

The Victorian Setting

by Rachelle Spiegel

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You have created or purchased a doll, or a family of dolls, dressed in clothing from the “Victorian “ Period. What kind of display will you create to give them a home? First, you must determine the stylistic period of your dolls’ clothing. The clothing and decorating styles of the Victorian era, which lasted from 1835 (or even 1830) to 1903 or a few years beyond, actually divide into several distinct periods. The Empire / Early Victorian period, Middle Victorian and late or High Victorian, the end of which overlaps the Edwardian in style. Time frame and details varied a little depending on the country of origin. I have analyzed the period from the American point of view.

A wonderful resource for American house styles is a periodical that has been published for many years: **Old House Journal**. While it caters to the old house dweller and restorer, with how-tos for remedying full size problems, it has a cornucopia of information relating to the period house. Subjects for articles range from an analysis of the characteristics of each home style to just what new improvements (baths, toilets, heating, lighting) went into a real house and at approximately what date. Even the advertisements are quite useful in that they show restoration wallpapers, furnishings, wall and ceiling trimmings, draperies, etc. Past issues of this magazine should be available at many libraries. You can also visit their website at:

<http://www.oldhousejournal.com/>

The Empire/Early Victorian Period

(Roughly 1830-1860)

Exteriors

The Empire, also labeled Early Victorian, Ante Bellum (Before the War-the US Civil War) or Greek Revival, marked the end of pure handcrafting and the beginning of the Industrial Revolution. The ability to produce goods more quickly and cheaply strongly influenced architecture and interior decoration.

Greek Revival

In general, the *Greek Revival* architectural style used columns, pediments, dentil moldings and various carvings. Exterior walls were of stucco, painted and/or plastered brick and white clapboard. Outer doors were generally solid double or single doors painted white or black with small windows next to or above the door in a fan shaped pattern to let in light. Large porches, verandahs or porticos can be found in this style.



Additional information can be seen at the following websites:

<http://architecture.about.com/od/periodsstyles/ig/House-Styles/saratoga-jc-3180005.htm>

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Greek_Revival

http://www.bc.edu/bc_org/avp/cas/fnart/fa267/greekrev.html

<http://www.andalusiapa.org/>

<http://www.andalusiapa.org/gallery/houseGroundsGallery.html>

<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gaineswood>

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Stanton_Hall

The Greek Revival Style (1820-1865)

Old House Journal – August 1998, p 67

Greek Revival in America

by James C. Massey and Shirley Maxwell

Old House Journal – February 2003, p. 72

Gothic Revival



Also popular during the Early Victorian period was the *Gothic Revival* style, which featured towers, turrets, castellations, pointed arches, carved stone and carved and milled wood trimming meant to copy medieval Gothic carvings. Exteriors were in natural colors like sand, moss, stone gray, slate blue, and fawn and building materials included brownstone, limestone and marble. Outer doors tended to have a pointed arch shape and perhaps an inset of leaded glass. Windows often had diamond shaped leaded panes or trefoil or quatrefoil tracery on pointed arched windows. Most popular were leaded casements and stained glass. The average window was narrow and tall, using a double hung sash with 4 over 4 panes. There might be hood molds over the windows. They had steeply pitched gable roofs, containing wall dormers (A window in a sloping roof, usually that of a sleeping-apartment), which might be made of shingle, slate or tile and might boast some decorative polygonal or cylindrical chimney pots (pipes of brick, terra-cotta, or metal placed on the top of a chimney to improve the draft to draw away noxious fumes from coal-burning fireplaces). The eaves and gable edges of these roofs were generally decorated with gingerbread trim.

An example of gingerbread:



Pugin, an English architect, furniture designer and champion of the Gothic Revival was the first architect to deplore industrialism and exalt gothic architecture and medieval furniture. Gothic Revival architecture came to America from England about 1830. Best known among its proponents was Richard Upjohn who designed Trinity Church in NYC. His churches, and those illustrated in publications like his *Rural Architecture* (1852), served as patterns for countless buildings throughout the country. Alexander Jackson Davis was the first active American architect to work in the Gothic Revival style. He published floor plans and three-dimensional views in his 1837 book, *Rural Residences*. Davis's friend and fellow architect Andrew Jackson Downing, a resident of the Hudson River Valley, also promoted the Gothic Revival in his books on "cottage villas" published in the 1840s. Sometimes, Gothic Revival Cottages are referred to as Carpenter Gothic, named after anonymous carpenter builders. An offshoot of Gothic, the Reformed Gothic style was furthered by Englishman Charles Eastlake, whose **Hints on Household Taste** was one of the most influential books of the 19th century. In America, when it came to furniture and woodwork details, Gothic Revival and Eastlake were synonymous.

For additional information:

<http://www.buffaloah.com/a/archsty/gothic/#Rev>

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gothic_Revival_architecture

http://www.bc.edu/bc_org/avp/cas/fnart/fa267/gothicrev.html

http://photos.igougo.com/pictures-photos-11581-s2-p312995-The_Willows_-_1854_Gothic_Revival.html

The Gothic in American Houses

by Patricia Poore

Old-House Interiors, Spring 1995- p. 68

Interiors

The Greek Revival house might have bright murals or scenic panels on the walls. They would be painted, papered or fabric covered and could be brilliant colored, pastels or a mix. Bedrooms and upper halls often used repeat patterns of flowers and/or birds. There might be wainscoting and a chair rail. Chinese designs were also popular.

Flooring was generally wide plank, glossy polished oak, walnut or fruitwood, or sometimes parquet. These wood floors might be covered with imported carpets. Ceilings were generally painted white and would have a medallion or rosette in the center. Windows were festooned with full drapes and a swag. A cornice might be of gilded metal or carved wood. There would be sheers for summer or Venetian blinds. Sometimes the windows were shuttered inside and /or outside.

The walls in the Gothic Revival house were often paneled in dark wood, had built in bookcases, or white plastered walls with half-timber wood designs. Rich tapestries might be hung. The desired effect was that of a romanticized Medieval castle. Flooring was dark wood parquet or marble or slate. The floors would be covered with Oriental or hooked rugs, Brussels machine-made carpeting, or animal skins such as bear or tiger. The ceilings held dark beams. A less affluent house would tend to have less woodwork; walls being wallpapered or painted and stenciled. Picture moldings, chair rails, baseboards and top moldings were always of dark woods. The less affluent homes had narrow plank floors and canvas painted floor cloths, painted stenciling, rag or hooked rugs, or a commercial floral carpet. Tartan carpeting was also popular.

For additional information:

<http://www.victorianstation.com/inter.htm>

<http://www.romanceeverafter.com/Early%20Victorian%20Period.htm>

Room Furnishings

Before beginning to decorate a room in a particular style, think about your own home, or your parents' or grandparents' homes. Generally there are furnishings contemporary with the homeowners' period and also some heirlooms from previous generations. Unless you are creating a "show home" to illustrate what was the newest style or fad, any furnishings contemporary with your dolls' costuming and **earlier** are appropriate. Accessories, wall hangings, heating (steam heat and parlor/bedroom stoves were replacing fireplaces by early Victorian times), lighting, fabrics, inventions, toys, games and sports and hobby equipment should reflect the actual period you have chosen most accurately.

In the early Victorian period popular furniture styles included Empire, with Greek/Egyptian/Roman/Louis XIV and Louis XV influenced furniture, modified

Federal styles, Rococo with carved fruits and vines, Late Duncan Phyfe (uses lyre and saber leg, but thicker and heavier than in the previous period), papier mache furniture and accessories and Gothic Revival furnishings which were influenced by Medieval ecclesiastical designs, Also appropriate to the general period are the Boston Rocker, balloon back side chair, tete a tete, Belter carved furnishings sleigh beds, canopy or half canopy beds and farmhouse furniture in the country style.

For additional information:

http://anc.gray-cells.com/p_ap.html

http://www.oldandsold.com/articles03/victorian_furniture1.shtml

http://www.oldandsold.com/articles03/victorian_furniture2.shtml