

Relatives, fans of Gustav Stickley celebrate furniture maker's 158th birthday



Brendan McGinn, left, a great-great-grandson of furniture maker Gustav Stickley, and Christopher Wiles, a great-grandson of Stickley, sit on a Stickley couch at Dalton's American Decorative Arts store in Syracuse on Wednesday. The two came to Dalton's to help celebrate Stickley's 158th birthday. *(Rick Moriarty | r Moriarty@syracuse.com)*

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Syracuse, N.Y. — Fans and two relatives of Gustav Stickley gathered in Eastwood Wednesday, not far from where he made his famous Craftsman furniture, to celebrate his 158th birthday.



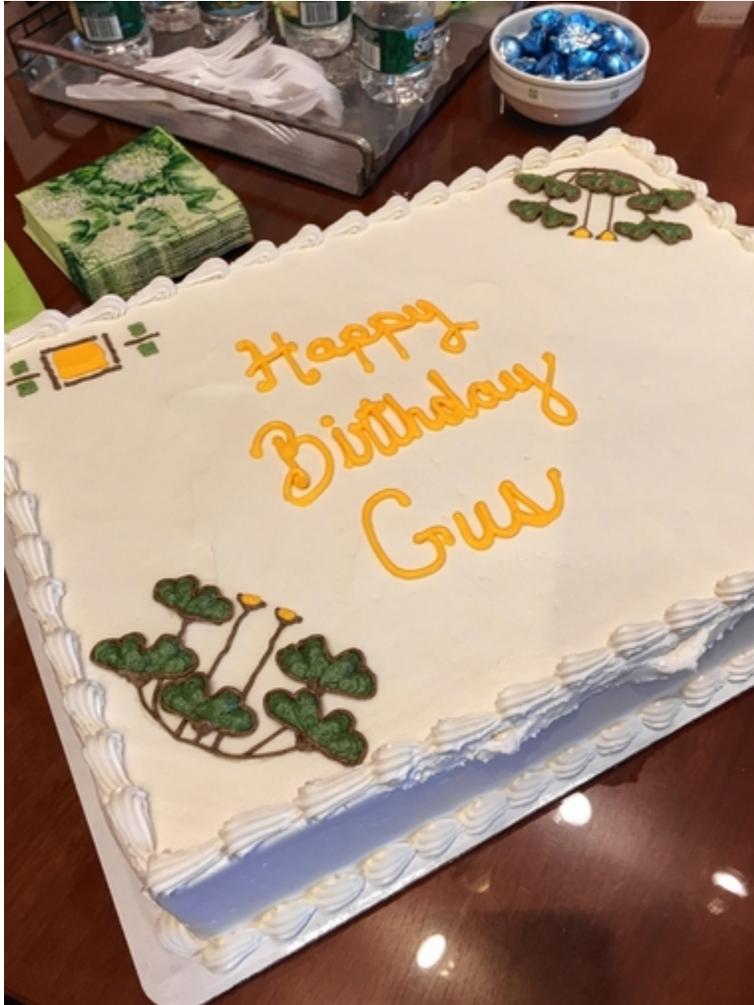
Gustav Stickley

Among the 15 people who shared a birthday cake at Dalton's American Decorative Arts store on James Street were Christopher Wiles, a great-grandson of Stickley, and Brendan McGinn, a great-great-grandson of the furniture maker. The cake was decorated with the words "Happy Birthday Gus."

Preservation designer Beth Crawford and Dalton's owner David Rudd organized the event on Stickley's birthday to update fans of the furniture maker on plans to [restore his house on Columbus Avenue](#).

Crawford said work on Phase 1 of the restoration — repairs to the home's exterior and structural improvements — will start this year. The University Neighborhood Preservation Association, which will manage the first phase of the project, is shooting for a start this summer, she said.

The second phase of the restoration will focus on the home's Craftsman interior and will be managed by the Onondaga Historical Association. Project officials expect that phase to be completed in 2019.



A birthday cake served during a celebration of furniture

maker Gustav Stickley's 158th birthday at Dalton's American Decorative Arts store in Syracuse on Wednesday. *Beth Crawford*

Wiles, 73, an state assistant attorney general, and McGinn, 36, an anesthesiologist at Upstate University Hospital, said they are looking forward to seeing the home restored.

"I've been waiting for about 50 years," said Wiles. "We never thought this would happen."

"It's a monumental endeavor, but well worth it," said McGinn, who grew up in Massachusetts but recently moved to Fayetteville. "I think it will bring a lot more attention to Stickley and his connection to Upstate New York and Syracuse."

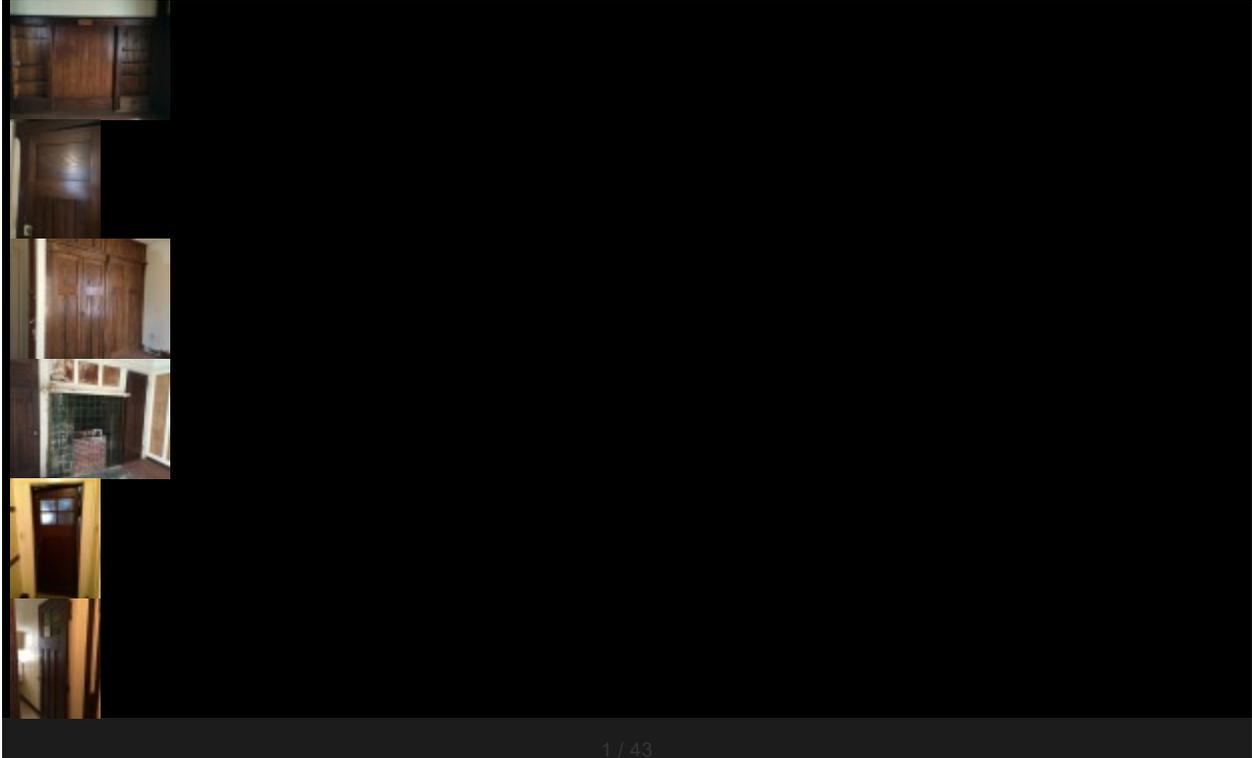
Stickley was born on March 9, 1858, in Osceola, Wis. He came to Syracuse in 1900 and began making his Craftsman-style solid-wood furniture in a factory at the intersection of Burnet Avenue and Luddington Street. Stickley also published a magazine called *The Craftsman* and became a driving force behind the American Arts and Crafts movement.

Hurt by competition from imitators, his company went bankrupt in 1915 and he gave up his business to his two younger brothers, Leopold and John George.

He died in relative obscurity in Syracuse in 1942 at the age of 84. But interest in his furniture designs saw a resurgence in the late 1900s and are still used by L. and J.G. Stickley Co., the Manlius company started by his brothers and owned since 1974 by the Audi family. The Audis bought Stickley's house from Rudd in 1995 and are donating it to the Preservation Association.







A view of the first floor of Gustav Stickley's home in Syracuse. The home features chestnut paneling and floors, and narrowly spaced wooden ceiling beams. (Rick Moriarty | rmoriarty@syracuse.com)
Rick Moriarty | rmoriarty@syracuse.com

Wiles was born a year after his great-grandfather died, so he never had a chance to meet him. But he said he did visit the furniture maker's home when he was a young child.

The Stickley family sold the home in the 1950s, and later owners turned its upper two floors into apartments. Wiles said the home's first floor still looks exactly as it did when he was a child, except it no longer contains any of the Stickley furniture, including a large table and chairs and a classic Stickley sideboard, that he recalls seeing there.

Stickley bought the house new in June 1900 and re-built its interior after a Christmas Eve fire in 1901, making it the first home in the country with a Craftsman interior.

Crawford is researching the home's exterior so that the restoration can match its original design as closely as possible. It has not been easy. Until

recently, the oldest known photos of the home's exterior were from the late 1960s, sometime after the home's front porch had been rebuilt.

The porch on the house now is noticeably smaller than the porch's footprint in Stickley's 1902 design. However, without a photo showing it, no one knew for sure whether Stickley built the porch according to his design.

Crawford, however, recently found a Feb. 4, 1911, article from The Post-Standard

that reported Stickley's sale of the house to Isaac Fleischman for \$16,000. (The home, which was numbered 416 Columbus Ave. at the time but is numbered 438 Columbus Ave. now, was bought back by Stickley's daughter Barbara a few years later.)

As luck would have it, the Post-Standard article contained a photo of the house, revealing for the first time what the porch looked like when Stickley owned the home. The porch in the photo is larger than the one currently on the house, keeping with his 1902 design.

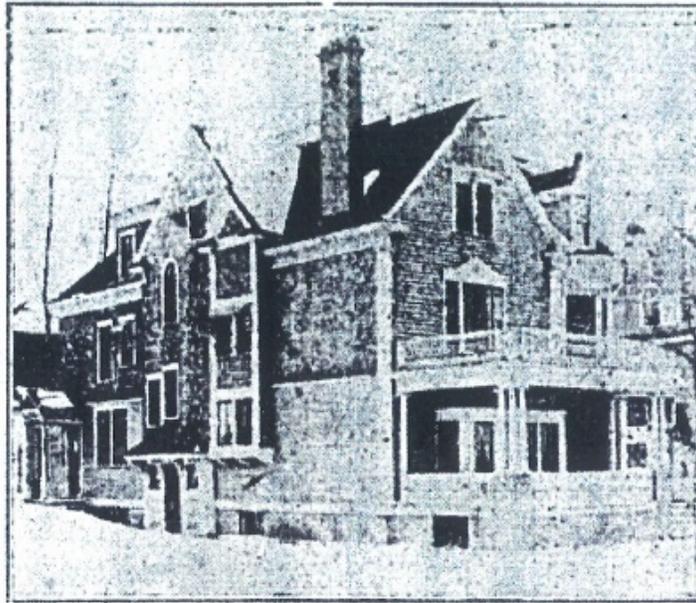
The photo also shows that the roof of the porch was decorated with a row of balusters, something not previously known. The photo also reveals a row of balusters on the peak of the home's roof. Crawford said those details will be incorporated into the home's restoration.

Crawford is asking that anyone whose family lived on Columbus Avenue and may have other photos showing the exterior of the Stickley home to contact her at stickleyhousefoundation@gmail.com or (315) 463-1568.

A copy of the Post-Standard article from 1911 is below:

[Post-Standard Article Feb. 4, 1911, On Sale of Gustav Stickley House](#)

COLUMBUS AVENUE HOUSE



SOLD BY GUSTAV STICKLEY

STICKLEY HOUSE SOLD TO ISAAC FLEISHMAN

Spacious Residence on Columbus Avenue With Many Attractive Features Including Especially Selected Woods Used With Mission Effects—Property Valued at \$16,000.

One of the finest houses in Syracuse as regards interior finish changed hands this week, when Gustav Stickley of Syracuse and New York sold his residence at No. 416 Columbus avenue to Isaac Fleishman. The consideration is not made public. The Onondaga Realty Company represented Mr. Stickley in the transaction.

This house was erected a few years ago by Mr. Stickley for a home and being in the furniture business he introduced many attractive features in the way of woodwork and permanent fixtures in the living and dining rooms. The mission style prevails on the first floor with three large fireplaces, beamed ceilings and other pretty features. There is a breakfast room as well as a large dining room. The second and third floors contain twelve bedrooms with two bathrooms. The property is valued at \$16,000.

Mr. Stickley has business interests in both Syracuse and New York. He has

built him a handsome residence in the Jersey suburbs.

The Onondaga Realty Company has sold a large number of vacant lots in the vicinity of Syracuse University to persons who will build for homes this year. Other sales by this company include the following:

For Harry Jones, the modern two-family house at No. 1204 Midland avenue, to Robert E. Handlin for investment. Each house has seven rooms with bath and finished in fine style with oak and hardwood floors. The property is valued at \$8,000.

For John Masters, a modern two-family house at No. 416 Stuart avenue, to Mrs. Emily Sheehan for an investment and home. The lot is 45x165 feet in dimensions.

An Investor from Rochester.

Two-family house in Edgewood avenue to George Latt of Rochester, for the Onondaga Realty Company. Mr. Latt buys for investment and will make improvements upon the property.