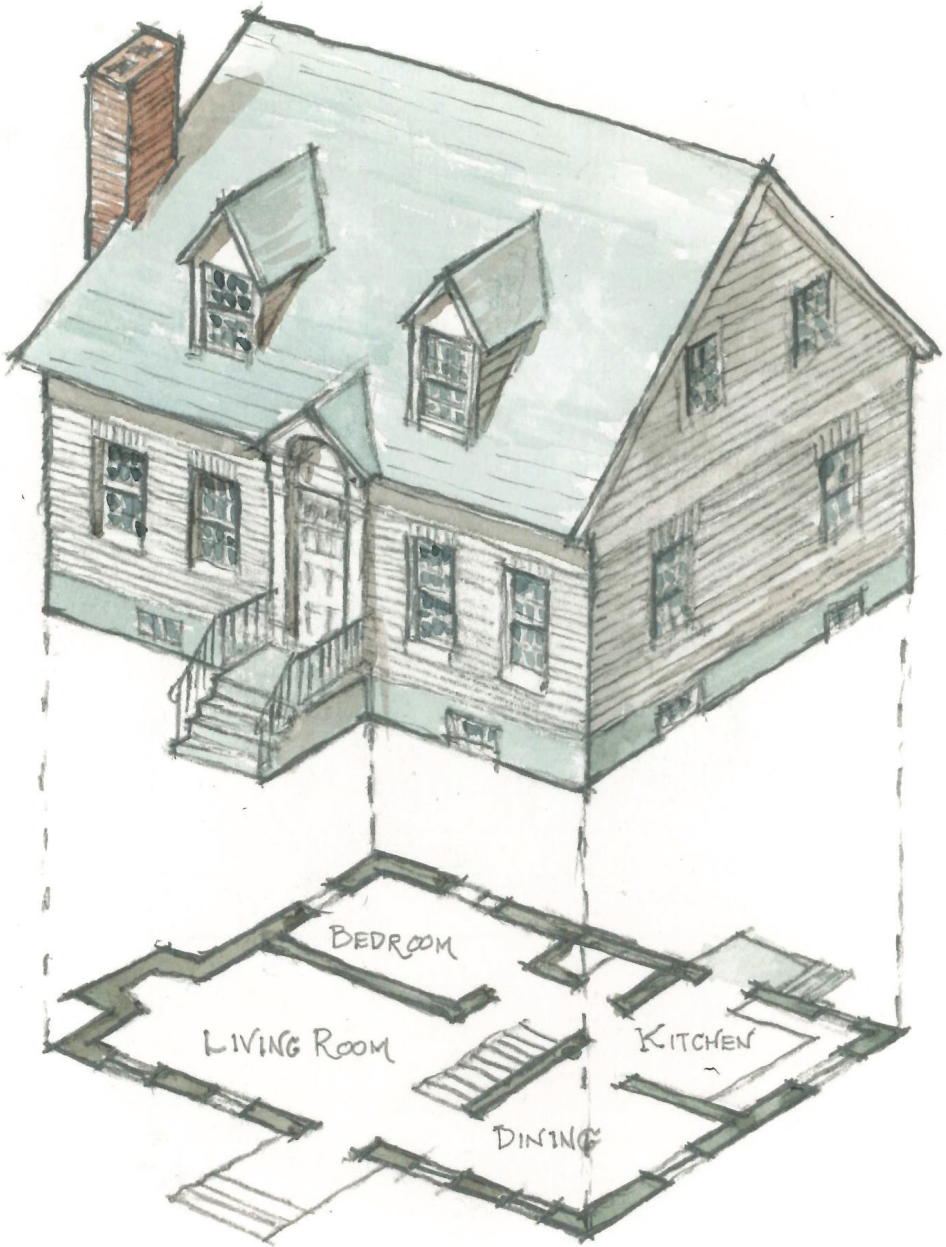
American Colonial Revival

Historic Resources • Santa Barbara, California



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INTRODUCTION

Enthused for the 100th anniversary of nationhood, the late 1800's saw a resurgence of Colonial-style architecture, which soon grew into a massive movement. Across the nation, American Colonial Revival became the strongest house style of the first half of the 20th century, dominating the vernacular architecture of America. Having left a lasting impression on house design, its affect on the city of Santa Barbara continues to this day.

This American Colonial Revival on Upper State Street features a triangular pediment over the portico that is in the center of the symmetrical façade.

The American Colonial Revival house in the Upper East neighborhood has the distinguishing elements of the centrally located front entrance surrounded by sidelights, under a portico with slender columns, four-over-four divided light, double hung windows and operable, louvered shutters.

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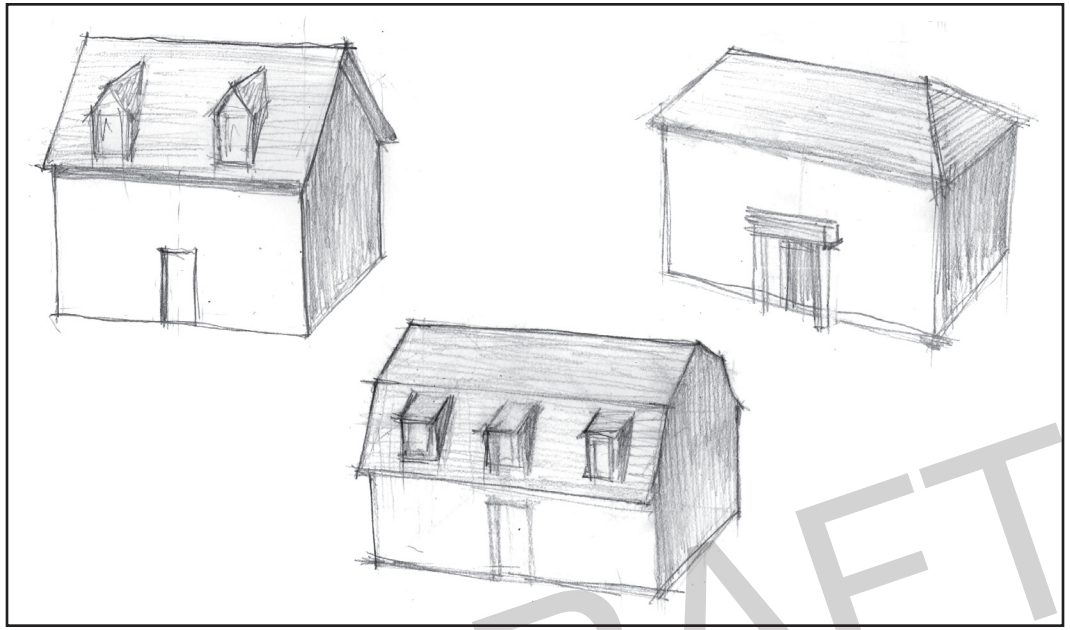
HISTORY

American Colonial Revival started in 1876 at the Philadelphia Centennial. It soon began to influence two Victorian styles of architecture. A portion of the developing Queen Anne architecture became Queen Anne Free Classic that has much the same detailing as American Colonial Revival, but had the asymmetry and massing of the Queen Anne, while the Shingle style exhibited traits of early Colonial shingle lean-to additions, as well as some classical detailing, such as Palladian windows.

As it became more popular, American Colonial Revival began to change from a style inspired by the early Colonial period, to a style with highly historically accurate recreation of architecture details. Periodicals published articles that included photographs and measured drawings of various early Colonial buildings.

In Santa Barbara, American Colonial Revival has a presence, but it was not as strong as in other parts of the country. This was in part because of the strength of Mission Revival, Craftsman, and Spanish Colonial Revival styles in Santa Barbara during the early 1900's when American Colonial Revival was popular on a national scale. It was nevertheless a key part of Santa Barbara's architectural repertoire and many examples can be found in the Lower Riviera neighborhood.



MASSING & OVERALL FORM

There are many forms of American Colonial Revival houses which occurred in various times throughout the country. In Santa Barbara, the most frequently occurring were the side-gabled roof, the Gambrel roof, and the side-hipped roof.

Nationally, they tended to be two-story with fairly steep-sloped roofs. In Santa Barbara, American Colonial Revival houses are mostly two-story, but the roof pitch of both the gable and the hip tend to be shallow.

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CHARACTER DEFINING FEATURES

Roof, Cornice and Eave Details: The cornice of the American Colonial Revival architecture is a key feature. Following the Georgian and Adam styles of the original Colonial period, American Colonial Revival buildings have a boxed cornice that includes molding details such as dentils or modillions. There are some American Colonial Revival buildings that break with their earlier Colonial precedents by having open eaves with rafter tails.

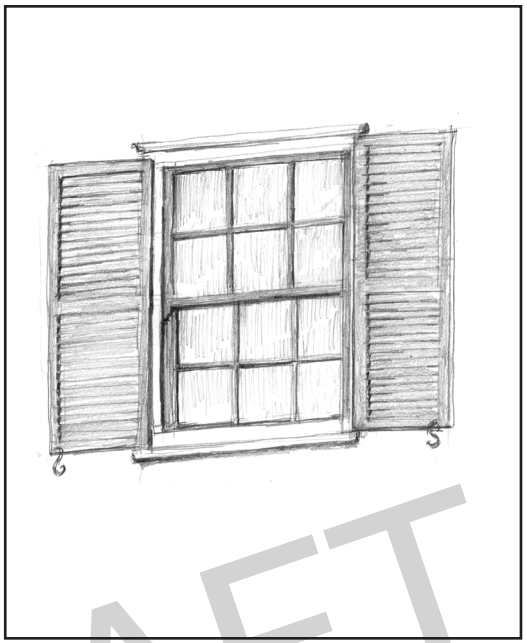
Porch Columns: The entrance of the American Colonial Revival house is usually centrally located, helping to establish the bilateral symmetry of the front façade. Detailing, such as porticos with a curved underside and intricate molding profiles, are often based on early Colonial precedents. Slender columns (sometimes paired) are frequently used.

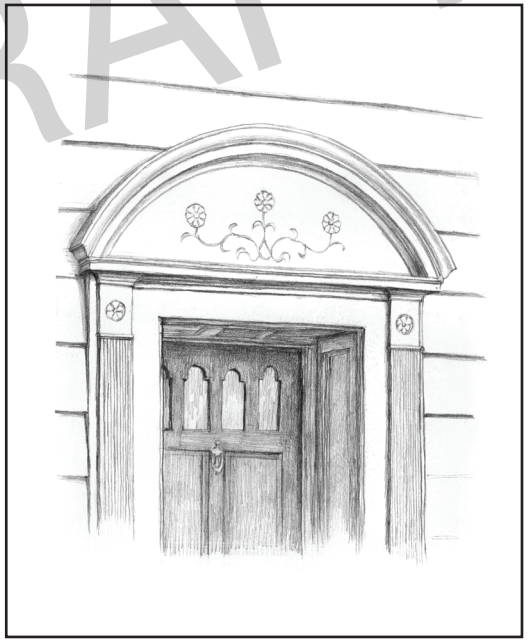
Doors: The solid, paneled, front entrance wood doors have semicircular fanlights and side-lights.

Windows: Windows in this style are typically rectangular with double-hung sashes in which both lower and upper sashes are operable. Sashes are sometimes subdivided into 6, 8, 9, or 12 panes, which references America's early period when large panes of glass were not common since they were expensive and hard to transport without breaking. Bay windows, paired windows, or tripled windows are also used in American Colonial Revival, although they are not found in early Colonial examples. Operable, louvered shutters, which are each half the window width that if closed they would perfectly cover the window, are often present.

Dormers and Chimneys: If dormers are incorporated into the roof, they are always gabled and aligned vertically with the windows and central door. Chimneys are often located at the gable ends of the houses.

Wall Materials: American Colonial Revival buildings in Santa Barbara are made of wood siding.





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