

Style Guide for Dummies



Romantic Homes

1820-1880

- Greek Revival
- Gothic Revival
- Italianate



The Romantic Style (1820-1880) of American houses grew in popularity at a time when the U.S. was attempting to break free from English culture and looked to the ancient world for architectural inspiration. While architects like Thomas Jefferson gained influence from Rome designing early Classical and Colonial Revival styles, other American architects delved even deeper into the past of ancient Greece, the "mother of all democracies".

This inspired the Greek Revival Style, which dominated America's commercial and residential building types from about 1830 until 1850. In the 1840s another fashionable Renaissance style arose which was primarily influenced by the cathedrals, castles, and manor houses of the Middle Ages, the Gothic Revival style. The final Romantic House Style; Italianate.

Romantic Style Homes

Greek Revival

Refers to a revival of Greek themes in domestic architecture during the early nineteenth century. Revived again at the close of the nineteenth century.



Greek Revival style homes will have many of these features:

- Pedimented Gable covering entry supported by large columns
- Symmetrical Shape
- Broad and Simple Moldings
- Decorative Pilasters



In the mid-19th century, many prosperous Americans believed that ancient Greece represented the spirit of democracy. Interest in British styles had waned during the bitter War of 1812. Also, many Americans sympathized with Greece's own struggles for independence in the 1820s.

Greek Revival architecture began with public buildings in Philadelphia. Many European-trained architects designed in the popular Grecian style, and the fashion spread via carpenter's guides and pattern books. Colonnaded Greek Revival mansions - sometimes called Southern Colonial houses - sprang up throughout the American south. With its classic clapboard exterior and bold, simple lines, Greek Revival architecture became the most predominant housing style in the United States.

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Gothic Revival

Revival style with roots in medieval cathedral architecture; signature mark is the pointed arch.

The earliest Gothic Revival homes were constructed of stone and brick. The Gothic Revival style imitated the great cathedrals and castles of Europe. However, few people could afford to build grand masonry homes in the Gothic Revival style. In the United States, the ready availability of lumber and factory-made architectural trim lead to a distinctly American version of Gothic Revival. Wood-framed Gothic Revival homes became America's dominant style in the mid-1800s.

Gothic style homes will have many of these features:

- Steeply pitched roof
- Quatrefoil and Clover Shaped Windows
- Pinnacles, Battlements, and shaped Parapets
- Windows with pointed arches
- Vertical board and batten siding
- Steep cross gables
- One-story porch
- Steeply Pitched Roof
- Grouped Chimneys
- Oriel Windows
- Asymmetrical Floor Plan



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Italianate



Romantic Victorian style patterned after the ancient villas of Italy.



The Italianate style began in England with the picturesque movement of the 1840s. For the previous 200 years, English homes tended to be formal and classical in style. Then, builders began to design fanciful recreations of Italian Renaissance villas. When the Italianate style moved to the United States, it was reinterpreted again to create a uniquely American style.

By the late 1860s, Italianate was the most popular house style in the United States. Historians say that Italianate became the favored style for two reasons:

Italianate homes could be constructed with many different building materials, and the style could be adapted to modest budgets.

New technologies of the Victorian era made it possible to quickly and affordably produce cast-iron and press-metal decorations. There are fewer Italianate buildings in the southern states because the style reached its peak during the Civil War, a time when the south was economically devastated.

