

CONTRIBUTION
OF
806 INGLESIDE PLACE
TO
NORTHEAST EVANSTON HISTORIC DISTRICT

Northeast Evanston Historic District
listed in
National Register of Historic Places
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Arts and Crafts History

There are some very notable distinctions that set houses from the Arts and Crafts period apart from those from other periods. Bungalows are the most famous style of the period, followed by Craftsman style, Mission style and Prairie style.

Bungalows were modeled after the small, open, airy houses built by the British in colonial India during the late 1800's, and were the inspiration behind the modern ranch house (invented, or at least refined and made popular, by Frank Lloyd Wright in the 1940's). The British designed the bungalow as a low, one-story cottage that was open to allow air to circulate freely and dispel the heat. As such, it was the perfect design for California. It was not the perfect design for places like Buffalo, NY.

Although you can find bungalows across America, other house styles were designed to better reflect the climate and environment they were in. In the Midwest, Frank Lloyd Wright invented the Prairie style. Although this style featured two or more stories, its use of straight, horizontal lines gives one the impression of a low, flat house that mimics the flatness of the plains and prairies of the Midwest.

Further east, cold weather and hilly terrain made the bungalow less practical and the prairie homes less popular. Many areas of the eastern United States were already populated with Victorian houses and farmsteads that were built with the climate in mind. However, Craftsman Guild founder Gustav Stickley (living outside of Syracuse, NY), found new ways to express the Arts and Crafts ideals with house plans based on existing Foursquare, Colonial, Cottage and Stick styles.

Mission Style homes were inspired by the adobe structures built in the southwestern U.S. by Spanish missionaries. They were not truly considered part of the Arts and Crafts Movement, but their popularity in some parts of the western U.S. merit mention because Mission architecture followed the ideals of the Movement by being made of natural, indigenous materials and fit the character of the environment very well.

All of these styles generally feature wide eaves, exposed rafter tails and joists along the roof line, and an emphasis on wood and natural materials. Interior features on many of these homes included art glass, built-in cabinetry and wood details.

Unfortunately, many homes from this period (1895-1920) have undergone extensive renovation over the years and their original appearance has sometimes been dramatically altered. For instance, the original boxed wood gutters (gutters that are built into the house itself) have often times rotted and been replaced with newer aluminum gutters that are attached to the edge of the roof. In some cases, the old inlaid gutters were removed altogether, thus shortening the broad overhanging eaves that are the hallmark of Craftsman homes. Many times the houses have been covered with siding and soffits and fascias, hiding exposed rafter tails along with once beautiful shingle or stucco upper-floor construction.

Throughout the early and mid-1800's the majority of American architecture had been derived from classic European forms. There was the Victorian style everyone is familiar with, but also the Italianate, Gothic Revival and even Egyptian Revival in America. The post-Civil War era from 1865 to 1900 saw many styles of architecture battling it out for national prominence. The result was a visual hodgepodge that reflected the nation's own unsettled culture. Often, features of several different styles were incorporated into one structure. The culmination of this practice became known as Queen Anne style. Often lumped into the broad Victorian category, Queen Annes were a visual feast that, while not altogether unpleasant, could be quite overdone. The Queen Anne style played on contrasts, including a mix of architecture, materials and color. It is also noted for its extensive use of exterior decoration in the form of turrets, wrought iron, spindles and "gingerbread" patterns. It is this emphasis on strong visual contrasts and ornamentation that architects William Morris, Frank Lloyd Wright, Gustav Stickley and Greene & Greene rebelled so strongly against.

By the mid-1880's, with the ideas of the Arts and Crafts Movement beginning to infiltrate the U.S., a more natural architecture evolved from the Queen Anne. New England's Shingle style incorporated many of the exterior features of Queen Annes, however, ornamentation was greatly reduced and the overall look was much tamer in general. Instead of a contrast of building materials, Shingle style homes were covered with wooden shingles. Occasionally, roughhewn stone was used for porch columns, but the color and coarseness was used to compliment the natural texture of the wooden shingles. This use of local building materials, along with the unity of surface texture and material was a first step toward achieving the Arts and Crafts architectural ideal.

Shingle style was, for the most part, a local style limited to New England, but its design direction was felt in other parts of the country. For instance, in the Mid-Atlantic and Midwestern states where wooden shingles were not appropriate because of harsher weather conditions, simple square homes constructed entirely of brick instead of shingles were introduced. As the 1890's advanced, these homes, known as American foursquares, became quite popular. Foursquares were very straightforward and "to-the-point." There was no frivolity, just function. These homes consisted of a two-story square brick frame with an enormous pyramid-shaped roof concealing a third floor. One of the outstanding attractions of this style was the unusually large third-floor dormer with wide eaves.

Craftsman Style

While bungalows and prairie homes are most often associated with the American Arts and Crafts Movement, Craftsman homes and foursquares were an important East Coast style until about 1920. And if the style doesn't seem an obvious fit with the Movement's back-to-nature ideal, it should be noted that its structural simplicity was necessitated by the local environment. The frugality of this style was perfectly suited to cold Northern winters where heat retention was important. The upright, square design and open floor plan centralized heat in the winter, while the broad front porch extending the width of the home offered summer outdoor space.

All of these styles -- California bungalow, American foursquare, Craftsman and Prairie -- incorporated similar interior features such as open floor plans, beamed ceilings, an abundance of woodwork and windows, stained and leaded glass, built-in bookcases or cabinetry, and of course, a fireplace. The overall effect was enveloping yet open. The dark wood and simple hearth conveyed coziness while the many windows flooded the rooms in natural light, thus bringing the outdoors into the home.

Despite these similarities, one cannot overlook the importance and influence of bungalows -- the truest form of American Arts and Craft architecture. The term "bungalow" can be traced to 19th century India, where the British coined the word to designate one-story homes with a large encircling porch. The California bungalow followed the same concept, but embellished the style with less exotic European design elements. The earliest American examples of the bungalow were the small, one-story Queen Anne-style cottage, which were built in profusion in California during the 1880's and '90s. As Craftsman ideas traveled westward, the Queen Anne influences were dropped in favor of less ornate Craftsman, Stick and Japanese design elements.

According to designer and architect Gustav Stickley, a bungalow was a house reduced to its simplest form, one that "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."

Bungalows that best exemplified the Movement's philosophy were well crafted, and used materials left as close as possible to their natural state. Cobblestones were used in foundations and broad chimneys while the rest of the home was constructed of wood or shingles in a natural shade of brown. The long pitched roof displayed exposed rafters or braces along its wide eaves and there was an abundance of outdoor space consisting of a broad front porch as well as a rear patio with a pergola. The front door opened directly into the living room, which in turn connected to the dining room. Often, the two rooms were separated only by a half wall. As in all Arts & Crafts-style homes, the fireplace was a prominent feature and special attention was paid to the location and construction of the hearth. Like the rest of the house, the fireplace was to be utilitarian and was built of local stone or clinker brick, but in more affluent homes the fireplace would sometimes be embellished with decorative tiles and mantles.

Although bungalow styles spread across the U.S., and while Craftsman style was a popular theme during the early 20th century, it was not the only design trend prevalent in the country at the time. English cottages and Tudor homes continued to be built and America never truly turned its back on European revival styles. This was especially true in the East and Midwest where bungalows were not as practical. Frank Lloyd Wright, one of America's founders of Arts and Crafts architecture and the premiere designer of his day, set about creating a style especially suited to his Midwestern roots. He and fellow architects George Maher, William Purcell, Walter Griffin (to name a few) sought to create buildings that reflected the flat rolling Midwest prairie -- the Prairie Style.

Prairie Style was predominately a home architectural style distinct to Illinois, Iowa, Minnesota and Wisconsin, and especially the Chicago suburb of Oak Park where Wright lived. These two-story homes had a very horizontal appearance with an almost flat, broad hipped or gabled roof and wide overhanging eaves. This geometric look was enhanced by a large, plain chimney and straight walls that met at 90-degree angles. In keeping with the feel of the landscape, light-colored brick and wood was used to imitate the sprawling Midwestern wheat fields. Prairie style had a short-lived life, beginning in 1908 and lasting less than 15 years, but its distinctive look earned it critical acclaim and Wright continued to incorporate its features in his designs for the rest of his life.

As the Arts and Crafts era came to a close, about the time that World War One ended in 1918, America looked longingly at the "good old days" when (supposedly) the world was less tumultuous. Part of this romantic look backward was seen in a renewed interest in European revival architecture. As the 1920's passed, modified bungalows continued to be built, but the major emphasis was on a variety of old-style European architecture, which became known in America as Period homes.

The House at 806 Ingleside Place

The house at 806 Ingleside Place in Evanston, Illinois, was designed by and built for J.N. Stewart in 1914 by Thomas B. Carson, the most prolific builder in Northeast Evanston.

Carson was known for using the Craftsman styled approach to his design and construction. To emphasize, the Craftsman style is a derivative of the Arts and Crafts Movement, which grew out of a 19th century philosophy that was not so much a style as an approach to design. It sought truth in materials, high standards of craftsmanship, and an integration of decorative and fine arts, architecture included. Its representative figure is the writer and designer William Morris (1834-96). For the Craftsman style the idea was to bring skilled craftsmen together to direct their talents to bear on the design and the construction of simple housing. This simplicity would make such buildings pleasant to live in and at the same time easier to maintain. These architectural ideas were expressed in simply-crafted homes, often with exposed structural elements. Buildings designed in these styles were a reaction against the ornate buildings exemplified by the Victorian style built during the rise of the machine age with mass-produced brackets, spindles, and patterned shingles. In other words, machine-made products, believed to be dehumanizing, were emphatically rejected.

The subject house is a fine example of the Craftsman style of the Arts and Crafts Movement. It is unique in quality, detail, materials, and craftsmanship. The basic layout is that of the very popular and straightforward foursquare with an enclosed porch-like extension on the side rather than the front of the house. Its exterior is the oft-used stucco. Its balloon framing is fortified by tapered exterior wall extensions that rise from ground level with the appearance of buttresses. This detail may have been inspired by C.F.A. Voysey, an English Arts and Crafts architect and designer of some note, whose 1893-4 Perrycroft house in Colwall, near Malvern, highlights this same feature.* Boxed wood gutters and telltale wide stucco soffits stand out under a quite typical large pyramid-shaped roof which caps the house, enclosing the vaulted ceiling of the third floor, while sporting two similarly shaped dormers. A detached single car garage was built in 1917, its direct proportions echoing the main structure. Single hung windows on the first floor of this extension allow the room to be fully opened in summer, mimicking the familiar porch. The house is filled with oak and birch woodwork, including an elaborate built-in hutch and bookshelves, tapered door casings to match the exterior tapered buttress-like details, modified battered column-like supports of a plaster arch setting off the front bay windows floor-to-ceiling alcove. The front elevation in two dimensions as well as that of the first floor door casings, resemble Eastern pagoda appearance. The integrity remains intact with the sole exception being the addition of a rear vestibule, leading from the relocated exterior steps to the kitchen.

When the original Evanston City Preservation Ordinance was drafted to create the Northeast Evanston Historic District, this house was one of two or three which were cited as examples of architecture worthy of preservation.

Located two blocks to the South, the 800 block of Clinton Street is filled with the same style of homes built by Carson. These homes continue to contribute to the architectural heritage of the City of Evanston.

* The C.F.A. Voysey English estate was purchased by and resides at Crab Tree Farm Foundation, Inc., in Lake Bluff, Illinois. The collection includes incomparable interior furnishings and decorations designed by this contemporary of Charles Rennie Mackintosh.