



The Cedars, the Harry Fenn residence. Courtesy of the Montclair Historical Society.

# All in the Family

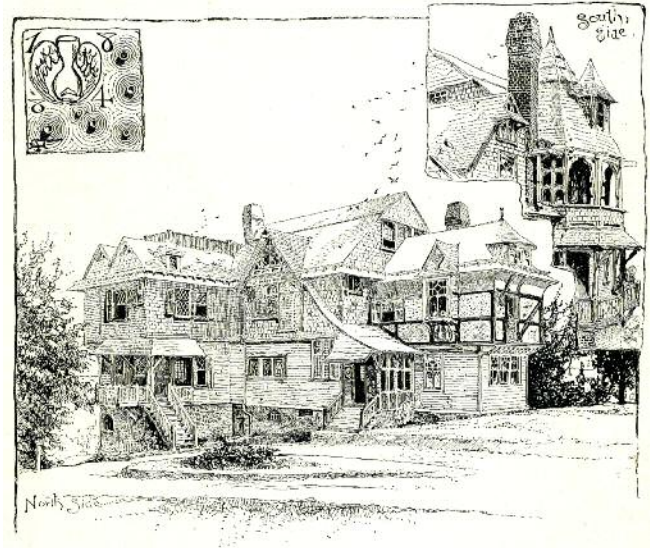
## ARTS & CRAFTS, DUDLEY VAN ANTWERP AND HIS CREATIVE RELATIONS

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Early twentieth-century architect Dudley S. Van Antwerp (1867-1934) launched his regional practice in 1902 with a “wedding gift” residence for his wife and himself in Montclair, New Jersey. One of the town’s earliest examples of the small suburban house in the Arts and Crafts style, it expressed the architect’s ideals at the time of his marriage to the daughter of one of Montclair’s most celebrated residents—the “Dean of American Illustrators,” artist Harry Fenn (1837-1911).

Not just a romantic gift, the house positioned Van Antwerp as a leader of a new generation of architects interested in design reform and searching for an “American style.” In striking contrast to his father-in-law’s widely published picturesque manse, *The Cedars*, designed in 1884 by British-born architect H. Edwards Ficken (1844-1929), Van Antwerp created a functional, small-scale house: a spare, rectangular block with hipped roof, stucco exterior, overhanging eaves, Mission-style entrance, and individualistic Craftsman details on the interior. It served as an early, experimental template for the estimated 500 houses that he built in his lifetime.<sup>1</sup> Based on Van Antwerp’s photographic archive of commissions, close to 125 of these houses, dating from 1902 to 1924, have been identified by the author, firmly establishing the extent to which his work contributed to the Montclair regional character and rich architectural heritage.

Van Antwerp found a partner and collaborator in his wife, Hilda Fenn Van Antwerp (1880-1931); her name appeared on the architectural drawings as an “associate,” and she was variously referred to as an “artist” and “interior designer,” suggesting that the couple together developed their nuptial project. Showing great ingenuity in interpreting and adapting the Craftsman style, Van Antwerp’s work was published in *Concrete Country Residences*, *American Homes and Gardens*, and *American Architect*. This article elaborates and further defines his contributions, as seen through the prism of the architect’s own house, given its special significance in marking a generational shift in architectural thought and practice, and the role it would ultimately play in the design of a new house for Harry Fenn. Tracing the evolution in style from Fenn to Van Antwerp, four Montclair houses are surveyed: the Harry Fenn Residence, *The Cedars* (1885); the Mrs. Charles F. Coffin (Alice Fenn Coffin) Residence, *Eastward* (1901); the Dudley and Hilda Fenn Van Antwerp Residence (1902); and the Harry Fenn Residence (1906), designed by Van Antwerp.



Harry Fenn, *The Cottage, North and South*.

### **The Cedars: A Symbol of Artistic Achievement and Picturesque Taste**

At least seven leading art and architecture publications in Britain and America featured articles about the Harry Fenn residence between 1885 and 1896, accompanied by sketches of the exterior and interior by Fenn himself.<sup>2</sup> The publicity gave the renowned illustrator and his house wide visibility in the years following his return from an extended stay in Britain, and no doubt delighted and inspired many readers. Born in Surrey, England, Fenn first came to the United States in 1856, where he built a career as an illustrator of books and magazines, and ultimately became a major contributor to the highly successful D. Appleton and Company series of *Picturesque America* (1872-74), *Picturesque Europe* (1875-79), and *Picturesque Palestine, Sinai and Egypt* (1881-84). Fenn’s greatest talent lay in the illustration of landscapes, architecture, and interiors; his success was made possible by and at the same time contributed to the rapid growth of the publishing industry, which in turn played a key role in the dissemination of art and culture in the late nineteenth century.<sup>3</sup> He was also a superb watercolorist and founding member of the American Society of Painters in Watercolor in 1866.

Fenn came to Montclair as early as 1865, and was one of the first artists to reside in the picturesque community stretching along the slopes of First Watchung Mountains, twelve miles from New York City.<sup>4</sup> A town of under two thousand inhabitants, Montclair was renowned for its rural

beauty, at the time still largely composed of farms, fields, and apple orchards. The town was Fenn's family base while he worked on *Picturesque America*, travelling across the nation, in 1870, in search of "the most unfamiliar and novel features of American scenery."<sup>5</sup> In 1873 Fenn took his family to England for an eight-year period while he travelled throughout Europe and the Near East gathering material for the subsequent volumes in the series.

Through his various assignments, Fenn became an enviably well-traveled artist at a time when society held such experience in high esteem, and when artists' studios and artistic taste were the subject of widespread interest. Not surprisingly, it would appear that Fenn was well known among the fashionable British artists and literati of the day, including Sir Laurence Alma-Tadema, whose studio he illustrated for *The Magazine of Art* in 1884, and England's poet laureate Alfred, Lord Tennyson, at whose home he attended many garden parties, and whose poems and house he also illustrated.<sup>6</sup> For the last two years of his residency in England, Fenn and his family lived in a farmhouse in the Surrey countryside frequented by artists.

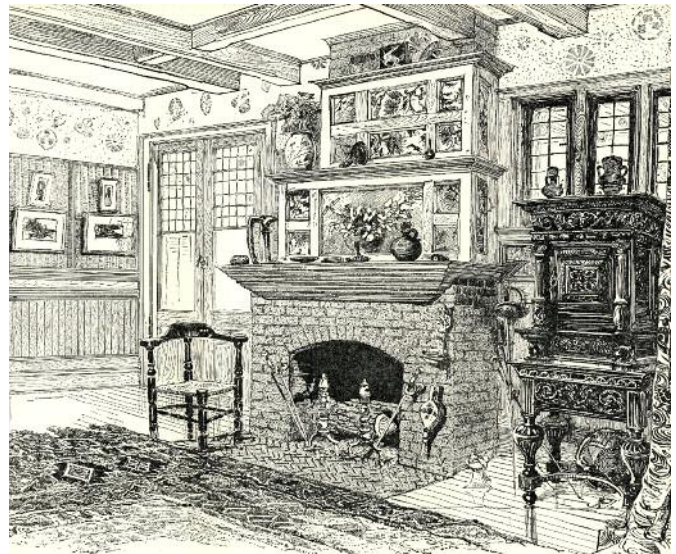
Fresh with impressions of the artistic houses of London and vernacular English country houses, Fenn returned to America in 1881 to settle down with his family and build his own house, establishing a kind of artistic pilgrimage site in the community. The architect he selected, H. Edwards Ficken, was of Scottish background, and came to the United States in 1869, eventually opening a New York office that produced many distinguished commissions.<sup>7</sup> Ficken began his career as an architectural renderer, perhaps meeting Fenn in that capacity, and the project may have represented more of a collaboration than was usual in an architect-client relationship. For *The Century Magazine*, Fenn proudly illustrated the sweeping gable of his studio, which occupied most of the attic, with the phrase "This House Was Built In 1884" carved in the wood in Old English lettering, along with his distinctive overlapping initials, HF.<sup>8</sup>

Fenn's house synthesized Old English and American elements in its sprawling picturesque form, with projecting gables, balconies, a two-storied piazza with a polygonal,

turret-like cap, and a panoramic view from Coney Island to the Hudson Highlands and beyond, then visible from Montclair's heights. The exterior exhibited half-timbered work combined with unusual patterned stucco, dark clapboards painted brown, cypress shingles, and varied fenestration, from banded groupings to artistic leaded and latticed windows, all contributing to its irregular appearance and the great variety of surface textures. The house was held forth as an example of the progress in American domestic architecture, an example in which "common sense and good taste have prevailed," to quote *The Magazine of Art*.<sup>9</sup> Editor George W. Sheldon selected it for inclusion in his important compendium of *Artistic Country-Seats* published by D. Appleton and Company in 1886-87.<sup>10</sup>

The interior, while conforming to then-popular Aesthetic tastes in many respects, generally avoided the visual complexity of Fenn's artistic contemporaries in Britain and America. Rather, it projected the simplicity of the Old English style, with a few choice antiques and a tasteful display of objects collected during Fenn's world travels. Fenn avoided the clichés of the Aesthetic style and the calls for "self-expression" and "art for art's sake," favoring architectural clarity, at least as conveyed in his illustrations. It was a commodious and comfortable home for an artist and his family, which in Fenn's case included five children. As summed up in *The Art Amateur* in 1896, the house was a "tasteful though not costly treatment of form and color."<sup>11</sup>

Focusing on some of the key features, the central hall, which gave immediate access to the parlor, dining room, piazza, and staircase, conveyed the idea of the great hall of Old English-style houses, rising higher than adjoining rooms and dominated by a monumental chimneypiece.<sup>12</sup> The massive exposed brick fireplace, with its deeply molded wood mantel, projected the rusticity and warmth of the British vernacular house, as did the timbered ceiling and the wood wainscoting. Old English furnishings were depicted by Fenn in sketches of his informal hall settings, among them a carved linen chest dated 1693, a bannister chair, a rush-seat corner chair, a Jacobean baluster-leg cabinet with ebony and ivory inlay, and Oriental carpets.<sup>13</sup>



L to R: Harry Fenn, sketch of the drawing room and view of the hall at The Cedars; *The Hall Fireplace*. *The Magazine of Art*, January 1886.

The wall treatment reflected the requisite tripartite horizontal division of the Aesthetic interior that was one of the hallmarks of the late Victorian period.<sup>14</sup> Fenn's evocative illustrations in *The Magazine of Art* in 1886 gave readers an inside look at how rooms could be visually unified in an Aesthetic decorative scheme. The "golden-hued" wood wainscoting continued through the three principal rooms of the ground floor, and paintings were hung on panels of "yellowish matting" at eye level. Japanesque, Moorish, and other exotic elements provided interest, from the patterned wall frieze composed of stylized Japanese crests and badges, to fireplace overmantel panels of "stamped and gilt Japanese leather," and "blue-and-white Delft and Spanish-Moorish platters" and "old Nankin blue-and-white porcelain" in the dining room's recessed-arch mantelpiece and on narrow wall shelving.<sup>15</sup> The walls exhibited "a number of prints in red ink, after drawings by Mr. Burne-Jones."<sup>16</sup>

The focal point of the drawing room was a large fireplace "nook" with built-in window seating, separated from the main space by a broad, flat-arched entrance and overhead mantel displaying Moorish plaques. Within the inglenook, the mirrored mantelpiece with classical decoration captured the essence of the delicate Queen Anne style.<sup>17</sup> Banded windows with opalescent glass roundels, or "bull's eyes," in the upper section bathed the nook in a warm, golden light, as described in *The Art Amateur*. The much-praised interior color effects of the house reflected the lighter Japanesque-inspired Aesthetic palette: warm golden and cream tones in the hall; light salmon in the dining room; and warm grays in the drawing room. Fenn placed his personal artistic stamp on the stairway's "ten-foot wide window of cathedral panes," over which he painted a life-sized dogwood tree, and on the dining room mantelpiece, which he decorated with a golden sunburst.<sup>18</sup>

### The Next Generation: Learning from The Cedars

The Fenn house offered a formative experience for the next generation of Montclair architects and designers—including two of Fenn's daughters and his son-in-law Dudley Van Antwerp, who took inspiration from some of the home's artistic and constructive features. Van Antwerp gained first-hand knowledge of the Fenn house through Hilda Marguerite Fenn, the youngest of Harry Fenn's children, who was to become his wife at age twenty-one. Hilda, born in England in 1880 and brought to America in 1881, was raised in the house and would have absorbed the special environment of The Cedars.<sup>19</sup> The house would also have made an impression on the young Van Antwerp, whose family settled in Montclair in 1880. Born in Indiana in 1867, Van Antwerp was just thirteen years old when they moved to Montclair, an age at which he could

appreciate the rapid expansion and building activity of Montclair in the decade of the 1880s.

Van Antwerp studied architecture in New York and worked as a draftsman with the firms of Young & Cable, R. C. Gildersleeve, Augustus H. Allen, and William B. Tuthill, the architect of Carnegie Hall (1891).<sup>20</sup> In 1894 he established the architectural firm of Van Antwerp & Brick (with Samuel R. Brick, Jr.), which existed until 1899 at 18 Broadway in New York. One of his independent New York projects has been located at 31 West 26<sup>th</sup> Street, within the present-day Madison Square North Historic District.<sup>21</sup> A Beaux-Arts style façade of brick and terra cotta created for a pre-existing structure, it demonstrated Van Antwerp's knowledge of the architectural vocabulary then in vogue in New York City.<sup>22</sup> Early in the 1900s, however, Van Antwerp changed directions and opened an office in Montclair, where he maintained an independent practice for more than twenty-five years.

Van Antwerp's shift in practice corresponded to his marriage to Hilda Fenn. The ceremony took place at the home of her parents on a late September evening in 1901. As reported in *The New York Times*, "The Cedars" was decorated with yellow and white chrysanthemums, palms, and smilax. The bride was gowned in a costume of white crepe de chine, over white taffeta. She was attended by sixteen young women, who wore costumes of white silk and white organdie, and who carried ropes of smilax, with which they formed an aisle for the bridal party."<sup>23</sup> The gowns and floral arrangements would have blended beautifully with the Aesthetic interior color scheme of The Cedars. It should be noted that Hilda, approximately 6 feet tall, towered over her husband, who measured just 5'3".<sup>24</sup>

The couple's new home in Montclair was a "wedding gift," according to family members. Whether a gift from Hilda's father Harry Fenn or from Dudley to his wife is not certain, but from the published architectural plans, which credit Dudley Van Antwerp as architect and Hilda Fenn Van Antwerp as associate, it is apparent that husband and wife collaborated on the project.<sup>25</sup> Their personal bookplate displays the T-square and compass of the architectural profession.<sup>26</sup> Hilda, however, most likely acted in the capacity of an interior designer on their projects; her 1931 newspaper obituaries referred to her as an interior decorator and watercolor artist, following in the "chosen art" of her famous father, Harry Fenn.<sup>27</sup> It was unusual to find women credited in professional architectural publications in this period, though the movement toward professionalization of the field of interior design was well under way. Hilda was educated in the late 1890s at Rosemary Hall in Connecticut, an institution with progressive ideas about women's education, suffrage, and careers for women.<sup>28</sup>



Top to bottom: The Cedars, the Harry Fenn residence. The Van Antwerp family c. 1915. Courtesy of the Montclair Historical Society.



Exterior of the Mrs. Charles F. Coffin residence, Montclair, N. J. *American Estates and Gardens*, November 1904.

A fertile artistic environment existed in the Fenn household, recalling something of the activity of William Morris and his circle in England. Walter Fenn (1864-1961), the only surviving son of Harry Fenn, was an accomplished illustration artist who spent a period on the West Coast, returning to live with the family in Montclair around 1900.<sup>29</sup> Alice Fenn Coffin (1862-1932), eighteen years older than her sister Hilda, was an “architectural designer,” a term that she herself employed.<sup>30</sup> In 1911, her work as an “architect” and “interior decorator” was featured in an article titled “The Decorative Ingenuity of Alice Fenn Coffin: A Clever Exponent of Original and Practical Elements” in *American Homes and Gardens*. She was praised for the “artistic” and “inventive qualities” of her work, including such embellishments as opalescent windows and fireplace tiles, wallcoverings of “Japanese gold fiber,” and a themed “Copper Room,” to name a few.<sup>31</sup> While there is no direct evidence substantiating her work as an architect, there is reason to believe she was an accomplished designer, more than likely collaborating with Van Antwerp and other architects and mentoring her younger sister Hilda in interior design.<sup>32</sup>



Living room of the Mrs. Charles F. Coffin residence in Montclair, N. J. *American Estates and Gardens*, November 1904.

Coffin was also a talented journalist, writing for *The Magazine of Art* two articles about the experience of living in the remote Surrey countryside with her family for two years, in the early 1880s, just prior to returning to Montclair.<sup>33</sup> The charming stories, written when she was in her early twenties, are filled with observations of farm life, nature, architecture, and literary celebrities, and illustrated by Fenn himself. She clearly had an acute eye, inherited from her father, and may have even been involved in the decorating projects at The Cedars, when she was in her early twenties but already immersed in the arts. Through her marriage in 1893 to Charles F. Coffin, a wealthy merchant from an old New England family, she gained important connections that set her on a path toward an interior design career, building also on those friendships and contacts she would have acquired through her artist father.<sup>34</sup>

#### **The Alice Fenn Coffin Residence: A Montclair Elizabethan Manor House**

Eastward, the grand Elizabethan manor house of Mrs. Charles F. Coffin, was nearing completion at the time of Hilda and Dudley Van Antwerp’s marriage. Designed by architect Alfred F. Norris (1864-1915), a New York and Montclair practitioner whose work embraced a number of architectural styles, the house was published in *Scientific American* in 1902, and again in 1904, in the lavishly illustrated *American Country Estates* by architecture editor Barr Ferree.<sup>35</sup> The latter publication, filled with imposing palaces, placed the Coffin residence in the category of the country mansion, a smaller type of typical country house of the future,

often very charming, beautifully designed, admirably built, richly furnished, and thoroughly complete in all appointments and surroundings.<sup>36</sup>

In Montclair, the Coffin house certainly ranked among the larger, high-style residences. The construction of this important house most likely made a deep impression on Dudley and Hilda, just as they were planning and executing their own, more modest project.

Half-timbered, with multiple gables in the Elizabethan style and an Arts and Crafts-influenced interior, the Coffin house was representative of the new suburban manor house, a considerable leap from the picturesque style of The Cedars, but not far from the traditional Old English examples young Alice Fenn may have seen in England. The interior design, while not credited to Coffin, clearly bore her highly evolved decorative stamp, with specialized wall, floor, and ceiling treatments, color schemes, and dramatic spaces, among them a vaulted, octagonal hall and muraled dining room. Architectural details, such as the flat Tudor-arch doorframes and fireplace openings, timbered ceilings, and windows filled with opalescent glass roundels, bear a strong resemblance to those later employed by Van Antwerp in his own house and in subsequent commissions. It was not unusual for architects to quote from each other in this period, often drawing from the same sources, and Van Antwerp later had the opportunity to build a similar half-timbered and brick manor house on the same street in Montclair, high up on the mountainside with a commanding view.

In this close-knit, but possibly competitive family network, it is interesting to note that Alice Fenn Coffin was related through marriage to architect A. F. Norris.<sup>37</sup> Coffin was thus closely linked with the two leading architects in Montclair at the time, Van Antwerp and Norris, who together are credited with designing as many as 1,000 houses in the community and its vicinity, many of them in the Arts and Crafts or Craftsman style that prevailed in the period leading up to World War I.<sup>38</sup> Coffin influenced and worked with both men—in addition to the Norris commission there are two documented Coffin residences in the Van Antwerp portfolio—and she herself may have created an additional body of work yet to be discovered, further revealing her role as a tastemaker in Montclair in the early twentieth century.

### **The Van Antwerp Residence: A Small Suburban House in the Arts and Crafts Style**

It is always instructive to examine the houses that architects build for themselves, and Van Antwerp's is no exception. From the exterior, Van Antwerp's house represented a radical simplification of form, far from the visual complexity of Harry Fenn's picturesque house or his sister-in-law's Elizabethan manor. So starkly simple in comparison with other Montclair houses of the period, the Van Antwerp residence provides a sense of the experimental attitude of the generation of architects working in the Arts and Crafts style, as they searched for an appropriate national style.<sup>39</sup> Drawing on American forms, Van Antwerp's 1902

design featured a distinctive hipped roof with deep, bracketed overhang associated with the Prairie style of architect Frank Lloyd Wright (1867-1959), and a Spanish-Moorish entrance arch and porch of stucco more typical of California Craftsman houses. The fenestration is varied, ranging from double-hung windows to Moorish arched openings over the porch, but also includes an early example of the tripartite, Chicago-style banded window that Van Antwerp later developed into a signature style.

The Van Antwerp house is, moreover, an early example of stucco over metal lath construction, relatively new in its application to domestic architecture, but increasingly used in the search for an American style of architecture appropriate for suburban living. In 1906, the influential publication *Concrete Country Residences* of Atlas Portland Cement Company featured the house and plans, along with two other works by Van Antwerp, including the residence he designed for his father-in-law Harry Fenn, in his late years.<sup>40</sup> The publication promoted the use of stucco over metal lath in domestic architecture as an economical and fire resistant building method. *American Homes and Gardens*, in 1907, published two Van Antwerp commissions, again including the Fenn House, as examples of "The Use of Concrete in the Building of the Small Country House." Subsequent articles featuring his work were titled "The Small House of Stucco" and "Two Typical American Homes."<sup>41</sup>

Van Antwerp's house responded to the realities of suburban life, as it was evolving in Montclair, by then a town of 14,000 inhabitants. Along with six other houses that he designed in the vicinity, the Van Antwerp house was located in Marlboro Park, a turn-of-the-century, railroad-era development planned by the Montclair Realty Company to emulate the British concept of the garden city.<sup>42</sup> The middle class homes designed by Van Antwerp represented a more innovative, second phase of the development and probably cost more than the original builder models. Sales brochures described Marlboro Park as an ideal location with "no



The Dudley and Hilda Van Antwerp residence (1902). *Concrete Country Residences*, Atlas Portland Cement Co., 1906.

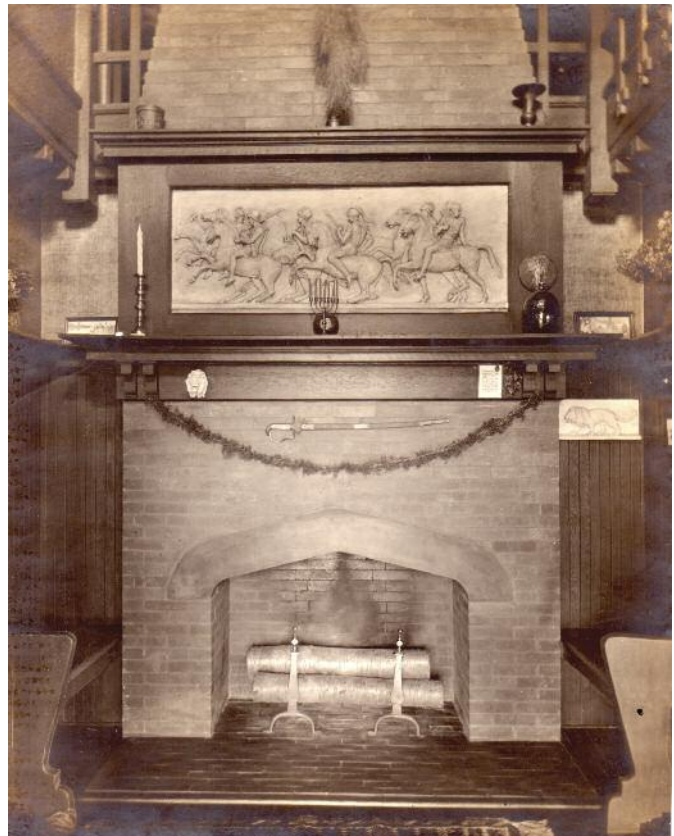
nuisance of any kind, not a saloon or factory anywhere in the vicinity.”<sup>43</sup> Van Antwerp also designed the new Watchung Congregational Church in close proximity to his house, bringing church and home within walking distance in the small community.<sup>44</sup>

The interior of the house was a place to express more personal needs for beauty, convenience and comfort, and the ideals of the young couple as they planned their family life, eventually to include two children. In keeping with tradition, the concept of the living hall, albeit greatly reduced in size, was forcefully expressed with a symbolic hearth and inglenook seating at the entrance. Within the highly compressed space, the chimney rose dramatically through two stories of open space, giving a strong sense of verticality that can be compared to a cathedral. This sense was reinforced by a wrap-around stairway with balcony and gallery, and the repeated motif of the flat Tudor arch throughout the house, another of Van Antwerp’s hallmarks. The rustic Flemish-bond fireplace opening introduced the flat arch, and above the projecting mantel, Van Antwerp placed a framed plaster relief of the Parthenon equestrian frieze, as if to say, this is the home of artists. The resemblance to the hall scheme of The Cedars is strong, particularly with regard to the chimneypiece.

As is often the case when an architect builds for himself, Van Antwerp, working together with his wife, exhibited a passion for details. The appreciation of materials and good craftsmanship is evident in the dark woodwork that unified the hall and house. In a display of architectural ingenuity, Van Antwerp created an open balcony overlooking the great

hall, which was accessed by the hall stairs. Both Van Antwerps were members of the local theatrical club, and their sense of drama is evident as they invented this stage for their new life. Van Antwerp took pleasure in the device of the central staircase, and deliberately placed a slight swell in the balcony on axis with the entrance, anticipating that his future offspring could watch arriving guests or eat meals there, in the center of the house. Small details such as the staircase and balcony railings, shaped with flat Tudor arches connecting the posts and terminating in a cross design at the base, are unlike any other Van Antwerp commission.

Ties with the British domestic architecture tradition of the generation of the 1890s are evident in the Van Antwerp house. The simplicity and the unified appearance of the interior architecture recall the works of M. H. Baillie Scott, C. F. A. Voysey, Parker & Unwin and others of the British Arts and Crafts movement, who emphasized both integrated design and simplicity in their plans.<sup>45</sup> They shared a common goal in the quest for a national style in architecture based on local precedent and the use of honest materials, and the American public came to know their work through publications such as *The Studio* and Gustav Stickley’s *The Craftsman*. Van Antwerp himself was of Dutch ancestry and brought this vocabulary into his house designs as well. A member of the Holland Society and Sons of the American Revolution, he drew on these antecedents when he incorporated, with some degree of frequency, the Dutch door, the Dutch ledge, the Dutch fireplace hood, Flemish bond brick fireplace facing, Flemish gables, and the Dutch Colonial house type, all paying homage to not only his past, but to the



L to R: Hall stairway, balcony, arched doorway and fireplace in the Van Antwerp residence. Courtesy of the Montclair Historical Society.

origins of Upper Montclair, originally a Dutch settlement named Speertown.

As in virtually all of Van Antwerp's plans, the hall opened directly into the other ground floor spaces. British vernacular tradition is reflected in the living room, which had a built-in inglenook on a raised platform, an example of the cozy nook concept in evidence at The Cedars, but here fully developed in the Arts and Crafts manner. The high-back seating was

Reputedly hand made by Van Antwerp, this piece was in keeping with Arts and Crafts calls for plain, functional furniture and do-it-yourself projects for those without adequate funds to purchase new furnishings, as would have been the case for these newlyweds. The proportions of the Arts and Crafts hanging lamp fit the scale of the table, but the delicately proportioned rocking chair and fall-front free-standing bookcase were more typical of British Aesthetic



Living room, with raised inglenook and Moorish windows in the Van Antwerp residence. Courtesy of the Montclair Historical Society

handcrafted with butterfly key insets, creating a decorative effect with its exposed joinery. Three small Moorish-arch windows banded above the inglenook filtered light through amber opalescent glass roundels, as in the inglenook at The Cedars, with the requisite Moorish lantern. The same opalescent glass roundels were used in the Dutch-door entrance to the house, and in many other Van Antwerp commissions, suggestive of the Medieval as well as Oriental aesthetic. As in The Cedars, the nook was separated from the rest of the room by a broad flat arch, a device repeated in many Van Antwerp houses. Quoting a different source, the small living room fireplace opening had a green Grueby-tile surround and the hammered-brass hood and trim that were popular in American Arts and Crafts interiors.

Interior furnishings offer insight into how the Van Antwerps embraced both the British and American aesthetics in their informal lifestyle. The center table, with a wrap-around leather surface held in place by bold round tacks, resembles the furniture shown in Gustav Stickley catalogs.

furniture. Assorted books, pottery, candles, and wall art completed the casual but artistic arrangement of the room.

From the hall, stepping through the small den, one entered the dining room, an intimate space with wainscoting panels interspersed with stucco, plate rails, and a broad tripartite window filling the room with light. The room was distinguished by a painted frieze, executed by family members working together in the collaborative manner of William Morris, possibly with the participation of Harry Fenn.<sup>46</sup> The two panels portrayed a row of Dutch houses on a canal with boats and views of the peaceful countryside, in a symbolic reference to the rural, simple life and the Dutch past of the Van Antwerp family. The dining table, chairs, sideboard, and porcelain plates were almost certainly hand-me-downs from former Fenn residences, eclectic in their appearance juxtaposed with the Arts and Crafts architectural and design elements.<sup>47</sup>





Exterior of the Harry Fenn residence by architect Dudley Van Antwerp. Courtesy of the Montclair Historical Society.

**The House of Harry Fenn:  
Living the Arts and Crafts Lifestyle**

In 1906, as Van Antwerp was reaching his mature style, he had the pleasure of creating a new residence for his father-in-law. *American Homes and Gardens* featured the Fenn house in the April 1909 issue, as part of an article by Benjamin Howes about the use of concrete and stucco in the small country house. Howes commented:

A larger and more ambitious house designed by Mr. Dudley Van Antwerp for Mr. Henry Fenn of Upper Montclair is a pleasing and restrained treatment in half-timbered work in grey-green. The shingle roof is also grey green of delightfully varied texture, as the shingles take the color differently. The lines of the entrance are well suited to the stuccoed walls, with their broad square surfaces, and the window grouping is particularly attractive.<sup>48</sup>

In the new Fenn residence, Van Antwerp created an environment in which the aging artist could feel familiar, recalling *The Cedars* with its half-timbered and stucco surfaces; the textural effects; the asymmetrical, sweeping front gable and side gables; and the inclusion of a generous porch and piazza facing south. But instead of the unbounded exuberance of *The Cedars*, there was restraint and a more rational plan appropriate for the smaller suburban house on a corner lot. The banded windows were perhaps one of the architect’s most important organizing elements, in the eyes of the writer Howes,

indicating a feeling for concrete design in which economies of construction call for broad surfaces and concentrated window space.<sup>49</sup>

The play of solids and voids across the façade of the Fenn house also demonstrated Van Antwerp’s facility with stucco, and its ability to create sculptural effects with light and shadow.

Fenn’s studio faced north in the new house, as is desirable for artists’ studios, but rather than “rambling” through the attic as at *The Cedars*, it was now located on the ground floor with picturesque views of the garden and pergola, extending the house into nature. The effect was generously illustrated with photographs in the *American Homes and Gardens* article, including one image showing the artist Fenn leaning casually against a post. The garden pergola, offering an inviting place for rest and for climbing vines, was considered an important feature of Arts and Crafts houses situated on smaller plots. Also shown in the photographs was the picturesque entrance-gate and stair approach to the Fenn house, illustrating yet another potential use of concrete.



Artist Harry Fenn beneath the garden pergola at his residence by architect Dudley Van Antwerp. *American Homes and Gardens*, April 1909.

On the interior, there was also a pleasant sense of *deja-vu* in the Arts and Crafts detailing. The dining room mantelpiece design closely resembled the dining room mantel at *The Cedars*, with its recessed arch, mantelshelf, and plate rail displaying some of the same decorative plates and objects that were seen in Fenn’s illustrations of *The Cedars*. In the “living-hall,” as it was here termed, a screened fireplace inglenook recalled built-in features at *The Cedars*, but instead of the soaring ceiling of the past, the space was tightly constructed, making the most of the comparatively limited square footage of the new house, and no doubt contributing to better heating conditions. Van Antwerp’s designs, of

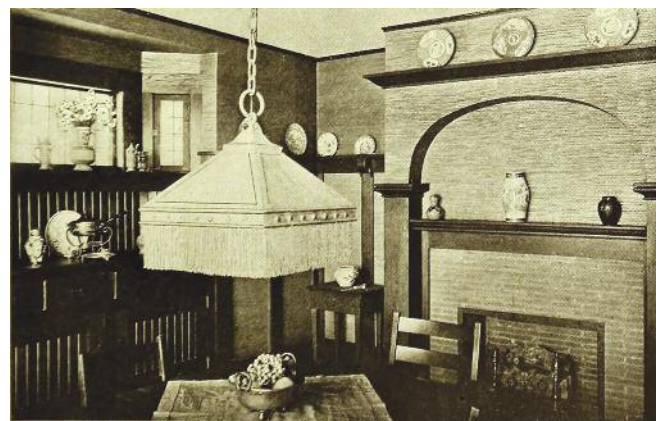
course, included the latest in heating and plumbing conveniences.

Furnishings were familiar too: the ebony cabinet-on-stand seen in the *American Homes and Gardens* photograph of the dining room is the same one shown in Fenn's illustration of the hall at The Cedars. A heavy Stickley-style Mission chair, Morris-style reclining chair, and center table with needlework table runner were new to the interior furnishings mix, but a Turkish end table and Colonial clock recalled the antiquarian eclecticism of The Cedars. Even the organizational wall divisions of the living hall, with "Flemish brown paneling" and walls "covered with golden-brown, Japanese grass cloth," evoked the The Cedars, now reinterpreted and part of the Arts and Crafts aesthetic, with a more sober color palette.

Van Antwerp introduced a new architectural idea in the design of the cast-in-place concrete fireplace, with heavy cornice and bracket supports, suggestive of the California Mission style. The writer for *American Homes and Gardens* commented: "An effective feature of the living-hall is a fireplace built of cement with a massive mantel."<sup>50</sup> Van Antwerp later used this type of mantelpiece in the sunrooms of his houses, combining it with a cement hearth. The landscape painting above the mantel, described as the work of the owner, Harry Fenn, brought natural beauty and artistic embellishment to the interior, recalling some of the painted features in Fenn's first home, and the taste for murals in the Van Antwerp and Coffin homes.

For his architectural studio, built circa 1910 when his practice was thriving, Van Antwerp chose to erect a small, shingled bungalow in the center of town, a remarkable expression of his continuing desire to make a new statement in architecture.<sup>51</sup> Unprecedented in Montclair, its simplicity spoke strongly of Van Antwerp's values and commitment to the Arts and Crafts movement. While the multi-paned casement windows, clipped gables, and interior woodwork echoed the Craftsman features of his larger commissions, the structure was essentially a popular expression emanating from the California bungalow movement, unpretentious and welcoming. In the reception area, Hilda Fenn Van Antwerp established an exclusive shop for children's clothing specialized in smocking, perhaps inspired by interior designer Candace Wheeler's needlework enterprise ideas.<sup>52</sup> The studio building was a harbinger of the future in small-scale residential design, never fully realized in Montclair, but elsewhere widespread. Converted into a house, it served as the idiosyncratic residence of the Van Antwerps during their later, less affluent years, after it was moved to a new location to make way for development in the central business district of Montclair.

The career of Dudley Van Antwerp coincided with a period of middle-class growth, which created an environment rich in opportunities for individual expression and experimentation in domestic architecture. Ideas were rapidly disseminated via a newly active popular press, with architects and interior designers playing the role of tastemakers. But following World War I, lifestyles changed,



Top to bottom: Arts and Crafts interiors of the Harry Fenn residence by Dudley Van Antwerp. *American Homes and Gardens*, April 1909. Bungalow studio of Dudley and Hilda Fenn Van Antwerp, c. 1910. Courtesy of the Montclair Historical Society.

building construction diminished, and it was harder to find a client able and willing to pay for a custom built house. In this climate, conformity and nostalgia for a classical, colonial past became the norm, and architect individualists like Van Antwerp had little place. The articles on Van Antwerp's work end around 1915, and only one Van Antwerp house has been identified from the post-war period.<sup>53</sup>

Through his many documented commissions, reflecting British and American precedents and the artistic sensibilities of his own extended family, Dudley Van Antwerp demonstrated versatility and agility in interpreting and adapting the Arts and Crafts style. Though his portfolio included examples of the Classical and Colonial Revival, Dutch Colonial, and Tudor Revival styles, and was not limited to domestic architecture, it was his Art and Crafts work that showed greatest originality. Stucco exteriors, sweeping roof lines, clipped gables, bracketing under extended eaves and bays, banded and eyebrow windows, leaded casements, battered walls, open and enclosed sun porches, applied trellises, and window boxes were integral

parts of Van Antwerp's vocabulary in his most imaginative works.

Favoring open plans organized around a central hall, unified by beamed ceilings and paneling used with restraint, and utilizing modern materials and technology, Van Antwerp successfully anticipated the direction that lifestyles would take in twentieth-century suburban towns. His versatility, sense of proportion, and graceful detailing are qualities that make the homes he designed stand out in the larger context of Montclair architecture, and they are an inspiration to current owners who wish to preserve his important legacy for the future. The remarkable pace of building activity and quality of design and construction maintained by Van Antwerp and his colleagues working at the dawn of the twentieth century will never be replicated; it is the aim of preservationists to recognize these achievements, recover lost knowledge of authorship where possible, and assure a long life for these noteworthy creations of domestic architecture.



I would like to thank the Montclair Historical Society for its support and permission to use selected photographs from the Society's archive. Many thanks also to author and Harry Fenn expert Sue Rainey for her contributions and generosity in providing additional images.

### Notes

1. Obituary of Dudley S. Van Antwerp, *The Montclair Times*, January 19, 1934.
2. "Personal: Mr. Harry Fenn," *Harper's Weekly* (September 26, 1885): 627; Lizzie W. Champney, "The Summer Haunts of American Artists," *The Century Illustrated Monthly Magazine* (October 1885): 848; *Building News* (December 18, 1885): 962-963; R. Riordan, "Artists' Homes: Mr. Harry Fenn's, at Montclair, New Jersey," *The Magazine of Art* (January 1886): 45-48; "Mr. Harry Fenn's House," George W. Sheldon, ed., *Artistic Country-Seats* (New York: D. Appleton, 1886), I, 13; "Suburban House of a New York Artist," *Scientific American* (March 19, 1887): 183; "The Home of Mr. Harry Fenn," *The Art Amateur, A Monthly Journal Devoted to Art in the Household* (November 1896): 126-127.
3. See Sue Rainey, *Creating a World on Paper: Harry Fenn's Career in Art* (Amherst and Boston: University of Massachusetts Press, 2013). I am indebted to Sue Rainey for her generous contributions to my research and permission to use selected images.
4. *Ibid.*, 24. Landscape artist George Inness, perhaps the best-known painter associated with Montclair's active but non-affiliated art colony, arrived later than Fenn, residing in the town from 1878 until his death in 1894.
5. *Ibid.*, 62.
6. Account of Dorothy Van Antwerp Walters, Harry Fenn Papers located at the Montclair Historical Society, Montclair, N.J.
7. Rainey, *Creating A World*, 194.
8. Champney, *The Century*, 848. The article also illustrated the "summer haunts" of artists Thomas Cole, George Inness, George Inness, Jr., Thomas Moran, Samuel Colman, Eastman Johnson, and R. Swain Gifford, among others.
9. Riordan, *Magazine of Art*, 46.
10. Sheldon, *Artistic Country-Seats*, 13.
11. *The Art Amateur*, 126-27.
12. For background on the British origins of American architecture in this period, see Richard Guy Wilson, "American Arts and Crafts Architecture: Radical though Dedicated to the Cause Conservative," in Wendy Kaplan et. al., *"The Art that is Life": The Arts & Crafts Movement in America, 1875-1920* (Boston: Little Brown and Company, 1987), 101-131.
13. Exercising artistic license, Fenn moved some of these pieces about in his various illustrations, creating picturesque variations on the Old English theme.
14. The tripartite treatment calls for wainscoting or a dado at the bottom of the wall, a frieze or cornice at the top, and a field of varying height between the wainscoting and the frieze, sometimes called fill. See Roger W. Moss and Gail Caskey Winkler, *Victorian Interior Decoration* (New York: Henry Holt & Company, 1986), 116-23.
15. Riordan, *Magazine of Art*, 48.
16. *Ibid.*
17. For a discussion of the British Queen Anne and Old English styles see Mark Girouard, *Sweetness and Light: The 'Queen*

- Anne' Movement 1860-1900* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1977).
18. *The Art Amateur*, 127.
  19. Rainey, *Creating a World*, 156.
  20. Henry F. Withey and Elise R. Withey, *Biographical Dictionary of American Architects (Deceased)*, (Los Angeles: Hennessey & Ingalls, Inc., 1970), 614.
  21. Matthew Postal, *Madison Square North Historic District Designation Report, New York City Landmarks Preservation Commission* (June 26, 2001): 98.
  22. *New York Times*, February 1, 1906. The building housed the New Hilgert Institute, a center for highly dubious rejuvenation treatments with salt water and a "magic shoe." To quote: "Prof. Hilgert's establishment, or 'institute,' as he himself calls it, is a handsome, new structure in Twenty-sixth Street, just west of Broadway."
  23. *The New York Times*, September 27, 1901.
  24. Various family members have commented on the height difference.
  25. *Concrete Country Residences* (New York: Atlas Portland Cement Company, 1906), 24.
  26. The bookplate is located in Charles Holmes, ed., *Modern Pen Drawings: European and American* (London: The Studio, 1901). It bears the pencil inscription H. Fenn, probably Hilda Fenn, but possibly Harry Fenn. Private collection.
  27. Obituary of "Mrs. Hilda Van Antwerp," *The Herald Tribune*, March 23, 1931 and Obituary of "Mrs. D. S. Van Antwerp," *The New York Times*, March 23, 1931.
  28. The founder of Rosemary Hall was Mary Choate, a co-founder with Candace Wheeler of the New York Exchange for Women's Work, a philanthropic enterprise that aimed to give impoverished women opportunities for gainful employment through sales of needlework and other handicrafts. See Amelia Peck and Carol Irish, *Candace Wheeler: The Art and Enterprise of American Design, 1875-1900* (New York: The Metropolitan Museum and Yale University Press, 2001), 35.
  29. Rainey, *Creating a World*, 278.
  30. Alice Fenn Coffin, United States passport, October 31, 1921. I gratefully acknowledge Billie Smith Culler of Montclair, N.J. for supplying a copy of this document.
  31. Jonathan A. Rawson, Jr., "The Decorative Originality of Alice Fenn Coffin: A Clever Exponent of Original and Practical Elements," *Arts and Decoration* (October 1911): 476-478.
  32. There are two houses of Mrs. Charles F. Coffin in Van Antwerp's portfolio of commissions, one of which has been identified as the house associated with Coffin's interior design work in *Arts and Decoration* (October 1911): 476-478.
  33. Alice Maude Fenn, "The Borderlands of Surrey," *The Century Magazine*, 24 (August 1882): 483-494; and "Among the Red Roofs of Sussex," *The Century Magazine* 30 (September 1885): 709-723.
  34. Alice Fenn Coffin's passport of October 31, 1921, listed her domicile as "care of Roland R. Conklin," linking her to the wealthy Conklin family of Huntington, Long Island; Van Antwerp's portfolio of commissions includes the estate of S. L. Conklin in Huntington.
  35. "An Elizabethan Residence at Montclair, N. J.," *Scientific American Building Monthly* 102 (November 1902): 83, 86, 87, 98; Barr Ferree, *American Estates and Gardens* (New York: Munn & Company, 1904): 225-230. The *Scientific American* article places the construction date of Eastward as fall, 1901.
  36. Ferree, *American Estates*, 21.
  37. A. F. Norris's wife, Julia Coffin Norris, was the niece of Charles F. Coffin, husband of Alice Fenn Coffin, as has been pieced together from obituary notices.
  38. Obituary of Alfred F. Norris, *The Montclair Times*, May 22, 1915; Obituary of Dudley S. Van Antwerp, *The Montclair Times*, January 19, 1934. Van Antwerp's obituary claimed he built 500 houses; Norris's estimated 400-500 houses.
  39. Wilson, *American Arts and Crafts*, 102. Regarding the Arts and Crafts movement, Wilson says: "In a sense Arts and Crafts represented not a true movement but a widespread group of very individualistic designers who had a sometimes kindred spirit and an allegiance to creating an organic art and architecture that owed its origins to William Morris."
  40. *Concrete Country Residences*, 21.
  41. Benjamin A. Howes, "The Use of Concrete in the Building of the Small Country House," *American Homes and Gardens* (April, 1909): 164-172; Kirby Hendricks, "The Small House of Stucco," *American Homes and Gardens* (May, 1913): 163; "A Stucco House at Montclair, New Jersey," *American Homes and Gardens* (March, 1914): 80; Gardner Teall, "Two Typical American Homes," *American Homes and Gardens* (February, 1915): 56-58.
  42. Eleanor Price, "Marlboro Park: Forgotten Railroad Development." Reprint from *The Montclair Times*, Montclair, N. J. See also Eleanor McArevey Price, *Montclair 1694-1982: An Inventory of Historic, Cultural and Architectural Resources* (Preservation Montclair, A Project of the Junior League Montclair/Newark, April 1982).
  43. *Ibid.*
  44. Family members were active in the Union Congregational Church of Upper Montclair. Harry Fenn provided sketches for the design of the Norman-style church in the 1890s.
  45. I am grateful to British Arts and Crafts historian Alan Crawford for suggesting these sources during a visit to the house in the 1990s. See M. H. Baillie Scott, *Houses and Gardens* (Woodbridge: Antique Collectors Club, 1995), first ed. 1906, George Newness Ltd. See also Gustav Stickley, *Craftsman Homes: Mission-Style Homes and Furnishings of the American Arts and Crafts Movement* (New York; Gramercy Park Books, 1996).
  46. Family accounts vary on this point: the mural outline may have been sketched by Harry Fenn and painted by his son Walter Fenn, an artist who lived with his family in Montclair at that time. Hilda Fenn Van Antwerp, an artist, may also have been involved.
  47. Some of these furnishings and ceramics are seen in unidentified Fenn interiors, perhaps predating The Cedars. Fenn Papers at the Montclair Historical Society, Montclair, N.J.
  48. Howes, *American Homes*, 166, 168.
  49. *Ibid.*, 163-164. The comment refers to the fenestration of another Van Antwerp commission reviewed in the same article.
  50. *Ibid.*, 168.
  51. In addition to various articles in *American Homes and Gardens*, Van Antwerp received coverage for the "House of Charles T. Droste, Esq.," *The American Architect* (July 6, 1910).
  52. See endnote 28.
  53. The house was built in 1924, and included in an AIA exhibition in Newark, New Jersey in 1927.

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