

Preserving Forest Grove

Newsletter of the Historic Landmarks Board

Origins of the Craftsman Bungalow

By Elizabeth Muncher

The story of the Craftsman Bungalow is actually two stories. The Craftsman Movement and the bungalow style house combined to provide a popular and uniquely American architectural style built between 1905 and 1930. It became the most frequently built suburban house from 1909 to 1913. The historical origins of the Craftsman bungalow start with the history of the Craftsman Movement.

The Craftsman Movement is the term used to refer to the American version of the Arts and Crafts Movement that started in England in 1859. The official start of the Arts and Crafts movement is associated with the building of the Red House in England. The architects, William Morris and Philip Webb, were inspired by the philosophy of John Ruskin (1819-1900) and Augustus Pugin (1812-1852) that reacted to the effects of the Industrial Revolution on society. The Industrial Revolution led to a separation of craftsman and laborer because manufacturing was divided into tasks. No one person saw the results of his labor and the traditional values of quality and craftsmanship were replaced by an emphasis on profit. Pugin and Ruskin saw that the Industrial Revolution was having the effect of changing the culture to one that devalued nature and craftsmanship. During



the late 1840s Ruskin led a drive to a simpler, more natural life. The architecture and furnishings of Morris and Webb's Red House exemplified the philosophies of Ruskin and Pugin and provided other architects and artisans a foundation for what became known as the Arts and Crafts Movement.

The Arts and Crafts movement quickly spread through Europe. Its principle of simplicity and a return to traditional craftsmanship led to a variety of styles as each country drew upon its own craft

heritage. For example, in France and Belgium the style was called Art Nouveau, in Germany it was known as Jugendstil, and in Austria it was Succession.

Interestingly, it was the lack of an American craft heritage that led to the first widely popular American craft style, the Craftsman style. Following American independence the country did not develop its own craft or architectural styles. The furniture, decorative, and architectural styles adopted by Americans tended to originate in European countries. The only American craft style was Shaker, which was established prior to American independence. Therefore, when the Arts and Crafts Movement took hold in America,

designs blended features from a variety of European countries with the Shaker style resulting in a unique American craft style.

The Arts and Crafts Movement in America took hold with the establishment of several companies dedicated to the production of furniture, homes, and pottery that adhered to the philosophies of simplicity, honesty, and usefulness. Most noteworthy of these manufacturers was Gustav Stickley & Co. in 1898 along with Charles Rohlf's furniture company and Henry Chapman's Moravian pottery company.

Of all the suppliers of designs of the period it is perhaps Gustav Stickley who made the most lasting impression. His *Craftsman* magazine, published from 1901 to 1916, became the leading voice of designers and craftsman following his design philosophy and gave its name "Craftsman" to the American version of the Arts and Crafts movement.

The popularity of a Craftsman style for a home did not rest on the artistic merits of the craft style alone. Cities were already full of Victorian homes with their "excessive" ornamentation stuffed with knick knacks and a variety of furniture styles. They were built of expensive materials, designed for families with servants, and tended to be owned by those with financial means. With the Industrial Revolution cities flourished and the traditional farming life was replaced with a suburban lifestyle. This period also saw the birth of the "American Dream", home ownership. The Craftsman movement combined with the bungalow style house offered the middle class potential homeowner an affordable, easily maintained, and convenient as well as stylish option.

The term "bungalow" stems from the Indian word "bengala", a 19th century one-story, thatch roof native dwelling. The British adapted the bengala to their needs in India. Designers added features from English cottages, tents, and other living

quarters to develop a single-level floor plan with bedrooms, bathrooms, and kitchen clustered around a central living area. This floor plan became the basis for American style bungalows.

Bungalows were built in many styles, the Craftsman bungalow was simply one of them, albeit the most popular. The Craftsman bungalow was appealing to the middle class homeowner for several reasons. From a practical perspective, it was affordable not only due to the use of local materials but also to the availability of patterns and pre-built kits from companies like Sears and Montgomery Ward. Another practical aspect was influenced by the futuristic optimism characteristic of Americans: The single-level floor plan with central living area simplified household chores, which was an attractive feature for the modern housewife.

The less practical yet equally compelling reason for the popularity of the Craftsman bungalow was its natural beauty. Gustav Stickley wrote in his *Craftsman* magazine that the Craftsman bungalow "never fails to harmonize with its surroundings because its low, broad, proportions and absolute lack of ornamentation give it a character so natural and unaffected that it seems to blend with any landscape. It is beautiful because it is planned and built to meet simple needs in the simplest and most direct way." This natural, simplistic beauty was appealing to the city worker in an era promoting simplicity and a back to nature lifestyle.

References

Comstock, William Phillips and Schermerhorn, Clarence Eaton, *Bungalows Camps and Mountain Houses*, The American Institute of Architects Press, Washington, DC, 1990.

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Mischief in Early Forest Grove - Ralph Raines and Growing up in the 1920s and 1930s

By Monty Smith

Ralph Raines has been a lifelong resident in and around Forest Grove, having been born here in 1920. I spent a couple mornings chatting with him about his early memories of the town. He must have been a lively child, as most of his memories involve more mischief than they do the town itself.

Ralph has been in timber all his life, being born in a tent in a logging camp. His parents didn't want to winter in a tent so they bought a house in Carnation and later, while Ralph was still a baby, they moved to 19th and Birch to a home site now occupied by the veterinary clinic. Upon returning from World War II he found himself president of the Carnation Lumber Company due to his father's death. He began buying logged timberland when no one wanted it and now lives on a stand of second-growth timber in Cherry Grove.

The Grove Theater, now home to Theatre in the Grove, was the local movie house and owned and operated by Don Watrous. As a boy, Ralph and his friends used a well-practiced method of sneaking into the Theater. 'Old Man' Watrous would stand guard at the front door taking tickets, but the other doors needed to remain unlocked due to fire regulations. One boy would buy a ticket and gain entrance while another would pelt Watrous with questions – who's in the movie, what's it about, etc. Using an adult buying a ticket as camouflage, the first boy would go around the ticket seller's booth to the other doors and silently let his buddies in. Watrous rarely ever caught on to this trick, but when he would they'd run inside,

run around the theater and then take a seat directly next to a family, thus ensuring a good cover.

Other rowdy activities such as chalking, soaping or 'painting' windows was common. Using real paint would have been downright destructive, so a mixture of soda and water was used, which would leave a white frost on the window.

In the '30s there were about as many cars as horses, and the local teenagers made lots of mischief with both, including auto fights with horse droppings. Two cars would drive through town while throwing horse manure at the other.

As far as dealing with the police, that was under control. It was well known that Dan Upton, the only policeman in town, never drove over 45mph, thus making a high-speed escape very likely. The local boys would purposely anger Officer Upton and prompt a chase, often by speeding through town directly in front of the parked Upton. A chase would ensue, which the boys could then escape by simply exceeding 45 mph. However, being a small town, Upton would often talk to the teen's parents and let the parents dole out the punishment.

In the '30s and '40s the armory was in the basement of the American Legion building. Drill was on Monday nights and was as much a social affair as it was military. Afterwards the men would hang out on Main Street, but as there weren't public restrooms available after hours, the large columns were used for... well, on Tuesdays they always had an unsightly mess to clean up behind the columns.

Preserving Forest Grove is a quarterly newsletter published by the Forest Grove Historic Landmarks Board to help fulfill its duty of public education regarding the preservation of cultural resources. If you would like to be on the mailing list, please call James Reitz at 503-992-3233, or jreitz@ci.forest-grove.or.us.

The Forest Grove Historic Landmarks Board Grant Program

Is your house on our local *Register*? If it is, did you know that your house is eligible for restoration / rehabilitation grant funding? The Historic Landmarks Board has funds to help you with your projects. If you are planning any exterior restoration work such as restoring architectural features or if you have structural work to do such a foundation repair, we'd love to help. We fund projects up to 50% of the cost of the job per grant. Come see us! We can also help you find historically appropriate solutions to any problems you may have.

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