

CRAFTY ADS:  
CORPORATE BRANDING AND PRODUCT NESTING IN THE ARTS AND CRAFTS  
MAGAZINE *THE CRAFTSMAN*

As the nineteenth century came to a close, many Americans and furniture manufacturers had become disenchanted with the ornate Victorian bravura which had characterized most household chairs, tables, cabinets, and textiles. Inspired by the ideologically-driven style of European Arts and Crafts designers like 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 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.”<sup>1</sup> 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, it is only the very last with which the present

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<sup>1</sup> *The Craftsman*. “Foreword.” October 1901: i-ii. <http://bit.ly/YDIUdJ>.

study concerns itself. It is the claim of this paper 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 communication 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.<sup>2</sup> 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.<sup>3</sup> 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.<sup>4</sup> Yet after years of mimicking the ornate, embellished style prevalent among furniture producers in the late 19<sup>th</sup> 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

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<sup>2</sup> Leslie Greene Bowman. *American Arts & Crafts: Virtue in Design*, (Boston: Bullfinch Press, 1990).

<sup>3</sup> Isabelle Anscombe and Charlotte Gere. *Arts and Crafts in Britain and America* (New York: Rizzoli International Publications, 1978).

<sup>4</sup> Mary Ann Smith. *Gustav Stickley: The Craftsman*, (Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press, 1983).

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.<sup>5</sup>

Stickley went further than most in promoting the movement, but always ensured doing so 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.<sup>6</sup> 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 1900, soon after reorganizing his company under the United Crafts banner, that Stickley published the first issue of *The Craftsman*. A magazine 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.<sup>7</sup> Far from a lackluster side project, *The Craftsman* was an integral part of Stickley's enterprise. Issues of the magazine extolled the values of the company and its owner – utility, simplicity, and beauty – throughout the life of the Craftsman Workshops. It was not until December 1916, after the collapse of Stickley's furniture

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<sup>5</sup> Ibid.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid.

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

enterprise the year proceeding, that *The Craftsman* ceased publication, merging with *Art World*, a competing magazine, in January 1917.<sup>8</sup>

Despite the pivotal role of *The Craftsman* in directing 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.<sup>9</sup> 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*.

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* 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

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<sup>8</sup> Smith, *Gustav Stickley: The Craftsman*.

<sup>9</sup> 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).

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."<sup>10</sup> In the dozen or so issues that followed, *The Craftsman*, a magazine originally devoted to the idolization of the founders of the Arts and Crafts movement and the tenants 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.<sup>11</sup> The pieces featured a mixture of 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

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<sup>10</sup>H. Fairchild Steven. "The Small Country House." *The Craftsman*, June 1902: 152-154. <http://bit.ly/YrsL8S>.

<sup>11</sup>*The Craftsman*. "The Craftsman House." May 1903: 84-92. <http://bit.ly/18QVg1n>; Harvey Ellis. "A Craftsman House Design." *The Craftsman*, July 1903: 269-277. <http://bit.ly/1084Pbf>. The first article, for which no author was cited, was a joint project between Stickley and architect E. G. W. Dietrich.

in a long series of Craftsman home plans appeared under the auspices of the Homebuilders' Club.<sup>12</sup> Each month, the article explained, a new Craftsman home would be featured, designed to be affordable and simple in design and the plans for which could be obtained by club members without fee.<sup>13</sup> 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.<sup>14</sup>

From the January 1904 issue into 1907, the home series was a staple in *The Craftsman*,

Figure 1. An illustration from the May 1903 issue of *The Craftsman*.



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.

<sup>12</sup> *The Craftsman*. "A Craftsman House: Series of 1904, Number One." January 1904: 398-405. <http://bit.ly/12aL6rt>.

<sup>13</sup> According to the article, all Craftsman series homes could be built for \$2,000 to \$15,000.

<sup>14</sup> *The Craftsman*. "Announcement of the Homebuilders' Club." February 1904: 524. <http://bit.ly/ZNryd8>.

eventually becoming somewhat formulaic in its composition; most articles began with a section of copy explaining the design followed by detailed illustrations of the featured 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.<sup>15</sup> 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*.<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>15</sup> *The Craftsman*. "How the Home-Builders' Club is to be Enlarged Into a National Organization." March 1909: 747-748. <http://bit.ly/10mqQVp>.

<sup>16</sup> Gustav Stickley. *Craftsman Homes*, (New York: Craftsman Publishing Company, 1909).



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.<sup>17</sup> Such examples, which had been the focus of occasional articles in previous years, became the principal means of showcasing Craftsman Workshop furniture in the magazine and were given a dedicated section, titled "Among the Craftsmen," in each issue. New plans once again appeared

Figure 2. Photograph from the October 1911 issue of *The Craftsman*.



Figure 2. Photograph of a Craftsman-design home built by readers of *The Craftsman*. Note the inclusion of Craftsman furniture such as the large table and reclining Morris-style chair.

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<sup>17</sup> For example, see: *The Craftsman*. "Mr. R. M. Bond's House in Florida." October 1911: 78-84. <http://bit.ly/10gN0Tn>.

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 1904-1907, 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. His house plans 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).

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.<sup>18</sup> 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,

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<sup>18</sup> *The Craftsman*. "Four Popular Craftsman Homes." May 1915: 225-228. <http://bit.ly/YsJA3e>.

departed from Stickley's tradition of product embedding. This serves as a first example of *The Craftsman* departing from novel and apparently successful advertising strategies during times of corporate financial instability.

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. Such can be seen in the "From the Craftsman Workshops" series, originally titled "Home Training in Cabinet Work," which featured details 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.<sup>19</sup> 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.<sup>20</sup> 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 highly-detailed grain lifts admired in his furniture.<sup>21</sup>

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<sup>19</sup> *The Craftsman*. "A Man's Dressing Cabinet." July 1903: 267-268. <http://bit.ly/18sexsp>.

<sup>20</sup> 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.

<sup>21</sup> *The Craftsman*. "Home Training in Cabinet Work: Practical Talks on Structural Wood Working: Seventh of the Series." October 1905: 123-132. <http://bit.ly/17KiXd4>.

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.”<sup>22</sup> 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 many if not most of his readers would recognize the projects as 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 perhaps 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

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<sup>22</sup> *The Craftsman*. “Lessons in Practical Cabinet Work.” October 1907: 90-93.  
<http://bit.ly/10EQE9v>.

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.<sup>23</sup> 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." In that column, Stickley proudly announced the acquisition of the 12-story Craftsman Building, the

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<sup>23</sup> Smith, *Gustav Stickley: The Craftsman*, 157.

new headquarters of Craftsman Workshops<sup>24</sup>. 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 38<sup>th</sup> 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 (“The Craftsman’s Birthday Party,” *The Craftsman*, 252).

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, 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

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<sup>24</sup> Gustav Stickley. “The Craftsman’s Birthday Party.” *The Craftsman*. May 1913: 252-254. <http://bit.ly/196dRXi>.

Craftsman homes. Readers might review one home plan, be drawn to a particular decorative motif in an illustration, and take a particular liking to the way a 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 Craftsman Building articles 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 Craftsman Building articles was presented in chaotic, showroom floor arrangements, as seen in

Figure 3. Photograph from the December 1913 issue of *The Craftsman*.

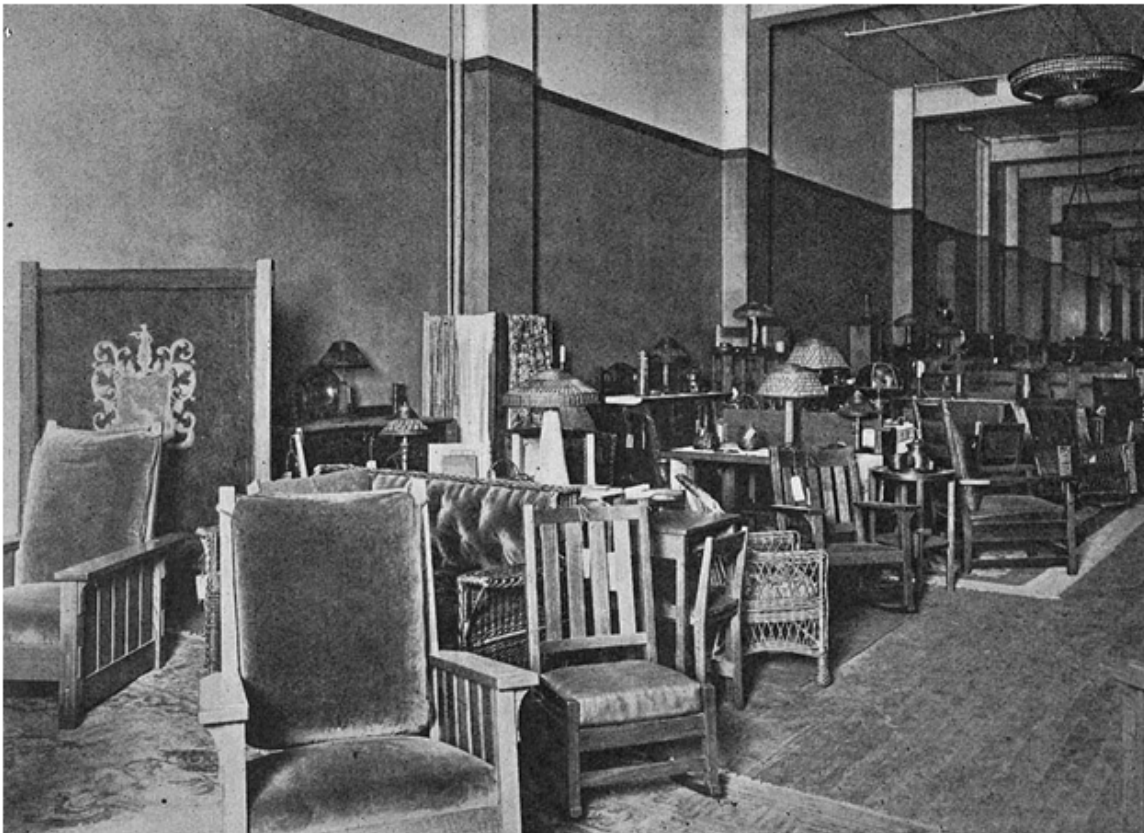


Figure 3. Photograph of a Craftsman Building showroom floor. By 1913, the nested quality of Stickley furnishings had degraded, with products featured in cluttered showrooms rather than quaint Craftsman living rooms.

figure 3.<sup>25</sup> It remains that 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*.

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 descent into bankruptcy.<sup>26</sup> 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.<sup>27</sup> 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.<sup>28</sup>

In the Craftsman Building series, then, the reader again witnesses *The Craftsman* abandoning product nesting techniques in times of financial turbulence. It is unclear whether the desertion of Stickley's innovative marketing strategies in *The Craftsman* was directly related to

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<sup>25</sup> *The Craftsman*. "Furnishing the Home: the Opportunity Afforded in the New Craftsman Building." December 1913: 299-303. <http://bit.ly/166CDKM>.

<sup>26</sup> Smith, *Gustav Stickley: The Craftsman*, 154.

<sup>27</sup> *The Craftsman*. "An Education in Home-Building: The Need and the Opportunity of Studying This Art in America." April 1914: 76-78, 107-113. <http://bit.ly/14hPWmY>.

<sup>28</sup> *The Craftsman*. "A New Type of Furniture: Elegant in Design and Rich in Color." July 1916: 408-411. <http://bit.ly/166INKO>.



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. Although further study must be conducted to test the strength of such suppositions, a correlation between the discontinuation of product nesting and the bankruptcy of Craftsman Workshops is quite clear.

### **Multi-Directional Branding in *The Craftsman***

The word "craftsman" itself lends itself to multi-directional branding, that is, the simultaneous extension of a brand to represent ideas beyond a company's own products and the development and maintenance of a company's products and ideology, as a result of its semiological characteristics. It carries strong meaning as a noun, representing an older, better way of doing things; in the words of Merriam-Webster Online, a craftsman is "one who creates or performs with skill or dexterity especially in the manual arts."<sup>29</sup> 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

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<sup>29</sup> Merriam-Webster.com. "Craftsman." <http://bit.ly/ZMAuMe>.

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 simple times long past while remaining completely malleable. New products, so long as they are carefully crafted and of a 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 regards 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 200-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.

Complementing the multi-directional branding strategy utilized by Craftsman Workshops was a related practice that 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 15-year publication, the label “craftsman” was used to associate individuals as widely varied as 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.”<sup>30</sup> 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 Workshop’s goals of simplicity, individuality and dignity of effect.<sup>31</sup> 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.<sup>32</sup> 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,

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<sup>30</sup> Irene Sargent. “William Morris: Some Thoughts Upon His Life, Art and Influence.” *The Craftsman*. October 1901: 2. <http://bit.ly/18xFevX>.

<sup>31</sup> *The Craftsman*. “Abraham Lincoln as a Craftsman in Words.” July 1905: 482-489. <http://bit.ly/YJhras>.

<sup>32</sup> Irene Sargent. “René Lalique: His Rank Among Contemporary Artists.” *The Craftsman*. November 1902: 65-73. <http://bit.ly/ZMkrhw>.; *The Craftsman*. “John La Farge, the Craftsman.” *The Craftsman*. January 1911: 330-336. <http://bit.ly/15RORGZ>.

pulling itself in line with legendary guilds and companies such as Morris, Marshall, Faulkner & Co. and Ashbee's Guild and School of Handicraft. This advertising 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 strategy enabled by the multi-directional 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 like 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."<sup>33</sup>

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<sup>33</sup> *The Craftsman*. "Style and its Requisites." October 1901: vii. <http://bit.ly/10f8GmU>.

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 supporting 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.<sup>34</sup> 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.<sup>35</sup> 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 (“Als Ik Kan,” *The Craftsman*, April 1907 112-113).

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<sup>34</sup> Gustav Stickley. “The Modern Home and the Domestic Problem.” *The Craftsman*. January 1907: 452-457. <http://bit.ly/10f9RTl>.; Gustav Stickley. “Social Unrest: A Condition Brought About by Separating the People Into Two Factions, Capital and Labor.” *The Craftsman*. November 1907: 183-191. <http://bit.ly/15S6sys>.; 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: 310-316. <http://bit.ly/196EA5S>.

<sup>35</sup> *The Craftsman*. “Als Ik Kan.” April 1907: 110-113. <http://bit.ly/12kAVze>.

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 typically involved the nested advertising of Craftsman products, such as home plans, or were related to side projects.<sup>36</sup>

In addition to promoting his national politics, Stickley also 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.<sup>37</sup> 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,

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<sup>36</sup> For example: Gustav Stickley. "Home-Building from an Individual, Practical Standpoint." *The Craftsman*. November 2012: 183-187. <http://bit.ly/15SaUNK>.

<sup>37</sup> *The Craftsman*. "Als Ik Kan." July 1905: 544. <http://bit.ly/10rg3Vc>.

melded into one unified idea: that of Craftsman Farms.<sup>38</sup> As presented in *The Craftsman*, the proposed undertaking was an exceptionally noble one, based around Stickley's belief that young American men aged 14 to 20 years were not receiving proper instruction to "develop independence of thought and creative initiative."<sup>39</sup> 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.<sup>40</sup> After mention in 1908, additional details regarding the layout of the farm were presented in a two-part unsigned narrative 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.<sup>41</sup>

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

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<sup>38</sup> Early development of Craftsman Farms can be seen in "Als Ik Kan" columns and other editorial work by Stickley, most notably in: *The Craftsman*. "Als Ik Kan." April 1908: 115-118. <http://bit.ly/13BedEN>; *The Craftsman*. "Als Ik Kan." July 1908: 451-452. <http://bit.ly/Yvh4Or>; Gustav Stickley, *The Craftsman*. "Plans of the Craftsman for the Next Year." October 1908: 113-115. <http://bit.ly/144MV9o>.

<sup>39</sup> *The Craftsman*. "A Visit to Craftsman Farms: The Study of an Educational Ideal." September 1910: 638-646. <http://bit.ly/10JP8D9>.

<sup>40</sup> *The Craftsman*. "The Craftsman's House: A Practical Application of All the Theories of Home Buildings Advocated in This Magazine." October 1908: 78-93. <http://bit.ly/12kjhM6>.

<sup>41</sup> *The Craftsman*. "A Visit to Craftsman Farms: The Study of an Educational Ideal." September 1910: 638-646.; *The Craftsman*. "A Country Home for the Business Man: A Second Visit to Craftsman Farms." October 1910: 55-62. <http://bit.ly/17PLVYQ>. At no point are either Stickley or the traveler named in the context of the articles.

ideals of construction and looking ahead to the future of the farms.<sup>42</sup> 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.<sup>43</sup> 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.<sup>44</sup> 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

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<sup>42</sup> Natalie Curtis. "The New Log House at Craftsman Farms: An Architectural Development of the Log Cabin." *The Craftsman*. November 1911: 196-203. <http://bit.ly/13lmgX2>.

<sup>43</sup> Smith, *Gustav Stickley: The Craftsman*, 111.

<sup>44</sup> *The Craftsman*. "A Visit to Craftsman Farms: The Study of an Educational Ideal." September 1910: 638-646.



seven months later.<sup>45</sup> 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. Photograph of Gustav Stickley from the October 1913 issue of *The Craftsman*.

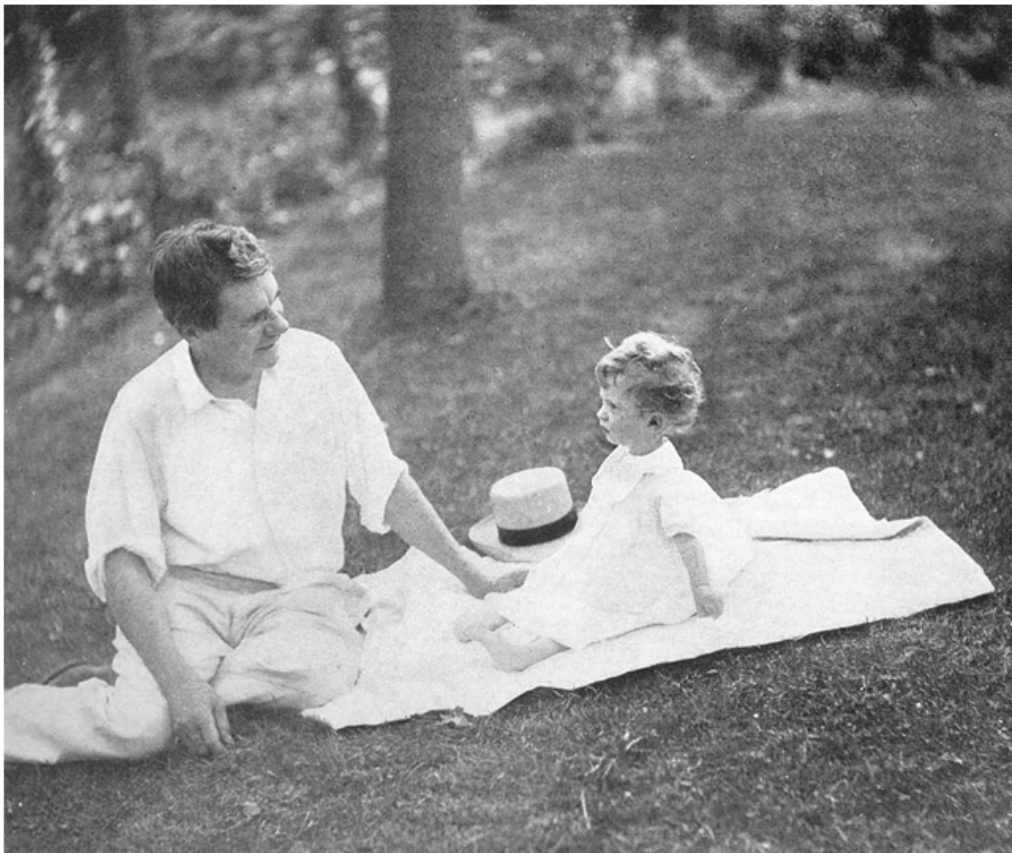


Figure 4. A photograph of Stickley and his first granddaughter from the article "Craftsman Farms: Its Development and Future." Craftsman Farms articles devoted significant space to promoting the Craftsman brand ideology through Stickley.

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<sup>45</sup>Raymond Riordon. "A Visit to Craftsman Farms: the Impression it Made and the Result: The Gustav Stickley School for Citizenship." *The Craftsman*. November 1912: 151-164. <http://bit.ly/16uYcnJ>.

## Conclusion

The preceding analysis drew from *The Craftsman* evidence of innovative advertising strategies previously overlooked by historical communications 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 correlation 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 multi-directional 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.

The findings of this analysis contribute significantly to existing historical communications research and present an opportunity for expanded study. Most importantly, 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 similar publications. The presence of both product-nesting and multi-directional branding in the intertwined manner observed in *The Craftsman* seems novel and, to at least some degree, successful. Comparable advertising strategies should be sought out in publications similar to *The Craftsman* to better understand their implementation and success.

A weakness of this investigation lies in its failure to supplement findings within *The Craftsman* with company documents. Existing literature on the history of the life of Gustav Stickley and his Craftsman Workshops indicates some such documents exist.<sup>46</sup> By comparing the utilization of particular article series within *The Craftsman* with financial statements and meeting notes, the success of particular marketing strategies could be gauged. Such information could also be used to test the strength of the 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 historical communications researchers and those using product-nesting and multi-directional branding practices today.

Finally, complimentary research might be conducted to investigate the use of those marking practices utilized in *The Craftsman* by modern companies. The staging of furniture sets for catalog photographs in a manner not unlike the illustrations of the homebuilders' series are currently used by companies such as Ikea and JCPenney. Although one would expect the characteristics of modern advertisements to be significantly different, the potential for the

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<sup>46</sup> Citations in Smith's *Gustav Stickley: The Craftsman* suggest portions of Stickley's business papers have been archived at the Henry Francis Dupont Winterthur Museum in Winterthur, Delaware.

identification of historical marketing methods, such as those seen in *The Craftsman*, in more recent publications exists.