

1900- 1955

20TH CENTURY ECLECTICISM

By the end of the 19th century, two major trends, one moving toward precise copies of historical architecture, and the other moving away from traditional architectural forms, were evident in residential architecture. These two main architectural “camps,” traditional vs. modern, characterize much residential construction at the beginning of the 21st century with the traditional approach continuing to dominate the marketplace for new house construction.

Among the traditional architectural house styles of the early 20th century are styles reminiscent of the Georgian and Colonial Revival, southwestern colonial revival and the Elizabethian-inspired Tudor revival. Contrasted with these forms are modernist styles that reflected new ways of planning, being built with stuccos, brick and stone veneers. Paint colors tended to vary according to style. Features identified with the Tudor style often include dark trim colors of browns, maroons, deep olives and greens. Georgian and Colonial Revival houses were generally light: white, gray, gray-blue, gray-green, or yellow on the body, with white trim and window sashes and dark shutters and doors. Modernist house tended to be painted in light neutrals with dark sashes and bold accents of bright, primary colors.

Andover Cream	Appleton	Asher Benjamin	Beauport Aubergine	Bulfinch Blue	Codman Claret
Cottage Green	Elise	Emily	Emma	Fieldstone	Gedney Green
Gropius Gray	Hawthorne	Hitching Post	Jewett White	Jonquil	Lady Banksia
Langdon Dove	Lucinda	Melville	Monument Gray	Newbury Moss	Pale Organza
Parsnip	Plymouth Beige	Pointed Fir	Portobello	Portsmouth Blue	Quincy Granite
Rocky Hill	Saxon Blue	Seal Blue	Tyson Taupe	Venetian Glass	Vinal Haven
Volute	Winter Harbor	Yarmouth Oyster			

SOURCES

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A Field Guide to American Houses, New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1984

PHILLIPS, STEVEN J.
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SUGGESTED READING

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Interior House Painting Colours and Technology, 1615 - 1840, New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1996

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***Paint in America*, Washington, D.C.: The Preservation Press, National Trust for Historic Preservation, 1994

Century of Color: Exterior Decoration for American Buildings - 1820/1920, Watkins Glen, NY: American Life Foundation, 1981

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Victorian Exterior Decoration, NY: Henry Holt & Co., 1987

Victorian Interior Decoration: American Interiors 1830 - 1900, NY: Henry Holt & Co., 1986

WHARTON, EDITH & CODMAN, OGDEN JR.
The Decoration of Houses, NY: W.W. Norton & Co., 1997

** Available through Historic New England: 617-227-3957, ext. 227 or www.historicnewengland.org

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION SOURCES

Old House Journal, A magazine containing articles on restoring and maintaining old houses; product advertising.
Two Main Street
Gloucester, MA 01930
Subscriptions: (800) 234-3797

Traditional Building Magazine, “The Professional’s Source for Historical Products”
69A Seventh Avenue
Brooklyn, NY 11217
(718) 636-0788 www.traditional-building.com

A GUIDE TO COLOR, STYLES AND ARCHITECTURAL PERIODS



This guide provides general descriptions of the architectural styles of homes and buildings found across America. There are overlapping brackets of time and many interior and exterior colors, used interchangeably, were popular in more than one era.

The descriptions and color lists serve as a springboard to what is possible when painting a building’s exterior, trim, interior walls and floors as well as details like accents, decorative stenciling and overlays.

Using this guide and the Historic Colors of America, homeowners and professionals can create the effect of a given historic period while applying variations to suit personal tastes.

Note: Technical information and assistance with paint analysis may be found by contacting a local historical society through your State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO). Professional services are also available through Historic New England. For more information call 617.227.3957



Mid 1600’s-1780

COLONIAL

The early colonists arriving in the New World from Europe brought with them the prevailing architectural styles and building practices of their native countries. Most colonial dwellings built during the 1600’s might be classified as folk houses if they did not so strongly reflect the distinctive traditions of their countries of origin. Old World practices persisted in Colonial empires well beyond the end of European rule.

Original Colonial styles were built primarily along the east coast, gulf coast and portions of the southwest. They were built before the era of industrialization, and unaltered examples have a characteristic “handmade” quality in such details as doors, windows, brickwork or siding. The most characteristic Colonial house is usually a one or two-story box, two rooms deep with symmetrical windows. Many examples of colonial houses survive today and are among the most popular styles of American building.

Asian Jute	Blonde Lace	Blue Winged Teal	Bold Bolection	Burnished Pewter	Burnt Umber
Chocolate	Cogswell Cedar	English Bartlett	Farmhouse Ochre	Georgian Yellow	Ginger Root
Grassy Meadow	Knightley Straw	Langdon Dove	Lexington Blue	Liberty	Meetinghouse Blue
Milkweed	Nankeen	Newport Indigo	Otis Madeira	Parsnip	Pettingill Sage
Phillips Green	Pitch Pine	Polished Pewter	Portobello	Pumpkin	Quincy Granite
Rawhide	Redrock Canyon	Sayward Pine	Shaker Red	Standish Blue	Tailor’s Buff
Tankard Gray	Tory Blue	Vinal Haven	Wainscot Green	Warren Tavern	Wooden Nutmeg
Wooly Thyme					

1780-1830

FEDERAL

The Federal style was the dominant style of the new Republic. During this period the population tripled in size and expanded to the west and south. The style was mostly concentrated in prosperous port cities of the eastern seaboard in Massachusetts, Rhode Island, Maine, New Hampshire, Pennsylvania, New York, South

Carolina and Georgia. Diversity of spatial planning found in interiors of the period reflected the style of Robert Adam, the gifted English architect who also popularized design elements such as swags, garlands and urns.

Symmetry, lightness and delicacy characterize the Federal or Adam style. One of the earliest examples of this style was the ceiling in the Mount Vernon dining room, executed for George Washington in 1775. In general, Federal houses may be rectilinear and boxlike, with perhaps an elliptical fanlight over the front door and sidelights flanking the door. Door trim may include thin columns or pilasters and curved or octagonal projections may reveal the shape of interior rooms. Also characteristic are curving steps and windows recessed within arches. The roof is often concealed behind a balustrade.

Amelia	Appleton	Asian Jute	Barrett Quince	Bayberry Wax	Boardman
Bristol Green	Bulfinch Blue	Burnt Umber	Citadel Blue	Coral Springs	Curry
English Bartlett	Farmhouse Ochre	Flaxen Field	Georgian Yellow	Grasshopper	Green Bonnet
His. Morning Dew	India Trade	Jackson Antique	Jewett White	Knightley Straw	Langdon Dove
Longfellow	Lucinda	Lyman Camellia	Meetinghouse Blue	Mountain Laurel	Parsnip
Pettingill Sage	Phelps Putty	Pumpkin	Quincy Granite	Rain Barrel	Rundlet Peach
Sandy Bluff	Stagecoach	Tory Blue	Tudor Ice	Vinal Haven	Viscaya
Wainscot Green	Wild Oats	Wooden Nutmeg	Woodstock Rose	York Bisque	

1825-1855

GREEK REVIVAL

The Greek Revival period began and ended in this country with public buildings built in Philadelphia. One of the most familiar icons of American architecture is the full-colonnaded Greek Revival mansion of the southern states with its large veranda or living porch. The front-gabled house was popularized in the early nineteenth century and became the predominant form of urban houses in the northeast and Midwest well into the twentieth century.

The classical temple form with a portico across the entire front and the roof ridge running from front to back is employed for buildings of all kinds and sizes including cottages. Dormers are rare and roofs are generally gabled or of low pitch. The front door is typically surrounded by narrow sidelights with a row of transom lights above. The most common types of ornament are the anthemion and the Greek fret, wide pilasters and deep, heavy cornices. Wooden buildings were invariably painted white.

Amish Green	Asian Jute	Brattle Spruce	Canyon Gold	Danish Pine	Flaxen Field
Jackson Antique	Jewett White	Langdon Dove	Nankeen	Parsnip	Phelps Putty
Plymouth Beige	Quincy Granite	Rain Barrel	Sandy Bluff	Sayward Pine	Vinal Haven
Wild Oats	Winter Meadow	Yarmouth Oyster			

1840-1900

VICTORIAN

The styles that were popular during the long reign of Britain’s Queen Victoria are generally referred to as “Victorian”. Growth of railroads and industrialization led to changes in mass productions and shipping of house components, while the development of mechanized saws and lathes let to a profusion of wooden ornament. The extravagant use of complex shapes and elaborate detailing are clearly reflected in these landmark houses.

Late Victorian styles of this period, also known as “Stick” and “Queen Ann”, became intertwined and tend to overlap each other. Characteristics such as multicolored walls, asymmetrical facades, and steeply pitched roofs are common features. Dwellings were built with every conceivable type of trim including wooden lacework, patterned shingles, porches and towers with conical roofs. Roofs are often complex with cross gables, conical turrets, dormers and decorative brackets beneath eaves. Finials and crestings were frequently used to decorate the roof ridges.

Alden Till	Amish Green	Asian Jute	Baize	Bargeboard Brown	Bean Pot
Beetroot	Biloxi Blue	Blonde Lace	Bowen Blue	Brattle Spruce	Britches
Brookside	Brownstone	Burnt Umber	China Aster	Clementine	Coastal Sand
Codman Claret	Concord Grape	Cottage Green	Covered Bridge	Cummings Oak	Curry
English Bartlett	Farmhouse Ochre	Fieldstone	Flowering Chestnut	Gable Green	Gedney Green
Georgian Yellow	Ginger Root	Glacier Bay	Goldenrod	Hazelwood	Hickory Nut
Knightley Straw	Madder	Maple	Marrett Apple	Moss Glen	Muted Mulberry
Newbury Moss	Palomino	Pettingill Sage	Picholine	Plum Island	Pointed Fir
Portsmouth Spice	Pumpkin	Redrock Canyon	Richardson Brick	Robin’s Egg	Roseland
Sayward Pine	Stagecoach	Sturgis Gray	Tailor’s Buff	Toffee	Veranda Blue
Vermont Slate	Warren Tavern	Whispering Willow	Winter Balsam	Winter Meadow	Wooden Nutmeg
Wooly Thyme					