



WOOD FORUM

Newsletter of the Sonoma County Woodworkers Association

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Kick Back and Relax

Due to difficulty in lining up a guest speaker this month, our meeting for June has been canceled. To avoid a similar situation in the future, the SCWA Board is asking for input from the members.

Specifically:

- Would you like to speak to the group about a project or technique that you would like to share?
- Do you know someone who you think would be an interesting speaker?
- Other ideas for monthly programs?



SCWA Monthly Meeting

May 6, 2019

by Joe Scannell

The meeting was opened by Chairman Tom Vogel, who started things off by welcoming the several guests who were present. The floor was then turned over to the Show Chair, Don Jereb.

Don began by offering encouragement to all members, whether first-time amateur or long-time professional, to consider entering their work in the upcoming *Artistry in Wood* Show, which is scheduled to begin in November. He went on to say that he would be reaching out for help from a few members with skills and expertise that he himself does not possess, specifically in the area of artistic pamphlet layout. We produced a pamphlet for Museum patrons last year, listing the names of the artists and judges, and a brief description of the SCWA, but he did not feel the public was well-served by this first attempt. He is hoping to come up with a better design for this year's pamphlet, so if you possess design skills and can help in this endeavor, please contact Don soon.

Another area in which members can help in the effort of putting on such a show is in the workshop. For the past two years several members have made small, inexpensive items for sale in the Museum's gift shop. This has become a significant source of revenue for the Museum, which operates on a minimal budget. Don plans on enlisting the membership again this year in this effort. Get in on the fun!

With the association business concluded, Program Chair Chuck Root introduced the evening's speaker, Michael Wallace, who spoke about Arts and Crafts furniture. Michael has written an abridgment of his presentation, which appears on the following pages.



Artistry in Wood 2013, by Steve Forrest

Last month we ran the above photo in the article on spalting, with the caption "maker unknown." The mystery has now been solved. Steve Forrest literally found the unidentified piece of wood on the side of the road on his way to Dillon Beach. The spalting was spectacular, and he was able to get two pieces from the chunk. This was his first-ever entry in *Artistry in Wood*.

So what will you do with your summer?



Diamond 1 by Richard Vierra

Arts and Crafts Masters

by Michael Wallace

This is a tale about two American families, one whose history in America stretches back to the time after the arrival of the Pilgrims, and the other who came from Germany after the Declaration of Independence.

The Arts and Crafts Movement began in Europe around 1850. Three prominent social critics, A.W.N. Pugin, William Morris, and John Ruskin, promoted through their writings the idea that modern society was becoming dehumanizing. They believed that society should look further back in time to the medieval era, for values and social structures deemed more pure and righteous. Pugin was an architect who designed the interior of Westminster Palace (prior to its becoming the Parliament building). Morris was from a wealthy family, and studied art but devoted more time to creating a company that would embody his ideals. Ruskin was an art critic. The three began to preach the values of Gothic architecture and honoring craftsmen who eschewed machinery. Morris was the most predominant force in the Arts and Crafts ideal. While his company devoted time to creating textiles and wallpaper, he also started to produce furniture. The most well known of his furniture pieces was the Morris chair. While his chair does not resemble the style of what we now call a Morris chair, it had the elements of a reclining back and upholstered seat and arms.



Gustav Stickley was born on March 9, 1858 in Osceola, Wisconsin. He was the eldest son of 11 siblings. Due to family needs, Gustav dropped out of school in the 6th grade and was employed at age 12 as a stonemason. From there, he went to work for his uncle in his furniture company, and rose to the position of manager at age 16, in 1874. Over the next 14 years, he joined with several of his brothers and other partners in the furniture business. In 1898 he formed the Gustav Stickley Company. Inspired by the Arts and Crafts movement in England, Stickley started to create furniture built around those designs as well as incorporating designs from Mission furniture that were built for the California Missions. Inspired by his success, he started the United Crafts company, and became a well known supplier of Arts and Crafts furniture. To further educate the public about the Arts and Crafts ideas, he started *The Craftsman* magazine in 1901, which gave the name to the style of furniture that was being created by Gustav, four of his brothers and other companies as well. Through his

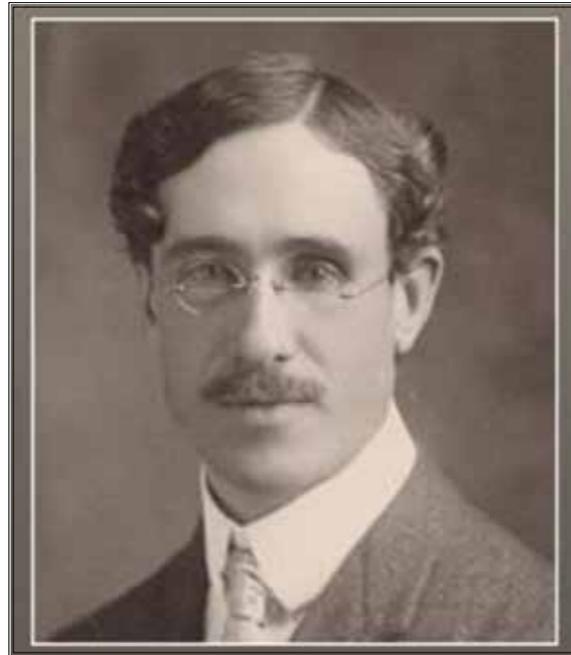
magazine, he showed the public how to decorate their homes, and included essays on socialism, to which he was deeply committed.



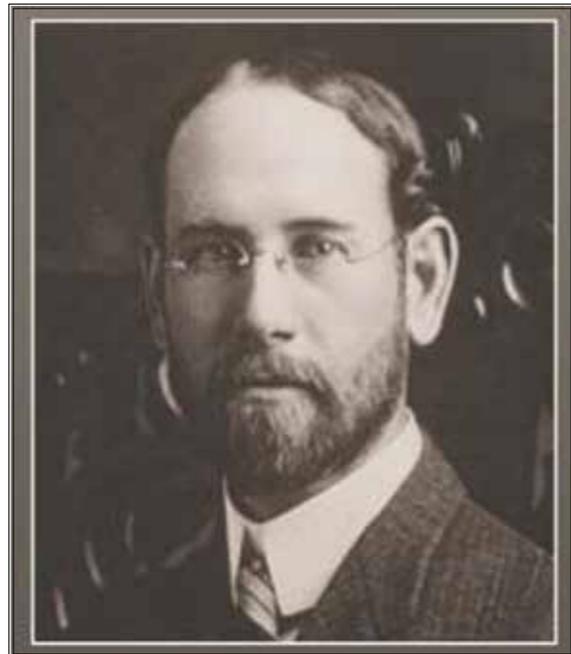
Gustav Stickley

In 1906, Stickley moved to New York City (he was living in upstate New York), and in 1908 bought 350 acres in Parsippany-Troy Hills, New Jersey to start a school he called "Craftsman Farms." The main building, built in 1908, is a log cabin from chestnut logs harvested from the property. However, the school never took off and in 1911 he moved his family into the house. In 1917, because of outstanding debt, Stickley was forced to close his businesses, and he sold Craftsman Farms in 1917. He moved to Syracuse and lived there until he passed in 1942.

The brothers Charles (1868) and Henry Greene (1870) were descendants of two well known families. On their mother's side were the Mathers, a family of ministers, one of whom was involved in the Salem Witch Trials. Their father was from the Greenes of New England, one of whom was the Revolutionary War hero Nathanael Greene. Their mother and father achieved some renown during the Civil War. The father, Thomas, was a captain in the Union Army and served under Grant, Fremont and Tecumseh. The mother, Lelia, helped her Union father who was a payroll master by running the money to him while he was behind Confederate lines. Early in life their father determined the boys' educational path, and ultimately sent them to MIT to study architecture for a two-year term to become practicing architects.



Charles Sumner Greene



Henry Mather Greene

Upon graduating from MIT, they went to work for separate Boston-based companies. In 1893, they decided to move to Pasadena, where their parents had relocated from St. Louis, and opened up their practice. At the time Pasadena was becoming known as a winter haven for the rich, and the Greenes were quick to capitalize on that and grew their firm. While the first house they designed has been demolished, the second one, the Breiner House (1894) still stands, although it has been altered. This house is interesting because it doesn't exhibit the richness of the bungalows that they became famous for later.



John Breiner House, Pasadena

Between 1893 and 1904 they had 103 commissions, and in the next seven, 150. According to their biographer, they had proposed over 900 works. Some were complete houses and others were renovations. They used their talents to design commercial buildings as well. Sadly, only one remains in Pasadena today.



In the Gamble House, Pasadena

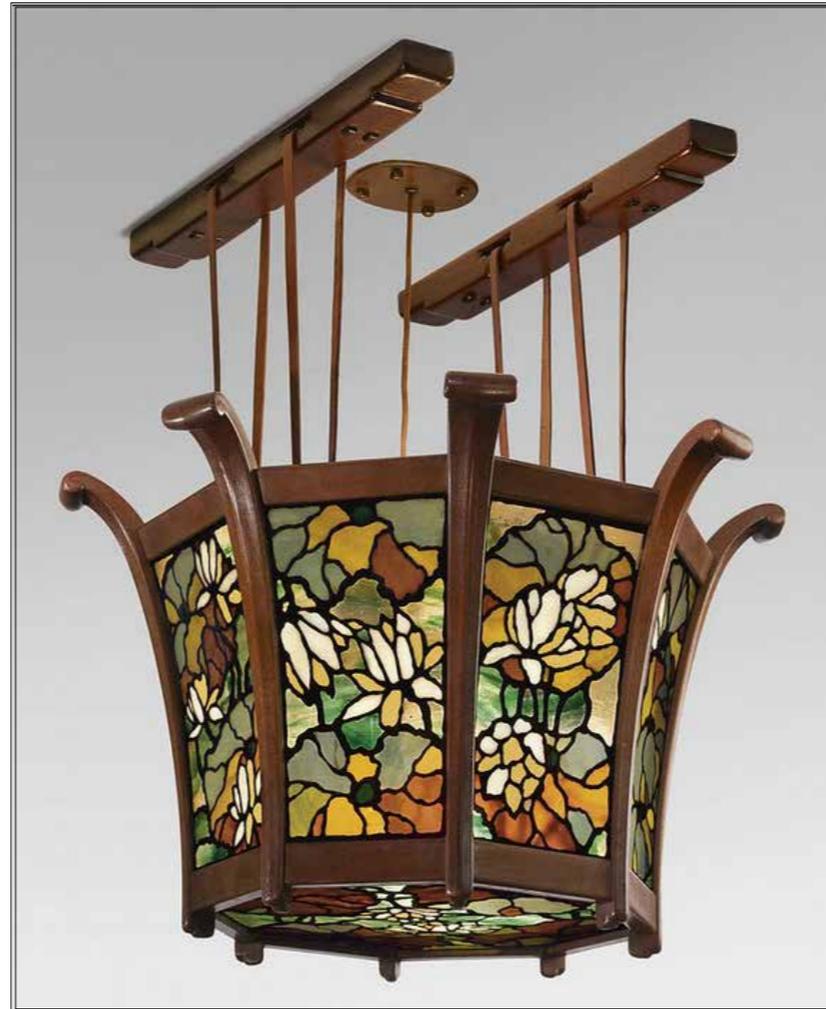
Charles Greene considered himself to be an artist first. He took the design elements of Arts and Crafts and Japanese style points and created the Greene signature style. This is exemplified by the Gamble House. Commissioned by a scion of the co-founder of Proctor and Gamble, the house today is in public hands and is the only Greene and Greene house with all of its original furniture. While Charles designed specific pieces for this house and others that they designed during this period (1908 - 1922), the Greenes incorporated Stickley pieces in the homes as well. The fame that surrounded them led to an increasing workload, and ultimately it had its effect on Charles. By 1920, the Arts and Crafts style was fading, and Charles broke with his brother and moved to Carmel, but continued to practice (as did his brother) until they died, Henry in 1954 and Charles in 1957. By the 1940s they were hardly known. However, because of a magazine editor's efforts, their work achieved a new sense of wonder and admiration, to the point that the AIA awarded them a special citation that acknowledged their works.



Contrasting with Stickley's apparent chaotic design process, the Greenes seemed to be more methodical. Charles took to the Japanese aesthetic, and left many detailed drawings for the builders indicating how a piece was to be made. Since the Greenes were designers and not builders (although they had learned how to make furniture), they were fortunate enough to find the Hall brothers, John and Peter. The Halls were born in Sweden, emigrated to the West Coast in the late 1800s, and found work in the building trades. Peter's forte was stairs, but he acted as general contractor for the homes that the Greene's clients wanted to build. John was more of a cabinet maker, and it is assumed it was his work that created the many beautiful furnishings in the Greene homes.



Gustav Stickley employed a number of designers, and with them he created the iconic Craftsman style. Simple, unadorned, almost Shaker-like, and according to Stickley's idealism they embodied honesty and truthfulness. Evidently the design process was somewhat fluid. According to family members, Gustav and his designers would have several go-arounds before he was satisfied with the results. Many of the desirable Stickley furniture pieces were designed by other people, like Henry Wilkinson and LaMont Warner. One supposed designer, Harvey Ellis, only worked for Stickley a year before his death. There is some now discussion that perhaps he was not a designer at all, but an illustrator for *Craftsman Magazine*. A museum in Denver has already determined that a piece in their collection cannot be reliably attributed to Ellis.



While both Stickley and Greene furniture pieces are highly collected, it is important to note that while Gustav was producing piece after piece in his factories, the Greenes were more idiosyncratic, and as such most of their work is hard to find. When a Greene piece comes up for auction, it can easily fetch a high six-figure price, whereas a genuine Stickley (remember, there were five Stickleys making Craftsman style furniture), will sell for a lesser amount.

In the Bay Area, the best place to see the Greene's work is at the Thorsen House in Berkeley. There are occasional tours. For Gustav, the most complete house is the Craftsman House in New Jersey.



The Future is in Good Hands

One of the privileges of editing this fine publication is that you can occasionally write about something or someone you find to be especially noteworthy. This month I would like to direct your attention to a young girl, an eighth-grader living in Pacifica, who has demonstrated some remarkable skills in woodworking. That she is my niece's daughter only explains how I know her.

For their last year of grammar school, each of the students was required to formulate a project that they would carry out during the year, and make a presentation of that project at the end of the school year. The undertaking could be literally anything, from picking up 5,000 pounds of trash (one student's project) to, well, you name it.

Katherine Griestins decided to make a wooden box, with her grandfather's guidance and tools. In fact, she wound up making eight boxes, the first one merely a "practice piece."

She designed the boxes using FastCAD, and cut out the pieces with a table saw. The sides are all joined with box joints made at a router table. Several of the boxes are embellished with carving done on a small CNC machine her grandfather has in his shop. Most of the boxes are made from purpleheart. Two had bottom panels made from fragrant camphor obtained from a source in Marin County.



Photos by José Cuervo



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Wood Forum is the monthly newsletter of the Sonoma County Woodworkers Association. Please feel free to submit articles and photographs for inclusion in the publication. You can send your submissions to the Wood Forum Editor at SCWAEditor@gmail.com. Advertisements are also accepted with a nominal cost for paid members.

Membership Application

I would like to join the SCWA to meet other people interested in the craft, the art and the business of fine wood-working. Enclosed is my check in the amount of \$35 for the annual dues. I understand that this fee entitles me to attend monthly meetings and to receive the Wood Forum newsletter by email or via the SCWA's website.

Name _____ Email _____

Address _____

City, Zip _____ Home Phone _____

Cell Phone _____ Work Phone _____

What can you do to help further the organizational goals of our volunteer-run association? Please tell us how you would like to help:

Please send check and completed application to:

Sonoma County Woodworkers Association, PO Box 4176, Santa Rosa, CA 95402