

Reforms that influenced american living

Family



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In the early twentieth century, an incredible artistic movement occurred that prompted an aesthetic reform for American living. The movement was known as Arts and Crafts. A mix of progressives consisting of designers, architects, and artists promoted simplified architectural style, handicraft production, and wholesome environments. The following essay will examine the many social and economic influences that shaped the new housing developments as well as what effects the 'modern' bungalow style housing had on the American family. In 1900, Americans were very receptive to the new bungalow style home. According to historian Gwendolyn Wright, Americans have long used domestic architecture to encourage certain kinds of family and home life. The Arts and Crafts movement helped demonstrate this by promoting simplified and wholesome environments through quiet lines and minimal decoration. In 1901, a man named Gustav Stickley created a magazine that offered his readers model house designs to build on their own homes. This would allow many working-class families to become homeowners. Another designer named Edward Bok was very influential on the development of the new style of housing. In Wright's article, she says "Bok wanted to encourage middle-class women to become more involved in the home thereby relinquishing their recent tendencies to abandon domestic duties for jobs for women's clubs activities." He wanted a house free from "senseless ornamentation", one that was equipped with the latest sanitary fixtures and decorated with unpretentious furnishings, with a few handmade necessities. Bok thought that many women made the mistake of over furnishing their homes because they fear being seen as "bare". He has many arguments about why a simply furnished home would be better, especially for women. Many architects were hesitant to accept Bok's designs,

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but when the depression came in the 1890s they became very open to the idea of his suburban dwellings. In 1901, Bok launched the first of a series of modern model dwellings. This encouraged the Arts and Crafts movement because thousands of readers sent in five dollars for a complete set of plans and specifications. As the working class started to build their newly designed houses by their own hand, this encouraged the female role in the home. Boc's designs called for a small easy to clean kitchen along with the latest sanitary fixtures. As this idea developed many other designers including Isabelle McDougall wrote articles that implied that a housewife or household administrator was to keep their kitchen extremely clean " with that scientific cleanliness of a surgery, which we know to be far ahead of any mere housewife neatness". This led designs to become compact and carefully planned with approximate square footage and where everything had a place. The idea of an efficient kitchen brought along the introduction of electrical appliances, unfortunately the new appliances were not always reliable, but this did however bring electricity to every class in society becoming the " modern servant". In Christine Frederick's article " Putting the American Woman and Her Home on a Business Basis (1914)" she points out how the scientific management in the workplace would benefit the kitchen of the American household. She claims that, at that moment in time, the American housekeeping is distasteful to the ' most intelligent portion of housekeepers'. She states that it " lacks mental interest and was without the spirit of competition in that it does not possess the dignity of the serious profession." The decline in the housing interest was due to people deciding to drift to large cities where more and more of the original functions of the home were being diminished, increasing demands of sanitation, greatly increased cost of

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living, and general broadening of women's horizon has led to the diminish net of a woman's role in the household. In a way the bungalow dramatically changed domestic living. It brought in clean and organized living spaces, compared to the cramped life in the tenant buildings. Domestic architecture encouraged social cooperation. There were common architectural standers that would visually reinforce the idea of a balanced 'egalitarian' social life for both men and women. Designers worked hard to come up with floor plans that would accommodate single men and women as well as married couples. They wanted to make it efficient and functional in order to keep women in the home rather than out in the work field. In cramped close quarters of tenant buildings there was disease and discomfort everywhere. With the new architecture including plenty of windows, people were able to get fresh air and enjoy the sunlight whereas before they were not able to. The Arts and Crafts movement brought along many different ideas of domestic reform. Views about domestic problems varied as did the style of bungalow. The family structure changed, bringing the idea of a housewife into the picture. The middle class were now able to be homeowners. The American family became central focus of the American dream.