

Craftsman ~~Box~~ Four-Square

The Center House was designed at a great turning point in young architect Ernest Wood's career. After several years of designing in Chatten's late Queen Anne manner, Wood was beginning to attach historical detail to simple rectangular volumes. Within a few years his practice would acquire two clear branches, one pushing rectilinear design in a bare-bones Prairie School direction, the other resurrecting a variety of ornamental schemes in the service of scholarly period designs. But in 1906 those paths had not yet diverged; the rectangle was still encumbered with history.

The round-arched front doorway could be another vestige of historicism, but an equally likely source is Frank Lloyd Wright's use of broadly arched entries for a number of his pioneering Prairie School designs in suburban Chicago, suggesting that Wood had become directly aware of Wright's work, though he did not yet grasp all of its implications. The living room fireplace also has an arched opening, though it is in the more common segmental form and is surmounted with an egg-and-dart molding of long historic use.

current owners ~~Marcia Merkel and Barbara Helmedag~~