

The Mid-Victorian Period

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The intermediate period (roughly 1850-1880) continued and embellished the previous architectural styles as well as adding another layer of borrowed, reinvented and new styles. Many of these styles overlapped periods and continued in various permutations throughout the later period as well. A main distinguishing characteristic of these styles is the variation in roofs. Primary among these are the continuation and development of the Gothic Revival style, Second Empire (Mansard Roof-French), flat roofed Tuscan (Italianate), and the beginning of the High Victorian, Stick-Eastlake styles.

In general, siding materials on these homes could be clapboard, shingle, board and batten, brick, stone and/or brownstone. Roofs could be made of shingle, slate or clay tiles. Outer doors, depending on architectural style, might have an oval or square glass inset and were solid and usually double doors. Windows could be 4 over 4 (4 panes above the sash and 4 panes below), 2 over 2, or 1 over 1. They might hold stained or etched glass, occasionally be circular in shape, and might still boast Gothic leaded panes.

Second Empire:

(1855-1885)



The primary indicator of Second Empire style is the Mansard Roof , which has two slopes on each of the four sides. The lower slope is steeper than the upper slope. Dormers (A dormer is a window which is set vertically on a sloping roof. The dormer has its own roof, which may be flat, arched, or pointed) are often set in the lower slope. The upper slope is usually not visible from the ground. The term "mansard" comes from the French architect François Mansart (1598-1666) of the Beaux Arts School of Architecture in Paris, France. Mansart revived interest in this roofing style, which had been characteristic of French Renaissance architecture, and was used for portions of the Louvre. Mansard roofs were considered especially practical because they allowed usable living quarters to be placed in the attic. For this reason, older buildings were often remodeled with mansard roofs. In the United States, Second Empire -- or Mansard -- was a Victorian style, popular from the 1860s through the 1880s.

Other common characteristics are that the dormer windows project like eyebrows from the roof, the house has rounded cornices (*the uppermost section of moldings along the top of a wall or just below a roof*). at top and base of the roof, brackets beneath the eaves, balconies and bay windows.

They may also have a cupola (*a dome-shaped ornamental structure placed on the top of a larger roof or dome.*) patterned slate on the roof, wrought iron cresting above the upper cornice, paired columns, classical pediments, tall windows on the first story and/or a small entry porch. Both Italianate and Second Empire houses tend to be square in shape, and both can have U-shaped window crowns, decorative brackets, and single story porches. But, Italianate houses have much wider eaves... and they do not have the distinctive mansard roof characteristic of the Second Empire style.

Subtypes of Second Empire houses include:

The Tower House- Most often the tower is centered on the façade. The tower may be a full five stories tall, or just suggested by a center projection the same height as the house.

The Mansard Cottage – The cottage form is one and a half or two stories tall topped with a fashionable mansard roof. The house itself is a typical mid-Victorian box or L-shaped mass and its details derive from regional farmhouses or use a simplified Italianate design.

The Urban Row House- In the 1860's and 1870's this type of structure dominated city building. The mansard roof is suited to vertical town houses and party-wall row houses because the upper floor is hidden under the roof, lessening the height and apparent mass of the building. Details were derived from the French Renaissance or Italianate styles.

For further information:

<http://www.buffaloah.com/a/archsty/sec/>

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

<http://tickets.newportmansions.org/mansion.aspx?id=1005>

http://www.terracehill.org/history/look_back/prairie_palace/#

<http://tickets.newportmansions.org/mansion.aspx?id=1006>

<http://jan.ucc.nau.edu/~twp/architecture/secondempire/>



Tuscan (Italianate) (1840-1885)

The Italianate style was popularized in the United States by Alexander Jackson Davis in the 1840s as an alternative to Gothic or Greek Revival styles. It was initially referred to as the "Italian Villa" or "Tuscan Villa" style. Italianate was reinterpreted again and became an indigenous style. It is distinctive by its pronounced exaggeration of many Italian Renaissance characteristics: emphatic eaves supported by corbels, (*Originating in Medieval architecture, the name corbel was attached to a piece of stone jutting out of a wall in order to support a superincumbent weight. Although corbels were originally constructed from natural stone, as time progressed, several different materials, including wood, have been used.*) low-pitched roofs barely discernible from the ground, or even flat roofs with a wide projection. A tower is often incorporated hinting at the Italian belvedere *an architectural term adopted from Italian (literally "fair view"), which refers to any architectural structure sited to take advantage of such a view. A belvedere may be built in the upper part of a building so as to command a fine view. The actual structure can be of any form, whether a turret, a cupola, (a dome-shaped ornamental structure placed on the top of a larger roof or dome. or an open gallery (in Italian an altana) or even a campanile tower. (a free standing bell tower, often adjacent to a church).* This architectural style became more popular than Greek Revival by the late 1860s. Its popularity was due to its being suitable for many different building materials and budgets, as well as the development of cast-iron and press-metal technology making the production of decorative elements like the brackets and cornices more efficient.

For more information:

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

<http://jan.ucc.nau.edu/~twp/architecture/italianate/>

<http://www.ontarioarchitecture.com/italianate.htm>

<http://video.about.com/architecture/Is-Your-House-an-Italian-.htm>

<http://www.cmhpf.org/S&RR/berryhill.html>

<http://www.cmhpf.org/S&RR/ingleside.html>

Stick Style (1862-1890)



Stick Style is the culmination of a vernacular building tradition that began in America in the 1840's. These houses are part of the tradition of timber construction that harkens back to Old England and Scandinavia. The style can be traced to the "Swiss cottages" and wood trussed folk houses of the 1850's plan books and Andrew Jackson Downing's 1840's picturesque style (an extension of Carpenter Gothic). Just before the Civil War, the vernacular tradition became an established style and Stick Style houses were built throughout the 1870's and 1880's. Ultimately, the stick style is about carpentry and the latest advances in wood technology. The houses are generally light and irregular in feel; a form made possible by the new system of balloon-frame construction with 2x4 lumber and nails. Projecting bays, gables and porches, towers and dormers are common and roof configurations are complex. Characteristic of the houses was a vertical emphasis through the use of boards framing windows and panelizing the façade, as well as chamfers (*A chamfer is a beveled edge connecting two surfaces. If the surfaces are at right angles, the chamfer will typically be symmetrical at 45 degrees. A flat surface made by cutting off the edge or corner of a block of wood or other material or a furrow or groove, as in a column.*), cutaway corners, trusses (*a truss is a structure comprising one or more triangular units constructed with straight slender members whose ends are connected at joints. The members of a truss are considered to only act intension or compression.*), and medieval roof and chimney details.

Well-known architects like Richard Morris Hunt and Frank Furness worked in this style, building consciously "vernacular" houses with bold structural timber

elements embellished with stick trusses, braces and grilles, the style was also influenced by Charles Eastlake. His suggestions in *Hints on Household Taste* (1868) regarding the simplification of furniture ornament was re-interpreted in America to embrace the use of exterior millwork that was aggressively turned, sawn and carved. The Stick house was the first style to use incised verge boards (*the board appearing at the gable edge of a roof, often with decorative patterns*), fret sawn railings and porches ringed with spindles. The houses generally were built with tall windows, were multiple stories, had surface ornament along sharply pitched roofs and they boasted monumental towers. The overwhelmingly defining characteristic is the stick work; wood facing and ornament that echoes their structural framing.

The Stick style house had a resurgence of popularity during the psychedelic era of the 1960's-70's, The houses were painted with electric colors and would make a great setting for your hippie dolls as well as your Victorians.

For more information:

<http://www.capemaytimes.com/history/physick.htm>

<http://www.welshcolor.com/physick.html>

<http://www.marktwainhouse.org/thehouse/index.shtml>

<http://www.essential-architecture.com/A-AMERICA-N/USA/USA-RhodeIsland/RI-005.htm>

http://www.lib.umassd.edu/digicoll/stickarch/stickarch_index.html?building=Griswold

<http://www.cohen-brayhouse.info/>

Old House Journal, April 2000, p67

Old House Journal, June 2003, p84

Interiors

During this period a house in town would boast bold, floral, gilt, flocked wallpaper, paper with elaborate patterns and Japanese influenced designs on its walls. Tapestries were sometimes hung as well. Inside a country home or farmhouse the walls would be painted, stenciled, or wallpapered. Inner doors could be solid, sometimes sliding (pocket doors), or French doors (double doors with small glass panes). Ceilings could be plastered or painted, either with a design or in a solid color. They could be fairly ornate, with a center medallion, plaster carvings, or pressed tin, or have applied wood carvings with colorful designs. The house might boast varnished floors in parquet, inlaid or might be of even, narrow planking. It might have carpeting in floral or other patterns, sometimes wall to wall, Oriental rugs, animal skin rugs (bear or tiger), hooked,

braided or rag rugs. A popular style was to layer area rugs on top of full carpeting.

There were no electric lights yet, so lighting still came from candles, kerosene lamps with ornate, decorative bases and glass chimneys and gasoliers with glass shades and fancy metalwork fixtures.

Lavish curtains in a proliferation of styles prevailed by mid-century. They were used on windows, doors, beds, and even on chimney breasts and pianos. So much fabric was used that the rooms seemed very dark. Heavy trimmings and blinds were essential to this look.

Plumbing had come a long way, but the flush toilet was not invented until 1876 by Thomas Crapper. Those homes, (mostly in town), that boasted plumbing (and a bathroom of sorts), used a gravity flush toilet with a cistern tank top, wooden based toilet, tub and sink. If there were faucets in the bathroom, the kitchen would also have them. In the country, it was much more common for the house to still have a separate outhouse, If there was any plumbing, there might be spigots at the kitchen sink.

There was a conflict between tradition and reform in the mid to late 19th century. Three approaches to decorating emerged. One entailed careful research in an attempt to recreate a past style accurately. Another, less concerned with authentic detail, aimed to capture the spirit of an earlier style.. Third, there was eclecticism,; a general mixing of styles which sometimes worked, but more often seemed chaotic.

Furniture styles included Gothic with pointed and lacy carvings, Classical, Rococo, Eastlake, Renaissance Revival and Elizabethan style spool furniture. Many different woods, including walnut, ebony, mahogany, cedar, rosewood, fruitwood, pine, oak and maple were used to make chests, bureaus, plant stands, marble topped tables, desks, etageres, bookcases, buffets and dining room tables, rockers, bedroom sets, totally wooden chairs and upholstered chairs and sofas. The mid 19th century brought balloon-back chairs and sofas and the introduction of coil-springing and deep-buttoning, Upholstery was luxuriant and curvy. By the 1880's buttoning had gone out of fashion. Velvet, needlepoint and Berlin wool work were popular for upholstery, followed b a little later in the century by loose covers made from striped fabric or floral chintz. Dining chairs were covered in stamped leather or tapestry and Aesthetic and Eastlake chairs were often covered in two different cloths. Papier mache furniture, usually lacquered black and then decorated became popular as did bentwood furniture. Dressing tables were draped in muslin or calico. With the development of aniline dyes, deep, rich colors became the norm. Especially popular were greens, blue-green, maroon, bottle-green, Prussian blue, yellow, and purple. Mass production of fabrics greatly widened the choices for the home decorator.

For more information:

<http://www.victorianweb.org/art/design/gothic/gallery1.html>

<http://www.victoriana.com/Furniture/>

<http://rarevictorian.com/2008/08/herter-brothers-eye-candy.html>

<http://www.vam.ac.uk/collections/furniture/index.html>

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