Crafty Ads:
Branding and Product Nesting in the Arts and Crafts Magazine *The Craftsman*

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Abstract

This article identifies innovative marketing strategies used at the dawn of the twentieth century in the Arts and Crafts magazine *The Craftsman*, a product of furniture maker Gustav Stickley. Drawing on all issues of the publication, the article identifies the use of novel product nesting strategies that advertise Stickley's products within *The Craftsman* magazine and provides evidence innovators like Stickley were testing product placement techniques as early as the first decade of the twentieth century. Additionally, the article analyzes branding strategies employed in the magazine that illustrate the versatility of the brand and its ability to borrow credibility from significant figures in the Arts and Crafts movement and American history. It contributes a notable case of creative magazine advertising previously overlooked by media scholars and provides opportunities for parallel studies of other magazines.

Keywords: product placement, product nesting, consumer magazine, Gustav Stickley, *The Craftsman*, branding, media history

Introduction

As the nineteenth century came to a close, many American consumers and furniture manufacturers had become disenchanted with the ornate Victorian bravura which had come to characterize most household chairs, tables, cabinets, and textiles. Inspired by the ideologically driven style of European Arts and Crafts designers such as William Morris, John Ruskin, and Charles Rennie Mackintosh, Americans wanted practical, utilitarian furniture, simple in design but complex in structural beauty. While the Euro-focused movement jumped the Atlantic and gained steam in the United States under several names, the growing working class quickly became interested in a uniquely American incarnation of the larger Arts and Crafts movement, seeking to bring affordable furniture into the rapidly consumerizing American home while retaining traditional "craftsman" construction and quality.

This movement culminated in 1901 with the establishment of United Crafts, later known as Craftsman Workshops. Owned by American Arts and Crafts proponent Gustav Stickley, Craftsman

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Workshops produced an evolving line of furniture, clocks, lighting fixtures, textiles, and home plans that have exerted influence on American design into the modern era. Alongside his manufactured products, Stickley published *The Craftsman*, a monthly magazine that mirrored the mission of Stickley's larger commercial enterprise: "To substitute the luxury of taste for the luxury of costliness; to teach that beauty does not imply elaboration or ornament; to employ only those forms and materials which make for simplicity, individuality and dignity of effect."[1] The publication included profiles of the founders of the Arts and Crafts movement, do-it-yourself plans for the construction of Stickley-designed furniture and houses, contemporary poetry and literature, and both traditional and cutting-edge advertisements for Craftsman Workshop products. Among these potential topics of study, this study addresses only the very last. This article claims that the case of *The Craftsman*, in light of its utilization of innovative branding and product placement techniques uncharacteristic of its time, is one particularly deserving of attention beyond that currently devoted to it by the field of media history.

As noted in Bowman's *American Arts & Crafts: Virtue in Design*, Stickley, while perhaps the most prominent cheerleader of the American Arts and Crafts movement, was not himself responsible for its rise.[2] Popular home décor publications such as *The House Beautiful* had already generated demand for Arts and Crafts products manufactured by a variety of companies and guilds such as the Roycrofters of East Aurora, New York, and Ashbee's Guild of Handicraft at Chipping Campden in England.[3] Indeed, Stickley, who began his career in furniture production sometime shortly before 1884, was not even one of the first Americans to take a concerted interest in the movement.[4] Yet after years of mimicking the ornate, embellished style prevalent among furniture producers in the late nineteenth century and fresh from an in-person encounter with the flourishing European Arts and Crafts movement while overseas, Stickley broke from dominant American furniture builders of his time, developing a line of simplistic, functional furniture in the Arts and Crafts style in 1898 and 1899. These products were showcased to significant acclaim in 1900 and, in the following year, Stickley rebranded his company as United Crafts, choosing a name likely to resonate with an Arts and Crafts legacy friendly to the causes of progressives and labor proponents.[5]

Stickley went further than most in promoting the movement but always did so in a way that would benefit an expansive line of his own products. This was accomplished by a variety of means, including the hosting of Arts and Crafts exhibitions and lectures.[6] No such efforts, however, matched the scale or significance of Stickley's *The Craftsman*. Published from 1901 to 1916, the monthly magazine had a substantial impact on the Arts and Crafts movement while promoting Stickley's ever-changing selection of products, as reviewed in Kevin W. Tucker's *Gustav Stickley and the American Arts & Crafts Movement*. It was in October 1901, soon after reorganizing his company under the United Crafts banner, that Stickley published the first issue of *The Craftsman*. Originally a small magazine of about fifty pages with appeal to men, women, and Americans of all classes, *The Craftsman* praised and popularized the ideology of Arts and Crafts founders such as William Morris and John Ruskin, advertised the merits of Arts and Crafts décor, art, and architecture, and promoted Stickley's Arts and Crafts-style products.[7] Far from being an afterthought, *The Craftsman* was an integral part of Stickley's enterprise, reaching around twenty thousand subscribers each month and eventually growing as large as 150 pages.[8] Issues of the magazine extolled the values of the company and its owner—utility, simplicity, and beauty—throughout the life of Craftsman Workshops while providing advertising space to a wide range of businesses, including magazines, jewelers, paint

manufacturers, and even rival furniture makers. It was not until December 1916, after the collapse of Stickley's furniture enterprise the year proceeding, that *The Craftsman* ceased publication, merging with *Art World*, a competing magazine, in January 1917.[9]

Despite the pivotal role of *The Craftsman* in shaping the Arts and Crafts movement and promoting Stickley's business ventures, little has been done to analyze the characteristics of advertising content in the magazine. The single available instance of academically rigorous research regarding *The Craftsman* was conducted by Joseph Cunningham and published within Tucker's *Gustav Stickley*. Titled "Irene Sargent and the Craftsman Ideology," the work highlights the influence of Irene Sargent, who edited and contributed significantly to *The Craftsman* from its original issue in 1901 until 1905.[10] Unfortunately, the work does not address the role of advertising in the periodical, focusing instead on the transfusion of Stickley's ideology through Sargent and into the pages of *The Craftsman*.

Not only has *The Craftsman* in particular been overlooked in the literature, but its genre, sometimes referred to as "customer magazines," has received scant attention in historical media research. As defined in research on contemporary marketing and print magazine production conducted by van Riejmersdal, Neijens, and Smit, modern customer magazines are defined as those "which are created by advertisers and in which the boundaries between advertising messages and editorial content have disappeared" and are exemplified in magazines like Kraft Food's *Food & Family*, which has been published since the early 2000s.[11] This definition, while not perfectly suited to *The Craftsman*, approaches what Stickley accomplished with his magazine—a blending of advertisement with editorial substance that served readers' dual interests in the Craftsman ideal and consumer products. Additionally, while extensive research has been conducted on the rise of magazine advertising during the era as well as magazine history in general, the topic of product nesting, defined in this work as the marketing technique in which a company embeds one of its products (images of a chair, for example) within another product (*The Craftsman* magazine) has not been a focus. Stickley's product nesting is an early example of an advertising tactic under the larger umbrella of product placement, a now-widespread practice that most scholars say originated in the early or mid-twentieth century.[12] Limited research, however argues the practice was present in some media forms as early as the 1890s.[13] This work's identification of product nesting strategies in *The Craftsman* shifts the starting date of product placement in magazines to no later than the first decade of the twentieth century, contextualizing the study of the practice's development in print throughout the 1900s.

The following investigation aims to shed light on Stickley's unique advertising strategies illustrated in the pages of *The Craftsman*. Through an analysis drawing upon all 183 issues of the magazine, this article investigates two primary themes that highlight the creativity and ingenuity of *The Craftsman*'s creators in implementing nontraditional advertising techniques. It begins with a consideration of the magazine's application of unique product placement techniques before delving into Stickley's branding practices as reflected in the publication. The article concludes with a discussion of the significance of Stickley's advertising practices in *The Craftsman*, techniques which not only represent a wholly unique approach to product marketing and branding during the time in which they were employed but which might be used to contextualize other historical communications research on magazines, catalogues, and branded company publications.

Promotional Product Nesting

Simplicity in home design and construction was a key component of the Craftsman ideal beginning in the magazine's ninth issue, in which the quaint and practical American country house was set in contrast to the "pretentious country-seats of the American aristocracy."[14] In the issues that followed, *The Craftsman*, a magazine originally devoted to the idolization of the founders of the Arts and Crafts movement and the tenets of good design, began sporadically supplying home plans and illustrations created by various architects. These exploratory articles contributed to the development of a new kind of home design article originally published in the May and July 1903 issues, articles which highlighted interpretations of the ideal Craftsman home as defined by the simplicity, practicality, and attention to artistic detail characteristic of each plan.[15] The pieces featured a mixture of written copy, illustrations of the homes' exteriors, floor plans, and, most notably, series of drawings featuring Stickley's products, an example of which is seen in figure 1. Neither article included any mention of United Crafts or Craftsman Workshops or draws attention to the presence of Stickley's trademark furniture. Instead, the text of the articles merely explained the quality of furnishings that would be appropriate in the various rooms, recommending various color schemes and cautioning against excessive ornamentation. Six months later in the January 1904 issue of *The Craftsman*, the first in a long series of Craftsman home plans appeared under the auspices of the Homebuilders' Club.[16] Each month, the article explained, a new Craftsman home would be featured, designed to be affordable and simple in design, the plans of which could be obtained by club members without fee.[17] Inclusion in the club's rolls was included in the price of an annual subscription to *The Craftsman*; at the time, three dollars per year.[18]

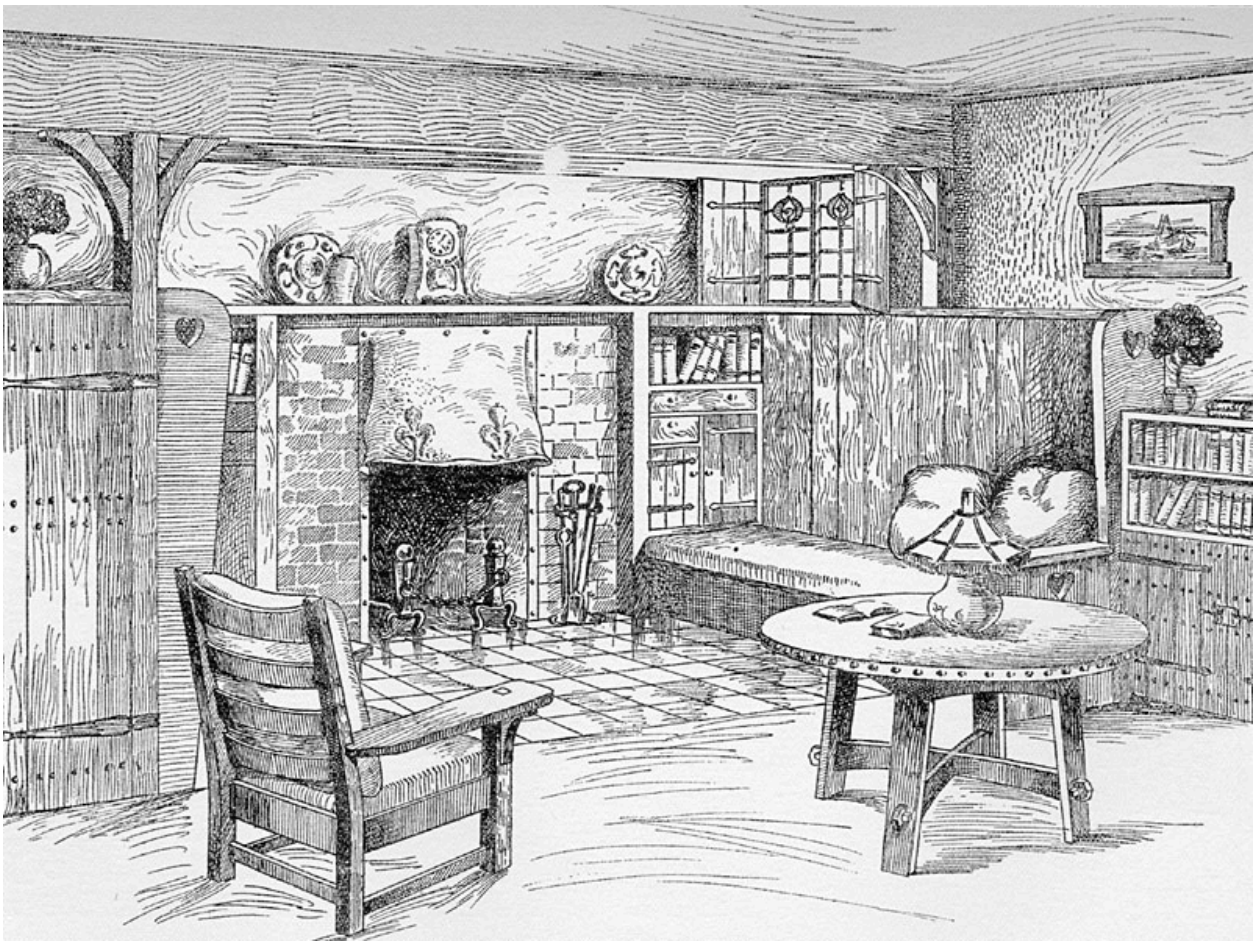

Figure 1. Illustration of the interior of Stickley and Dietrich's original Craftsman Home. The chair appears to picture item 320 in the circa 1904 Craftsman Catalog D, while the leather-topped table seems to be either item 635 or 636. Image in public domain, accessed from University of Wisconsin-Madison digital collections, http://digicoll.library.wisc.edu/cgi-bin/DLDecArts/DLDecArts-idx?type=turn&entity=DLDecArts.hdv04n02.p0037&id=DLDecArts.hdv04n02&isize=M.

From the January 1904 issue into 1907, the home series was a staple in *The Craftsman*, eventually becoming somewhat formulaic in its composition; most articles began with a section of copy explaining the design followed by detailed illustrations of the home's exterior and several subsequent illustrations featuring Stickley's furniture in the completed home. This pattern continued until a period beginning in October 1907 and stretching into 1909 during which the series disappeared from the magazine altogether. In March of 1909, however, an expansion of the Homebuilders' Club was announced in a brief article written by Stickley himself.[19] That article urged readers to form local club chapters and promised members answers to questions related to any aspect of home-building, including plans for carpentry and wood treatment, needlework and embroidery, color selection, flooring, and landscape gardening, among other topics and in addition to the standing offer to provide house plans at no charge to members. The re-launch coincided with the 1909 release of *Craftsman Homes*, a book filled with Craftsman home designs and décor suggestions previously published in *The Craftsman*.[20]

Following the March announcement, the monthly inclusion of Craftsman home plans and associated illustrations featuring Stickley furniture returned, although in a different package than before. Rather than focusing on hypothetical home designs, most issues focused on real homes built from Craftsman plans, showcasing not mere illustrations of Stickley's furniture in theoretical houses but photographs of the interiors of real Craftsman homes, as seen in figure 2.[21] Such examples, which had been the focus of occasional articles in previous years, became the principal means of showcasing Craftsman Workshops furniture in the magazine and were given a dedicated section, titled "Among the Craftsmen," in each issue. New plans once again appeared in several issues of the magazine, but these included fewer visual aids and were typically followed by those articles featuring real-world examples. The new approach to the homebuilders' series, which included both proposed house plans and examples of successfully completed homes based on those plans, significantly increased the marketing power of each house plan article and exemplifies Stickley's strategy of nested advertising. In articles belonging to the initial homebuilders' series, printed from 1904 to 1907, Stickley placed his furniture (a nested product) within free house plans, which were published in *The Craftsman* (the product in which the nested product was placed). By 1909, however, the house plans were not simply a free service afforded to subscribers; they had become a product themselves, available for purchase as a neat bundle in *Craftsman Homes*. Additionally, Stickley's proposed expansion of the Homebuilders' Club was no act of philanthropy. With the house plans as a commodity, the club expansion served as a thinly veiled campaign to create fan groups around Stickley's products. If properly executed, the strategy would now involve club members seeing Stickley products (the most deeply-nested product) in images of other Stickley house plans (the intermediately nested product) within the pages of Stickley's *The Craftsman* (the outermost product).

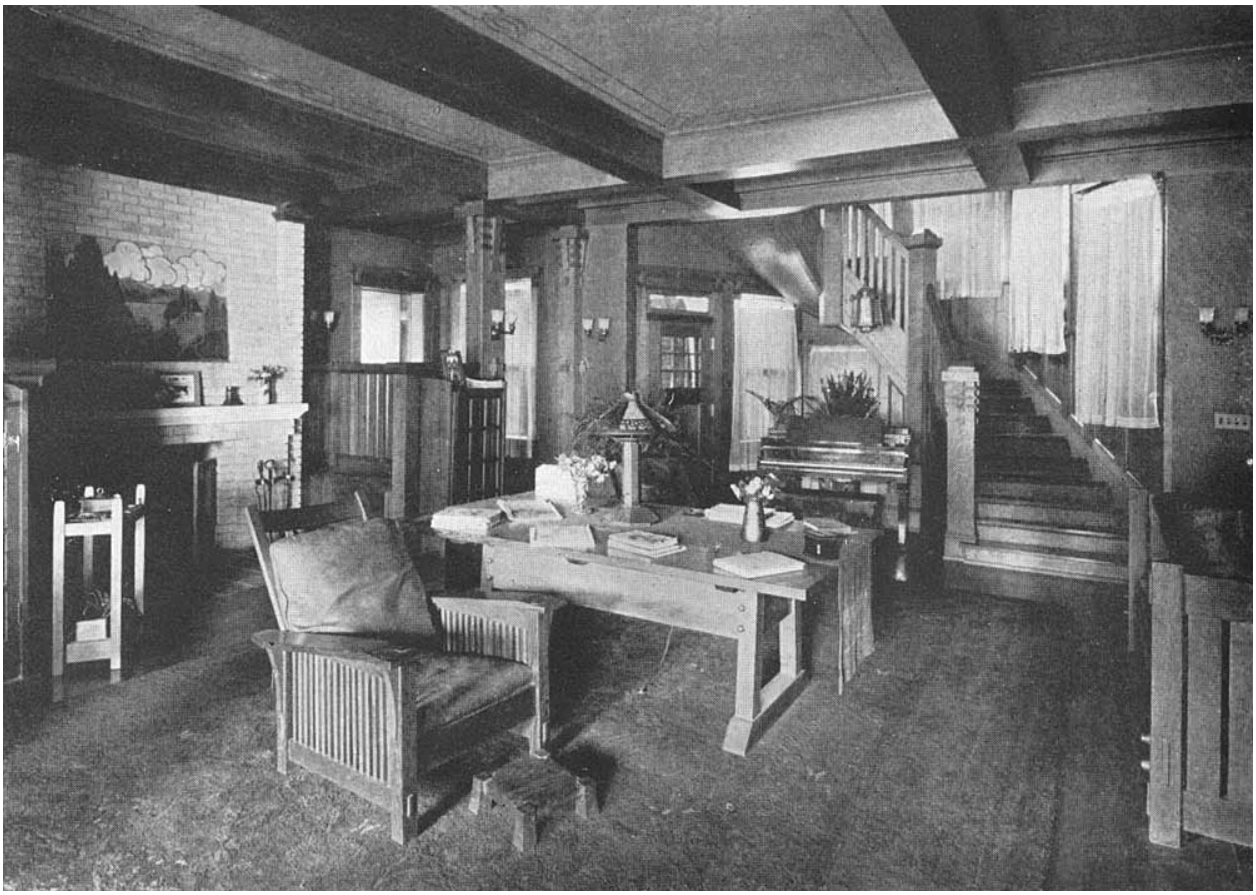

Figure 2. A photograph of a Craftsman-design home built by a reader of *The Craftsman*. Note the inclusion of Craftsman furniture, such as the large table and reclining Morris-style chair. Image in public domain, accessed from University of Wisconsin-Madison digital collections, http://digicoll.library.wisc.edu/cgi-bin/DLDecArts/DLDecArts-idx?type=turn&id=DLDecArts.hdv21n01&entity= DLDecArts.hdv21n01.p0082&isize=XL.

In time, the number of unique home plans appearing in *The Craftsman* again began to dwindle. As Stickley's furniture enterprise began to crumble in spring of 1915, the magazine began reprinting abbreviated versions of plans published in earlier years, offering to "furnish tentative estimates and cost of complete plans upon request" rather than providing them free of charge.[22] Such plans were packaged in groups of four and featured at the end of seven of the last eight issues of *The Craftsman*. The series did not include extensive illustrations and, therefore, departed from Stickley's tradition of product embedding. This serves as a first example of *The Craftsman* departing during times of corporate financial instability from novel advertising strategies long used in the magazine.

While exceedingly ambitious do-it-yourselfers were entertained by the prospect of building their own houses in the homebuilders' series, Stickley nested his products in other articles aimed at handicrafters aspiring to lesser achievements. This is seen in the "From the Craftsman Workshops" series, originally titled "Home Training in Cabinet Work," which featured instructions and illustrations for the construction of Craftsman Workshop furniture through step-by-step directions. The series of do-it-yourself projects was launched just as Stickley was first experimenting with the

idea of home plan publication in the pages of *The Craftsman*, with the initial article appearing in the July 1903 issue.[23] While the first of the series included only the basic dimensions and characteristics of a Craftsman-style wardrobe and did not bear the series' name, *The Craftsman* quickly expanded its treatment of woodworking and other handicraft projects to include iconic Stickley designs and woodworking techniques.[24] Stickley held nothing back from readers in such articles, revealing what today might be closely guarded trade secrets, including the elaborate ammonia fuming process that produced the detailed grain lifts admired in his furniture.[25]

By October 1907 the cabinet work series had become a major component of the magazine and was transformed into a standardized series titled "From the Craftsman Workshops."[26] These articles explained, often in great detail, the process by which Stickley's signature products, such as the Morris reclining chair, could be built. In addition to woodworking projects that often featured furniture illustrations, dimensions, and even wood cut lists, "From the Craftsman Workshops" occasionally provided lessons in metalwork and embroidery.

Like the homebuilders' series, "From the Craftsman Workshops" and its earlier incarnations placed Stickley products in view without drawing attention to the fact such products were available in the Craftsman Workshops catalog. Yet even without labeling the projects as derived from actual products, Stickley could safely assume that many, if not most, of his readers would recognize the projects as being of his own design. Advertisements for Craftsman Workshops products were frequently found in *The Craftsman*'s front and back matter, and many of those projects included in the do-it-yourself series were those Stickley and his company were best known for.

It is doubtful Stickley provided his designs as lessons altruistically, especially given the quiet inclusion of Craftsman Workshops products in homebuilders' series illustrations and photographs. Instead, it seems Stickley used "From the Craftsman Workshops" as another opportunity to nest products available in furniture stores across the nation within otherwise advertising-free content. While not as complex as the web of product placement utilized in the homebuilders' series, Stickley's strategy in his woodworking lessons allowed *The Craftsman* to market Craftsman furnishings within the magazine, itself a product, providing advertising at no additional cost. It might be argued that, in printing detailed instructions for the replication of Craftsman furniture and techniques, Stickley was unselfishly promoting the Arts and Crafts movement. While Stickley may have seen in his actions some degree of charity, there is little doubt the do-it-yourself series stimulated interest in Craftsman designs. By spreading Craftsman techniques and designs to readers and encouraging woodworkers to duplicate his work at only the cost of materials, Stickley could safely assume more potential customers would come in contact with his furniture designs in the homes of handy friends and family members. Many of those people would rather purchase such furniture than cut and assemble it themselves. Thus, the use of Craftsman Workshop designs in the do-it-yourself series found in *The Craftsman* served not only to increase the visibility of Stickley's products in *The Craftsman* but in the physical world as well.

In both Stickley's homebuilders' and do-it-yourself series, the reader sees the successful implementation of product nesting to increase the visibility of certain Craftsman wares within the context of other products. Yet not all of Stickley's creative product placement strategies were so successful; indeed, a select few can be recognized as contributing directly to the demise of the

Craftsman empire. The greatest example of such an attempt, Stickley's Craftsman Building, damaged the financial standing both of the man himself and his company.[27] However, the advertising creativity exemplified in the campaign is worth study, proving valuable to those seeking information on the potential dangers and merits of such product nesting strategies.

The building failure, perhaps the greatest business misstep of Stickley's professional life, was the result of an ambitious project first presented in the May 1913 edition of "Als Ik Kan."[28] In that column, Stickley proudly announced the acquisition of the twelve-story Craftsman Building, the new headquarters of Craftsman Workshops.[29] Stickley himself recognized the bold nature of such a business move, although he was careful in his writings to counter any potential reservations readers might have about the financially perilous aspects of taking over a skyscraper in Midtown Manhattan:

> It sounds like a large undertaking, in New York, to fill the space of a building running up twelve stories, extending from an entrance on 38th St., just off of Fifth Ave., to an entrance on 39 St., equally near the main artery of New York—a building so tall that it looks out over the city, to the rivers beyond and the harbor, and with so much space that we can not only show our furniture and our house fittings and all the accompanying beautiful things that go with them, but that we shall be able to install draughting rooms for the designing of Craftsman houses, editorial rooms for *The Craftsman* Magazine, circulation and advertising departments, as well as various harmonious enterprises that are closely allied with Craftsman achievement.[30]

The product nesting strategies utilized in articles advertising the Craftsman Building, while sharing some similarity to those used in the homebuilders' and do-it-yourself series of the magazine, were often of a distinctly different character. Many articles pertaining to the building featured photographs including Stickley furniture, as did the homebuilders' series, and as the subject of the articles was the building rather than the furniture, parallels to the earlier series can be drawn. However, the execution of the product nesting strategy was entirely different between the two series. In home plans, the nesting of Stickley furniture was innovative in that such products were neither highly noticeable nor expected in house plan illustrations or photographs of real Craftsman homes. Readers might review one home plan, be drawn to a particular decorative motif in an illustration, and take a liking to the way a particular chair in the illustration fit within the motif, only to find the Craftsman stamp on the chair once at the local furniture store to make a purchase. Products in articles about the Craftsman Building did not carry out their product placement objectives in the same camouflaged manner. Quite the opposite: where illustrations and photographs in house plan articles fit furniture into comfortable, cozy homes, furniture in photos of the Craftsman Building was presented in chaotic showroom floor arrangements, as seen in figure 3.[31] Such products were nested within a configuration of other products, but the nature and, it seems, efficacy of such nesting was significantly different from that of other series in *The Craftsman*.

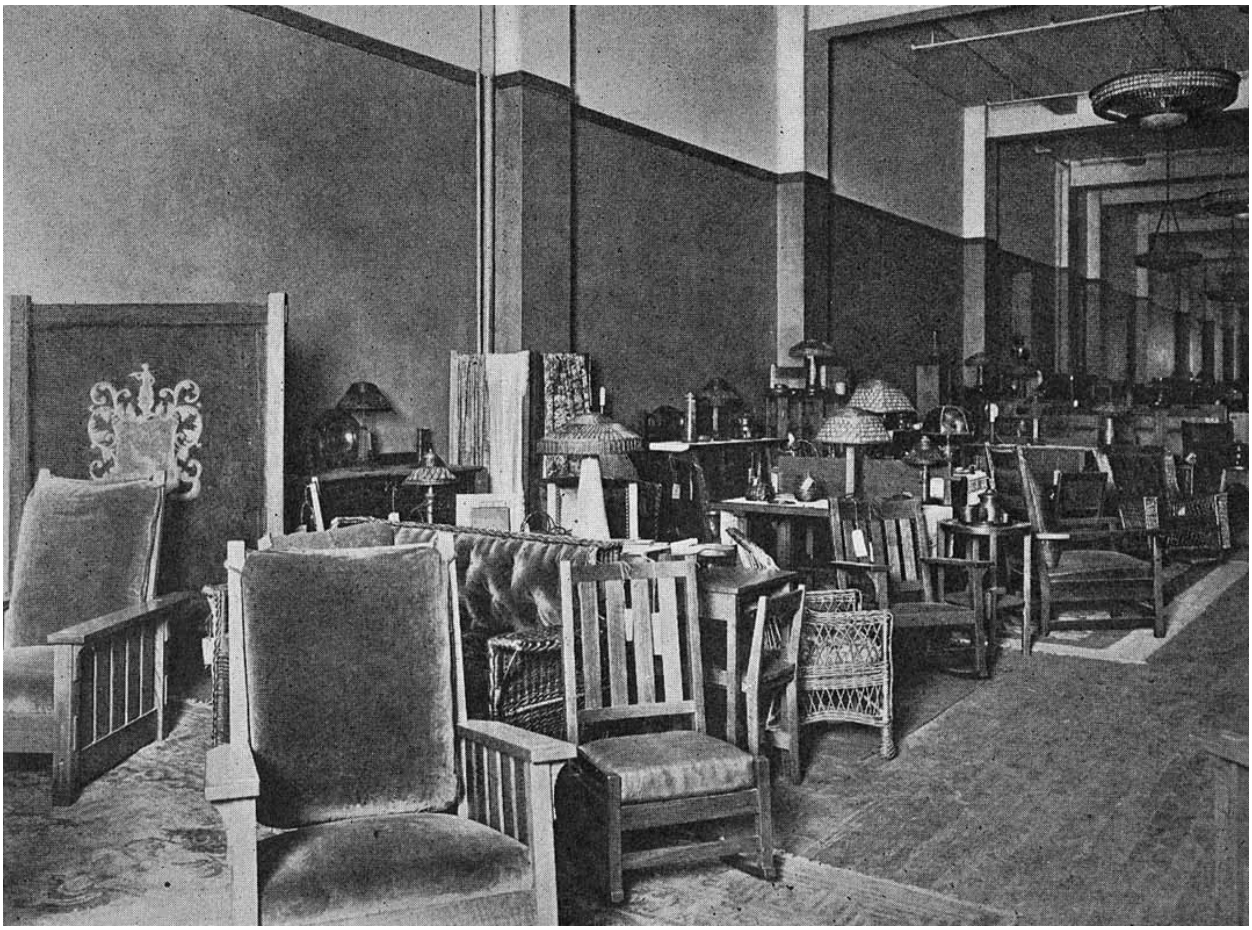

Figure 3. A photograph of a Craftsman Building showroom floor. By 1913, the nested quality of Stickley furnishings had degraded, with products featured in cluttered showrooms rather than quaint Craftsman living rooms. Image in public domain, accessed from University of Wisconsin-Madison digital collections, http://digicoll.library.wisc.edu/cgi-bin/DLDecArts/DLDecArts-idx?type=turn&id=DLDecArts.hdv25n03&entity=DLDecArts.hdv25n03.p0077&isize=XL.

Despite a flood of articles advertising bureaus, exhibits, and even restaurants at the location, the Craftsman Building was a major failure and hastened Stickley's two-year decent into bankruptcy.[32] The botched building venture was accompanied by a distinct shift in the dominant advertising strategies visible in *The Craftsman*; notably, a move away from quietly nested product placement towards obvious advertorials. By April 1914, pieces that began as informative articles and, after a page jump, became heavy-handed advertisements for Craftsman products sold in the Craftsman Building had become commonplace.[33] As Stickley's 1915 bankruptcy neared, such articles were replaced with unabashed advertorials that promoted, above other products, the attractions of the Craftsman Building as well as Stickley's ill-fated Chromewald furniture line, a product that not only stylistically conflicted with the simplicity and angularity of Arts and Crafts furnishing but that failed to gain the attention of the consumer.[34]

In the Craftsman Building series then, the reader again witnesses *The Craftsman* abandoning product nesting techniques in times of financial turbulence, as it did in the previous example of do-

it-yourself building plans. It is unclear whether the desertion of Stickley's innovative marketing strategies in *The Craftsman* directly related to the demise of the company. It may be that Stickley discontinued the use of subtle product nesting in favor of advertorials as a last-ditch effort to regain the attention of a dwindling consumer base. It may also be that the transition from nested product to advertorial marketing annoyed or angered readers of *The Craftsman*, further deteriorating Stickley's bottom line. The discontinuation of product nesting coincided with Craftsman Workshops' slide into bankruptcy. It would be premature to argue a correlation exists between the two based on this evidence alone. Further research into the matter could help establish a connection between the two events, informing other studies of product nesting, advertising, and early twentieth century magazines.

Branding in *The Craftsman*

The word "craftsman" lends itself to a unique form of branding that simultaneously extends Stickley's brand to represent ideas beyond his own products while guiding the development and maintenance of his products and ideology, as a result of its semiological characteristics. "Craftsman" carries strong meaning as a noun, representing an older, better way of doing things. In the case of *The Craftsman* magazine, however, "craftsman" transcends the individual to represent both those abstractions connected to traditional concepts of the craftsman and those brought about by the content of the magazine, such as homebuilding and architecture, textiles, literature, politics, and so on. Furthermore, craftsmanship is a characteristic that can be applied to most things or individuals that represent a high level of quality. The intricate detail of a handmade leather-bound book, for example, could easily be identified as representing a high level of craftsmanship, while a glossy, machine-manufactured book could not. This dimension of craftsmanship can be extended to encompass skills beyond those traditionally considered under its definition; Mahatma Gandhi can be labeled a craftsman of peace or Bob Dylan a craftsman of the guitar. As such, the Craftsman brand becomes versatile, far more so than most brands of its age. It simultaneously represents future and past, carrying a multitude of positive connotations from past ages while remaining completely malleable. New products, as long as they are carefully crafted and of high quality, can be craftsmanly.

That we today have "craftsman" styles of houses, metal fixtures, and furniture is no coincidence, as may be the case for other artistic styles such as mission or even Arts and Crafts. It is the result of extensive advertising on the part of Stickley to associate his brand with such a style and to nest his products within the concept of craftsmanship on multiple levels: in regard to their quality, the magazine in which such products appeared, the building in which they were sold, the company which manufactured them, and so on. In choosing the name for his company, Stickley effectively gained the effect of a two-hundred-year-old brand with an untarnished reputation for excellence but with such flexibility that several lines of products, including a magazine, showroom furniture, and even a farm, could sensibly carry the name.

Similar marketing techniques complemented Craftsman Workshops' branding strategy. One such practice bolstered the brand through the involuntary sponsorship of Stickley products by Arts and Crafts pioneers and legendary American leaders. In several articles appearing in *The Craftsman* throughout its fifteen years of publication, the label "craftsman" was used to associate individuals as widely varied as Scottish artist Charles Rennie Mackintosh and President Abraham Lincoln to

Stickley's brand. The practice began on the second page of the first issue of *The Craftsman* in the reproduction of a comment made by a coworker of William Morris, the latter widely recognized as the founder of the Arts and Crafts movement in England. The comment read: "Morris was a splendid leader, a great poet, artist and craftsman, a still greater man, and, oh ! such a friend to know and love."[35] Additional comments were made in the issue's foreword to tie the ideals of Morris to the ideology of the young United Crafts company.

An even stronger example of *The Craftsman's* efforts to coopt unwitting sponsors is the case of Abraham Lincoln, who was summoned repeatedly in the magazine's issues. In July 1905, for example, an article titled "Abraham Lincoln as a Craftsman in Words" attempted to bring the late president's ability to use words "to express thought, clearly and convincingly" alongside Craftsman Workshops' goals of simplicity, individuality, and dignity of effect.[36] Figures significant to readers of *The Craftsman* for their relevance to the Arts and Crafts movement who were labeled specifically as craftsmen included jewelry and glass designer René Lalique and painter and glass artist John LaFarge.[37] Numerous others were drawn close to Stickley through the presentation of their ideals as in line with those of Craftsman Workshops, although *The Craftsman* stopped short of branding them specifically as craftsmen.

Through its practice of anchoring Stickley's unique interpretation of the Arts and Crafts movement to European artists and larger-than-life American icons, *The Craftsman* elevated Craftsman Workshops, the company's products, and Stickley himself. While an artist in his own right, Stickley was not recognized as a revolutionary artistic figure. He was a businessman, modifying popular Arts and Crafts designs to satisfy the demands of an American audience. By mooring himself to such significant figures, Stickley effectively ratcheted himself upwards, pulling his company in line with legendary guilds and companies such as Morris, Marshall, Faulkner & Co. and Ashbee's Guild and School of Handicraft. This branding technique was developed and implemented in an age in which fictional characters like Aunt Jemima or the Delaware, Lackawanna and Western Railroad's Phoebe Snow were being created to represent brands in advertising. *The Craftsman*, rather than inventing personages thought emblematic of the Arts and Crafts movement, turned to real-life artisans and authorities, a tactic enabled by the branding strategy characteristic of the Craftsman label. It is worth noting that *The Craftsman* was free to make such associations without fear of appearing disingenuous. For example, it makes sense denotatively to refer to Lincoln as a "craftsman" of words: his rhetorical dexterity was well known in Stickley's time as it is today. Editorially, it makes sense to characterize such skill as "craftsman" to make the man relevant to a magazine called *The Craftsman*. Thus, brand-related associations between Lincoln and Craftsman Workshops could be made without fear of accusations of distasteful writing.

The use of political figures such as Lincoln appears, at first glance, beyond the realm of the practical extension of a furniture company's brand. Stickley, however, saw the Craftsman label as encompassing traits of a wide variety and not limited to those related to artistic endeavors. Early issues of *The Craftsman* established an ideological component to the Craftsman Workshop brand. Recognizing the psychological appeal of hand-crafted goods in a time of increasing mechanization in industry, the magazine stressed the socialistic dimensions of craftsman-style production methods, putting the brand forth as in support of "art created by the people for the people: simple, sincere and

structural; an art wherein the designer and the craftsman shall be one and the same individual, creating for his own pleasure and unassailed by commercialism."[38]

Stickley had a particularly prominent voice when it came to weighing in on political matters in *The Craftsman*, especially in the publication's middle years. He took on a variety of issues, rallying for women's rights outside the home, supporting the role of governments in bolstering traditional arts, and criticizing what he perceived to be a growing sentiment of greed among emerging industries such as railroads, all topics addressed in separate editorials in 1907.[39]

So forceful was Stickley and his *Craftsman* in expressing political beliefs that the magazine was driven to defend its inclusion of political commentary in response to a letter published in the April 1907.[40] That letter, which criticized the inclusion of such material and called for a stronger focus on house plans and architecture, was rebuked in a response nearly ten times longer than the letter itself, the core of which reflected the all-inclusive nature of the Craftsman brand:

> The part of this magazine that is devoted to architecture is of no more significance to us than any other part,—and of no less. We are just as much interested in sociology, in politics, in education, in healthy outdoor living, in revolutions and in dress reform. All are parts of the general business of life, and all the significance that attaches to anything that we or others have to say about any or all of them lies in the honesty and directness of our point of view concerning them.[41]

As reflected in *The Craftsman*, Stickley did not see his brand as limited to furniture, textiles, house plans, magazines, or any other single product. Instead, he actively curated a multifaceted brand comprised not only of products but also of supporting ideas and individuals. The political dimension of this strategy does not appear to have proven altogether successful: after a prolific period from 1907 to 1911, Stickley's politically charged editorial offerings diminished significantly. He continued to appear occasionally to voice his opinion on issues closest to his personal interests, most notably the value of homebuilding, but such issues in his column typically involved the nested advertising of Craftsman products, such as home plans, or were related to side projects.[42]

In addition to promoting his national politics, Stickley devoted a sizeable portion of *The Craftsman* to the broadcasting of the Craftsman brand ideology. While this was done through several projects in the magazine and was particularly prevalent during *The Craftsman*'s early years, there is perhaps no more striking example of the promotion of Stickley's corporate ideology than the case of Craftsman Farms.

By 1908, "Als Ik Kan," which began in July 1905 as an unsigned editorial section with no clear direction, had developed into Stickley's monthly soap box.[43] Columns ranged in topic from woodworking to politics to education, becoming fixated, at times, on those issues apparently foremost in Stickley's mind. It was in 1908 that he began addressing the topics of farming and education in significant detail, two concepts that, over the course of the year, melded into one unified idea: that of Craftsman Farms.[44] As presented in *The Craftsman*, the proposed undertaking was an exceptionally noble one based around Stickley's belief that young American men aged fourteen to twenty years were not receiving proper instruction to "develop independence of thought and creative initiative."[45] To fill this need, *The Craftsman* outlined the plans for a farm school to be

constructed on property purchased by Stickley near Morris Plains, New Jersey, a location featuring idyllic woods alongside fertile farming ground.[46] After a mention in 1908, additional details regarding the layout of the farm were presented in a two-part unsigned narrative in 1910 that set an anonymous Host of Craftsman Farms in conversation with an unnamed Traveler, a dialogue seemingly more focused on praising the efforts of Host, a man of "characteristic modesty," than providing clear plans for the farm.[47]

By 1911, Stickley had come as close to realizing Craftsman Farms as he ever would. A November article toured a log house built at the site, lauding its exemplification of Craftsman ideals of construction and looking ahead to the future of the farms.[48] In reality, the log home, originally designed as a clubhouse for Craftsman Farms, served as the primary residence for Stickley, his wife, and his children beginning in July 1910.[49] The home Stickley had planned to build for his family in 1908 never came to be, nor did any major part of the planned school.

While Craftsman Farms, in its ambitiously envisioned form, was a failure, the writings on the project did much to promote Stickley's corporate ideology. In devoting so much time to discussing the matter in *The Craftsman*, Stickley impressed upon readers the depth of the Craftsman brand, which reached beyond furnishings and architecture into the home and school. It made the brand one interested in public education; had the farm been successful, Craftsman Workshops would likely have been associated with educational reform and innovation for years to come. In the same vein, the Craftsman Farms project also strengthened Stickley as a component of the larger brand to such a degree he nearly became a character or spokesman of the brand rather than its cultivator.[50] Stickley as the gracious, modest, and wise Host of the "Visit to Craftsman Farms" series was the ideal craftsman—balanced in body and mind, slow to speak but brimming with insight, a family man, and a supporter of the arts and educational efforts. This image was further enhanced in a later article focused solely on the educational plans for Craftsman Farms printed in November 1912, an article that predicted the school would open only seven months later.[51] While the piece certainly overestimated Stickley's ability to bring his dreams to fruition, it could not have done more to elevate his character. "This is my Garden of Eden," the article read. "This is the realization of the dreams that I had when I worked as a lad. It is because my own dreams have come true that I want other boys to dream out their own good future here for themselves."

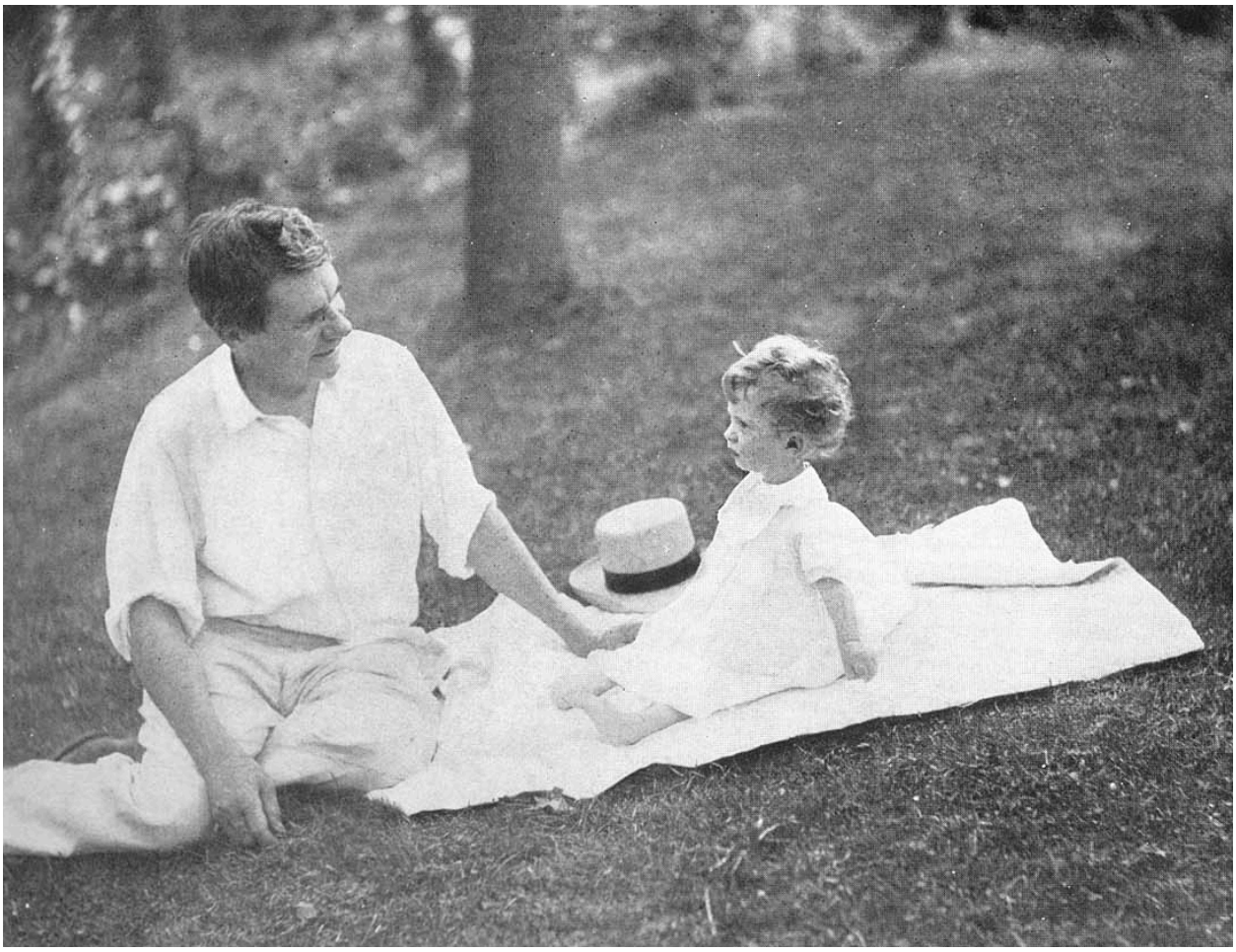

Figure 4. A photograph of Stickley and his first granddaughter from the article "Craftsman Farms: Its Development and Future." Craftsman Farms articles devoted significant space to promoting the Craftsman brand ideology through Stickley. Image in public domain, accessed from University of Wisconsin-Madison digital collections, http://digicoll.library.wisc.edu/cgi-bin/DLDecArts/DLDecArts-idx?type=turn&id=DLDecArts.hdv25n01&entity=DLDecArts.hdv25n01.p0015&isize=XL.

Conclusion

The preceding analysis drew from *The Craftsman* evidence of innovative advertising strategies previously overlooked by historical media research. First, it called attention to the unique product-nesting techniques used by Stickley to quietly bring Craftsman products into articles otherwise free of advertisements. This was exemplified in both the homebuilders' series, which featured Craftsman furniture in illustrations and photographs of Stickley's house design—plans which themselves became products as they grew in popularity—and the do-it-yourself series, which utilized not only the pages of *The Craftsman* to promote Craftsman furniture but the workshops of home woodworkers who showed their hand-built projects to prospective Craftsman customers. It also contrasted this nested-product technique with the failed use of advertorials to promote Stickley's Craftsman Building, a venture that contributed significantly to the collapse of Craftsman

Workshops, and identified a relationship between the decrease in utilization of product-nesting practices and subsequent increase in advertorial use with the decline of the company. Second, the analysis reviewed the unique branding strategy inherent to the Craftsman label. This included an explanation of the semilogically significant impact of the use of the term craftsman as a brand for Stickley's products. It also included a review of *The Craftsman*'s practice of elevating the Craftsman brand through association with such figures as William Morris and Abraham Lincoln, individuals who would have had little if any relation to the Craftsman brand had it not been for the concerted efforts of the magazine. Finally, the investigation reviewed the development of the ideology and politics of the Craftsman brand through the editorials of Stickley and the Craftsman Farms series, articles which made Stickley himself a representation of the craftsman ideal.

This investigation calls to the attention of researchers the development and execution of imaginative advertising techniques in *The Craftsman*, indicating the use of sophisticated marketing strategies previously unobserved in other publications of the era. The presence of both product nesting and branding in the intertwined manner observed in *The Craftsman* is novel and, to at least some degree, given the magazine's growth and development throughout the life of Craftsman Workshops, successful. Further, Stickley's early implementation of product placement tactics through his product nesting shows clearly that such techniques, now common, have their origins no later than the first decade of the twentieth century. Comparable advertising strategies should be sought out in publications similar to *The Craftsman* to better understand their implementation and success and to further explore their origins.

This investigation did not seek to supplement findings within *The Craftsman* with company documents.[52] Doing so would have been beyond scope of this project, which sought to analyze both the overt and latent content within the magazine itself. However, comparing the utilization of particular article series within *The Craftsman* with financial statements and meeting notes could more clearly show the success or failure of particular marketing strategies used in the magazine. Such information could also be used to test the strength of any correlation between the decline in usage of product-nesting articles, increase in advertorial publication, and subsequent failure of Craftsman Workshops. The findings of such research could inform both media historians and those using product-nesting and branding practices today.

Finally, complementary research might be conducted to investigate the use of those marketing practices utilized in *The Craftsman* by modern companies. Companies such as Ikea and Thos. Moser on their websites and in catalogs currently stage furniture sets for catalog photographs in a manner not unlike the illustrations of the homebuilders' series. Although one would expect the characteristics of modern advertisements to be significantly different, the potential for the identification in more recent publications of historical marketing methods, such as those seen in *The Craftsman*, exists. At a minimum, such research would expand our contextual understanding of magazines, catalogs, and other branded company products being produced today and help us understand how practices such as product placement moved out from consumer magazines like *The Craftsman* and into the mainstream.

Notes

[1] "Foreward," *The Craftsman*, October 1901, i-ii.

[2] Leslie Greene Bowman, *American Arts & Crafts: Virtue in Design* (Boston: Bullfinch Press, 1990).

[3] Isabelle Anscombe and Charlotte Gere, *Arts & Crafts in Britain and America* (New York: Rizzoli International Publications, 1978).

[4] Mary Ann Smith, *Gustav Stickley: The Craftsman* (Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press, 1983).

[5] Ibid.

[6] Ibid.

[7] Kevin W. Tucker, *Gustav Stickley and the American Arts & Crafts Movement* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2010).

[8] Circulation numbers reported in *N. W. Ayer and Son's American Newspaper Annual* ranged from a low of 14,500 in 1912 to 22,500 in 1915, the last year *The Craftsman* was included. A circulation of 16,000 was listed for the magazine the first year it appeared in *Ayer and Son's*, 1907.

[9] Smith, *Gustav Stickley: The Craftsman.*

[10] Joseph Cunningham, "Irene Sargent and the Craftsman Ideology," in *Gustav Stickley and the American Arts & Crafts Movement*, ed. Kevin W. Tucker (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2010).

[11] Eva A. van Reijmersdal, Peter C. Neijens, and Edith G. Smit, "Customer Magazines: Effects of Commerciality on Readers' Reactions," *Journal of Current Issues and Research in Advertising* 32, no. 1 (Spring 2010): 59; Stephanie Thompson and Jack Neff, "'Covering All the Bases': Kraft Expands Circ for 'Food & Family'," *Advertising Age* 73, no. 45 (November 11, 2002): 41.

[12] Jay Newell, Charles T. Salmon, and Susan Chang, "The Hidden History of Product Placement," *Journal of Broadcasting and Electronic Media* (December 2006): 576.

[13] Ibid., 579.

[14] Harvey Ellis, "A Craftsman House Design," *The Craftsman*, July 1903, 269–277. Steven H. Fairchild, "The Small Country House," *The Craftsman*, June 1902, 152–154. *The Craftsman*. "The Craftsman House." May 1903, 84–92.

[15] "The Craftsman House," *The Craftsman,* May 1903, 84-92; Harvey Ellis, "A Craftsman House Design," *The Craftsman*, July 1903, 269-77. The first article, for which no author was cited, was a joint project between Stickley and architect E. G. W. Dietrich.

[16] "A Craftsman House: Series of 1904, Number One," *The Craftsman,* January 1904, 398-405.

[17] According to the article, all Craftsman series homes could be built for $2,000 to $15,000.

[18] "Announcement of the Homebuilders' Club," *The Craftsman,* February 1904, 524.

[19] "How the Home-Builders' Club is to be Enlarged Into a National Organization," *The Craftsman,* March 1909, 747-48.

[20] Gustav Stickley, *Craftsman Homes* (New York: Craftsman Publishing Company, 1909).

[21] For example, see: "Mr. R. M. Bond's House in Florida," *The Craftsman,* October 1911, 78-84.

[22] "Four Popular Craftsman Homes," *The Craftsman,* May 1915, 225-28.

[23] "A Man's Dressing Cabinet," *The Craftsman,* July 1903, 267-68.

[24] The January 1904 issue, for example, featured several simple designs identical to products found in the 1904 Craftsman Catalog D, including Stickley's trademark tabouret table, identified as items 601-603 in the catalog.

[25] "Home Training in Cabinet Work: Practical Talks on Structural Wood Working: Seventh of the Series," *The Craftsman,* October 1905, 123-32.

[26] "Lessons in Practical Cabinet Work," *The Craftsman,* October 1907, 90-93.

[27] Smith, *Gustav Stickley: The Craftsman,* 157.

[28] Als Ik Kan translates from Dutch to English as "If I can." It was used in Craftsman Workshops' trademark and was a motto in Arts and Crafts circles.

[29] Gustav Stickley, "The Craftsman's Birthday Party," *The Craftsman*, May 1913, 252-54.

[30] Ibid., 252.

[31] "Furnishing the Home: The Opportunity Afforded in the New Craftsman Building," *The Craftsman,* December 1913, 299-303.

[32] Smith, *Gustav Stickley: The Craftsman,* 154.

[33] "An Education in Home-Building: The Need and the Opportunity of Studying This Art in America," *The Craftsman*, April 1914, 76-78, 107-13.

[34] "A New Type of Furniture: Elegant in Design and Rich in Color," *The Craftsman*, July 1916, 408-11. Chromewald differed from traditional Stickley products in its use of brightly colored finishes rather than naturally colored stains and thinner, stylized legs.

[35] Irene Sargent, "William Morris: Some Thoughts Upon His Life, Art and Influence," *The Craftsman*, October 1901, 2.

[36] "Abraham Lincoln as a Craftsman in Words," *The Craftsman*, July 1905, 482-89.

[37] Irene Sargent, "René Lalique: His Rank Among Contemporary Artists," *The Craftsman*, November 1902, 65-73; "John La Farge, the Craftsman," *The Craftsman*, January 1911, 330-36.

[38] "Style and its Requisites," *The Craftsman*, October 1901, vii.

[39] Gustav Stickley, "The Modern Home and the Domestic Problem," *The Craftsman*, January 1907, 452-57; Gustav Stickley, "Social Unrest: A Condition Brought About by Separating the People Into Two Factions, Capital and Labor," *The Craftsman*, November 1907, 183-91; Gustav Stickley, "The National Spirit of Speculation: Are Not Our Financial and Corporate Morals Merely the Outgrowth of the Moral Sense of the American People?" *The Craftsman*, December 1907, 310-16.

[40] "Als Ik Kan," *The Craftsman*, April 1907, 110-13.

[41] Ibid., 112-13.

[42] For example: Gustav Stickley, "Home-Building from an Individual, Practical Standpoint," *The Craftsman*, November 2012, 183-87.

[43] "Als Ik Kan," *The Craftsman*, July 1905, 544.

[44] Early development of Craftsman Farms can be seen in "Als Ik Kan" columns and other editorial work by Stickley, most notably in: "Als Ik Kan," *The Craftsman*, April 1908, 115-18; "Als Ik Kan," *The Craftsman*, July 1908, 451-52; Gustav Stickley, "Plans of the Craftsman for Next Year," *The Craftsman*, October 1908, 113-15.

[45] "A Visit to Craftsman Farms: The Study of an Educational Ideal," *The Craftsman*, September 1910, 638-46.

[46] "The Craftsman's House: A Practical Application of All the Theories of Home Buildings Advocated in This Magazine," *The Craftsman*, October 1908, 78-93.

[47] "A Visit to Craftsman Farms: The Study of an Educational Ideal," *The Craftsman*, September 1910, 638-46; "A Country Home for the Business Man: A Second Visit to Craftsman Farms," *The Craftsman*, October 1910, 55-62. At no point is either Stickley or the traveler named in the context of the articles.

[48] Natalie Curtis, "The New Log House at Craftsman Farms: An Architectural Development of the Log Cabin," *The Craftsman*, November 1911, 196-203.

[49] Smith, *Gustav Stickley: The Craftsman,* 111.

[50] "A Visit to Craftsman Farms: The Study of an Educational Ideal," *The Craftsman*, September 1910, 638-46.

[51]Raymond Riordon, "A Visit to Craftsman Farms: The Impression it Made and the Result: The Gustav Stickley School for Citizenship," *The Craftsman*, November 1912, 151-64.

[52] Portions of Stickley's business papers have been archived at the Henry Francis Dupont Winterthur Museum in Winterthur, Delaware.