

Arts and Crafts Movement

The Arts and Crafts was an international movement in the decorative and fine arts that flourished in Europe and North America between 1880 and 1910 and emerging in Japan in the 1920s. It stood for traditional craftsmanship using simple forms, and often used medieval, romantic or folk styles of decoration. It advocated economic and social reform and was essentially anti-industrial. The Arts and Crafts style emerged from the attempt to reform design and decoration in mid 19th century Britain. It was a reaction against a decline in standards that the reformers associated with machinery and factory production, and was in part a response to items shown in the Great Exhibition of 1851 that were ornate, artificial and ignored the qualities of the materials used.

William Morris, the towering figure of 19th century design, was a major influence on the Arts and Crafts movement. The aesthetic and social vision of the Arts and Crafts movement derived from ideas he developed in the 1850s with a group of students at the University of Oxford, who combined a love of Romantic literature with a commitment to social reform. In 1861 Morris began making furniture and decorative objects commercially, modeling his designs on medieval styles and using bold forms and strong colors. The spread of Arts and Crafts ideas during the late 19th and early 20th centuries resulted in the establishment of many associations and craft communities, although Morris was not involved with them because of his preoccupation with socialism in the 1880s. A hundred and thirty Arts and Crafts organizations were formed in Britain, most between 1895 and 1905.

In the United States, the Arts and Crafts style initiated a variety of attempts to reinterpret European Arts and Crafts ideals for Americans. These included the "Craftsman"-style architecture, furniture, and other decorative arts such as designs promoted by Gustav Stickley in his magazine, *The Craftsman* and designs produced on the Roycroft campus as publicized in Elbert Hubbard's *The Fra*. Both men used their magazines as a vehicle to promote the goods produced with the Craftsman workshop in Eastwood, NY and Elbert Hubbard's Roycroft campus in East Aurora, NY. There were a host of imitators of Stickley's furniture, such as the Limbert Furniture company and three companies established by Stickley's brothers (the designs of which are often mislabelled the "Mission Style").

Some notable architects working in the Arts and Crafts style also designed and marketed furniture. However they did not produce pieces in the volume of Stickey, Roycroft, or Limbert. One of the most notable of these architectural firms was Greene & Greene, based in Pasadena, California. The design of the small chest selected by the Team largely based on designs developed by this firm.



Team Project

Greene & Green

Greene and Green was an architectural firm established by brothers Charles Sumner Greene and Henry Mather Greene. They were influential early 20th Century American architects who were active primarily in California. Their houses and larger-scale ultimate bungalows are prime exemplars of the American Arts and Crafts Movement. Charles and Henry each received a "certificate for completion of partial course," a special two-year program at MIT's School of Architecture, in 1891. The architectural firm of Greene & Greene was established in Pasadena in January 1894. In 1905 the Greens began an association with Peter Hall as the primary contractor for their major architectural commissions, and from 1907 with his brother John Hall, who ran a millwork shop producing their decorative arts and furniture designs. The firm of Greene & Greene was officially dissolved in 1922 after Charles moved his family north to Carmel, California. Henry remained in Pasadena, doing architecture projects on his own. The brothers remained lifelong friends until their deaths in the 1950s.

Greene & Greene designs tended to emphasize the traditional joinery aspects of the piece, such as pegged mortise and tenon and dovetail joints. The use of surface embellishments, such as inlays or carvings, was typically absent or used very sparingly.



Antique Greene & Greene pieces tend to be rare since they were largely made on order and as complements for the Firm's architectural commissions. Today a large number of craftsmen have chosen to work in the Greene & Greene style. Stickley Furniture's current Pasadena Bungalow Collection, was inspired by Greene & Greene pieces. A couple examples of the prices antique example bring.



\$913,000



\$125,000



\$50,000

Stickley Furniture

Stickley is probably the most recognized name associated with Arts and Craft, or Craftsman, style furniture. Gustav Stickley began making furniture before the Arts and Crafts movement took hold in America. In 1883 he and brothers, Charles and Albert, formed Stickley Brothers & Company. Within five years, the company was dissolved and Stickley then partnered with Elgin Simonds, a salesman in the furniture trade, to form the firm of Stickley & Simonds in Binghamton, New York. During the 1890s, Stickley divided his efforts between his new enterprise, and, with his brother, Leopold, oversaw the furniture operations at the Auburn State Prison. In 1898 he orchestrated the removal of Simonds and formed the Gustave* Stickley Company .

In the summer of 1900 he worked with Henry Wilkinson to create his first Arts and Crafts pieces in an experimental line called the New Furniture. In 1901 he changed the name of his firm to the United Crafts, issued a new catalogue written by Syracuse professor Irene Sargent, and began to offer middle class consumers a host of progressive furniture designs in ammonia-fumed quartersawn white oak, as well as other mostly native woods.

Stickley's new furniture reflected his ideals of simplicity, honesty in construction, and truth to materials. Unadorned, plain surfaces were enlivened by the careful application of colorants so as not to obscure the grain of the wood and mortise and tenon joinery was exposed to emphasize the structural qualities of the works. Hammered metal hardware, in armor-bright polished iron or patinated copper emphasized the handmade qualities of furniture which was fabricated using both hand-working techniques and modern woodworking machinery within Stickley's Eastwood, New York, factory (now a part of Syracuse, New York

His ideals - simplicity, honesty, truth - were reflected in his trademark, which includes the Flemish phrase *Als Ik Kan* inside a joiner's compass. The phrase is generally translated 'to the best of my ability.

His firm's work, both nostalgic in its evocation of handicraft and the pre-industrial era and proto-modern in its functional simplicity, was popularly referred to as being in the Mission style, though Stickley despised the term as misleading. In 1903 he changed the name of his company again, to the Craftsman Workshops, and began a concerted effort to market his works — by then including furniture as well as textiles, lighting, and metalwork — as Craftsman products.

Ultimately, over 100 retailers across the United States represented the Craftsman Workshops.

The Stickely Furniture Company is still in business today and offers a broad line of furniture including both original Stickely and other Arts and Crafts designs along with contemporary and traditional pieces. Stickely furniture designs have been copied extensively over the years and numerous variants or reproductions can be purchased in antique stores at very affordable prices. However original turn of the century pieces can bring very high prices.



Sideboard: \$596,500 (Barbara Streisand purchase)

In May 1903 Stickley hired Rochester architect Harvey Ellis. Although Ellis died only nine months later, in January 1904, he had an immediate and profound effect upon design of *The Craftsman* magazine, its architectural offerings, and the furnishings Stickley was producing, reinforcing the connections between Stickley's work and that of English and Glaswegian designers. During this year Stickley's furniture evolved from solid, monumental forms to lighter shapes, relieved by arches, tapering legs, and — in a new experimental line — inlay as decoration. Within a year the inlay designs would be all but dropped from production save special orders, but the broader emphasis on less massive forms would remain. In keeping with this new emphasis, Stickley also began offering furniture in willow to complement the heavier oak designs.

Rare antique Stickely pieces designed by Ellis are highly sought after and bring very high prices. Some examples are noted below:



Music stand: \$184,000



Fall-front desk: \$221,000



Desk: \$194,000



Small desk: \$182,500

Roycroft

Roycroft was a reformist community of craft workers and artists which formed part of the Arts and Crafts movement in the United States. Elbert Hubbard founded the community in 1895, in the village of East Aurora, Erie County, New York, near Buffalo. Participants were known as Roycrofters. The work and philosophy of the group, often referred to as the Roycroft movement, had a strong influence on the development of American architecture and design in the early 20th century. From the tail end of the 19th century through the first few decades of the 20th, the group produced beautiful examples of Mission-style furniture, handmade books, and a variety of hand-hammered copper vases, lamps, candleholders, humidors, and bowls.

According to Roycroft metalwork collector David Kornacki, the late 1800s were a time of artistic upheaval in the United States as artists rebelled against the social and aesthetic strictures of the waning Victorian Era. Artists were even less thrilled about a future in which objects once created by craftsmen and artisans were increasingly mass-produced. Sharing these concerns, Elbert Hubbard decided to develop the Roycroft Campus in 1897. A blacksmith shop came first in 1899, and it was here that the earliest examples of Roycroft wrought-iron fixtures, andirons, and hinges were made. A copper shop followed in 1902, constructed of local stone with a half-timbered and stucco exterior. Artisans at the copper shop produced the hardware for the doors, furniture, and light fixtures around the growing campus.

By 1906, Roycroft offered a limited inventory of copper items (pen trays, letter openers, etc.) for sale. Production increased slowly at first, which means there are relatively few Roycroft pieces from 1906 to 1911 available on the market today.

Concurrently, the Roycroft press started printing small, handmade books, with hand-tooled, gold-inlaid leather covers designed by Dard Hunter and binding by the master of his day, Lewis Kinder. They sold beyond anyone's expectations and, along with the copper pieces, furniture, and leather items, put Roycroft on the Arts-and-Crafts map.



Limbert Furniture

Charles P. Limbert was founder of the "Charles P. Limbert Furniture Co.". Limbert's quartersawn oak furniture is characteristic of the Arts and Crafts movement in America; some of it looks similar to that produced by other makers of the day. Many of the company's better pieces, however, are pleasingly unique, are solidly constructed and stand on their own merits. Limbert established a factory in 1902 where he designed and built what he termed "Dutch Arts and Crafts"-style furniture and light fixtures. In 1906 he opened a factory in Holland, Michigan, which he regarded as a more healthy environment for

his workers. Limbert continued to manage his company until 1922, when poor health prompted him to sell his share in the company.

Since the Limbert Furniture Company started a little later than the above companies, it is view more as a “fast follower” rather than an originator. Limbert pieces tend to be fairly common and can typically be purchased for very reasonable prices today at antiques stores.



Small table \$750



Original Limbert label \$1750

Each of the above mentioned companies developed designs that over time have become associated with their firm or a designer working there. That said, many similar design elements were incorporated in the various companies’ designs. Today, craftsmen working in the Arts and Crafts style often utilize stylistic aspects of the different early designers as they craft pieces “in the style of” or “inspired by” specific companies or individuals. Unlike mixing the designs of the classical furniture periods (e.g. Queen Anne, Chippendale, William and Mary, etc.) their design creations can work quite well. That is largely due to the fact that there was a basic philosophy that permeated the Arts and Crafts movement and the early designers were trying to adhere to the principals of that philosophy.

In terms of collectability, Stickely (especially Harvey Ellis) and Greene & Greene pieces tend to be coveted the most by antique collectors while Roycroft and Limbert much less so.

In summary, the different stylistic approaches of three most notable American Arts and Crafts firms can be illustrated by utilizing example of their different interpretations of the small stand the Team has chosen for its project.



Roycroft



Greene & Greene



Stickley (Craftsman)



Stickley (Harvey Ellis)