



# Fabric & Decor in the Bungalow

## The Ideal and the Reality

Ann Wallace

[www.annwallace.com](http://www.annwallace.com)

One of my favorite interior sketches from Gustav Stickley's *Craftsman Magazine* shows a living room with an inglenook and several archways opening to other rooms. The scale is inaccurate and the drawing is obviously meant to promote architecture more than interior design, and yet the room is full of fabric. There are portieres at every archway, a couple of styles of curtain, a cloth on the table and pillows on the inglenook bench. The drawing is black and white, but I imagine the textiles would give the room a warm and comfortable air.

I often think of this drawing when I see contemporary restored bungalows. The walls are white, the windows are bare and I can almost feel the drafts whistling through the open archways. The Arts & Crafts ideal of unpretentious comfort with quality of materials and construction seems to have deteriorated into a cold minimalism.

Stickley advocated using the warm, rich colors found in nature and suggested that the bright accents in embroidery and applique could "lighten a dark and quiet scheme of decoration." He sold linen and cotton but he also stocked a wide variety of silk and velour (or velveteen). The velour was often sold for portieres and outer curtains or draperies as well as upholstery, since it provided excellent insulation. Stickley carried it in several shades of "foliage green" as well as "autumn brown and russet" and "grayish blue."

Stickley's solid colored silks were used mainly for curtains and he apparently carried some surprisingly vivid colors including "deep bright gold," "rosy heliotrope," and "yellowish leaf green."

The Craftsman workshops sold a surprising number of printed fabrics, including small bright floral prints that would have been used mainly for bedroom curtains.

Stickley's interiors always show curtains and often layers of window coverings. This is because simple unlined curtains were (and still are) the simplest and least expensive way to provide privacy. Stickley's curtains are almost always mounted inside the window frame to feature the woodwork. He



*dining room*

knew that his interiors could be dark so he recommended light, natural colors in fabrics that would let in filtered light even when closed. Curtains were not full, seldom more than 1 1/2 times the width of the window and hardware was not emphasized. There is often only one panel per window, especially when there is a bank of several windows.

The curtains in Stickley's textile catalogs always had rod pocket tops, but rings and tabs

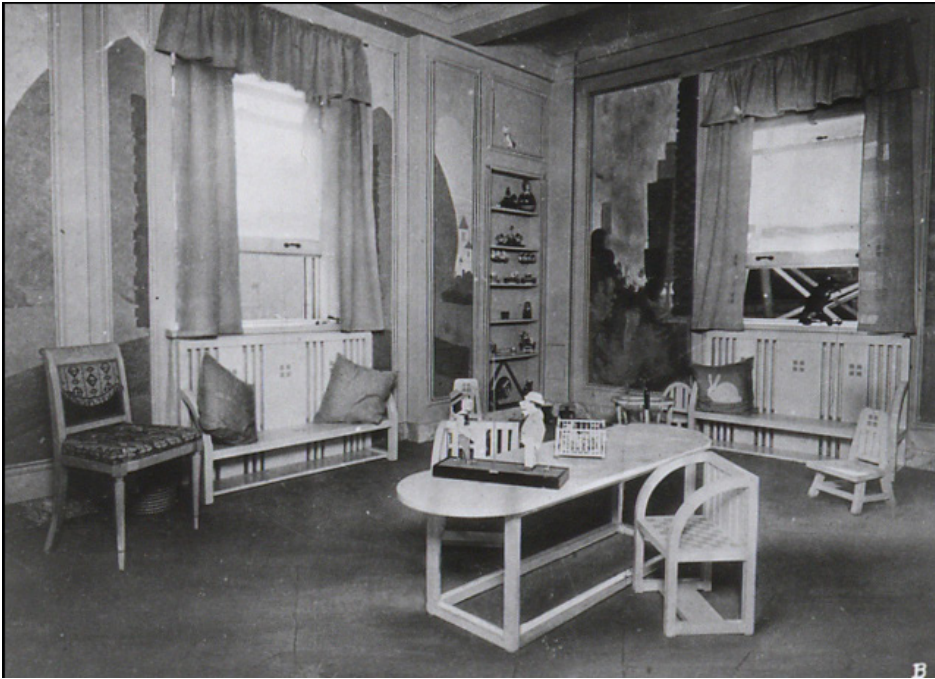
are often shown in his drawings. These would allow the curtains to open further, letting in more light. He also often showed simple fabric tiebacks to hold curtains off the window - a practical technique unfortunately often associated with cutesy cottage interiors.

Roller shades were often added to provide more shade for insulation in summer and winter. Ecru cotton or dark green were popular. Sometimes thin, light filtering shades were used with a painted landscape scene or design.

Of course, an admirer of the Arts & Crafts movement in 1908 would have been just as unlikely to have an all-Stickley house as admirer today. Family heirlooms, sentimental favorites and affordable, practical standbys would have to be accommodated. I have often wondered how everyday people - the customers for Stickley's bungalows would have really furnished their homes.



*kitchen*



*nursery*

Restoring two Arts & Crafts houses convinced me that they definitely did not paint their walls white....but what about curtains and pillows? How did they make themselves comfortable? What did their kitchens and bedrooms look like? I was given a collection of old glass negatives from Keith's Magazine, a contractor and builder of Arts & Crafts houses, mainly bungalows, in the Midwest and California. These negatives show

eccentric accessories and furnishings that were obviously from the homes of satisfied customers (the concept of the model home must have appeared much latter). Still, these are clearly charming (and often amusing) Arts & Crafts interiors. It's fascinating to see just how those porches were furnished, what was done with the children's toys, and how they got comfortable on those hard built-in benches. If only we could see the color!

Ann Wallace  
213-614-1757  
[www.annwallace.com](http://www.annwallace.com)



*porch*