

A Biographical Dictionary of Architects in Maine



Freeman A. Stanley
1870-1934

In a 1910 article, "Boom of the Bungalow", a Bangor newspaper announced that, "No woman a few years ago would have thought she could live in a house of one story, a one-room house. But the times have changed, and to have a bungalow is now the acme of desire."¹ The popularity of this house type, which began in California and spread east, was fueled by illustrated journals directed at women, such as *House Beautiful* and *Better Homes and Gardens*. Many bungalows in Maine were built from mail order house plans purchased from midwestern firms such as Sears, Roebuck & Company, Aladdin, and Radford. Freeman Stanley of Rockland, however, was a Maine architect who adopted the bungalow as a specialty.

Born on Swans Island on July 10, 1870, Stanley was the son of Freeman W. and Aurilla Gott Stanley. Swans Island in the nineteenth century was a community of fishermen and quarry workers with little outlet for someone interested in architecture. Con-

sequently, young Freeman journeyed to Rockland, one of the largest cities in the mid-coast region, to work as a carpenter in 1890. Within a year of Stanley's arrival he had married Winifred Kent, a Swans Island girl.²

Dominating the Rockland building trades in 1890 was one contracting firm, William H. Glover and Company. Stanley's obituary indicates that he worked for a construction company, and family tradition states that it was the Glovers. This firm, one of the most respected in the state, was responsible for erecting a majority of the large Queen Anne style homes in the city. In many cases they provided design services as well. Whether working for the Glovers or on his own as a carpenter, Freeman Stanley acquired training in the stylistic fashions popular in the Rockland area at the turn of the century.³ Certainly this is evident in two of Stanley's earliest projects, the houses for his sister Vesta Stanley Stewart and Fannie Gott on Swans Island (Figures 1 and 2). Both residences are late examples of the Queen Anne mode, featuring asymmetrical massing and ornate decorative woodwork. These houses, apparently constructed at the turn of the century, document the persistence of Victorian architectural styles.⁴



Figure 1. Chester and Vesta Stewart House, Swans Island, c. 1910 view (Courtesy of Norman Stanley).



Figure 2. Fannie Gott House, Swans Island, c. 1910 view (Courtesy of Brad Ames).

Probably the earliest bungalow in Rockland is a house built in 1909 for Wilfred Pease from plans obtained by mail from a Spokane, Washington firm, Keith and White. This unpretentious structure was overshadowed in the following year by the city's most distinguished bungalow, the Nathan Allen House, which was built by Freeman Stanley.⁵ Stanley has not yet been documented as the architect of the residence, but in supervising its construction he would have gained an understanding of this new mode. The Allen House commands a large lot with streets on three sides and is characteristic of the bungalow with its low pitched gable roof, wide overhanging eaves, and squat porch posts. Although the interior spatial flow between the study, living room, and parlor is relatively open, as was typical of bungalows, its central hall and staircase suggests a more traditional plan. The carved neo-classical capitals in the hall also reflect the influence of Colonial Revival taste.

It is not clear when Stanley first provided architectural drawings as a service to his clients. In city directories he was always listed as "F. A. Stanley, Building Contractor". It was in that capacity that he designed and built his early houses, as well as the Odd Fellows Hall of 1909 on Swans Island. Surviving drawings signed by Stanley document that he did prepare original designs, and by the 1920s he was evidently Rockland's principal architect. This aspect of his career is confirmed by his son, Norman, who also relates that his father was happiest

at the drafting table. Freeman Stanley's earliest known architectural design for a bungalow is the Virgil Studley House of 1917 in Rockland. The exterior is, like the Allen House, characteristic of the bungalow; and in a view taken shortly after its construction we can see a house which, unlike its nineteenth century neighbors, would fit comfortably on a street in any town in America (Figures 3 and 4).

One of the most dramatic changes with bungalow homes came in the floor plan, which typically was opened up by the elimination of halls and doors. In the Studley House the main entrance leads directly into the living room, which is joined to the dining room by an opening enframed with short columns on pedestals. Another characteristic of bungalow floor plans was to have most of the rooms, including bedrooms, on the first floor. This presented the architect with a particularly difficult organization problem. A first floor plan for an unidentified project by Stanley illustrates one solution to this problem (Figure 5). The main entry opens into a large living room with a cobblestone fireplace. To the left is a "sun room", positioned to obtain the exposure often lost in much of the house through wide overhanging eaves and porches. In addition to a dining room and kitchen, this plan includes two bedrooms and a full bath. Typically, the staircase is located toward the rear of the house and is purely functional.

Stanley's work in this idiom continued into the 1920s with the first Arthur Rokes House and the Kirkpatrick House, both of about 1924. Drawings for

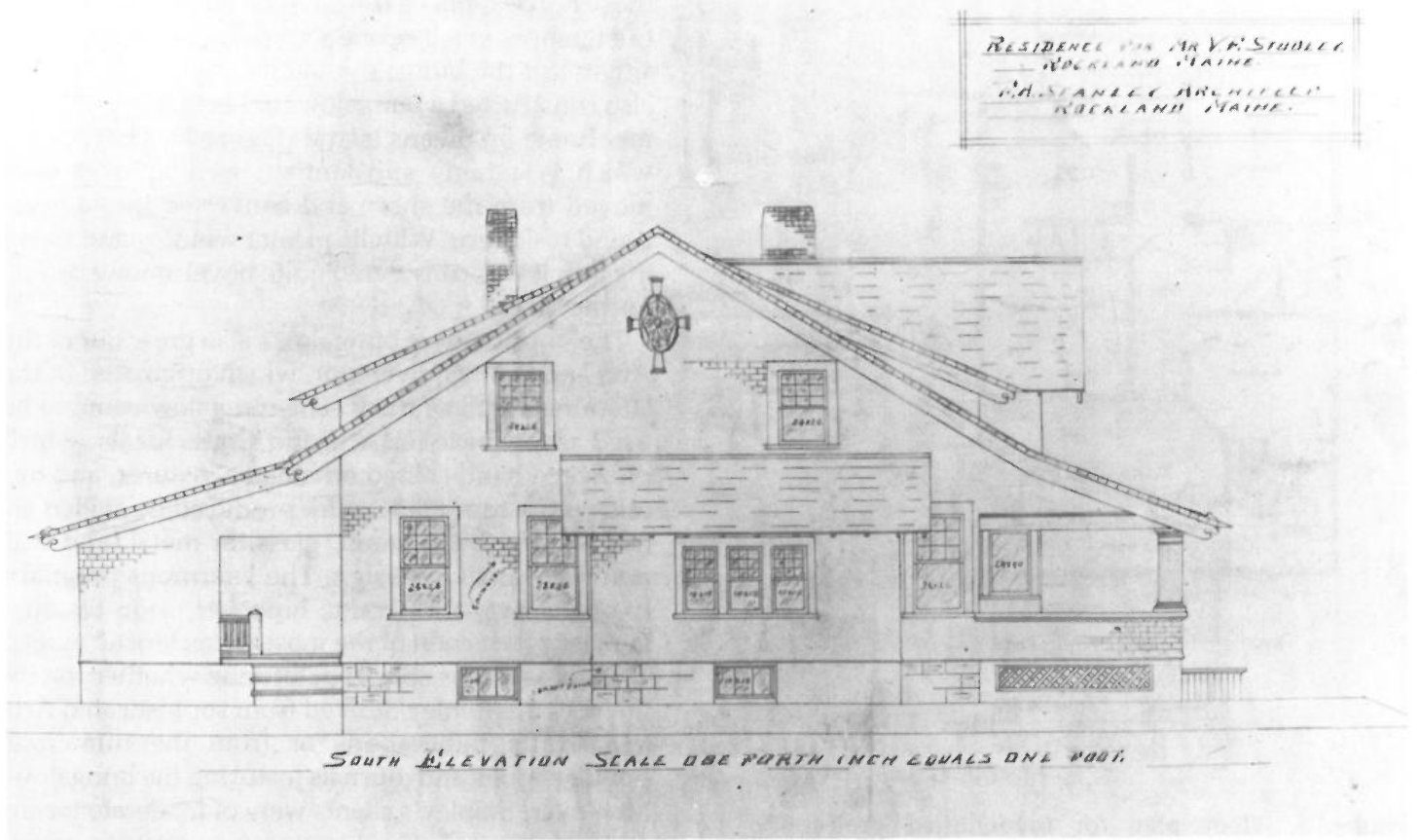


Figure 3. South elevation of Virgil Studley House, Rockland, 1917 (Courtesy of Norman Stanley).



Figure 4. Virgil Studley House, Rockland, c. 1920 view (Courtesy of Richard Warner).

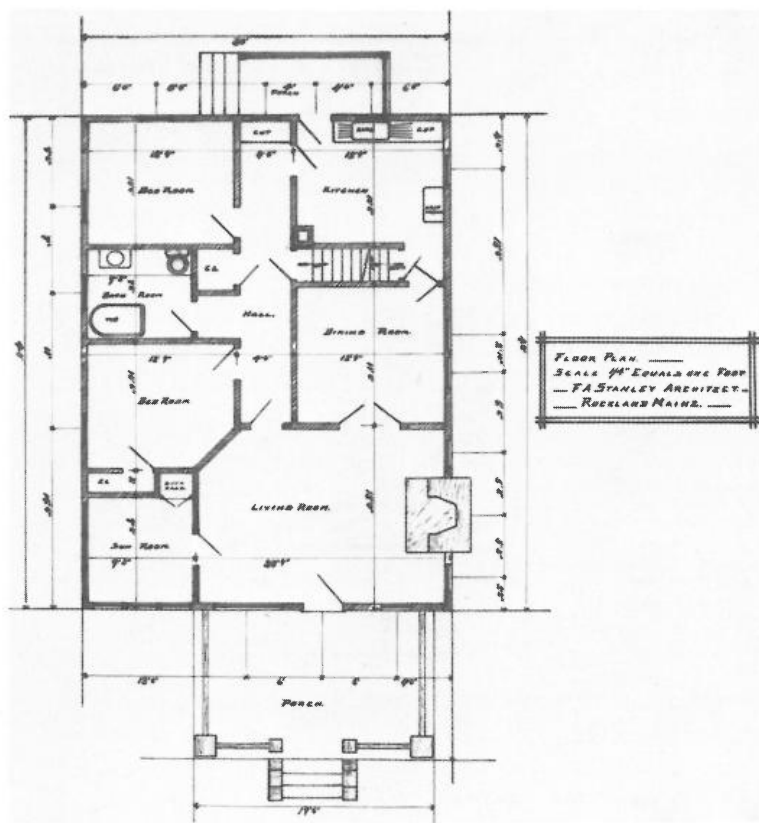


Figure 5. Floor plan for unidentified project by Freeman Stanley (Courtesy of Norman Stanley).

these houses, plus a third which has not been identified, show small residences designed with a sensitivity for the bungalow motifs (Figure 6). Stanley also constructed a bungalow for his family as a summer home on Swans Island (Figure 7). That house, which is a fairly substantial dwelling, was later moved from the shore and converted into a year-round residence. With its picture window and sleeping loft, it was considered quite novel among people on the island.⁶

The popularity of bungalows also grew out of the Arts and Crafts movement, which originated in the late nineteenth century. The bungalow came to be used as a vehicle for Arts and Crafts ideals, which promoted hand-crafted ornaments, fixtures, and furniture. Custom-made work produced by skilled artisans could be in wood, glass, or metal, and was non-traditional in design. The enormous popularity of the Arts and Crafts, however, soon resulted in mass production of the most characteristic motifs. Thus, it is impossible to determine whether the influences on Stanley derived from sophisticated Arts and Crafts publications or from the numerous popular books and journals featuring the bungalow. Moreover, Stanley's clients were of moderate means and unable to afford expensive craftsmanship. Nonetheless, hand-crafted wooden light fixtures in the Studley House are clear examples of Arts and Crafts influences.

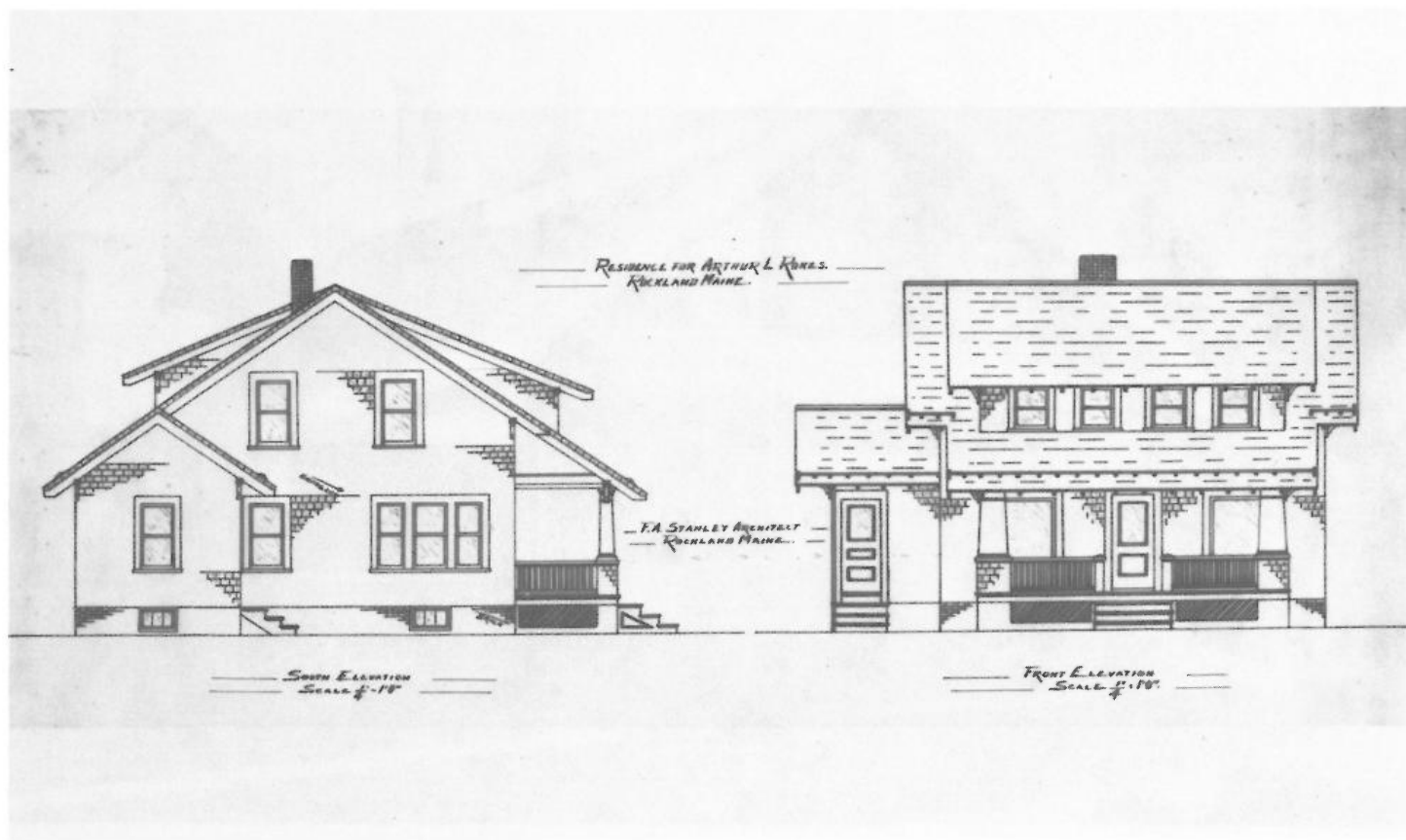


Figure 6. Front and south elevations of First Arthur Rokes House, c. 1924, (Courtesy of Norman Stanley).



Figure 7. Freeman Stanley Cottage, Swans Island, c. 1920 view (Courtesy of Norman Stanley).

Stanley's other documented designs included the popular styles of the period, such as a "Colonial" house for Charles Sheldon about 1925 and a "Dutch Colonial" for Lincoln McRae about 1929. The Sheldon House on Masonic Street in Rockland was probably inspired by an earlier Colonial Revival style home on Main Street, which was itself based on one of Maine's great Georgian masterpieces, the Lady Pepperrell House in Kittery. Other documented work includes drawings for buildings of little or no architectural pretension, such as an automobile garage for David Rubenstein⁷ and a group of four duplexes for the Rockland Building Company erected about 1920 on Court Street.⁸

With the advent of the Great Depression in the 1930s, Stanley's career suffered as did that of every architect and builder. His last major project was a second house for Arthur Rokes, built in 1933 (Figure 8). Stanley's careful attention to detail produced a fine late example of the bungalow tradition without many of the characteristic motifs. The handsomely finished interior woodwork and carefully organized plan demonstrates the architect's skills. The house is somewhat novel for its attached two-car garage with a cement drive and direct access into the kitchen. This feature, which became common with post-World War II homes, no doubt derived from the fact that Arthur Rokes was a taxi driver by occupation, and automobiles figured prominently in his life.

The second Rokes House may, in fact, have been Freeman Stanley's last design. His obituary reports that he died on May 17, 1934, after a two month illness. In addition to a career as a respected carpenter and builder, Stanley's impact as an architect was such that his adopted city of Rockland has perhaps the highest concentration of bungalows in the state.

Roger G. Reed
August, 1987

Notes

- ¹ *The Industrial Journal*, Bangor, March, 1910, p. 6.
- ² Freeman Stanley obituary, *Rockland Courier-Gazette*, May 17, 1934; letter from Louise Gregory to Pauline Stanley, June 24, 1980; interview with Freeman Stanley's son, Norman Stanley, Owls Head, November, 1986.
- ³ When Stanley first came to Rockland, he apparently worked with Willard Sadler. Sadler died about 1900 and was replaced by Freeman's brother, Herman. In his capacity as a builder, Stanley constructed "Roxmont", the F. O. Havener Cottage in Rockport in the early 1900s. E. T. Sanderson of Parkersburg, West Virginia, was the architect.
- ⁵ *Rockland Courier-Gazette*, December, 13, 1910.
- ⁶ For this and the other Swans Island projects by Stanley, I am indebted for the generous assistance of Brad Ames and Nililani Bailey of Swans Island and Rachel Joyce of Stonington.
- ⁷ David Rubenstein was a noted antique dealer in his day. Stanley's son related that his father, who was a talented carver, restored many of Rubenstein's antiques.
- ⁸ There are several Stanley drawings for projects which have not been identified and may not have been built. In addition, Norman Stanley has in his possession two photographs of buildings which presumably were built by Stanley and may have been his designs as well: the Arthur Littlefield House, 120 Talbot Street, Rockland, built c. 1898, and the I. O. R. M. Hall on Swans Island, built 1908.

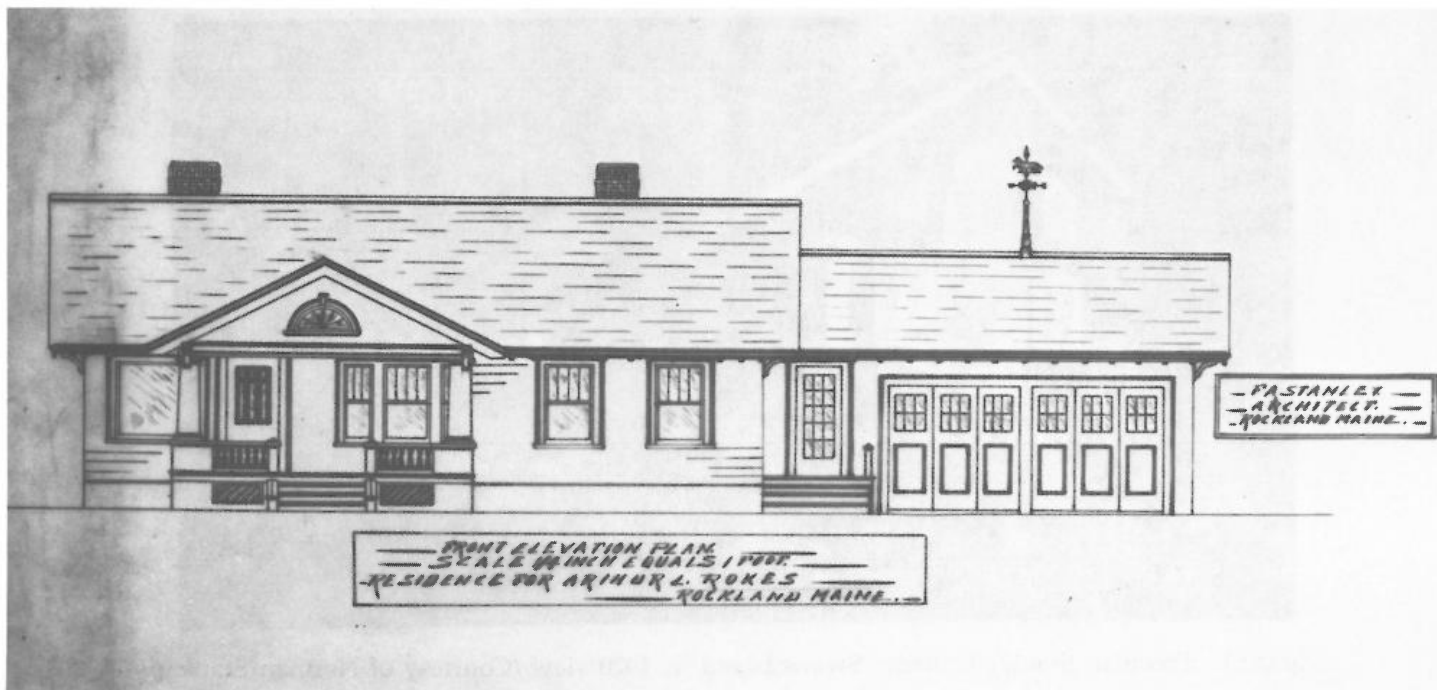


Figure 8. Front elevation of Second Arthur Rokes House, 1933, (Courtesy of Norman Stanley).

Architectural Drawings

Freeman Stanley's son, Norman Stanley, has a collection of his father's drawings, including linens, tissues, and blueprints. Eleven projects are represented.

List of Known Commissions in Maine by Freeman A. Stanley

Gus and Esther Dolliver House, Swans Island, c. 1900, Extant
 Chester and Vesta Stewart House, Swans Island, c. 1900, Altered
 Fannie Gott House, Swans Island, c. 1905, Altered
 Willis Ayer House, 54 North Main Street, Rockland, c. 1908, Extant
 Odd Fellows Hall, Swans Island, 1909, porch altered
 Addition and Garage for Freeman Stanley House, 193 Broadway, Rockland, c. 1910, Extant
 Virgil Studley House, 64 Masonic Street, Rockland, 1917, Extant
 Automobile Garage for David Rubenstein, 643 Main Street, Rockland, c. 1918, Destroyed

Freeman Stanley Cottage, Swans Island, c. 1920, Extant
 Mrs. Freeman Stanley House, Swans Island, c. 1920, Altered
 Four Duplexes for Rockland Building Company, 13-15, 17-19, 21-23, 25-27 Court Street, Rockland, c. 1920, Extant
 Katherine and Flora Kirkpatrick House, 15 Grove Street, Rockland, c. 1924, Extant
 First Arthur Rokes House, 130 Limerock Street, Rockland, c. 1924, Extant
 Charles Sheldon House, 56 Masonic Street, Rockland, c. 1925, Extant
 Hiram Dolliver House, Swans Island, c. 1925, Extant
 Richard Lufkin House, 131 Limerock Street, Rockland, c. 1927, Extant
 Lincoln McRae House, 223 Broadway, Rockland, c. 1929, Altered
 Guy Douglas House, 125 Limerock Street, Rockland, c. 1932, Extant
 Second Arthur Rokes House, 129 Limerock Street, Rockland, 1933, Extant

Photograph of Freeman Stanley and Family
 Courtesy of Norman Stanley
 Left to right, Freeman, Harold and Winifred Stanley

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