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Tobey Handmade Furniture

Made by the Tobey Furniture Company of Chicago, the maple library table and the smaller pedestal table in this room are hand carved pieces original to Lucknow. The Tobey Furniture Company advertised that it employed skilled Norwegian craftsmen in its workshop, who carried out all of the delicate handcraftsmanship.

Intricately carved elements like leaves, flowers, and berries were all part of the body of the piece, not done separately and applied with glue or nails. The workmanship and philosophy of the company, which celebrated the craftsman, was perfectly aligned with the ideals of the Arts and Crafts movement.



Top right: Hand carved pedestal table owned by Thomas and Olive Plant.

Above right: Early 20th Century advertisement for Tobey Furniture Company, featuring the "Library Table." The Plants owned this table; it can be seen in the Library.

Below left: Detail of hand-carving on the Plants' Library Table.

Below right: Tobey Furniture Company maker's mark found on furniture pieces at Lucknow.



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Competing Styles

Tobey Furniture Company versus Irving and Casson

The majority of the furniture chosen by the Plants for Lucknow was either purchased from Irving and Casson or the Tobey Furniture Company. While the pieces made by Irving and Casson are very traditional, gothic, and heavy in appearance, mimicking 17th and 18th century English designs, the Tobey pieces in the house have an entirely different feel. Woods like mahogany and maple are delicately carved and light surface finishes accentuate the natural wood grains. Tobey described its pieces as simple, elegant, organic, and emphasizing the natural beauty of the wood. See if you can pick out the Tobey pieces versus the Irving and Casson pieces in this home!



Above: Examples of Irving and Casson tables purchased by the Plants to furnish Lucknow.



The mahogany bureau and side table pictured here are part of a set of furniture ordered by the Plants from the Tobey Furniture Company.



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