

Could a house fire be considered lucky?
For the Gustav Stickley House that might just be the case.

By Amy Shook Perez

Gustav Stickley's family home at 438 Columbus Avenue in Syracuse, New York is in the midst of a unique restoration project. While from the outside this Queen Anne Style house doesn't read "Arts & Crafts," you can't always judge a book by its cover.

Stickley purchased the newly built house in 1900. It was close to his Eastwood workshop and comfortable for his large family. The following year, a Christmas Eve fire significantly damaged the interior. When all the repairs were complete, Stickley had transformed the inside into what might be the earliest "Craftsman" interior. The result of this potential tragedy has instead left an indelible impact on American design. Today the home is being restored and transformed into a unique historic house museum and guest house.

Gustav lived there with his family from 1900 to 1910, and then again with his adult daughter Barbara and her family from 1919 until his death in 1942. The first floor contained living and dining rooms, an iconic Arts & Crafts style inglenook, and a broad stair/entry hall.



Dining room and inglenook



Exterior of Gustav Stickley House, prior to February 2017

Many of these spaces contain beautiful American Chestnut walls and typical Craftsman details, lighting fixtures and fireplaces. The second floor had four bedrooms, the only bath and a master bedroom with Stickley's adjoining private study. Two of the bedrooms contain Grueby tile surround fireplaces. The third floor had both bedrooms and common space.

The project is being done in two phases. The completed Phase I exterior restoration included asbestos removal, structural repairs, a new roof and restored windows as well as the recreation of the historic front porch. This work received an award from the Preservation Association of Central New York (PACNY) for "excellence in the application of preservation technology and craftsmanship." Phase II, the interior, will complete first floor restoration and historic elements on the upper floors while assuring universal access and modern code compliance.

The interior requires substantial work; virtually all mechanical, electrical and plumbing systems are unusable, and materials and finishes suffer from lack of temperature control, moisture, water, and wear, including elements installed by Gustav Stickley. The second phase is estimated to cost \$2 million.

On March 5, 2020 a Capital Campaign was launched to fundraise with a successful event Kick-Off Event but like many other nonprofit organizations, Covid-19 curtailed community

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STICKLEY HOUSE (CONT)

activities planned for the rest of the year. In July the project received a coveted Save America's Treasures grant for \$500,000. This 1:1 matching grant is administered through the National Park Service and works to save "America's threatened cultural treasures . . . document and illuminate the history and culture of the United States."

With this grant, the project is now back on track and recently the GSHF has hired Crawford & Stearns Architect and Preservation Planners to oversee Phase II. The ultimate goal, to create a unique historic house museum and guest house, will be operated by the Onondaga Historical Association. The space will be transformed into an educational environment with tours and exhibits as well as space for personal and cultural events. A small commercial kitchen will be designed on the first floor. Upstairs, five guest suites with private baths will be created and in the basement area, a two bedroom apartment for a full-time caretaker/manager. A new three-story addition at the rear of the house will provide universal access including an elevator (LULA) and publicly accessible first floor bathroom as well a second stairwell for egress. A tall but exciting order, the work will maintain and preserve the integrity of the historic elements of this important legacy of Gustav Stickley and the Arts & Crafts movement in America.

After the Stickley descendants sold the house in the 1950s, the interior was altered into five apartments. Luckily most of Stickley's significant design and materials survived these changes. In the late 20th century, the building was vacant for some time, and it was during this period that the building suffered most from deterioration and damage. The Audi family purchased the home, saving it from destruction and in 2016, donated the house to a local nonprofit. The restoration project began.

The creation of the guest suites will provide income to support the public use of this building, educational exhibits and events and add to the integrity of an emerging and diverse neighborhood. The guest suites will also boost the local economy with the addition of County tax and the generation of tourism dollars in the region. All work is designed to meet the Secretary

of the Interior's Standards for the Treatment of Historic Properties, as well as requirements of the Syracuse Landmark Preservation Board and the State Historic Preservation Office.

The Gustav Stickley House Foundation was formed in 2016 to support the restoration, preservation and interpretation of the Gustav Stickley House. After the successful funding of Phase I it is committed to supporting the Capital Campaign for Phase II and intends to support the property and its operation beyond restoration.

The rejuvenation of the Gustav Stickley House and its return as a functioning example of the American Arts & Crafts movement is a testimony to decades of vision, dedication and commitment by so many. The home will once again honor and reflect the vision of Gustav Stickley and be a public example of innovative historic restoration and interpretation while serving as a community gathering place. To learn more about our progress on this project, visit: gustavstickleyhousefoundation.org.



Exterior of Gustav Stickley House, after June 2018

Gustav Stickley House Foundation Can Use Your Help!

Preservation takes time and money. Any donation can make a big difference. Please consider contributing to the cause at gustavstickleyhousefoundation.org