester began to be relayed from coast to coast."⁵⁴ Stickley's work promoting simple homes echoed Carpenter's viewpoint.

Like Voysey and other housing reformers of the period, Wright points out that Stickley felt that design "could remedy almost every social problem facing the middle-class family, from lack of servants to the divorce rate."⁵⁵ Lears states that many leaders in the Arts and Crafts Movement, seeking a wider significance for their hatred of modern tawdriness, agreed that social and moral decay revealed itself in the decline of American

⁵² Gustav Stickley, "Introduction," in *Craftsman Homes* (New York: Craftsman Publications, 1909), 2.

⁵³ Carpenter, "The Simplification of Life," in *Craftsman Homes*, 1.

⁵⁴ Rowbotham, *Edward Carpenter*, 355.

⁵⁵ Gwendolyn Wright, *Building the Dream: A Social History of Housing in America* (New York: Pantheon, 1981), 164.

taste.”⁵⁶ Jackson agrees and points out that reformers and craft advocates stressed a “Simple Life” and war on the clutter of Victorianism, as a way of “cleaning up” social problems. Wright argues that, “Stickley claimed that his approach to design could remedy almost every problem facing the middle-class family, from lack of servants to the increased divorce rate.”⁵⁷ Wright believes that while Stickley’s beliefs were naïve, he still found a wide audience for his publication and his ideas for housing reform between the years 1901–1915.⁵⁸ Indeed, *The Craftsman* became the main promulgator of the Arts and Crafts Movement in America, by offering philosophical, as well as practical articles on the meaning and implementation of Arts and Crafts lifestyle.

Homebuilding and the Idea of the Democratic Home

By the February 1902 issue of *The Craftsman*, only five months after its introduction, ever ambitious Stickley expanded the journal’s focus, beyond furniture and decorative art to home design, with the publication of the article “The Planning of a Home” by architect Henry Wilhelm Wilkinson. The article featured a cement two storied Cottage Style home, utilizing the open floor plan popularized by Voysey and M. H. Bailie Scott. The main open living area became a fundamental element of Stickley’s later *Craftsman* homes. In 1903, architect E. G. W. Dietrich, working under contract to Stickley, published “A Cottage of Quality” in *The Craftsman*. These early forays into home planning initiated an innovative period for Stickley, in which he experimented

⁵⁶ Lears, *No Place of Grace*, 74.

⁵⁷ Gwendolyn Wright, 164.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*

intellectually with the ways in which people live. Stickley's work served as a major influence on reformist housing design in America.

In 1903, Stickley hired a talented designer Englishman Harvey Ellis who exerted a strong influence on both Stickley's furniture and home designs. David Cathers, Stickley's prime biographer, wrote that Ellis's work, "showed the unmistakable influence of the most advanced English Arts and Crafts Designers of the period, such as C. F. A. Voysey, Baillie Scott, and Glasgow architect Charles Rennie Mackintosh."⁵⁹ Ellis introduced a refinement, lightness, and color to Stickley's furniture. Ellis was also instrumental in developing Stickley's home design department. In 1903, Ellis published in *The Craftsman* the first of 210 house designs officially termed "Craftsman Homes," from 1903–1916, the year *The Craftsman* ceased publication. Ellis's "A Craftsman House Design," (Fig. 29) utilized a white roughcast stucco exterior, multiple gables and dormers, and numerous sets of mullioned casement windows, set to take advantage of the light. Crowned with a red tile roof, this charming cottage illustration has the unmistakable whimsical quality of Voysey's cottage work in England.

⁵⁹ David M. Cathers, *Stickley's Craftsman Furniture Catalogs: Unabridged Reprints of Two Mission Furniture Catalogs* (New York: Dover Publications), v.

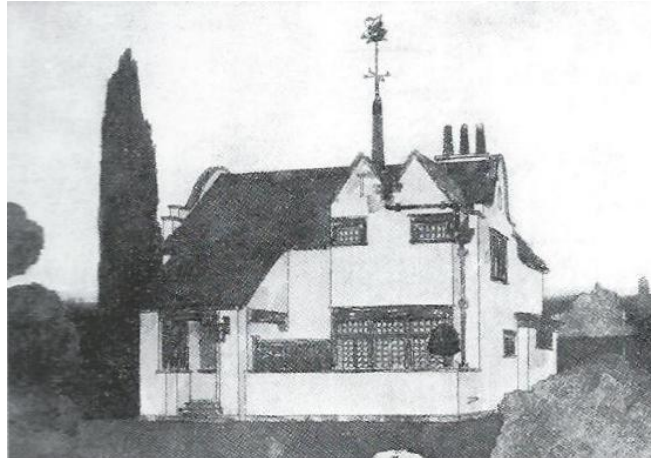


Figure 29. “A Craftsman house design.” Architect: Harvey Ellis. *The Craftsman* (1903).

Over the next decade and a half Stickley continued to publish practical designs, based on Arts and Crafts principles in the home building section of *The Craftsman*. According to Cathers, Stickley contracted professional architects to work for him and acted as the “Design Director” of the *Craftsman* homes operation.⁶⁰ Beverly K. Brandt asserts: “From the magazine’s inception, articles stressed the relevance to the *Craftsman* home of three historical building types: the vernacular English Cottage, the Spanish Mission, and the Southwestern adobe. Their simplicity of form and contextually established these types as appropriate precedents.”⁶¹ And like the English Arts and Crafts designers, Stickley looked to the simple Gothic form for inspiration on structure, “From the examination of the Gothic cathedral I first learned thoroughly the relations between construction and decoration: finding the best examples of the great mediaeval style adequately ornamented by features, which, like the flying buttress, gave them strength

⁶⁰ David M. Cathers, *Gustav Stickley* (London: Phaidon Press, 2003): 16.

⁶¹ Beverly K. Brandt, “The Paradox of the Craftsman Home” in Kevin Tucker ed. *Gustav Stickley and the American Arts and Crafts Movement* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, Dallas Museum of Art, 2003), 74.

and support; finding also the decadence of the art in later specimens wherein these same features were allowed to exceed their functions, and decoration, like a parasitic plant, spread over the fabric to sap and undermine its foundations.”⁶² Stickley’s interest in the basic tenets of Gothic architecture including: structure, function, siting, and light highly influenced the ideas for building simple, modern homes promoted in his publications. Significantly, Stickley contracted with Raymond Unwin’s partner, vernacular Gothic Revival architect and planner Barry Parker to write a twenty-eight part series of articles called “Modern Country Houses in England,” appearing in *The Craftsman*, from April 1910–October 1912. In this series, Parker focuses on different aspects of modern cottage home building such as “Building in Relation to Site,” (August 1910) “Air and Light in Building,” (September 1910) “True Economy in Architecture,” (November 1910) “Relation of Ornament to Construction,” (January 1911). The extent of the “Modern Country Houses” series and the detail of its illustrations, utilizing the plans and images of Parker and Unwin’s pervasive collection of commissions, demonstrate Stickley’s commitment to promoting cottage homes as a model for American small homes.

Gwendolyn Wright also points to Gustav Stickley as an important disseminator of homes for the common man. Through his publication of *The Craftsman* magazine, Stickley presented images and plans of model houses in what he termed as simple “democratic” styles like the “Cement Cottage” (Fig. 30). To Stickley “democratic architecture” meant good homes at affordable prices, achieved by “economy of

⁶² Gustav Stickley, “Thoughts Occasioned by an Anniversary: a plea for a democratic art,” *The Craftsman* 12, no. 1(1904): 45.

construction and materials.”⁶³ He wrote, “The problem that I am facing in every house that I plan is how it can be brought within the means of the people who should have a home, who have saved for it, who need it, who would be better citizens for it.”⁶⁴ Stickley reasoned that small inexpensive versions of *Craftsman* homes would make working-class families homeowners and that home ownership should be accessible and affordable to all in a democracy.⁶⁵

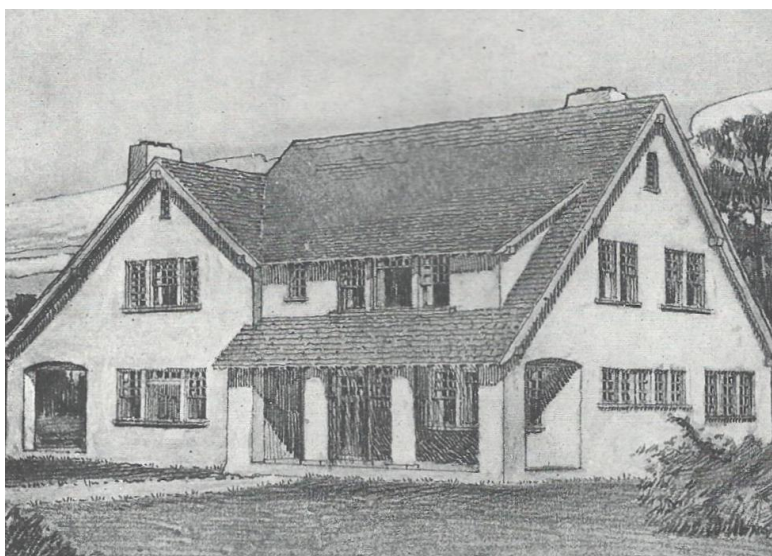


Figure 30. Cement cottage. *The Best of Craftsman Homes*, 25.

Stickley’s determined ideas about democracy and the home were projected throughout his publications. In *The Craftsman* in 1906, John Spargo wrote of Edward Carpenter, “‘Democracy,’ in the sense in which Carpenter uses the term, is synonymous with brotherhood and unity, and so defined, the title of his great work (*Towards Democracy*) is an affirmation of belief in the ultimate realization of the ideal community

⁶³ Wright, *Building the Dream*, 165.

⁶⁴ Gustav Stickley, “The Craftsman Idea in Home-Building,” *The Craftsman* 24, no. 1 (1913): 130.

⁶⁵ Wright, *Building the Dream*, 164.

of sympathy and interest which has been the quest of uncounted ages.”⁶⁶ John Spargo continued with an idealized description of Carpenter’s Millthorpe, “Carpenter acquired a piece of land, about seven acres, upon which he built a small house. Here, with a couple of workmen friends, he set about market-gardening. He enjoys manual labor, particularly farm work, caring for horses, carting stones and manure, using shovel and pickaxe, hoe and scythe, just like any ordinary labourer.”⁶⁷

In another *Craftsman* article focusing on Carpenter “A Visit with Edward Carpenter,” the author describes Carpenter’s humble home, “...a cottage built after the northern fashion with long, straight lines, very narrow eaves, and absolutely no attempt at decorative effect... Somehow it was all just as I had expected-simple, homelike and pleasant; no attempt to austerity; no striving after ultra-simplicity, but just a plain, hardworking living room that was used and evidently enjoyed all the time. A well-worn work table, two or three chairs, and some shelves of books were all the furnishing it had, yet I never saw a room which more completely carried out its owners ideas of life.”⁶⁸ As a revelation of the “simple life,” and as a testament to democratic home ownership this reverence for homely, and plain living by a gentleman was sufficiently surprising to an onlooker and a reader, at a time when the fashion trend was toward large homes requiring domestic help.

⁶⁶ John Spargo, “Edward Carpenter, the philosopher: his gospel of friendship and simplicity,” *The Craftsman* 11, no. 1 (1906): 54.

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, 52.

⁶⁸ “A Visit with Edward Carpenter,” *The Craftsman* 17, no. 2 (1909): 117.

Echoing Stickley's campaign for the "democratic home," Clark contends that the characteristics of "simplicity of design, ease of construction and low cost"⁶⁹ led to a breakthrough in home ownership for the average American in the early years of the twentieth century. William L. Price stated in *The Craftsman*, "This is the house of the democrat, and such houses shall democracy be full..."⁷⁰ Stickley stated, "When the tale of our hours of labor is a tale of hours of joy: when the workshop has ceased to be a gloomy hell from which we drag our debased bodies for a few hours of gasping rest; when the workshop shall rather be a temple where we joyously bring our best to lay it on the shrine of service; when art shall mean work and work shall mean art to the humblest, then democracy shall be real; then our hours be too short for the joy of living; then patiently shall be build up a civilization that shall endure..."⁷¹ Stickley believed that owning one's own home gave joy, dignity, and a legitimate sense of place in society to the working man.

Stickley also saw the well-crafted home as a key to solving larger social problems, such as crime and civil disorder. Commenting on the *Craftsman* home builders, Beverly K. Brandt suggests, "These individuals shared a common belief that the right environment could inspire right living. By building a Craftsman home, they committed themselves to the lifestyle promoted by the magazine, one that emphasized such positive character traits as nationalism and moralism, social responsibility and thrift,

⁶⁹ Clifford Clark, *The American Family Home, 1800–1960* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1986), 185.

⁷⁰ William L. Price, "The House of the Democrat," *More Craftsman Homes* (New York: The Craftsman Publishing Company, 1912), 9.

⁷¹ *Ibid.*

pragmatism and can-do attitude, self-sufficiency and industriousness.”⁷² Apprentice training programs in house construction and furniture making, run by state and by private business, would provide uplifting employment for young men. The pages of *The Craftsman* carried the message that housing and social issues were related in their need for good design. Though Stickley’s expectations of immediate, lasting social harmony, through aesthetic reform were obviously unrealistic, he found a sizable audience that regarded residential architecture as the preferred American approach to reform.⁷³

Interiors of the Democrat

Like his idol Edward Carpenter, Stickley became a spokesman for simple living. For Stickley, the entire home environment of furnishing, art and their setting fit into his call for a renewed way to live. However, *The Craftsman* mission was something quite different from British Arts and Crafts furniture. *Craftsman*, unlike the designs of English furniture makers such as Voysey or Macintosh, was democratic furniture in the sense that it was machine produced.

Gender and domestic reform also had its impact on the interior environment of the *The Craftsman* home. Lears contends that Victorianism was decidedly female and that Arts and Crafts reformers recoiled from these fussy, feminized interiors. Lears also asserts that Arts and Crafts design was essentially masculine in nature and form.⁷⁴ It was time for men to take an interest in their homes, to be comfortable in their homes, and to spend more time in their homes. The simplicity of Arts and Crafts interiors, exemplified

⁷² Brandt, “The Paradox of the Craftsman Home,” 77.

⁷³ Wright, *Building the Dream*, 164.

⁷⁴ Lears, 66–71.

by the plain unvarnished oak of Stickley's furnishings invited men back into American houses.

Stickley's home and furniture designs reflected the English Arts and Crafts furniture designers he admired, who were also architects. Additionally, as a reformist interested in advocating a new way to live, the entire home environment was unsurprisingly of interest to him. Stickley wrote: "You cannot make your house and your furnishings two separate schemes of attractiveness and expect a harmonious whole."⁷⁵ Stickley further stated, "I have so eliminated the superfluous in structure, in floor plans, in interior fittings, that furniture which is not well planned or is over ornamented must of necessity seem out of place."⁷⁶ In the study "From Separation to Togetherness: The Social Construction of Domestic Space in American Suburbs, 1840–1915,"⁷⁷ Margaret Marsh points to Gustav Stickley and *The Craftsman* magazine as a conduit for the social goals and values of housing reformers. Marsh suggests that the simplified and standardized home found in Arts and Crafts publications, promoted family unity and togetherness. The open floor plans advocated by Stickley and later by Frank Lloyd Wright and others were a direct departure from the closed off rooms and individual spaces of the typical Victorian interior. The elimination of the formal parlor, so prized in working-class homes, allowed for living and dining areas, which flowed from one to the other, promoting shared family activities. Even kitchens opened up, adding in dining and breakfast nooks, reducing steps to the formal dining area, easing a housewife's workload.

⁷⁵ Stickley, "A Word about Craftsman Architecture," *More Craftsman Homes*, 3.

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*

⁷⁷ Margaret Marsh, "From Separation to Togetherness: The Social Construction of Domestic Space in American Suburbs, 1840–1915," *Journal of American History* 76, no. 2 (1989): 506–527.

Clark maintains that Stickley “stressed the need to reduce the dwelling’s structure to its essentials in order to simplify the daily life of the homeowner. Fewer objects to be dusted or repaired, more compact and efficient use of space, and a reorganization of the routines of life such as the preparation of meals and the washing of clothes, Stickley thought would make the house more durable and functional.”⁷⁸

In 1904, in an effort to promote *Craftsman* home designs and to democratize home ownership by offering affordable mail-order plans, Stickley launched the *Craftsman Homebuilder’s Club*. Club membership was open and free of charge to all year-long subscribers to *The Craftsman*. In 1908, Stickley expanded the dissemination of home plans through the *Homebuilder’s Club* by developing a construction company *The Craftsman Homebuilding Company*, which built the houses previously only offered as plans. The first house was built in Beechhurst Long Island for an H. Phillips.⁷⁹

In a desire to further promote *Craftsman* home designs, Stickley published two books of homes plans: *Craftsman Homes* (1909) and *More Craftsman Homes* (1913). The home plan books stood as a platform for a reformist agenda. Stickley wrote: “It is my wish, my own final ideal that *The Craftsman* house may so far as possible meet this demand and be instrumental in helping to establish in America a higher ideal, not only of beautiful architecture, but of home life.”⁸⁰ In 1913, Stickley increased the scope of the Craftsman Home Builder’s Club to include new departments: the Craftsman Architectural Service, the Craftsman Real-Estate Service, and the Craftsman Landscape and

⁷⁸ Clark, *The American Family Home*, 184.

⁷⁹ Tucker, 68–69.

⁸⁰ Stickley, *More Craftsman Homes*, 4.

Agricultural Service. The combined services offered advice on home-planning, construction, interior design, furnishings, hardware, landscape, and gardens was available free of charge to *The Craftsman* subscribers. Lears suggests that if the Arts and Crafts Movement was to be work and not play, as Ernest Batchelder warned in *The Craftsman*, it must prove itself commercially. For many craftsmen, to reject industrial capitalism was to risk evading the “real life” they longed for.⁸¹ Eventually, Stickley himself surrendered to the lure of commercialism and accommodation to the commercial society. Overextended by so many different businesses, Stickley went out of business in 1916. Lears contends that true socialist philosophers such as Tolstoy, Kropotkin and “Simple Life” originator Carpenter, “would all have been dismayed by such a vision.”⁸²

Like Stickley, most early 20th century American Arts and Crafts enthusiasts lost sight of the political origins of the English Arts and Crafts Movement that made it relevant. While their English counterparts focused on Arts and Crafts as a reaction to the abuses and intrusions of industrialization, including the life of the factory worker, Americans eventually fixated on the objects themselves. Gwendolyn Wright maintains that, “In the arts and crafts movement of the early 1900s, architects and designers mixed with poets and writers, housewives and reformers, combining a sentimental reverence for handcrafted goods with a more up-to-date endorsement of simplified, wholesome environments.”⁸³ Eventually, many Americans involved in Arts and Crafts reconciled that it was possible to create attractive items in factories as well as in individual workshops.

⁸¹ Lears, *No Place of Grace*, 94.

⁸² *Ibid.*, 92.

⁸³ Wright, *Building the Dream*, 162.

Conclusion

Innovative late nineteenth-century English intellectuals and designers supported the idea of housing reform as a tool of social reform. They came up with practical solutions to deal with overburdened living conditions and the ugliness of urban life. Writer Edward Carpenter was at the forefront of a movement called “Simple Life,” which proposed that a return to modest cottage life, based in the country was a therapeutic alternative to city life, socially and materially degraded by industrialization. At his remote cottage Millthorpe, Carpenter put his ideologies to work, building a cottage based on the regional vernacular, supplementing his income with market gardening, and writing about causes close to his heart. Many of Carpenter’s friends, which included some of the foremost writers, artists, politicians, and reformers of the day, were influenced by “Simple Life” principles and moved to the country. One visitor to Millthorpe was cottage architect and town planner Raymond Unwin, who devoted his career to creating “garden cities,” based on English village life. Unwin and partner Barry Parker were the principle designers of Letchworth Garden City, a self-sustaining rural community, which became the model for similar developments in England and America.

Both Edward Carpenter and Unwin and Parker were sources for similar housing reform movements in the United States. Parker and Unwin’s garden cities were models for garden communities such as Forest Hills, New York. Both Carpenter and Parker and Unwin were influential to American designer and publisher Gustav Stickley. Stickley admired British intellectuals and the designers of the English Arts and Crafts Movement. His company United Crafts was based on the concept of the medieval guild and produced handmade furnishings. Stickley was also a preacher of artistic and socialist values and

became the main disseminator of the Arts and Crafts Movement in America through his publication *The Craftsman* (1901–1916). In this monthly periodical Stickley featured articles by Carpenter, Parker and Unwin, and myriad Arts and Crafts designers, always integrating art and social values. Stickley was also at the vanguard of a movement in home design for the common man. Lacking a clear regional vernacular as in England, Stickley's *Craftsman* home plans blended elements of modest medieval laborers cottages, American log cabins, Indian bungalows and rustic western ranch houses, all available for a nominal fee. In his plans and publications, Stickley promoted the idea of the Democratic home, which reflected the mission of both the English and American housing reformers; to create finely crafted, affordable, manageable, reasonably-sized, single-family homes for the emerging middle classes and people of modest means. Stickley's campaign for Democratic homes influenced later movements for small homes in America such as the Architect's small House Service Bureau and the Better Homes in America Movement.

CHAPTER SIX

POPULARIZATION, COMMERCIALIZATION, AND STANDARDIZATION LEAD TO THE DEMISE OF COTTAGE STYLE HOMES AS A CULTURAL SYMBOL IDEALIZED BY PROGRESSIVE HOUSING REFORMERS

Initially, the revival of cottage homes was promoted by avant-garde intellectuals in England and America seeking to escape urbanization. Early nineteenth century architects and social reformers such as Charles Voysey, Edward Carpenter, Raymond Unwin, and Gustav Stickley experimented with the cottage home as an ideal small house model set in the country. By the 1920s, American professional and civic improvement organizations such as the Architect's Small House Service Bureau and the Better Homes in America group continued to support cottage homes as a model for reasonable-sized middle class, single-family homes. Throughout the 1920s English Cottage Style homes were popularized and idealized in home building and advertising imagery. The charming features of the English Cottage flourished in plan books, house catalogs, and popular magazines. The home-like appearance of the English Cottage was also used to market commercial enterprises, such as storefronts and gas stations. English Cottage images promoted a sense of nostalgia for a romanticized pre-industrial Anglo-Saxon past, after a period of massive immigration, the devastations of World War I, and rapid industrial growth.

The successive crises of the Great Depression and World War II changed the nature of the residential housing market. By the 1930s, the economic effects of the Great Depression caused a decline in the construction activity of residential homes. As the housing market struggled to regain its footing, the building standardization developed by the Federal Housing Authority lessened the popularity of the English Cottage Style. Colonial and Cape Cod homes were recommended as practical and affordable. World War II delivered a second decisive blow to home construction as war needs prevailed and halted all home construction. Post-war housing, influenced by speculative tract development, marketed to returning servicemen with young families. Prefabricated building techniques superseded the craftsmanship and individualism which characterized the original Cottage Style homes in England and the later ones promoted by Arts and Crafts designers in America. Increased demand necessitated quick and inexpensive construction. The charm of the English Cottage was lost to the monotony of mass development.

The Architect's Small House Service Bureau

World War I was followed by a housing shortage triggered by returning servicemen, and the ongoing desire for well-designed, affordable, single-family homes.¹ In an effort to fill the need for good, small homes in an expanding market, four architects in Minneapolis, Minnesota developed the Architects Small House Service Bureau

¹ For studies on early twentieth-century residential housing see: Clifford Edward Clark, *The American Family Home: 1800–1960* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1986); Kenneth Jackson, *Crabgrass Frontier: The Suburbanization of the United States* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1985); John Stilgoe, *Borderland: Origins of the American Suburb, 1820–1939* (New Haven, Connecticut: Yale University Press, 1988); Gwendolyn Wright, *Building the Dream: A Social History of Housing in America* (New York: Pantheon, 1981).

(ASHSB), which functioned from 1919 to 1941. According to the ASHSB, “The planning and building of the small home has always been a difficult problem with the home-builder. It is a matter of the utmost importance that small home builders receive full value for every dollar invested in his building operation.”² The ASHSB was a non-profit, professional organization and its membership was comprised of architects from across the country who produced low-cost plans and specifications for three, four, five, and six room houses. “In purpose it is a public service, operating on practically a non-profit making basis, to give the small home builder a square deal and to improve the architecture of a class of dwelling which seldom has the architect’s service.”³

Like *The Craftsman*, the ASHSB promoted home ownership over renting, “There is no more enduring satisfaction in life than that of home ownership and there are few things more disagreeable than paying rent.”⁴ The ASHSB attempted to democratize home ownership by providing good quality home design for moderate sized homes at nominal prices, satisfying an ever increasing desire for single family homes. But while Gustav Stickley’s home plans ranged from cottages and bungalows to some substantial structures, the ASHSB remained true to its mission and focused entirely on small homes.

The ASHSB was sponsored and overseen by a board of the American Institute of Architects (AIA). While the AIA wanted to maintain the character of a professional

² Architect’s Small House Service Bureau, *Scrapbook of Homes* (Washington DC: Architect’s Small House Service Bureau), 95.

³ Architects’ Small House Service Bureau, Mountain Division, introduction to *How to Plan and Finance and Build Your Home* (Denver, Colorado: The Architects’ Small House Service Bureau, 1922).

⁴ *Ibid*, 17.

service, it did not want the group to be a commercial enterprise.⁵ Herbert Hoover, then Secretary of Commerce of the U.S. wrote in 1928, “The form of control by the American Institute of Architects (AIA) should guarantee a high standard of service. It gives me great pleasure to endorse this work and to assure you that the Department of Commerce will do all it can to cooperate with the Institute and the Bureau.” The AIA did not control the operation of the Bureau or render any responsibility for designs, plans, or specifications. Nor did the AIA hold any financial interest in the group. Instead, “The Board looked upon an architect’s work in the Bureau as primarily a contribution to the improvement of the small house architecture of this country.”⁶ While Gustav Stickley targeted a bohemian and experimental clientele with his mix of socialism and domestic reform, the ASHSB derived from a new tendency toward standardization, civic improvement and instruction. The ASHSB was part of a larger trend toward professionalism and the creation of national associations, which flourished in the early twentieth century. As the business and professional world grew so did professional and business associations.

The ASHSB was divided into thirteen regional divisions throughout the United States and offered “stock plans” for small homes suitable for the area, designed by member architects. All ASHSB architects were practicing architects.⁷ According to the ASHSB, “The architect and the small house are almost strangers to each other, for the reason that the majority of small-home builders look upon the architect as more or less a

⁵ Herbert Hoover, “Endorsements,” in *Small Homes of Architectural Distinction*, ed. Robert T. Jones (New York and London: Harper & Brothers Publishers, 1929), introduction.

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ Ibid.

luxury. The cost of preparing plans for a small home is almost as large as that for larger dwelling. It has been almost impossible in the past for the architect to render complete service even for small homes at much less than 6% of the total cost.”⁸ However, through the organization of the ASHSB, architectural service could be offered at a small cost and at no loss to the architect, to people with limited incomes.

The ASHSB combined a tendency toward professionalism and regimentation with an increased interest in housing reform. As the Secretary of Commerce for both the Harding and Coolidge Administration, Herbert Hoover made his mark on Washington bureaucracies. He created the Bureau of Standards, The Bureau of Home Economics, Advisory on Building Codes, fourteen Homemaking and Information centers, seven New England Urban Home Bureaus, the Agricultural Extension Services (funded partly through the Dept. of Agriculture) Division of Building and Housing. The ASHSB was a professional cooperative effort and service by practicing architects who, through their respective regional bureaus supplied professional service and guidance, well studied, carefully prepared, ready-to-use plans, specifications, working drawings, list of materials, and complete details at low cost, for the construction of homes up to and including six primary rooms.⁹ The ASHSB did not want to take work away from the local architect. On the contrary, it desired to provide service in a field which the individual architect could not handle due to cost. The cost of the work was distributed over many homes, and that was why the plans and service could be sold at low cost.

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ Architect’s Small House Service Bureau, *How to Plan Finance and Build Your Own Home*, 4.

In the ASHSB's view, economy actually dictated the principle of having an architect prepare plans. Too many builders tried to eliminate the architect's service, arguably the most useful tool in the entire home-building operation. The ASHSB Mountain Division regional office suggested that, "The solution of that problem is presented to you in this publication, wherein the Mountain Division places within your reach professional service at so low a cost that, irrespective of the size or type of house contemplated, it can be afforded. The combined talents, skill, experience and time of these men offer you a large and valuable home-building resource from which plans and service of the highest character may be secured a low cost, due to methods of standardization, volume distribution and co-operative production."¹⁰ The ASHSB made it possible for the architect to offer his skill to small home builders.

Home builders utilizing ASHSB plans received considerable value for their money. A full set of specifications and a list of necessary materials and quantities and two contract agreements accompanied each plan. The cost of each set of plans was based on an average cost of six dollars per principle room. As the qualification for "small home" status was six rooms or less, thirty-six dollars stood as the highest price per set (Fig. 31). The ASHSB regional bureaus also provided professional advice included in the price of the blue print package. Unlike *The Craftsman*, the ASHSB promoted standardization over individual craftsmanship. The most effective way to build a home at a reasonable cost was to eliminate waste. All of the ASHSB homes used stock lengths in lumber, stock millwork, finish and trim. Ceiling heights were governed by stock lengths of studs. Windows, finish and trim were also designed from universal sizes, eliminating

¹⁰ Ibid.

waste in labor from cutting and fitting. The ASHSB informed builders about exactly what they were going to pay before building commenced. The ASHSB also provided home builders with precise figures of every item in the home, referencing the sizes, dimensions and types of items specified by the complete set of construction documents and detailed plans. The ASHSB quantity survey of materials was important in figuring the cost of the home. The document listed all of the items on the job, the number of bricks, sacks of cement, and quantity of 2 x 4s. This enabled builders to buy no more than they actually needed and to estimate the material costs before beginning construction. Such an approach eliminated waste and therefore helped lower costs.¹¹

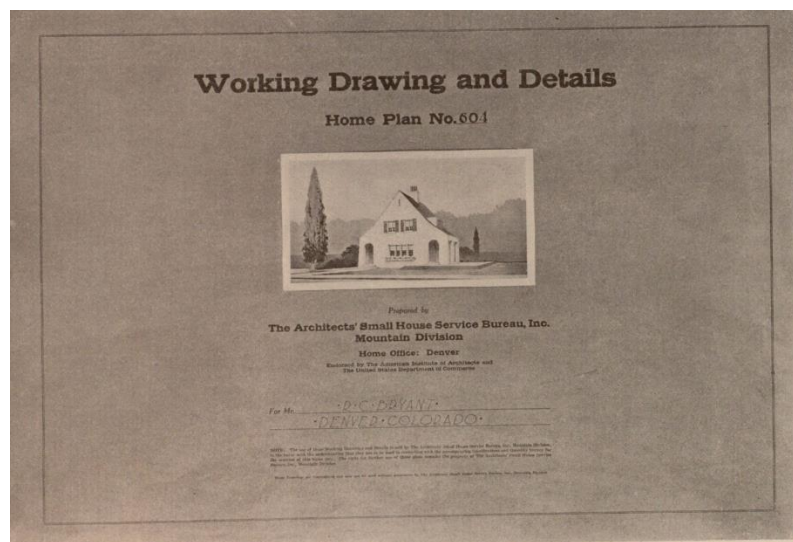


Figure 31. ASHSB plan set with Cottage Style home on the cover.

To further reduce costs ASHSB designs called for simplicity in design, eliminating complicated and extravagant roofs, heavy cornices, brackets and meaningless ornamentation, adding to the cost of the home. A space saving arrangement of rooms was labor saving and efficient for housekeeping. But an examination of plans reveals that

¹¹ Architects Small House Service Bureau, *Scrapbooks of Homes*, 7.

while efficient in size, and lacking superfluous ornamentation, the ASHSB homes were not uniform boxes. The ASHSB called for beauty and comfort in the home. ASHSB homes were charming little houses with attention to detail such as pergolas, arbors, trellis, shutters, window boxes. Also, the ASHSB paid great attention to planning of the entire home site, including garage placement, kitchen gardens, lawns and hardscape, flowers gardens, shrubs, pathways, and garden seating, “Following the precedent of most of our houses the garden is in reality a part of the house.”¹² The profession of landscape architecture took shape during this period and the ASHSB was quick to promote the relationship of house and grounds and garden plans were frequently illustrated as appropriate to the house. While ASHSB houses varied in historical styles, Gwendolyn Wright suggested that, “subsidiary regional offices, in addition to the Minneapolis headquarters, developed houses that took into account the historic traditions of a particular area, as well as its climate and native building materials.”¹³

The ASHSB held true to the small house idiom and cottage homes also featured widely in publications. The ASHSB’s book *How to Plan Finance and Build Your Home* features a cottage home on the cover (Fig. 32). In 1930, the Architect’s Small House Service Bureau published a pattern book entitled *Correctly Designed English Type Homes*, which features a modest Cottage Style home on the cover (see Fig. 1). ASHSB Chief Robert T. Jones wrote that, “In England the cottage follows closely the life and manners of its occupants.” Additionally he argued, “There is nothing stereotyped about the picturesque cottages from which we derive inspiration. That is one of their essential

¹² Architects’ Small House Service Bureau, *How to Plan, Finance, and Build Your Home*, 23.

¹³ Wright, *Building the Dream*, 200.

charms. Nearness to the source of supply dictated the choice of building materials, hence their variation in different localities. Convenience dictated the size and shape of the plan. As the cottages were occupied for several generations, each in turn made additions, sometimes of one or more rooms. If the cottage finally became large and rambling, it was for logical reasons.”¹⁴ However, Jones also asserts that the plan is typical of the five room bungalow and that, “You will find the plan used in this book with practically every type of house architecture. Jones suggests that the Cottage home, once the epitome of individualism in England, where laborers cottages grew organically along with the needs of its occupants, had by this time in America, become a mere façade enveloping a standardized plan.”¹⁵

¹⁴ Robert T. Jones, “The English Cottage to the Fore,” in *Small Homes of Architectural Distinction* (New York and London: Harper and Brothers Publishers, 1929), 84.

¹⁵ Ibid.

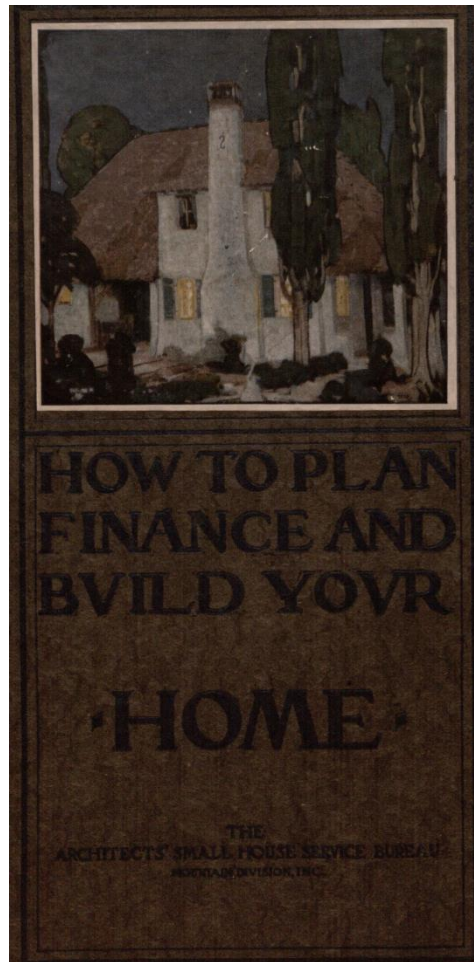


Figure 32. Cover image of Cottage Style Home. How to Plan, Finance and Build Your Own Home, Architect's Small House Service Bureau, Mountain Division (Denver, Colorado: Architect's Small House Service Bureau, 1922), cover.

In “Reminiscent of the English Cottage,” Jones describes a house in “the English Domestic Style of architecture adapted to a modern five-room home.” And like the original English cottages “it may be compact or rambling, large or small, according to the needs of those who live in it.”¹⁶ In “Two Stories and an Attic: with an exterior somewhat

¹⁶ “Reminiscent of the English Cottage,” *Small Homes of Architectural Distinction*, 49.

English,” Jones describes the cottage interior, “a built-in seat nestles comfortably into the chimney corner.”¹⁷ The illustration displays a wood frame and white roughcast plaster house, typically Voysey in style with steep gables, hooded bay window with flanking chimney, “This design suggests the English Cottage type of home. It is economically planned and its exterior is exceedingly attractive.”¹⁸ In “Inspired by the English Cottage,” Jones suggested that, “the style is English and yet it has been designed with so much consideration for American family life that it is practically as much at home here as on English soil.”¹⁹ In “Designed to Grow with the Family,” the author describes “This six-room house in the English Cottage Style, is designed for future enlargement.”²⁰

Housing Reform as a Civic Duty: The Better Homes in America Campaign

In 1922, an organization dedicated to domestic housing reform called “Better Homes in America” formed. Like the Architect’s Small House Service Bureau, Better Homes in America was a private group supported by the US Secretary of Commerce Herbert Hoover and President Warren G. Harding. Wright claimed, “Hoover’s plan was for government to sponsor agencies and committees tied to private groups or local associations. The state would function as a clearing house for information, while business and community organizations developed new markets for continuing national prosperity.”²¹

¹⁷ “Two Stories and an Attic,” *Small Homes of Architectural Distinction*, 132.

¹⁸ Architects’ Small House Service Bureau, Mountain Division, *How to Plan, Finance, and Build Your Home*, 23.

¹⁹ “Inspired by the English Cottage,” *Small Homes of Architectural Distinction*, 228.

²⁰ “Designed to Grow with the Family,” *Small Homes of Architectural Distinction*, 144.

²¹ Wright, *Building the Dream*, 196.

Better Homes in America was spearheaded by Marie Meloney, editor of *The Delineator* (1873–1973), a popular women’s magazine, published by the Butterick Company. Like Gustav Stickley and the member architects of the ASHSB, Meloney wanted to improve housing design as a civic duty. Eventually, Meloney and Better Homes sponsored and helped form a network of local committees across the country, which advised their communities on home design and improvement. Within a year Better Homes had branches in over five hundred communities, with its headquarters in Washington, establishing close ties with the government. By 1930 there were over 7,279 Better Homes committees, each committee sponsoring local home improvement contests.²² In *The Better Homes Manual*, Blanche Halpert wrote: “Professional and business organizations are increasingly broadening their outlook with reference to civic responsibility. Their first interest used to be the making of quick profits and all too frequently their members have been willing to make large profits at the expense of their clients. More recently, however, it has been recognized that it is the prerogative of each business and profession to discover the needs of its clients and if necessary help its patrons to raise their standards and create a demand for quality.”²³ Furthermore, Halpert wrote, “Herbert Hoover, Secretary of Commerce was responsible for the development of hundreds of conferences among specialized business groups which developed this idea of public responsibility and interest in civic service through the daily business routine. For each individual can usually make his greatest contribution to the general welfare through his daily activities. The codes of business and professional ethics which have developed

²² Ibid, 197.

²³ Halpert, *The Better Homes Manual*, 19.

amazingly among our commercial organizations in the past ten years are but an expression of this new constructive tendency.”²⁴

Better Homes also sponsored annual competitions for small house designs. Like the ASHSB, Better Homes endorsed the use of the professional architect, “The public should first be taught to recognize the need, value, and ultimate economy of employing a competent architect.”²⁵ A further purpose of the Better Homes campaign was to “stimulate more activity in small home design among leading architects.”²⁶ The call also extended to architects who asked to recognize the importance of public service and to remind them to be useful in the design of small single-family homes.²⁷

Better Homes regional groups built, furnished, and equipped model small homes across the country. Meloney wrote, “Millions of Americans have had the opportunity to visit these living examples of what an American home should be.”²⁸ In the spring of 1923, in the momentum to promote the Better Homes agenda, the group constructed a small demonstration Cape Cod Colonial home in Washington D.C., equipped with the latest modern technologies, and financed by the Home Owner’s Service Institute. Called “Home Sweet Home” the display cottage utilized the sentimental rose covered cottage

²⁴ Ibid.

²⁵ James Ford, “The Better Homes in America Small House Competitions,” in *American Country Houses of Today, 1935*. (New York: Architectural Book Publishing Company, Inc.), 117.

²⁶ Ibid.

²⁷ Ibid.

²⁸ Mrs. William Brown Meloney, “Better Homes,” *The Delineator* (July 1923), reprinted in *The Books of a Thousand Homes*, 290.

image.²⁹ The Home Owner's Service Institute worked in conjunction with the Better Homes Movement, serving as their practical arm. The Institute endorsed, financed and published Better Homes' materials. Additionally, The Institute sponsored the weekly "Small House Page," of the *New York Tribune*.³⁰

Despite a trend toward Colonial Style, representing early American roots, as seen in the "Home Sweet Home," cottage homes and other similar English vernacular types were well represented in publications of the Better Homes in America campaign. The home on the "Small House Page" of the *New York Tribune* in 1923 was called, "A 7-Room House of English Character." A typical white stucco English cottage is placed on the cover of *The Books of a Thousand Homes* published by the Home Owner's Service Institute and edited by the Institute's architect supervisor Henry Atterbury Smith. In "A Popular Plan for Stucco Exterior" Smith states, "This attractive English type of six-room stucco house has proven to be an exceedingly popular plan and has been built several times to our knowledge in the suburban districts of New York City."³¹ Another Institute Cottage home was "English in its characteristics" and "well suited for a small country home."

Better Homes' house designs and home improvement techniques regularly appeared in *The Delineator* and eventually in a series of pamphlet books called the *Better*

²⁹ Henry Atterbury Smith, "The Most Talked -Of House in America," *The Book of a Thousand Homes* (New York: The Home Owners Service Institute, 1923), 4.

³⁰ Ibid, "Plans and Service Approved by the Press," 279.

³¹ Ibid, "A Popular Plan for Stucco Exterior," 26.

Homes in America Guides (1924–1931).³² Better Homes also published several books on small home design including, *Better Homes in America: Plan book of small homes (Three, four, five, and six rooms)*,³³ *America's Little House*,³⁴ *The Better Homes Manual*,³⁵ *Home Information*.³⁶ Through these publications, advertisements, competitions, and regional community promotional groups, operating with federal government endorsements from Secretary of Commerce and later President Herbert Hoover, the Better Homes' Movement had an undeniable and influential effect upon small home building, during a decade of peak construction.

Popular Home Magazines

The Better Homes in America campaign initiated in *The Delineator* led to wider promotion of house planning, furnishing, gardening, home renovation and improvement through the popular magazine market. Early twentieth-century American home and garden magazines such as *Better Homes and Gardens*, *House and Garden*, *Garden Home Builder*, *American House and Gardens* and others offered an array of advertising images, sample house plans, and articles on building, decorating and landscaping the Cottage Style home. Wright points to Edward Bok, the influential editor of the popular home magazine *The Ladies Home Journal*, as leading the way at promoting and advertising small homes within reach of the average home buyer/builder. In 1895, Bok developed the

³² *Better Homes in America* guides were published from 1924–1931 by the Home Owner's Service Institute.

³³ *Better Homes in America: Plan book of small homes (Three, four, five, and six rooms)* (Washington D.C.: Better Homes, 1924).

³⁴ *Better Homes in America, America's Little House* (New York: Better Homes in America, 1934).

³⁵ Halpert, *The Better Homes Manual* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1931).

³⁶ *Better Homes in America, Home Information* (Lafayette, Indiana: Purdue University, 1936–37).

Model Home section of *The Ladies Home Journal*. According to Wright, Bok increased circulation of the magazine to more than two million readers largely due to this development. For five dollars a reader could buy a set of plans and specifications for homes in a variety of styles by leading architects such as Frank Lloyd Wright, who began contributing to the magazine in 1901.³⁷ Bok also campaigned for architectural standards for the modern home. To Bok, the ideal American home was to be structured in such a way as to eliminate “senseless ornamentation and be equipped with the latest standards in sanitary fixtures. It should be decorated with unpretentious furnishings and a few handmade niceties.”³⁸ Under Bok’s direction, *The Ladies Home Journal* presented model homes designed in this simple Arts and Crafts Style.

Based on their frequent appearance in *The Ladies Home Journal* and other publications, it is clear that Cottage Style homes were a favorite choice for conveying an image of the ideal American home. These warm images evoked a sense of stability and family life during a time of cultural change. The growing interest in cottage homes

³⁷ Ibid.

³⁸ Gwendolyn Wright, *Moralism and the Model Home: Domestic Architecture and Cultural Conflict in Chicago, 1873–1913* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1980), 164.

coincided with the explosion of popular women's magazines. Popular home magazines of the teens and twenties published images of English Cottage Style homes for a mass audience. For example, within its pages *Garden and Home Builder Magazine* (June 1925) features a Cottage Style home, complete with floor plans and English gardening ideas (Fig.33).³⁹ The same periodical exhibits a Cottage interior on its cover (Fig.34). Magazines such as *Better Homes and Gardens*, *House Beautiful* and *House and Garden* frequently featured stories on proper English details, materials, decoration, and garden types. By consulting these publications homeowners were presented with information on how to build decorate and landscape their own cottage home.



Figure 36. Cottage Home, *Garden and Home Builder*.

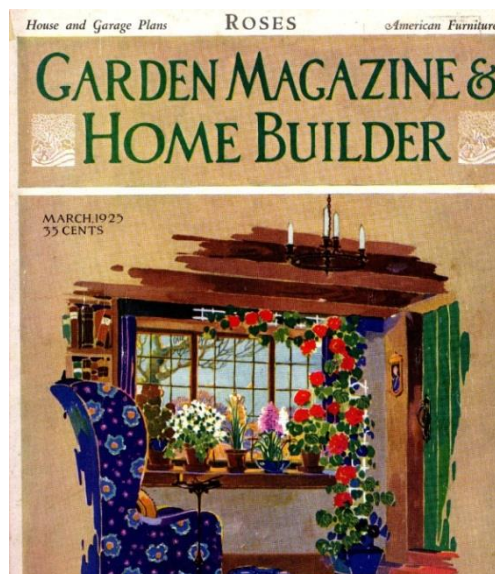


Figure 37. Cover: Cottage interior, *Garden Magazine and Home Builder*

³⁹ *Garden and Home Builder* 16 (June 1925), 8, 44.

Advertising Images-Selling the Cottage Life

Cottage images were widely used in advertising during the teens, 1920s, and early 1930s, the peak period of their popularity. Cottage Style dwellings were used as a background to sell everything from roofing materials, cyclone fencing (Fig. 35), gardening implements, and seeds. In an advertisement for Portland Cement published in *House Beautiful* magazine in 1924 a cottage is seen with the caption, “The home of your heart’s desire” (Fig. 36).⁴⁰ An advertisement for Richardson Roofing features a picturesque development of Cottage homes (Fig. 37). These advertising images resonated in household and builders magazines throughout the 1920s, firmly establishing cottage



Figure 35. Advertisement showing Cottage Style home. *House and Garden* 45 (1924): 139.



Figure 36. Advertisement, Portland Cement Association.

⁴⁰ *House Beautiful* (June 1924): 53.

homes as ideals in America.

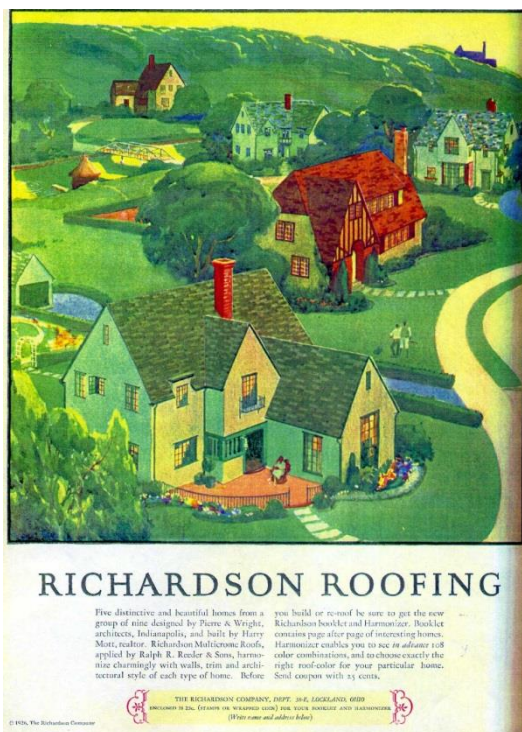


Figure 37. Advertisement for Richardson roofing showing cottage suburban development. *House and Garden* 49 (May 1926): 24.

These modest Cottage Style houses were built primarily in suburbs in the United States. The dream of a landscaped suburban escape arose as a defense with the development of mass industrialization in the mid to late nineteenth century.⁴¹ During this time a number of affluent communities emerged along commuter railroad lines. With the invention of the mass-produced automobile by Henry Ford in 1903, suburbs emerged outside of virtually all major American cities.⁴² The popularity of the Cottage Style

⁴¹ Jackson, *Crabgrass Frontier*.

⁴² Gelernter, *A History of American Architecture: Buildings in the Cultural and Technical Context* (Hanover, MA: University Press of New England, 1999), 200.

coincided with this new desire for a suburban retreat. Like Voysey's own home The Orchard, Cottage homes in England were primarily country homes whose simple nature was well suited to more rural areas. A similar relationship is seen in the United States. American Cottage homes flourished in the suburbs. Suburban locations were clearly more in keeping with their rustic simplicity and irregular massing.

Furthermore, suburban locations more closely reflected the flavor of England. To many Americans, England conjured up nostalgic images of stability and historical certainty, during a time of great social change. According to Marco Duranti, nostalgia represented a, "mourning for the impossibility of mythical return, for the loss of an enchanted world with clear borders and values."⁴³ Duranti also claims that the condition frequently emerged during wartime and was first diagnosed in US soldiers during the Civil War.⁴⁴ English Cottage building in the 1920s followed the harrowing experiences of mechanized killing in World War I. Jay Winter in his study of mourning claims, that the use of older imagery and rituals was a means of coping with the extremes of suffering in World War I.⁴⁵ The popularity of the utopian images of the English countryside represented a way of coping with disconcerting memories. Additionally, Americans searched for harmony and continuity, contrasting with Europe, during a time of great devastation.⁴⁶

⁴³ Marco Duranti, "Utopia, Nostalgia and World War at the 1939–40 New York World's Fair," *Journal of Contemporary History* 4, no. 4 (2006), 665.

⁴⁴Ibid.

⁴⁵ Jay Winter, *Sites of Memory, Sites of Mourning: The Great War in European Cultural History* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 444.

⁴⁶ Duranti, "Utopia, Nostalgia and World War at the 1939–40 New York World's Fair," 664.

By the 1920s, the unsettling effects of industrial development also influenced what Duranti calls, “a nostalgic yearning.”⁴⁷ Arthur P. Dudden claims, “There lay adjacent to the idea of progress a deep-running tide of nostalgia. Throughout history of the American people in fact, the seeker for clues to the essence of their past can discover a deep seated, heartfelt, romantic longing for the yesterday that is gone but is never to be forgotten.”⁴⁸ Dudden also points out that, “Gothic spirituality betrayed the pretensions of an age of transparency and greed. On canvas the sylvan landscapes of the romantic school of painters provided an *a priori* complaint against the smoke and noise of the steamships, factories, and railroads which had already despoiled the beauty of the land.”⁴⁹ Lears not only points to an escape from industry, but from an emerging institutionalism and corporate system. As life in the twentieth century became more regimented, people also yearned for a more “authentic,” life represented by premodern, medieval life. What better way to escape the disconcerting pace of American mass industry than to revere the decidedly pre-industrial English cottage?

Another effect of industrialization was the extraordinary wave of immigration and how this settlement influenced the way things looked and felt in America. Handlin suggests that by the 1890s, people in the United States were “perplexed by the changes taking place in American life”⁵⁰ and began considering the Arts and Crafts Movement for its ideas about society. In England, the Art and Crafts Movement was a reaction to rapid

⁴⁷ Ibid.

⁴⁸ Arthur P. Dudden, “Nostalgia and the American,” *Journal of the History of Ideas* 22, no. 4 (1961), 516.

⁴⁹ Ibid, 526.

⁵⁰ David Handlin, *The American Home: Architecture and Society, 1815–1915* (New York: Scott Foresman and Company, 1981), 442.

industrialization and urbanization. By the late 1800s, America was experiencing the same changes, along with a mass immigration of peoples from vastly different ethnic and cultural backgrounds. In the face of such dramatic shifts, some people wanted to turn back the clock and retreat into the pre-industrial, rural traditions, which the Arts and Crafts Movement promoted. T. J. Jackson Lears contends that the antimodernism advocated by most Arts and Crafts enthusiasts and Gothic revivalists, “had a dual significance: it promoted accommodation to new modes of cultural hegemony, while it preserved an eloquent edge of protest.”⁵¹ Margaret Marsh further argues that a strong ethnocentrism pervaded throughout much of Progressive housing reform. Both the Colonial Revival and the Arts and Crafts Movement promoted by reformers were Anglo-Saxon in background. Anglo-Saxon styles were believed to be superior and ideal models for the modern American home.⁵² Marsh points to reform architect Joy Wheeler Dow, who stated in 1904, that people of Anglo-Saxon descent had “the greatest reverence for the dwelling place.”⁵³ This white, middle-class, nativist sentiment certainly played into the push for Arts and Crafts interiors and the condemnation of the ethnic, working-class interior.

Certainly by the 1920s, the time of greatest popularization of Cottage homes in suburban America, the nostalgia for a romanticized Anglo Saxon past far outweighed any edge of protest demonstrated by early housing reformers in England and America.

⁵¹ T.J. Jackson Lears, *No Place of Grace: Antimodernism and the Transformation of American Culture, 1880–1920* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1981), 301.

⁵² *Ibid*, 507–527.

⁵³ Joy Wheeler Dow, *American Renaissance: A Review of Domestic Architecture* (New York: 1904), 17.

Dudden claims that, “A romantic pessimism characterizes the mood of nostalgia. By contrast with the state of things as they are, there comes beseechingly to mind a preference for things as they once were, or more importantly, a preference for things as they are believed to have been.”⁵⁴ Dudden also surmises that nostalgia, “implies a certain dissatisfaction with present circumstances and very likely also a dissatisfaction with the apparent direction of trends leading into the future.”⁵⁵ Lears argues that in America, “Antimodern impulses helped WASP elites to become a unified and self-conscious ruling class. Gothic architecture and medieval heraldry provided collective symbols-often with Anglophile overtones-for an emerging national bourgeoisie.”⁵⁶

A less wistful aspect of cottage life was the longing for Anglo Saxon heritage and history, as exemplified by cottage imagery. Nostalgic images were popularized in an array of publications, which appeared following the Centennial of 1876. Books such as Allen Jackson’s *The Half-Timber House*⁵⁷ cultivated a taste for the décor and culture of the medieval period. Illustrators such as N. C. Wyeth painted storybook visions of the Arthurian legends.⁵⁸ Periodicals such as *Country Life*⁵⁹ offered American readers a view of English country houses, including many fine Cottage examples from Voysey and other domestic architects of the day. Art prints featuring English rural-life were also popular.

⁵⁴ Dudden, “Nostalgia and the American,” 517.

⁵⁵ Ibid.

⁵⁶ Lears, *No Place of Grace*,

⁵⁷ Allen Winchester Jackson, *The Half-Timber House: its origin, design, modern plan, and construction* (New York: McBride, Nast & Company, 1912).

⁵⁸ N. C. Wyeth was well known for illustrating a collection of children’s books called Scribner’s Illustrated Classics, including the popular *The Boy’s King Arthur: Sir Thomas Malory’s History of King Arthur and His Knights of the Round Table* .

⁵⁹ *Country Life* magazine was first published in 1897.

Specifically, the cottage life depicted in the paintings of English artist Helen Allingham were reproduced in books and sold as prints. Allingham, a friend of both John Ruskin and fellow illustrator Kate Greenaway was the first woman welcomed as a full member into the Royal Watercolour Society. Like Ruskin and Greenaway, Allingham mourned the loss of traditional rural life and depicted a romanticized, pre-industrial Great Britain in her pictures. She illustrated the books, *Happy England* (1903), *The Homes of Tennyson* (1905), *The Cottage Homes of England* (1909). Prints from these books and others from exhibitions such as *Surrey Cottages*, exhibited at the Fine Art Society in London (1886) were endlessly copied and sold and continue to form the basis of present day calendar and greeting card art highlighting the English countryside.⁶⁰

It is ironic that these peaceful, nostalgic images of rural cottage life concealed a greater, possibly unconscious, truth. Arts and Crafts supporters in England romanticized a pre-industrial past in the face of the disconcerting realities of factory production. Seemingly less disturbed over industrial life, many Americans embraced Arts and Crafts and medieval cottage iconography, as a way of processing and retreating from a bewildering mass of new and culturally confusing people. Imagery of cottage life in England was non-threatening and represented a time of perceived social simplicity for some and a blatant xenophobia for others.

Cottage Commercial Architecture

While the cottage's homespun imagery proliferated throughout popular magazines and merchandise of the period, commercial and roadside architecture also exploited the English Cottage Style in an attempt to lure patrons and put them at ease in picturesque

⁶⁰ Ina Taylor, *Helen Allingham's England* (London: Caxton Editions, 2000).

settings. Cottage commercial blocks, store-fronts, and vernacular roadside buildings were erected from coast to coast. These utilitarian constructions were as distant from Voysey's ideal rural cottage retreats as one could possibly imagine. English Cottage and modified Tudor Style main street buildings flourished in leafy American country club commuter suburbs on the north shore of Chicago, such as Wilmette, Winnetka, and Lake Forest, Illinois.

While the residential homes in Chicago's northshore suburbs display a variety of traditional styles, the cores of their downtowns were firmly anchored in interpretations of Medieval English Style, adapted for commercial use (Fig. 38). Stilgoe writes of the purely residential late nineteenth century suburb, where residents "disgusted with the urban juxtaposition of stores, factories, stables, taverns, and housing"⁶¹ took refuge in a



Figure 38. Market Square, Lake Forest, Illinois. Photographer: Audra Bellmore

⁶¹ Stilgoe, *Borderland*, 208.

tree-filled paradise. Express companies delivered packages from the city to a housewife's door. Only a few local shops and businesses "remaining from the nearly vanished agricultural era... huddled about the depot."⁶² Stilgoe continues, "Borderland families, especially borderland women, disliked retail activity and kept it in its proper place, near the station."⁶³ Tradesmen eventually arrived in suburbs and the need for village improvement arrived. Residents took up the challenge of beautifying villages adjacent to commuter depots. According to Stilgoe, a primary model was the English village. Just as English Cottage homes inspired domestic reformers in England and America to the "Simple Life," English village models stirred suburbanites to clean-up their shabby, utilitarian villages and create picturesque settings, only miles down the track from urban centers, "With its smooth lawns, well-tended hedges, spectacular flower boxes everywhere, the English village overwhelms the American visitor, even the visitor from handsome borderland landscapes dotted with tawdry train-shop villages."⁶⁴

English Cottage roadside architecture also developed across the country. Entrepreneurs utilized the style to establish a home-spun bond with travelers. Motor courts, a distinctive form consisting of individual detached rental cottages arranged in U or L shapes around an interior parking lot with a main office, developed along highways (Fig.39). Many reflected a regional style: In the Southwest, Spanish and Native American styles lured tourists with the temptation of the exotic. In the Northeast and mid-Atlantic,

⁶² Ibid, 212.

⁶³ Ibid, 217.

⁶⁴ Ibid.

Colonial Style dominated. Art Moderne Style was seen throughout the US. English Cottage Style was also used throughout the country (Fig.40). According to roadside architecture historian Chester Liebs, “The quaint cottage was one of the most commonly exploited images for motor court cabins...wooing guests with individual flower gardens and the promise of a cozy night by the fire.”⁶⁵



Figure 39. Cottage motor court motel. Springfield, Missouri. National Park Service, Route 66 Division.

⁶⁵ Chester Liebs, *Main Street to Miracle Mile: American Roadside Architecture* (Baltimore and London: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1985), 174.



Figure 40. Cottage gas station. Altus, Oklahoma. National Park Service, Route 66 Division.

Cottage commercial architecture is best represented in the form of filling and service stations. In the 1920s, constructing gas stations to look like houses was a popular marketing tool. The domestic appearance of these structures fit well into residential neighborhoods and along highways where “The sight of a little house selling gas along the roadside could trigger a host of positive associations—friendliness, comfort, and security—in the minds of motorists whizzing by.”⁶⁶ Michael Karl Witzel argued that, “From the vantage point of the motorist wheeling past, the pleasant trappings of the roadside house conjured up welcome feelings of friendliness and offered the atmosphere so greatly missed by the traveler when venturing forth on the open road.”⁶⁷ In a 1926 article in *American Builder* magazine entitled “Quaint Old English Architecture is

⁶⁶ Stilgoe, *Borderland*, 101.

⁶⁷ Michael Karl Witzel, *The American Gas Station* (New York: Barnes and Noble, 1979).

Feature of this Filling Station,” the “talk of the countryside”⁶⁸ is a Cottage Style filling station with two curbside pumps, reproduced with storybook detail by architect C. C. Reynolds in a station in Manitowoc, Wisconsin. House-type gas stations like this Cottage example lent a welcoming and safe touch to an otherwise charmless enterprise. The cottage filling-station normalized this intrusion upon the landscape which was both malodorous and potentially dangerous.

US highway Route 66, the so-called “Mother Road,” extending from Chicago to Los Angeles, exhibits countless examples of Cottage Style gas stations. The Route was established in 1926, the prime period of English Cottage design. Inevitably, business owners utilized the quaint style. The Phillips 66 Oil Company, which originated along the route in Oklahoma, exploited the style in a series of filling stations stretching from Chicago to California. These stations were rectangular buildings with steeply pitched gables roofs with small decorative gable placed above a central entrance door, bounded by a front facing chimney and a set of casement or double hung windows (Fig. 41).⁶⁹

⁶⁸ “Quaint Old English Architecture of Feature of Filling Station,” *American Builder* (July 1926): 130.

⁶⁹ Liebs, *Main Street to the Miracle Mile*, 101.



Figure 41. Phillips 66 station. Cuba, Missouri. National Park Service, Route 66 Division.

The Pure Oil Company also capitalized on the English Cottage motif for the design of its service stations. Pure Oil built a chain of service stations across the country. Their standard design featured a main building housing an office and a wing with one or two stall repair garages with pumps in front. The white painted stucco, or brick structures with steeply pitched blue tile roofs and side chimneys became the symbol of Pure Oil, from 1925 to the early 1950s (Fig. 42).



Figure 42. Pure Oil gas station. Lexington, Virginia.

It is clear that Cottage Style commercial architecture was used to great advantage throughout the 1920s as a way of drawing customers to the ever-widening array of establishments selling material goods. Picturesque cottages and medieval main streets formed the backdrop for an intense new business landscape, concentrated in leafy suburban retreats. In particular, utilizing Cottage Style in the form of roadside motels and gas stations was an attempt to entice and familiarize new travelers with reassuring imagery, and was realized along new highways throughout the United States.

Plan Book and Catalog Homes

Further commercialization and heavy marketing of the English Cottage Style occurred in the mail-order home market. English Cottage Style homes were prominently displayed throughout the pages of popular pattern books and pre-fab catalogs. Simple to construct, with less cumbersome historical detailing, English cottages were a nice middle-class alternative to the pricey Tudor with its cachet of expensive materials, such as copper, slate and stone. By the 1920s, there were many businesses selling blue prints, construction documents, and factory pre-cut materials, saving the home builder a great deal of labor and expense, including Aladdin, Loizeaux (Fig. 43), Morgan (Fig. 44), National, Radford (Fig. 45), Sears, Standard (Fig. 46), Sterling (Fig. 47), and Wardway. While Sears was in this business only a relatively short time, from 1918–1940, the Sears mail-order house catalog alone reached more than thirty thousand homes by 1925.⁷⁰ In 1918 the Sears Company also began selling pre-cut systems. The “pre-cut” systems were first offered to the public by the Aladdin Company of Bay City, Michigan in 1908.

⁷⁰ Katherine Cole Stevenson and H. Ward Jandl, *Houses By Mail: A Guide to Houses from Sears, Roebuck and Company* (New York: Preservation Press, 1986), 19.

Aladdin surpassed Sears in number of home sales and extent, operating from 1908–1984.

Daniel Reiff contends, “Cottages again flourished in the pre-fab market.”⁷¹ Relatively low cost and “distinctly modern in layout, these simple houses were designed from the inside out. The floor plan was laid out first and the elevation taken from it. In addition, interiors retained their comfortable, livable proportions. A large living room was of primary importance and the other units were made to balance with it. Specifically, the Modern English home is built from the inside out and should make a strong appeal to anyone desiring to inculcate his special ideas into his home.”⁷² Due to this proliferation of English sources, one is likely to turn up cottage examples wherever middle-class homeowners chose to live and work during the period of peak popularity, from World War I through the late 1920s.

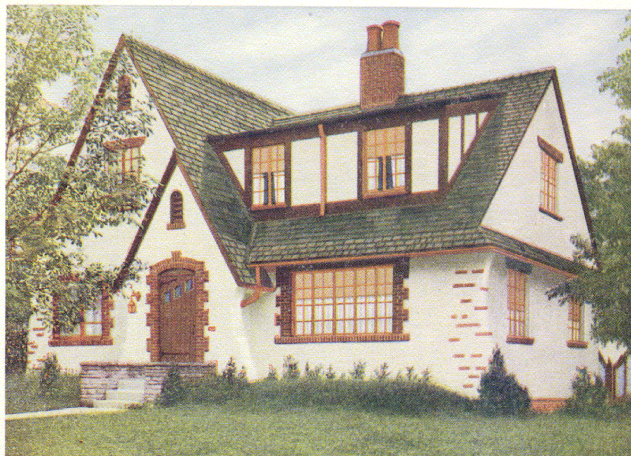


Figure 43: Cottage home, *Loizeaux Plan Book No. 7* (1927)

⁷¹ Daniel Reiff, introduction to *Small Homes of the 1920s* (East Mineola, NY: Dover Publications, 2008), ii.

⁷² “Modern English,” *Loizeaux’s Plan Book No. 7* (Plainfield, NJ: J. D. Loizeaux Lumber Company, 1927), 7.

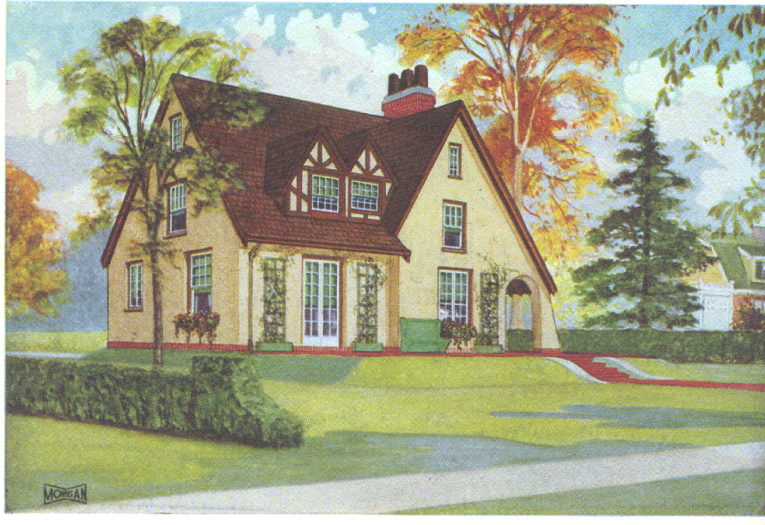


Figure 44. Cottage Style home, *Morgan Woodworking* (1923).



Figure 45. “The Adams,” stucco Cottage Style home. William Radford, *The Most Popular Homes in America* (Chicago: American Builder, 1925): 111.

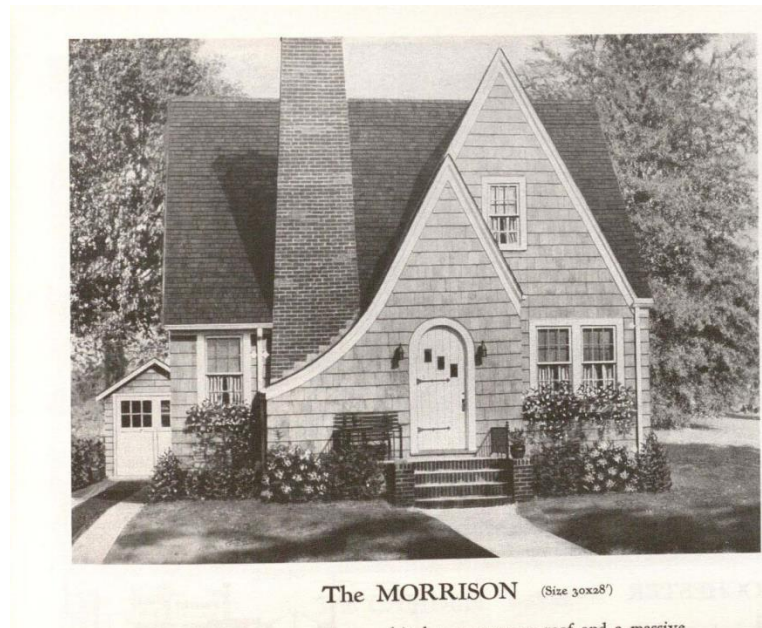


Figure 46. Cottage Style home with shingled exterior. *Better Homes at Lower Cost* (Washington DC: Standard Homes Company, 1928): 35.

While Cottage homes flourished in the 1920s American suburb due to their promotion in advertising, commerce, and plan books, they unfortunately fell into group eclecticism, along with other period styles. No longer, the practical, distinctive homes envisioned by Voysey and other architects of the English Domestic Revival, nor the models for the influential democratic house movement promoted by Stickley, cottages became one of a multitude of period choices easily obtainable from plan books or catalogs.

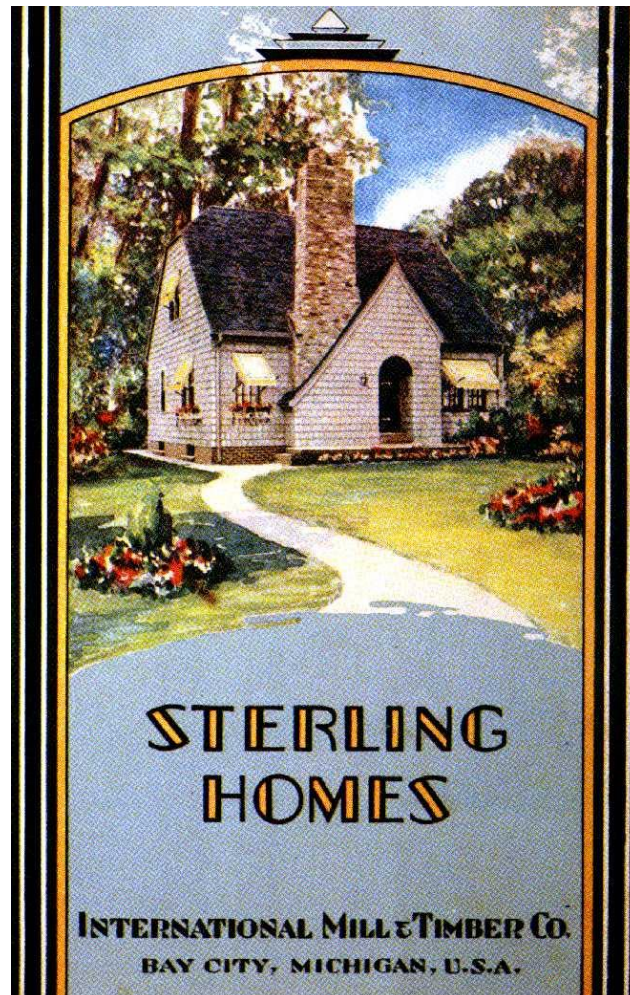


Figure 47. Clapboard Cottage Style home. *Sterling Homes* (Bay City, Michigan: International Mill Company, 1929).

While the ASHSB presented an “architectural melting pot” of designs that were predominantly English,⁷³ and Daniel Reiff maintains, “many were traced to the English vernacular and some reflected the reformist mode of Charles Voysey,”⁷⁴ The designs provided by the *Chicago Tribune* volume were varied. In 1927, the *Chicago Tribune* declared, “The formal Colonial of New England, the gracious Colonial of the Southern states, the purposely asymmetrical and picturesque the English Cottage types and the

⁷³ Jones, *Small Homes of Architectural Distinction*, 5.

⁷⁴ Reiff, introduction to *Small Homes of the 1920s*, ii.

quaintly artistic Normandy and Brittany dwellings. There are examples too of the stately ornate French, the Italian, and the softly appealing Spanish.”⁷⁵ Also in 1927, the front cover of *Loizeaux’s Plan Book No. 7*, boasts a potpourri of styles on its cover; Dutch Colonial, Spanish Revival and an English Cottage (Fig.48).



Figure 48. A variety of period styles including Dutch Colonial, Spanish Revival, and English Cottage. *Loizeaux’s Plan Book No. 7*. (Plainfield, NJ: J.D. Loizeaux Lumber Company, 1927), cover image.

The eclectic nature of the new assortment of period and continental architectural styles is partially attributable to the powerful influence of the Chicago World’s Fair of 1893. While the overall scheme for the Fair was classical, both in plan and architectural styling, for the first time in American history a gathering of national and international players, showcased the culture, merchandise, and technology of their respective states and countries in pavilions designed to reflect their predominant home-styles. The “Virginia Building was an exact representation of Mount Vernon plantation; the

⁷⁵ Louise Bargelt, “*The Chicago Tribune Book of Homes* (Chicago Tribune, 1927), introduction.

Pompeiiian style of the Vermont Building, reflected the Greek Revival nature of its farmhouses; the Wisconsin Building highlighted the brown stone and hardwoods of the region; the French Building was a representation of a portion of the Palace of Versailles; the German Castle was designed in the style of a medieval stronghold; the Irish Village contained small, thatched cottages; and “Victoria House,” the headquarters of Great Britain was a gabled, half-timbered Tudor house.⁷⁶ The significance of the World’s Fair of 1893 as a marketing tool is cited by innumerable authors. Clark states that, “After the World’s Fair of 1893, Neo Classical Revival houses, now known as ‘Colonial,’ came back into fashion.”⁷⁷ Leland Roth asserts that the Fair spawned the City Beautiful Movement, promoting classical design in suburban communities. Likewise, the exhibition of eclectic styles also made an impression. Interest was piqued by the remarkable display and the concoction of styles was implanted into the American imagination, stimulating offerings by plan book publishers and catalog home companies.⁷⁸ Wright points out a more worrying element of the concoction of styles on offer and insists that, “The period styles of architecture that became so popular in the suburbs also suggest deep racial and ethnic sentiments. Diminutive replicas of French Chateaux, Spanish haciendas, Norman Farmhouses, Georgian manors, Old English cottages, and various Early American homesteads provided acceptable cultural references as well as aesthetic charm. Families were trying to establish their heritage and their place in the world. Indeed, the Allied Architects Association of Los Angeles declared that

⁷⁶ *Views of the World’s Fair and Midway Plaisance*. Chicago: W. B. Conkey Company, Publishers, 1894.

⁷⁷ Clark, *The American Family Home*, 133.

⁷⁸ Leland Roth, 216.

Mediterranean styles were best for their region because “environment is definitely racial.”⁷⁹ Certainly, the hodgepodge of styles popular in America was unquestionably contrary to the deeply-rooted nationalistic ideals espoused by Voysey and other members of the English Domestic Revival who supported the Gothic vernacular cottage as the precedent for a generation of modern housing. In America, the melting pot of cultures and confusion over cultural identity, played out in the choice of a home-style.

Mass Development of Cottage Homes

Leads to Standardization over Individualism

By the 1920s, the large, architect-designed Cottage Style homes of a decade or two earlier had influenced the design of a slightly more moderate class of suburban home. A charming addition to any 1920s suburb, the Cottage Style was a favorite choice of homebuilders during this period. By this time the horizontal emphasis of Voysey’s buildings had been adapted to a narrower suburban lot (Fig. 49). In “A Pleasant Home in the English Style,” the cottage design is called “Our ‘suburban’ design and “offers the discriminating builder an unusual opportunity to secure a typical English design home at a comparatively small cost. As the width is only 22 feet it may be built on narrow city lots as well as in the suburban or rural districts.”⁸⁰ Similarly, the plan for “A charming English Half-Timbered Design,” states, “A feature of first importance of this home is the fact that it is only 22 ft. wide and therefore can easily be built on the 40 or 50 foot city or

⁷⁹ Wright, *Building the Dream*, 210.

⁸⁰ “A Pleasant Home in the English Style,” in *Wardway Homes* (Chicago: Montgomery Ward & Co., 1925), 21.

suburban lot.”⁸¹ The “Tilden” a plan of the Standard Company reaches only 26 feet wide with the addition of a sun parlor off to the side. At 30 feet wide the “Allerton,” by Loizeaux offered “Substantial simplicity, proportion, large well-lighted rooms and convenient household arrangements.”⁸² Still these homes maintained many of the “cottage” elements such as the roughcast stucco exterior, unusual groupings of windows, simple lines and lack of busy historical detailing.



Figure 49. A cottage design adapted for a narrow lot. *Wardway Homes* (Chicago, 1925), 21.

Many of the houses found in mass subdivision developments in the 1920s were built in the Cottage Style. After the First World War, American builders perfected a method of attaching a thin, masonry, veneer to the usual American timber frame house,

⁸¹ "A Charming English Half-Timbered Design," in *Gordon-Van Tine Homes* (Davenport, IA, 1923), 28.

⁸² "The Allerton," in *Loizeaux Plan Book No. 7*, 140.

allowing designers to recreate the traditional styles originally constructed in solid brick or stone, in a very economical manner.⁸³ In a development constructed in Royal Oak, Michigan, a working class suburb of Detroit, there are block after block of modified cottages with masonry veneers, dormered windows, and prominent front gables (Fig. 50). A similar development was Sunshine City in North-Ridge, New Jersey (Fig. 51). In an article entitled “Homes for \$6450,” Sunshine City is regaled as an affordable but beautiful place to raise a family.⁸⁴ These homes are typical of Cottage developments, which brought the picturesque quality of the Cottage Style to the masses in an affordable manner.



Figure 50. A modest, working-class Cottage development. Royal Oak, MI. Photographer: Audra Bellmore.

⁸³ Radford, *Cement Houses and How to Build Them*, 17.

⁸⁴ Anon., “Homes for \$6450,” *American Builder* (September, 1930): 22.



Figure 51. The Sunshine City development. Woodridge, New Jersey. “Homes for 6450,” *American Builder* 49 (September 1930).

Decline of the Cottage Home

A number of forces led to the decline and demise of cottage homes in addition to eclecticism and standardization. The economic collapse of the 1930s, preceded by the stock market crash of 1929, devastated the home building industry and brought about a wave of mortgage foreclosures. Construction of cottage homes, along with every other type and style of home, came to an almost complete standstill. In 1931, in a fruitless attempt to revive homebuilding, in particular the single-family home, President Herbert Hoover, called the President’s Conference on Homebuilding. Hoover formed committees of architects, landscape architects, real estate developers, representatives from various trade and construction associations, and government officials to Washington to determine ways of improving the design, efficiency, cost and financing of the single-family home. The Committee on Construction established the need for standard building codes, standards of workmanship, labor and timesaving methods, and research of new methods

of pre-fabrication. The Committee on Design recommended guidelines for house siting to benefit from sunlight, air, and outdoor space. The Committee on Landscape Planning and Planting advocated the need for careful and attractive home landscape to increase both homeowner enjoyment and to enhance home values. These bureaucratic reforms resembled Hoover's *Better Homes in America*, which tried to administer and regulate housing problems out of existence. However, such optimistic efforts to recover the home construction market failed in the light of severe economic hopelessness.

Federal Housing Authority (FHA)

When Franklin Delano Roosevelt took over the United States presidency in 1932, he furthered efforts to stimulate the building industry and employ the masses of out of work Americans through several New Deal agencies. The FERA, CWA, CCC, WPA granted directly or indirectly through local municipalities to fund the construction of public buildings. Residential housing was influenced by the development of some large-scale public housing projects financed by the Public Works Administration (PWA). Additionally, the New Deal's Resettlement Administration (RA) funded the construction of three Greenbelt towns between 1935–1938: Greenbelt, Maryland; Greendale, Wisconsin; and Greenhills, Ohio as device to give jobs to workers in the building trade and also as an attempt to initiate a cooperative housing scheme, featuring innovative planning methods. Considered too socialist and opposed by powerful private real estate developers, the Greenbelt towns remained as an idealistic experiment and most properties in these communities were sold to into private hands. Another New Deal agency, the Federal Housing Authority (FHA) was more popular, working to improve accessibility to

financing opportunities for residential homes by offering to insure mortgages from private lenders, lessening their risk of default.⁸⁵

The FHA exerted great influence on home design for many decades. The FHA also worked to stimulate the growth of single-family homes by developing and promoting standardized house plans and regulating home building practices. With the publication of its *Principles of Planning Small Homes* (1936),⁸⁶ the FHA introduced five house types of increasing size and cost known as models A, B, C, D, E offering “a maximum accommodation with a minimum of means.”⁸⁷ The FHA models included elevations, floor plans and building specifications. House Model A, also known as the FHA minimum house, was a cozy one-story, two bedroom house measuring 534 square feet. FHA House Model E, the largest of the five homes, was a two story, three-bedroom home. All of the FHA homes were functional, lacking ornament and unnecessary spaces in order to contain costs.⁸⁸ The bare-bones of the FHA homes were the antithesis of the picturesque English vernacular and English Gothic sub types. Faced by overwhelming demand, cost and quantity outweighed individuality.

Prefabrication and Non-Traditional Materials

In the 1930s a number of private manufacturers experimented with mass production techniques and the prefabrication of non-traditional building materials with the goal of marketing cost efficient housing to low-income families. One in particular,

⁸⁵ Wright, *Building the Dream*, 151.

⁸⁶ Federal Housing Authority, *Principles of Planning Small Homes* (Federal Housing Authority: Washington D.C., 1936).

⁸⁷ Federal Housing Authority, *Principles of Planning Small Houses*.

⁸⁸ Ibid.

Alfred Farwell Bemis was an idealist industrialist interested, like other housing reformers of the day, in innovative ways to meet the needs of people. In 1933, Bemis published the three-volume *The Evolving House*, which established the principles for pre-fabrication and streamlining production techniques. Bemis Industries explored the use of steel, gypsum, and composition board.⁸⁹ In 1947, industrialist Carl Standlund introduced the *Lustron House* made of colorful porcelain enameled steel.⁹⁰ Also in the late 1940s the US Department of Agriculture's Forest Products Laboratories introduced a prefabricated, insulated plywood house, which could be shipped directly to the building site and assembled.⁹¹

During World War II, a cessation on home construction activities reserved building materials for the war effort. After the war, a flood of returning service men and their families created an urgent need for housing. FHA and Veterans Administration (VA) financing broadened from targeting single-family home owners in the 1930s to developers of large-scale, housing projects in the 1940s. The FHA and VA's generous financing terms enabled builders to market to an increasing number of qualified home buyers. Tract housing developments took their name from the process of buying up a large tract of undeveloped land and constructing a subdivision of homes often adhering to the FHA standardized models.⁹² In 1947, developer William Baird Levitt applied many of the FHA principles from the 1936 and the 1940 revised edition of the FHA "Planning

⁸⁹ Alfred Farwell Bemis, *The Evolving House*, Vol. I-III (Boston: Massachusetts Institute of Technology, 1933–1936).

⁹⁰ Thomas T. Fetters, *The Lustron Home: The History of a Postwar Prefabricated Housing Experiment* (Jefferson, North Carolina and London: McFarland & Company, Inc., Publishers, 2006).

⁹¹ Colin Davies, *Prefabricated Home* (London: Reaktion Books, 2005).

⁹² Jackson, *Crabgrass Frontier*, 211 .

Small Homes” guide when he created one of the first large-scale post-war suburban developments called Levitt Town on Long Island, New York. Levitt marketed to returning soldiers with young families. Most veterans qualified for both FHA and VA mortgages. These factors influenced Levitt’s plan and other mass development projects, which reached a peak in 1950 with new home construction of 1,692,000 properties.⁹³

Cape Cod

By the late 1940s, the FHA expanded its offerings with designs which included basements, built-on garages and enlarged bedrooms. Illustrations of both the early FHA homes and the post-war FHA models most closely resemble a stripped-down version of the Colonial Revival Style.⁹⁴ According to Wright, “The beginning of World War I had changed perspective on everything...Returning from the war and seeking ancient roots devoid of the German associations of pre-war modern architecture and decorative arts, Americans embraced “the Quest for the Colonial” as number-one status pursuit.”⁹⁵ “For the new middle class who had outgrown the bungalows they were born in, the bland colonial was an acceptable substitute.”⁹⁶

The standard style of the Levitt houses was a modified version of the Cape Cod, similar in form to the FHA minimum House Model A. According to Wright, “The one and a half story Cape Cod’s simple lines and compact floor plan, built on a concrete slab and set on a 6,000 square foot lot provided an efficient and cost effective means to

⁹³ Clark, *The American Family Home*, 221–227.

⁹⁴ Ibid.

⁹⁵ The idea of “Quest for the Colonial” comes from Gwendolyn Wright.

⁹⁶ John Crosby Freeman, *The Forgotten Rebel: Gustave Stickley and his Craftsman Furniture* (Watkins Glen, New York: Century House, 1966), 111.

capture the burgeoning market.”⁹⁷ To distinguish one home from another amidst the endless uniformity, the Levitt Cape Cod was offered in a variety of exterior colors thanks to the sheets of insulated asbestos wall shingles mass produced after the war. According to Kenneth T. Jackson, “The typical Cape Cod was down to earth and unpretentious; the intention was not to stir the imagination, but to provide the best shelter at the least price...this early Levitt house was as basic to post World war II suburban development as the Model T had been to the automobile.”⁹⁸

Cape Cod style was part of a broader category of the popular Colonial Style, which traced its roots to the American period of colonization by British settlers. Jackson points out that Colonial style became enormously prevalent after World War II, “its appeal derived partly from its spaciousness, partly from its suggestion of affluence, and partly from its symbolic connection to an earlier period.”⁹⁹ Like the Cottage Style with its sentimental associations, the Colonial also looked back to another time. Wright maintains that, “New England Colonial cottage to be an architectural expression of the entire country’s common heritage of good sense and egalitarian principles.”¹⁰⁰ “The beginning of World War I had changed perspective on everything. By 1920 all aspects of modern architecture and decorative arts had lost their value as currency. Returning from the war and seeking ancient roots devoid of the German associations of pre-war modern architecture and decorative arts, Americans embraced “the Quest for the Colonial” as

⁹⁷ Wright, *Building the Dream*, 168.

⁹⁸ Jackson, *Crabgrass Frontier*, 236.

⁹⁹ *Ibid.*, caption “The America Colonial-Style house.”

¹⁰⁰ Wright, *Building the Dream*, 168.

number-one status pursuit. For the new middle class who had outgrown the bungalows they were born in, the bland colonial was an acceptable substitute.”¹⁰¹ According to Freeman “By the 1920s even middle-class interiors once again reflected the genteel European court pretensions to aristocracy...” and “Instead of continuing to adopt its native and vernacular sources, America rejected mission furniture and turned to the illegitimate colonial, erroneously convinced that this was the only true American Furniture Style.”¹⁰² Patricia West, in her study of Louisa May Alcott’s Orchard House as an “Agent of Domestic Reform,” contends that the Colonial Revival and the Arts and Crafts Movement became the ideal models of home design for domestic reformers bent on convincing working-class and immigrant Americans to adopt more middle-class standards of decoration and hygiene. Working-class families were fond of parlors filled with dust catching accessories and purposeless ornamentation. Reformers pressed for the removal of such items from the home in favor of the simple furnishings of the Colonial Revival and the Arts and Crafts interior.¹⁰³ Writing in 1904, Joy Wheeler Dow, maintained that the revival of Colonial Style and Colonial principles encouraged an established social order and restraint from vulgarity.¹⁰⁴ According to Wright, Colonial Style was also used to promote, “the country’s common heritage of democratic good sense and egalitarianism.”¹⁰⁵ That good sense also seen in the practical construction of

¹⁰¹ Freeman, *The Forgotten Rebel*, 11.

¹⁰² Ibid, 32.

¹⁰³ Patricia West, *Domesticating History: The Political Origins of America’s House Museums* (Washington DC: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1999), 78.

¹⁰⁴ Dow, *American Renaissance*, 12.

¹⁰⁵ Wright, *Moralism and the Modern Home*, 252.

homes, “Colonial was a sign of the American public’s stronger insistence on houses that were economical, efficient, simple, and dignified.”¹⁰⁶ The post–World War II period, Colonial homes filled the need for efficient, easy-to-build homes. They also drew away from European imagery during a time of heightened patriotism for democratic American values by a home-buying population, dominated by ex-servicemen and their families.

Ranch Houses

Another popular home design common in speculative tract housing development was the ranch house. Originally from southern California, the ranch was reminiscent of both adobe and Spanish Colonial buildings. However, according to Clark, the ranch’s popularity grew far beyond the southwest.¹⁰⁷ The ranch’s low-pitched roof and one-story plan was simple and affordable to build. With no stairs to climb and easy access to the outdoors through glass doors, the ranch was a convenient home for expanding post-war family life. To Clark, “the emphasis was on children and enjoyment...convenience rather than style, comfort rather than some formal notion of beauty became the hallmarks of the new design.”¹⁰⁸ Backyard patios replaced prominent front porches. Children could play safely behind the house, while protrusive garages faced the street. Ranches were a material tribute to the new car culture, when people typically drove instead of utilizing forms of public transportation.¹⁰⁹ Wright argues that, “the word ‘Ranch’ evoked a rambling dwelling to most post war buyers, which perhaps explains the great popularity

¹⁰⁶ Ibid, 253.

¹⁰⁷ Clark, *The American Family Home*, 211.

¹⁰⁸ Ibid, 216.

¹⁰⁹ Jackson, *Crabgrass Frontier*, 240.

of the design.”¹¹⁰ According to Jackson, “The Ranch Style in particular was evocative of the expansive mood of the post–World War II suburbs and the disappearing regionalism of style. It was almost as popular in West Chester County, as in Los Angeles.”¹¹¹

Both Colonial Style Homes and Ranch homes represent the psychology of the post-war suburb, moving-away from European imagery of the English Cottage to a more American look. While Colonial Style is based on a combination of Classical Revival and Georgian Style, developed during the reigns of King George I–V (1714–1830) in England,¹¹² in American it is more highly representative of the break from England by the thirteen colonies and the beginnings of the United States. Similarly, while Ranch Style is based on the missions and courtyard houses of the Spanish colonization, it is the house type most closely associated with westward expansion and settlement by American pioneers.¹¹³ Unsurprisingly, after recently fighting two grueling wars in Europe and one in the Pacific, post–WWII Americans were keen to distance themselves from foreign conflict and its related imagery. Like the English Arts and Crafts designers who searched for a national precedent for their own modern housing and discovered it in the modest Medieval Gothic cottage, so too did American architects and developers of the late 1940s and 1950s. Two styles, based in the initial origins of a colonized and mythic bucolic America were chosen as an escape from blighted far-off lands. Both Cape Cod and Ranch Styles represent architectural conformity and the disappearance of regional and period

¹¹⁰ Wright, *Building the Dream*, 251.

¹¹¹ Jackson, *Crabgrass Frontier*, 260.

¹¹² Virginia and Lee McAlester, *A Field Guide to American Houses* (New York: Knopf, 1984), 160.

¹¹³ *Ibid*, 200.

styles. After years of depression and war time restriction the explosion in construction prompted a new vision of what the ideal home and ideal neighborhood looked like. New FHA loans with low down payments and attractive terms drove a boost in construction and eventual housing shortage. Developments like Levittown on Long Island with its sea of contemporary Cape Cods and Ranches created a sea of conformity and homogeneity. “The style tended to find support throughout the continent, so that by the 1960s the casual suburban visitor would have a difficult time deciphering whether she was in the environs of Boston or Dallas.”¹¹⁴ Unsurprisingly, the Colonial and the Ranch have remained popular house types in America and proliferate in suburbs, due to their extreme expansion from the 1940s through the 1970s, but also due to their undeniable associations with Americanism.

¹¹⁴ Jackson, *Crabgrass Frontier*, 240.

CONCLUSION

Influenced by social problems created by manufacturing in cities during the Industrial Revolution, some intellectuals proposed a return to Gothic English traditions. Notably, architect Augustus Pugin proposed a return to Gothic Style, which highlighted the structure and simplicity of buildings. Art critic and writer John Ruskin worried over the effect of mass industry and the decline of the individual craftsman. Like Pugin, Ruskin also advocated a return to the Gothic tradition and heralded the return of the guild system of handicraft. Artist and scholar William Morris also celebrated craftsmanship, uniting the arts, and reviving the medieval guild system. Morris also revered the England's traditional architecture and formed the Society for the Protection of Ancient Buildings (SPAB), the first historic preservation group in Britain. Notably SPAB preserved village churches and peasant cottages, sparking an interest in rural life, as a retreat from overcrowded and diseased urban life. The restoration and revitalization of historic cottages led to the design of modern cottages by members of the later phase of the Arts and Crafts Movement, called the English Domestic Revival. The leading architect of the cottage movement was Charles Voysey, whose simple, white-roughcast country and suburban homes were built for new middle class professionals. Voysey and other architects of the English Domestic Revival searched for solutions to housing problems and looked to medieval tradition as a source for progress.

Originally the homes of country farmers and laborers, cottage homes were an anti-urban statement. They represented a return to simplicity and modesty, during a time of mass industrialization and urbanization. Historic cottages were used as models for manageable, affordable houses for an expanding middle class eager for single-family home ownership. The most prolific cottage architect in England was Charles Voysey. Voysey, the son of a rebellious Anglican minister, revered the regional architecture of the countryside for its minimalism and its nativism, lacking classical precedent. Voysey claimed that both individuality and retaining local character was of high importance to the integrity of British architecture. While based on the simple form and appearance of the vernacular cottages of laborers and yeoman farmers, Voysey's cottages were modern, functional, easy to clean, livable family homes for new suburban commuting professionals who lived in towns and villages off the rail lines. Voysey's influential cottage homes received wide attention in a vibrant and expanding British architectural press.

British Arts and Crafts publications soon reached America. Gustav Stickley, a New York furniture designer, was interested in the connection of design and the socio-political ideals associated with the Arts and Crafts Movement in England. Stickley began his own Arts and Crafts-based design company and publication called *The Craftsman* (1901–1916), which became the most prominent vehicle for Arts and Crafts thought in America. Charles Voysey and other Arts and Crafts icons in England contributed to the periodical, revealing to Americans the latest thoughts on design and related social movements. Cottage architecture was emphasized in *The Craftsman* as an ideal modest

home for the common man. In the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, cottage homes were appreciated in both England and America, for their simplicity, economy, healthfulness, and style. Advances in concrete technologies greatly influenced the affordability of modern cottages. Charles Voysey's cottages sheathed in white roughcast concrete created a fluid look devoid of obvious historical associations. Their simplicity was seen as a model for later modern design.

The architects of the Detroit Society of Arts and Crafts were particularly successful in articulating the cottage design in Detroit and its suburbs. The DSAC was based on English Arts and Crafts' societies, such as the Arts and Crafts Exhibition Society and the Guild of Handicrafts, which advocated a unity of the arts and emphasized decorative art and architecture. Like the English Domestic architects, who revered the cottage form, the architect members of the DSAC also admired the cottage anti-urban simplicity of the Cottage Style in a city marked by mass industry and urbanization. Founding architect William Buck Stratton designed the DSAC's headquarters in the manner of a Voysey cottage. His wife Mary Chase Perry founded the Pewabic Pottery, creating tiles which decorated many of the cottage homes and English Gothic Style public buildings constructed in the city, in the early twentieth century.

Another DSAC architect Albert Kahn designed factories for Henry Ford and substantial cottage homes for his elite cliental. Newspaper owner and DSAC president George Booth planned Cranbrook, an experimental educational community, as an English Arts and Crafts Cottage colony. In 1924, Booth hired Finnish designer Eliel Saarinen as Cranbrook's resident architect. Saarinen's buildings represent the evolution of cottage style and its relation to modern movement design. Christchurch Cranbrook, designed in

the manner of an English village church by Boston's great ecclesiastical firm of Goodhue and Cram stands as Detroit's last great Arts and Crafts building, highlighting the skills of the founding members of the DSAC. Unlike many Arts and Crafts societies in America, the DSAC flourished in the mid and late twentieth century by developing an art school supporting industrial design. Ironically, the DSAC survived and thrived by promoting industrial work, in direct contrast to the original Arts and Crafts promoter John Ruskin who reviled it.

English and American domestic reformers used rural, medieval cottage design as a model for modest new houses for a growing middle class interested in constructing their own single-family home. English socialist reformer and writer Edward Carpenter led the way by proclaiming the value of the "Simple Life" and by building his own cottage based on the regional vernacular. Carpenter's influence was widely felt in artistic and intellectual circles. Specifically members of the Arts and Crafts Movement promoted simplicity in design as a hope for solving social and housing problems. Innovative planners and architects Parker and Unwin designed experimental garden communities, highlighting cottage design as a form of practical and affordable housing. Carpenter also influenced American designer and social reformer Gustav Stickley, who promoted housing for the common man, based on English Arts and Crafts principles. Cottages featured widely in Stickley's publication *The Craftsman*, from 1901–1916. Other American reformers, specifically architects associated with the progressive Small House Service Bureau, used the English cottage as a model for modest single-family homes.

From the 1920s through the 1940s, English Cottage Style homes flourished and ultimately declined in favor of Colonial and Ranch Style houses. In the 1920s, images of

English Cottage Style homes proliferated in plan books, house catalogs, and popular magazine advertisements, promoting them as idealized homes. The charming features and rural imagery of the English Cottage were used as a backdrop for selling all manner of products. The home-like appearance of the English Cottage was also used for the design of commercial structures, such as shops and gas stations. By the 1930s, the economic effects of the Great Depression caused a decline in the construction activity of residential homes. Influenced by building standardization, developed by the Federal Housing Authority the popularity of the Cottage Style waned. Plans for modified Colonial Style and Ranch homes were endorsed as practical and affordable. World War II halted all home construction. Post-war housing, was highly influenced by speculative developers who bought up large tracts of land and built tract housing, marketed to the flocks of returning servicemen and their young families. Building cheap and fast was the order of the day. The appeal of the English Cottage, with its rural imagery, individuality, and charming character was lost to the necessities of mass development.

While English Cottage Style houses in America found their roots in the revival of medieval cottages in rural England by members of the English Arts and Crafts Movement, these modest dwellings were progressive, modern homes for an emerging middle-class. First touted by designers of the English Domestic Revival in England looking for a national model-home based on regional precedent, Cottage homes in America were endorsed by housing reformists such as Gustave Stickley and members of the American Small House Service Bureau as a simple and affordable alternative to the highly ornamental Victorian home. With the influence of architects such as Charles Voysey, the cottage home became almost style-less; sleek planes of white stucco and

horizontal bands of casement windows, predated the International Movement and provided a restful environment for the urban professional. Arts and Crafts publications such as *The Studio* in England and *The Craftsman* in America supported the cottage home in their campaigns for reasonable priced country homes. Socialist reformers such as Edward Carpenter and Ebenezer Howard championed the idea of cottage community as the basis for the new Garden City Movement. Eventually the cottage home lost its progressive associations and was promoted by the establishment as one of an assortment of “period” styles and its quaint appearance was used prolifically in advertisements and commercial structures of the 1920s to market a variety of products and businesses. By the 1930s, cottage homes were replaced by simpler Colonial forms, most notably by the simple classical boxes sponsored by Federal Housing Administration. In time, Colonial derived homes and ranch houses replaced English Cottage Style as the preferred home style in America. However, due to their high-volume construction in the prosperous years of the early 20th century, with their peak in the 1920s, Cottage homes are still a significant element of the American material landscape and point to a period of both technical and social innovation in housing development.

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