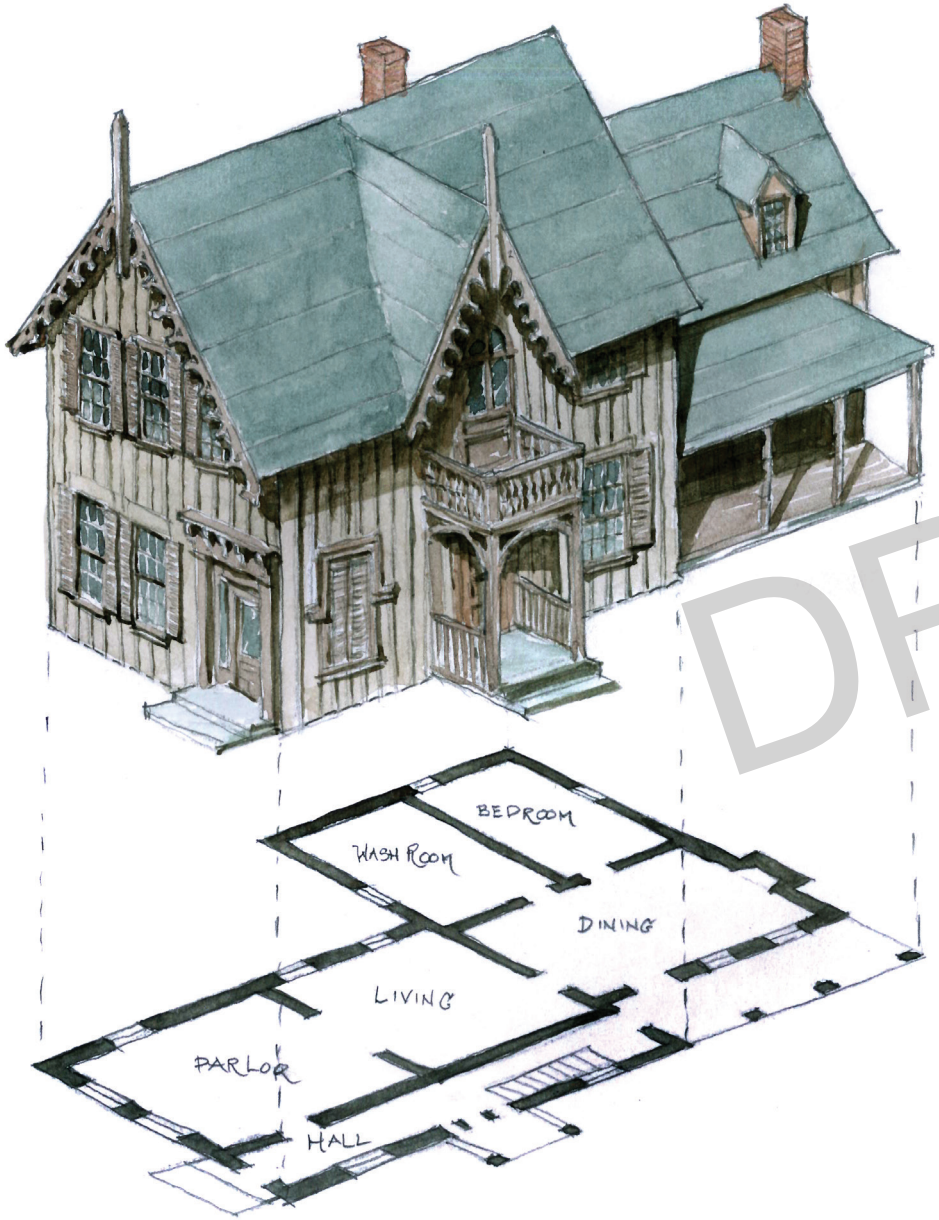
Gothic Revival

Historic Resources • Santa Barbara, California



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Introduction

One of the earliest forms of Anglo architecture in Santa Barbara was the wood cladding of the adobes. Once Stearns Wharf was open, elaborate wood work was shipped from the east coast. The ease of shipping materials in the late 1800's allowed popular east coast architectural styles to be more available in Santa Barbara. Gothic Revival is noted for intricate wood detailing cut from a scroll saw that was improved enough to be used to cut the delicate ornamental patterns at the roof eaves of the gabled ends and porches. Gothic Revival improvises upon features that were carved in stone in authentic Gothic architecture. The result was a style that was familiar in its close relation to several other Victorian styles, yet unique in a variety of ways.

In downtown Santa Barbara a Gothic Revival house has intricate woodwork in the steeply pitched gables, wood cut-outs placed over the rectangular window so that it appears to be pointed and a character-defining bay window

In the upper west side of Santa Barbara at 2020 Chapala Street, this Gothic Revival style church was constructed in 1875 and is a designated City Landmark. Its intricate woodwork in the steeply pitched gable and the decorative cross bracing over the front entrance are examples of character defining features of the style.

HISTORY

Thoroughly popular throughout the United States from 1830 to 1870, Gothic Revival architecture was influential during Santa Barbara's early period of growth. The style originally began as the Gothic Revival style in England in the 1700's and soon the trend spread to America and was championed by Andrew Jackson Davis, and Andrew Jackson Downing by their popular book at the time, Rural Residences and The Architecture of the Country House.

Primarily influential in the single-family, rural residential architecture, the Gothic Revival style also found favor in religious and some public buildings. Since the style was promoted as a rural residence, and since the steeply pitched roofs and wide porches did not adapt well to narrow lots, it was rarely used in an urban residential setting.

Gothic Revival continued to be influential in Santa Barbara through the late 1800's. Although few in number, existing examples of Gothic Revival architecture in Santa Barbara range from small, simple residences, to rural country houses, to churches that dot the downtown neighborhoods.

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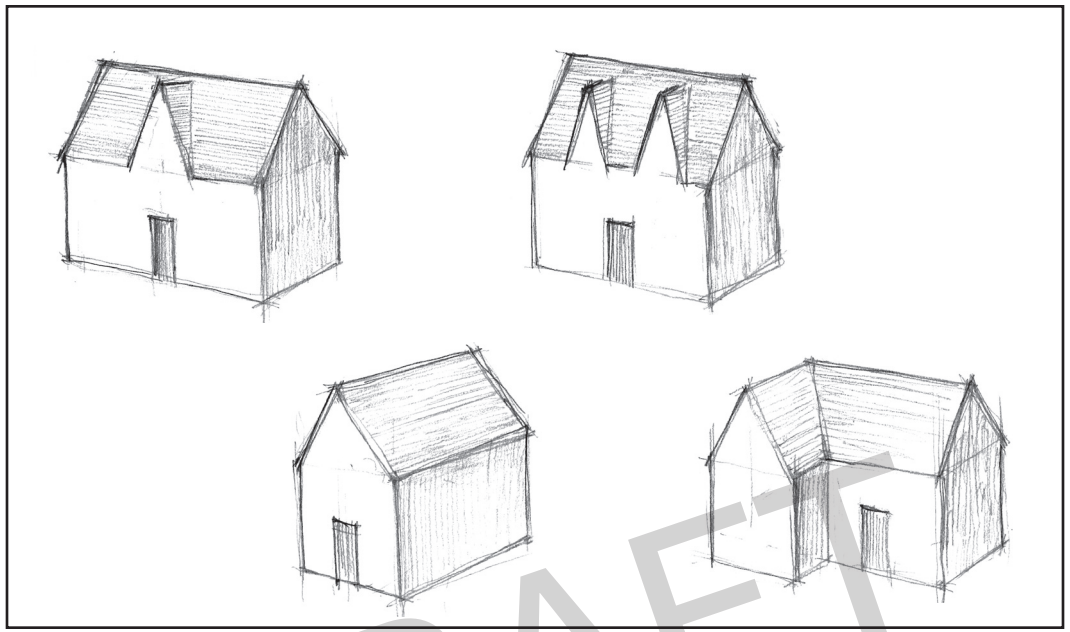

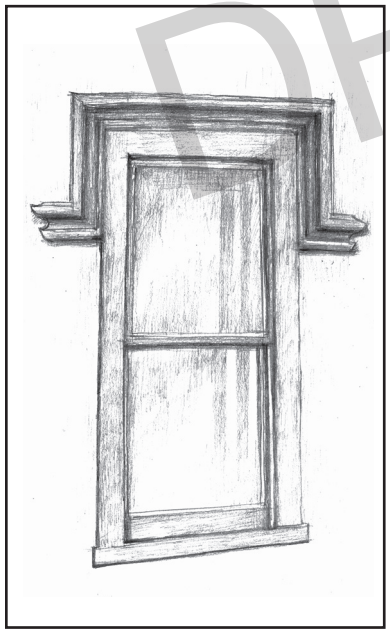

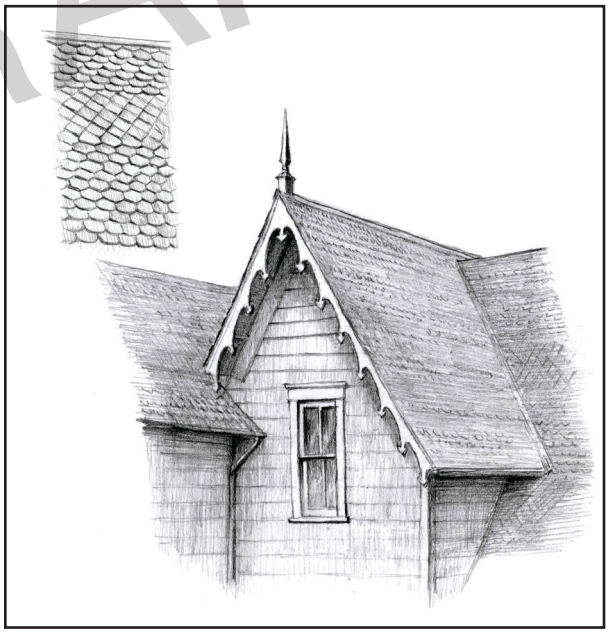

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MASSING & OVERALL FORM

Strong, steeply pitched gables (10:12 or greater) are hallmarks of the Gothic Revival style. The gables can be assembled in a variety of ways, but several combinations are typical. A common form is the Centered Gable, where the main body of the structure is a sideways-facing gable (sometimes hip), which has a prominent, central cross gable with entrance directly below. A variation of this form is the Paired Gables, which has a similar setup, but with two gables (one on either side of the entrance).

Another common form is the asymmetrical plan, which is often L shaped, and is comprised of a series of gables, cross gables and dormers. In later variations, square towers were occasionally used with the asymmetrical plan. A third form was the front gabled form, which uses the front of the main gable-body as the central form for the entrance.

CHARACTER DEFINING FEATURES

Gables, Cornice and Eave Details: Gables, being an expressive feature of Gothic Revival style, are often decorated with verge boards and sometimes with finials or with decorative cross-bracing. The cross-bracing was a decorative truss, that became popular in the later phases of Gothic Revival (post 1860's). Another important development is the move away from boxed-in eaves, which created a cornice for the building that was common on earlier

classical styles. The Gothic Revival saw a switch to an eave with exposed rafter tails or with the sheathing directly against the underside of the rafters.

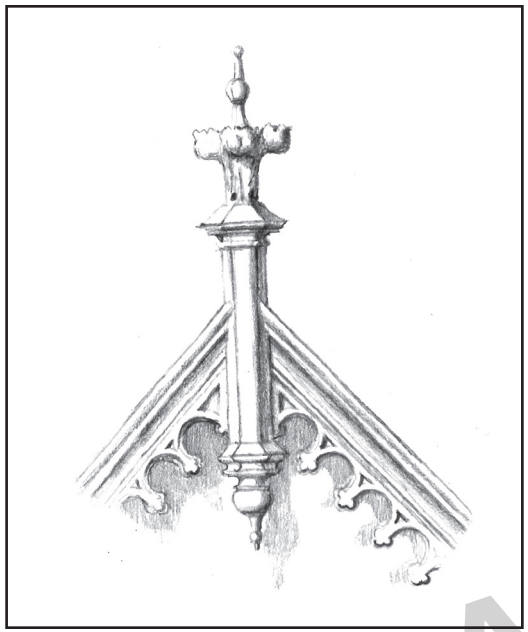
Porch columns: Porches usually have some form of square posts with brackets that imitate flattened arches.

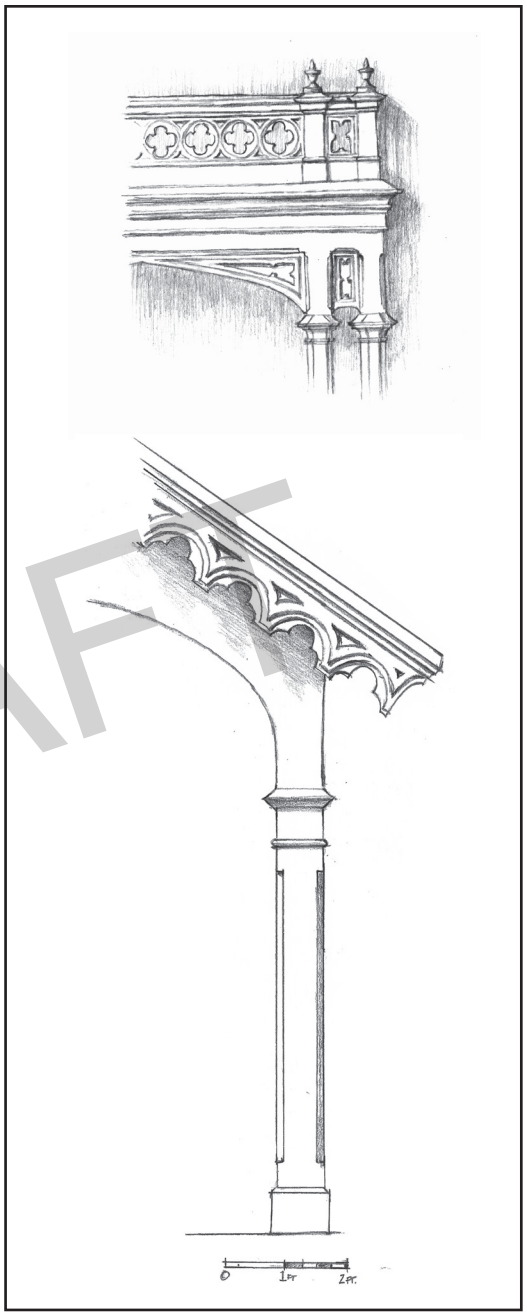
Doors: Doors often follow similar designs, incorporating Gothic (pointed) arches or have crowns of moldings that flare to each side of the window, known as drip-molds. Elaborate paneled doors are common and similar to other Victorian styles, as well as solid batten doors that reference Medieval doors.

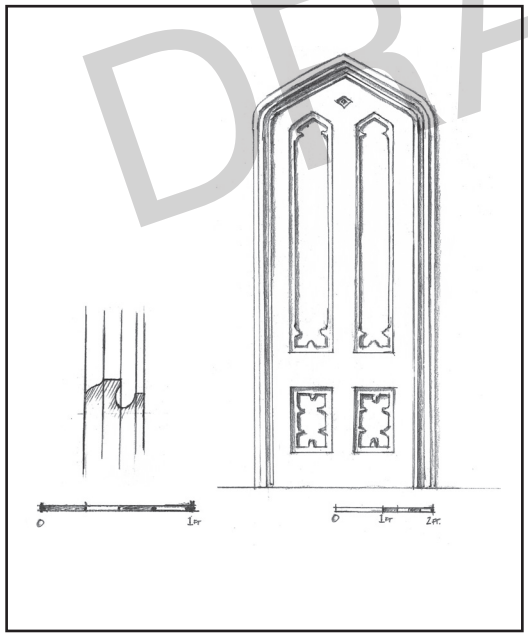
Windows: Windows are a fundamental part of defining Gothic Revival architecture. Usually, one window will have some form of a Gothic (pointed) arch. On simpler examples, when the window itself cannot be arched, wood cut-outs are placed over the rectangular window so that it appears to be pointed. On the ground floor, full-scale bay windows are common, often with two-over-two, double hung wood windows, or the windows being divided into a grid of diamond shapes. Embellished versions of gothic windows often have small gables over them, or have crowns of moldings that flare to each side of the window, known as drip-molds.

Dormers: Gothic Revival is known for the steeply pitched dormers decorated with intricately carved details.

Wall Material: Wall material of Gothic Revival in Santa Barbara was made of wood weatherboards, wood board and batten siding or stucco.







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