

Essay #1 of a series written by Alabama preservationists to supplement the *Handbook for Owners of Alabama's Historic Houses*, Alabama Historical Commission, 2001

## ALABAMA ARCHITECTURE

Robert S. Gamble

Only recently have Alabamians begun to appreciate the full sweep of their architectural heritage. If white-columned mansions, log cabins, and more recently Victorian cottages are invested with nostalgia and self-evident appeal, a whole range of other buildings has gone largely unnoticed. The following brief overview of architecture in Alabama is condensed and adapted from the forthcoming Alabama catalog of the Historic American Buildings Survey, to be published in 1986 by the University of Alabama Press. Described are some major styles and types of early buildings to be found in the state. These include both folk structures and major “high fashion” trends that appeared in Alabama over the course of nearly two centuries.

For supplementary information as well as a national perspective on early Alabama architecture, the reader may also wish to consult one of several guides to American architecture. These include *Architecture Since 1780: A Guide to the Styles* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1969); J. G. Blumenson's *Identifying American Architecture: A Pictorial Guide to Styles and Terms, 1600-1945*, (Nashville: American Association for State and Local History, 1981 edition); and *What Style Is It?*, (Washington: National Trust, 1977), by S. Allen Chambers, Nancy Schwartz, and John Poppeliers. Most recently there has also been Virginia and Lee McAlester's *A Field Guide to American Houses* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1984).

### The Folk Legacy

Properly speaking, Alabama has no “colonial” architecture. No vestige of the 18<sup>th</sup>-century domination of the Gulf region by successive French, English, and Spanish overlords remains today except for Mobile's partially reconstructed Fort Conde. Further inland, the fledgling trading posts and garrisons established among the Creeks, Chickasaws, Choctaws, and Cherokees have long disappeared. Nevertheless, some of the building practices that held sway around Mobile Bay during the 1800s were clearly rooted in a tradition extending back into the previous century. Likewise, the American settlers who poured into Alabama's interior after the War of 1812 and during the 1820s and 1830s brought with them not only the log cabin, but also other building types that could be traced back to the English colonial period in the Carolinas, Georgia, Virginia, and Maryland.

Some of the house types molded by the lingering influence of an earlier age enjoyed a long and happy life in 19th-century Alabama, existing alongside more pretentious buildings that followed the national stylistic trends. Old habits died hard and the country craftsman was a natural conservative, which was probably just as well to his equally conservative clientele. Both client and craftsman were usually content to express changing architectural fashion by simply grafting stylish details onto familiar folk forms. In fact, only with post-Civil War spread of the railroads and mass-produced building components, along with cheap and popular house-building magazines, did the folk tradition which pervaded Alabama architecture at least give way to newer, nationally-based ideas.

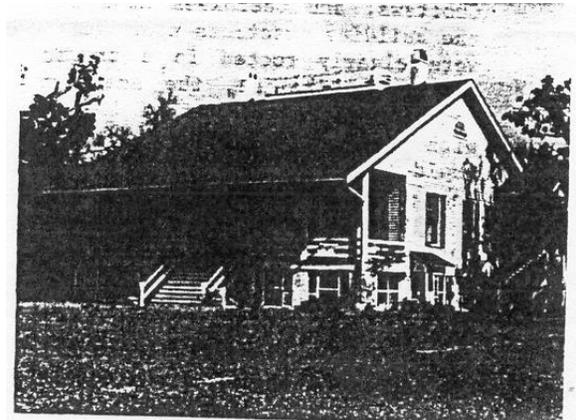
Six major house types reflecting these folk traditions and, ultimately, the colonial legacy are described in the following pages.

### The Coastal Cottage (19<sup>th</sup> century Creole cottage)

The typical Gulf Coast cottage to be found in and around Mobile is one of Alabama's most distinctive building types, and one rooted in a folk building tradition that reaches back to French and Spanish colonial days. For this reason, such houses have long been known popularly as "Creole cottages." Characteristically, the main part of the house is raised well off the ground, either on brick piers or over a high brick basement. A pitched roof sweeps down over a full-length front gallery that may wrap around both sides of the house and intersect a rear porch. Windows are large and plentiful, ceilings high, and the circulation pattern open and free. The gallery windows sometimes reach to the floor and may occasionally function as French casement windows. Early maps and other documents reveal that this house type was already developed, at least in primitive form, by the end of the colonial period. Summer homes along Mobile Bay and the Gulf continued to be built in this tradition until the early 1900s. More recently the form has enjoyed a mild rebirth as a conscious expression of regional architecture.



OUTSIDE ELEVATION, Toulmin House



"Creole Cottages" on Alabama's gulf coast. Upper left: Toulmin house, Mobile (drawing by Nick Holmes, III). Lower right: Fry house, Point Clear.

### The Basic Dogtrot:

Without question it was the log or frame "dogtrot" that was the typical rural Alabama folk dwelling of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Named for the breezeway-like open hall - the "dogtrot" - that invariably ran through the middle of the house, the standard dogtrot dwelling consisted of one large room to either side of this passage, with massive chimneys at each end. Often there was an attic or half story above.

As the house grew, it might sprout a leanto or ell at the back, and a porch across the front. But initially at least, the open-ended passage itself doubled as both porch and outdoor living room - a cool tunnel to catch every breeze in hot weather, and only a minor inconvenience in Alabama's normally short,

mild winters. A variant on the standard one or one-and-a-half story dogtrot was the full two-story dogtrot house, examples of which are now extremely rare in Alabama.

Over time, many log dogtrot houses were covered with weatherboarding outside and embellished inside with plaster or flush-board walls, decorative mantelpieces, and occasionally even a bannistered stairway. A few, like the Robert Jenkins house in Talladega County, also acquired formal neoclassical porticoes.

A common mistake made by well-meaning restorationists may be the removal of later features and additions in order to “get back to the original” part of the house. Often, however, the weatherboarding and trim of a log dogtrot may be nearly as old as the house itself. And in any event, such additions may form an important part of the tale the house has to tell.

Both frame and log dogtrots continued to be built in remoter areas of Alabama even after the turn of the century.



Alabama dogtrots. Upper left: frame dogtrot (circa 1900), Coosa County. Lower right: log dogtrot (circa 1850), DeKalb County.

### **The Extended I-House (I-House with Sheds)**

Although a recent statewide survey suggests that their numbers are rapidly diminishing, this was once one of the most widespread folk-house types to be found in Alabama. Its basic characteristics are a one-room deep, two-story central section with one-story shed extensions running the length of both front and rear. At least one of these sheds is usually given over to use as a porch, very often with a small room at one or both ends. Sometimes there is a hall or dogtrot through the middle of the house. Then again, there may be no central passage at all, but merely two rooms side-by-side. The stairway to the second floor is usually a “boxed” or enclosed stair rising either from the hallway or from one of the

downstairs rooms. The extended I house, or “plantation plain” as some romantics have dubbed it, was brought to Alabama by early settlers from Georgia and the Carolinas. Thus one normally finds it in areas originally populated by settlers from these states.

The extended I house was built throughout the antebellum period, and a few examples even postdate the Civil War. At the same time, other examples such as the Aquilla Hardy house in Greene County are among the earliest instances of frame construction still standing in the state.



Aquilla Hardy (Tuck) House (circa 1825), Greene County.

A logical development from the extended I house was a more formalized version which did away with the front shed altogether, substituting instead a pedimented portico or in a few instances a full-length two-story colonnade.

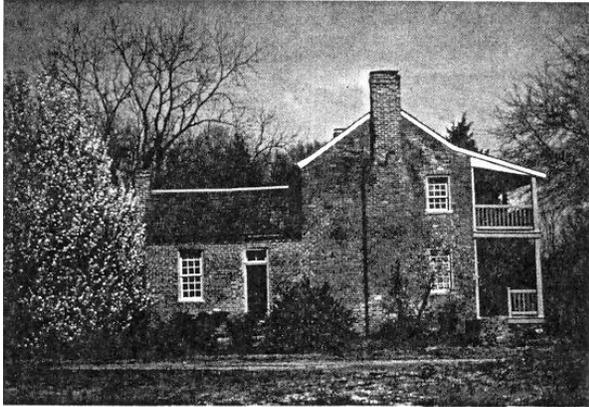
Mantelpieces, doortrim, cornices, and porch posts may reflect “Federal” or “Greek Revival” influence - depending on when the house was built. But the fundamental element that sets such houses apart is its basic profile, recognized by the shed flankers to either side. While the roof is commonly gabled, with chimneys at each end, some fancier examples may have a hipped roof.



A late “extended-I” house, Herrington house (circa 1870), Calhoun County.

### I House-with-ell

A two-story main block with a rear wing turned at right angles defines this basic house type. The wing may be either one or two stories, while the house itself usually has a shed porch across the front. Thus the I house with ell is a cousin to, but not as distinctive as, the extended I house (or I house with sheds). In fact, the most refined examples of the I house with ell may be so sophisticated in their façade treatment and interior finish as to merge imperceptibly with full-blown academic renditions of the Federal and Greek Revival styles. The plan of the I house-with-ell varies, having a central hall in some cases, a side hall in others, or simply two side-by-side rooms. Almost without exception, however, the rear ell has a porch along its inner side abutting the main block of the house.



Elston-Barta (side view of I-house with ell) (circa 1840), Talladega County.



Rear view of I house (circa 1850) with ell in Wills Creek Valley, DeKalb County.

### The Spraddle-Roof House

The spraddle-roof house is identified by its characteristic side profile: a gable roof, each slope of which is broken or splayed at the bottom so as to “spraddle” a porch or small leanto rooms at the front as well as a corresponding porch or leanto at the back. The spraddle-roof house is, in other words, a one or one-and-a-half story version of the “extended I house.” While some spraddle-roof houses grew from one or two-room log or frame dogtrots, others were built as a unit from the ground up. Whatever the origin or a particular example might have been, the form itself was widely spread over 19<sup>th</sup>-century Alabama - another of the folk house types brought from the South Atlantic states.



Speegle house (circa 1845), near Falkville, Morgan County

### The Tidewater-type Cottage

The Tidewater-type cottage is Alabama's authentic architectural link to eighteenth century Williamsburg, and the life and culture of the colonial American South. Sadly, it is also one of Alabama's least appreciated folk houses. The best surviving examples occur in the Tennessee Valley and along the Alabama River around Montgomery - areas both settled early, and by many families with strong ties to Virginia and the upper South where this form originated. The Tidewater-type cottage is a single story or a story-and-a-half in height, with a rather steeply pitched gable roof flanked by prominent end chimneys. Occasionally there is a high basement beneath the house, and often the sloping roof is pierced by dormer windows. The most sophisticated examples in Alabama follow the so-called "double cube" formula: that is, the front elevation is roughly twice as long as it is high. The chimneys may or may not be included in this formula. Some Tidewater-type cottages are two rooms deep ("double pile"); others only one ("single pile").



Upper left: Bride's Hill (circa 1825), Lawrence County, as conjecturally restored. Today this typical Tidewater-type cottage is abandoned. Lower right: Tidewater-type house (circa 1825) near Sheffield - demolished in 1985. Originally there were three dormers across the front.

## HIGH STYLES

### The Federal Style (approximate 1820 to 1850)

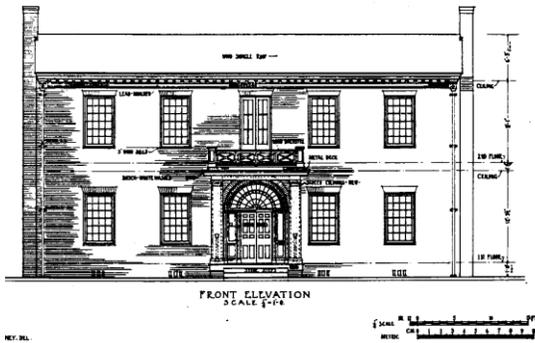
From before the American Revolution until the mid-1800s, some brand of neoclassical architecture ruled virtually unchallenged in the western world. The so-called “Federal” style is basically the American version of the English Late Georgian, Adam, and Regency styles. In the U.S., the Federal style spans the period roughly from the 1780s through the 1820s, although in Alabama and other states away from the Eastern centers of taste some vestiges of Federal influence lingered to 1850 and even later.

The style can usually be distinguished from the Greek Revival which followed it by the more delicate proportions of its columns, cornices, mantelpieces, and stairways, as well as its door and window trim. Federal-period neoclassicism also favors the Roman rather than the Grecian orders for porticoes and other elements of a building. In contrast to the heavy full-length colonnades popular during the Greek Revival period, Federal porticoes are also more likely to be two-tiered and to be centered about the main doorway rather than stretching the entire length of the front. Arched fanlights and Palladian doors or windows are other favorite features of the Federal style (a Palladian opening consists of an arched central section with flanking square-headed openings). These details were normally gleaned from such standard construction manuals of the time as Asher Benjamin’s *The American Builder’s Companion* and Owen Biddle’s *The Young Carpenter’s Assistant*.



Federal-period house, Huntingdon (circa 1835),  
Elmore County.

Alabama’s first public buildings and private houses of any architectural pretension, such as the old State Capitol at Tuscaloosa (1828-30) and the Weeden house in Huntsville (ca. 1819), were erected as variants on the Federal style. These structures were simplified versions of the elegant Federal period buildings erected in the East during the first decades of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. More often, however, the Federal style manifested itself in Alabama through details - mantelpieces and doorways especially - incorporated into some of the plainer, folk-type buildings previously discussed.



Left: Weeden house (circa 1819), Huntsville. The small portico, added in the mid-1800s, has been removed. (Historic American Buildings Survey)

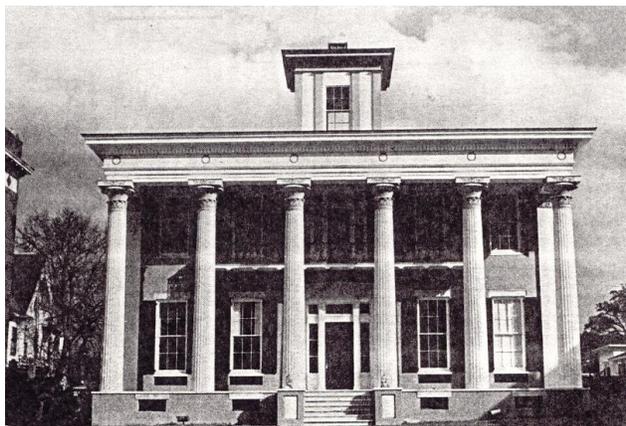
Right: Karsner house (circa 1820), Florence.

### **Greek Revival (approximately 1835 to 1860)**

The Greek Revival was the style of Alabama's first major boom period, sparked by the rapid expansion of cotton culture throughout the Deep South during the 1830s and 1840s. Because of its romantic associations with the Old South, the Greek Revival style is also the one still most popularly associated with Alabama. Greek Revival proportions are heavier and more masculine than those found on Federal-style buildings. Likewise, Federal-period arched windows and fanlight doorways were supplanted by square-headed openings in most Greek Revival structures, although both Federal and Greek Revival details may be seen freely mingled in an Alabama building of the late 1830s or the 1840s.

Some of the more sophisticated Greek Revival buildings, such as Mobile's Government Street Presbyterian Church or the Perry County courthouse at Marion, could be found almost anywhere in the country. Other buildings, however, display the way in which Greek Revival features were gracefully adapted to regional building types. Preferred over the fully developed "Greek temple front" for most Alabama houses was the hipped-roof colonnade or the central portico with triangular pediment. Sometimes this porch or "gallery" extended around three sides of a house, although very rarely did the colonnade completely encircle the building, as was common in Louisiana.

Neoclassical structures continued to be built in Alabama up to the Civil War years and even afterward. But these later buildings show, to an ever-increasing degree, that fussiness and fondness for ornamentation that heralded the opening of the eclectic age which we have come to know as the Victorian era.



Variations on a Grecian theme: the Greek Revival in Alabama. Above: Know House (circa 1845), Montgomery. Opposite page in clockwise order: Bray-Barron house (circa 1860), Eufaula; Perry County courthouse (1854-56), Marion; the abandoned Ebenezer Presbyterian Church (1854), Greene County.



## VICTORIAN ECLECTICISM

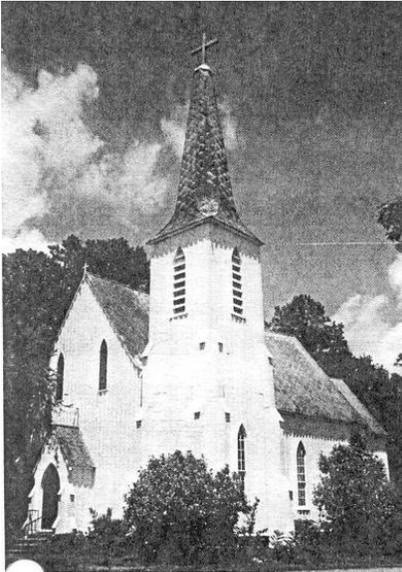
An array of exotic alternatives to the Greek Revival style and neoclassical architecture appeared in Alabama beginning about 1850. These included the so-called “octagon” fad, the Italianate style, and the Gothic Revival. While the number of octagonal buildings erected in Alabama can literally be counted on one hand, both the Italianate and the Gothic Revival styles enjoyed growing popularity during the years just prior to the Civil War.

### **Gothic Revival (approximately 1850 to 1875)**

The Gothic Revival was never as widely accepted in the state as the Italianate style. Nevertheless, it was the style chosen for some of mid-19<sup>th</sup> century Alabama’s most notable churches and schools, as well as for a number of distinguished private houses. Usually a Gothic Revival-style building can be identified by one or more of the following elements: an emphasis on vertical proportions, pointed

arches, clustered chimneys, and steep rooflines sometimes punctuated by spires, towers, and chimneys, and steep rooflines sometimes punctuated by spires, towers, and artificial battlements. Jigsaw-work or latticed porches and carved bargeboards are another feature of the Gothic Revival.

Unfortunately, many of the best Alabama examples of the Gothic Revival have been destroyed. Yet a few houses scattered here and there throughout the state still attest to the style's wide acceptance at one time. Perhaps, however, the best collective expression of the style in the state is a small group of churches erected during the 1850s, including St. Andrew's Prairieville; St. Luke's, Jacksonville; St. Paul's, Lowndesboro; Huntsville's Church of the Nativity; and the First Presbyterian Church of Wetumpka.

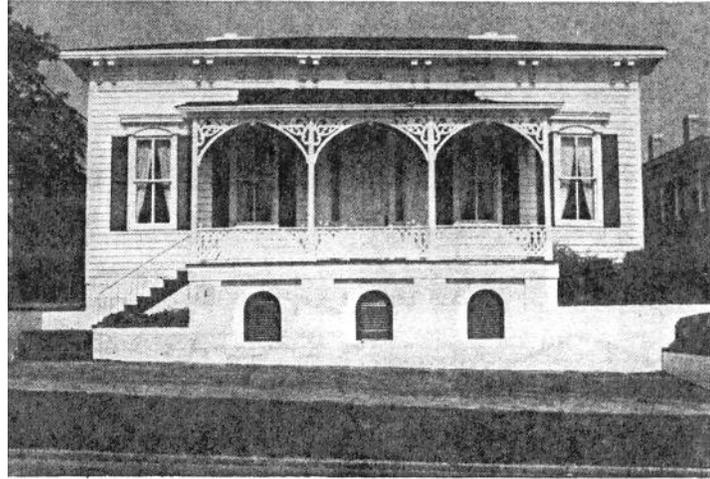
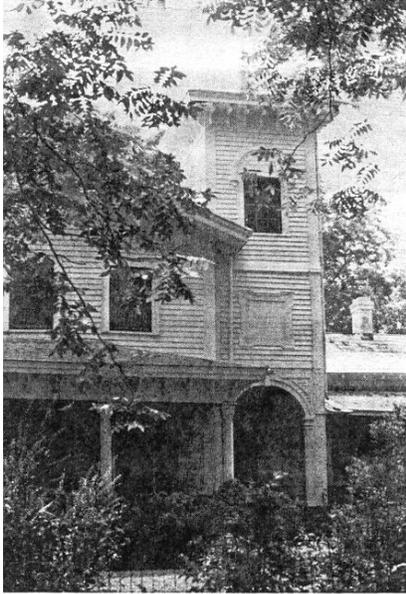


The Gothic Revival. Left: St. Paul's Episcopal Church (1857), Lowndesboro. Above: "Boxwood" (circa 1855), Talladega. The board and batten siding which sheaths both structures was a favorite medium of the Gothic revival.

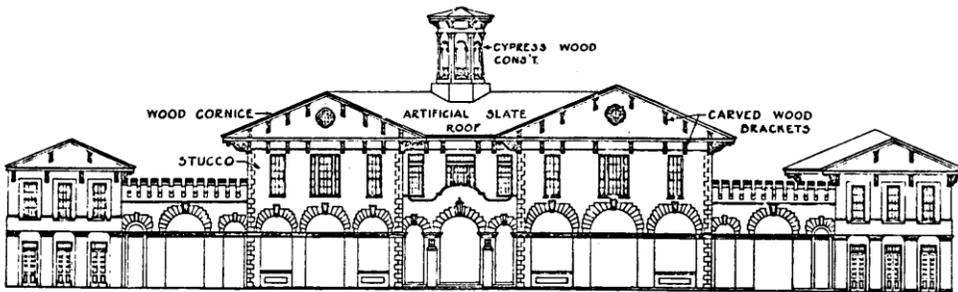
### **Italianate (approximately 1850 to 1880)**

Touted as a mode particularly appropriate for a warm climate because of its associations with sunny Italy, the Italianate style appeared in Alabama during the 1850s. The most typical earmarks of the style are wide, bracketed eaves and a fondness for rooftop cupolas or towers. In contrast to the strict symmetry of the Federal and Greek Revival styles, Italianate-style structures may be variously symmetrical or asymmetrical. Even essentially symmetrical Italianate buildings may have random porch and bay-window projections. Windows are often paired in groups of two or three, and accentuated by ornate frames and cornices. Porches tend to be one story, spreading, and often elaborately treated through the use of ornamental cast iron or jigsaw work.

The style was employed for large institutional buildings, sumptuous private mansions, and smaller cottages alike between 1850 and 1880. Larger Italianate houses - called "villas" during the 19<sup>th</sup> century - may usually be classified as either symmetrical or asymmetrical, though all but a handful of the asymmetrical villas built in Alabama have now disappeared.



Left: Hawthorne, Prairieville, an early nineteenth century cottage renovated and enlarged as an Italianate-style house in 1862. Above: Gerald House (circa 1870), Montgomery.



WEST ELEVATION.  
Scale 1"=16'-0"

Left: Dr. John Drewry house (circa 1870), Eufaula. Right: Carlisle Hall (1858-1860), Perry County. Bottom: City Hall and old Southern Market (1856), Mobile, as drawn by Historic American Buildings Survey.

**Romanesque Revival (approximately 1860 to 1880)**

Not to be confused with the "Richardsonian" Romanesque style that blossomed during the 1880s, the Romanesque Revival was another of the exotic mid-century stylistic fads which appeared in Alabama during the years just before the Civil War. Alabamians turned to it mainly for churches - as an alternative to both the Greek and Gothic revival styles. Indeed, several of the largest churches built in the state between 1860 and 1880 adhered to the Romanesque Revival style. Its governing features are heavily rounded window and door openings, emphasized by molded dripstones and sometimes by

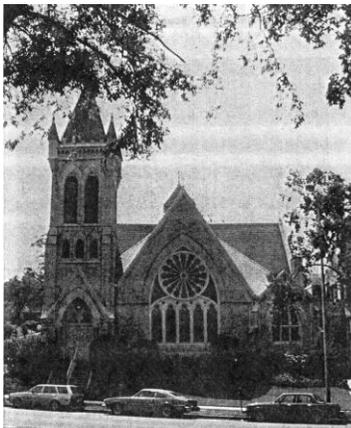
deeply molded embrasures, along with drip corbelling at the cornice level. Like other “historical” styles of the Victorian decades, the Romanesque Revival attempted to be more suggestive of a particular style than to faithfully replicate it.



First United Methodist Church (1871-1874), Oxford.

#### **High Victorian Gothic (approximately 1880 to 1910)**

The High Victorian Gothic style was really the exuberant finale to the entire Gothic Revival movement of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Its proportions are looser and its detail altogether more elaborate and unpredictable than that of the straightforward Gothic Revival of the 1850s. The High Victorian Gothic structures erected in Alabama during the 1870s and 1880s are likewise marked by their display of a mixture of colors and materials. Wall treatments often combine brick, terra cotta, and stone, while roofs may exhibit varicolored patterns of slate and bristle with iron cresting. Commercial buildings, schools, and houses all sported such features when the High Victorian Gothic was in its heyday - although, as with the Romanesque Revival, churches seem to have been the favorite subject for builders working in the style.



South Highland Presbyterian Church (1891), Birmingham (Gary H. Dobles, Jr. photo).

#### **Second Empire (approximately 1875 to 1890)**

Sometimes called the “General Grant style,” the Second Empire is usually associated with the years immediately after the Civil War. Perhaps because of the post-war economic conditions of the late 1860s and the 1870s, the style’s impact on Alabama was relatively minor and rather late in coming. The universal hallmark of a Second Empire structure is its steep-sided mansard roof, usually emphasized by a heavy cornice and often further accentuated by dormers. Although the initial impulse for the style

came from France, distinctly American details such as jigsaw-work porches and wood trim usually appear on Alabama examples - reflecting that dilution which all styles commonly undergo as they are imitated and re-imitated farther and farther from their original source.



Second Empire-style house (circa 1880), Union Springs.

#### **Queen Anne (approximately 1885 to 1910)**

Architectural historians have scrupulously tagged some of the major architectural currents of the Late Victorian era (1880-1910) as “Eastlake,” “Shingle Style,” “Stick Style,” and so forth. None of these movements, however, emerged in Alabama with the clarity that they did, say, along the East coast or in the Midwest. Rather, in Alabama one is more apt to see a fusing of all of these impulses under the general umbrella of what was loosely defined, both then and now, as the Queen Anne style.

The Queen Anne style building - whether it be a house, a commercial edifice, or a school - is apt to be comparatively complex in form as well as varied in both the kind and treatment of surface materials employed. Brick, stone, terra cotta, and shingles may all be randomly mixed. On houses especially, there is usually a steep and prominent roofline with a profusion of secondary gables emerging from an overall pyramidal form. Porches may sprawl irregularly around the house, with posts and banisters either turned in imitation of Charles Eastlake’s popular furniture styles of the period or cut in the “gingerbread” patterns that were a late nineteenth-century American staple. Stained glass and dark-wood interiors are abundant, while the “living hall” - with a massive stairway and ceremonial fireplace - is a common feature of the interior.

The Queen Anne style flourished during Alabama’s industrial boom years of the late 1880s and the 1890s, and domestic examples from rambling one-story country houses to pretentious town mansions are still to be seen across the state.



Above: Queen Anne-style Powell house (circa 1900), Union Springs. Left: Detail from 1888 McKelroy house, Anniston

### Richardsonian Romanesque (approximately 1885 to 1905)

This is the name for the peculiar brand of robust, Romanesque-inspired architecture evolved by the Eastern architect H. H. Richardson. In Alabama it was essentially a public and institutional rather than a domestic style - one used in the main for railroad stations, courthouses, churches, and schools. It reached its zenith in the 1890s, as a host of imitators throughout the nation mimicked Richardson's distinctive building vocabulary. Mainline features of the style are its stolid, ponderous proportions worked out in heavy masonry walls; a steep and heavy roofline akin to that associated with the Queen Anne style, horizontal bands of arched or square-headed windows, and almost always a main doorway framed by a low, heavy "Syrian" arch. Very often Richardsonian style churches and courthouses are dominated by a soaring, campanile-like belltower.



Above: Old view of First Presbyterian Church (1894), Selma. A brick essay in Richardsonian Romanesque. Right: Steiner Building (1890), Birmingham.

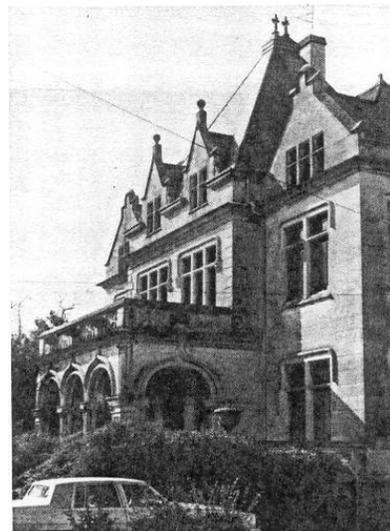


## TWENTIETH-CENTURY STYLES AND TRENDS

### Beaux Arts (approximately 1895 to 1920)

The term “beaux arts” applies to those structures that mirror the return to a Renaissance-inspired neoclassicism which was led by American architects who had been trained at, or who fell under the spell of, the Ecole des Beaux-Arts in Paris. French and Italian Renaissance prototypes were especially popular models for a style that was essentially one either for ambitious public buildings or for the very rich homebuilder. It was basically the Renaissance neoclassicism of the Beaux Arts movement that was conveniently, if inexpertly, grafted onto turn-of-the-century houses in Alabama to make them appear “Southern Colonial.”

The influence of the Beaux Arts movement is most profoundly seen, however, in some of the courthouses and public buildings erected between 1895 and 1915, such as the Covington County Courthouse in Andalusia or the old Carnegie Library of Montgomery. A handful of private mansions like Montgomery’s Sable house and the Burgess-Maschmeyer house in Mobile clearly show how deeply indebted were practitioners of the Beaux Arts style to such models as the chateaux of 16<sup>th</sup>-century France and the villas of the Renaissance Florence.



Ecole des Beaux Arts influence in Alabama. Above: The “Chateausque” Sable house (1907), Montgomery. Left: Clay County courthouse (1906), Ashland. (Alabama Historical Commission photo).

### Colonial Revival (approximately 1895 through the 1930s)

The so-called “Colonial Revival” was more a state of mind than a precise style. The term itself specifically denotes Late Victorian America’s attempt to romantically evoke the architecture of its colonial past. This attempt, which began with the nation’s Centennial celebration in 1876 and extended beyond the turn of the century, eventually encompassed the countless “Cape Cod” cottages and pseudo-Georgian houses that were popular in the 1920s and 1930s. The Colonial Revival, then, actually covered a multitude of building types from gambrel-roofed imitations of the Dutch colonial houses of the Middle Atlantic states to would-be columned Southern mansions.

As might be expected, turn-of-the-century Alabamians showed a particular partiality toward “Southern Colonial” - or what they naively thought was southern colonial. For the fact is that, until the Williamsburg restoration effort of the 1930s brought about a clearer understanding of true southern colonial building traditions, client and architect alike frequently confused colonial-period architecture

with the later Greek Revival. Likewise, most Colonial Revival houses of the turn of the century routinely borrowed details from such contemporary movements as the Queen Anne and the Beaux-Arts styles.

A Colonial Revival house of the late 1890s or the early 1900s can usually be spotted by such features as a gambrel roof or neoclassical columns often mixed willy-nilly with Victorian stained glass and other incongruous features. Larger houses may have ostentatious colonnades or porticoes, very often with an adjoining porte-cochere.

As historical styles in general became better understood, Colonial Revival buildings themselves became more “correct” in their detail and proportions, though frankly adapted to 20<sup>th</sup> century living.



Jemison house (1905), Birmingham. A southern mansion in the “Colonial Revival” style.

#### **Arts and Crafts: The Craftsman Bungalow and the Prairie Style (approximately 1900 to 1925)**

The freshest of all the competing architectural trends of the early 1900s were two currents which, like the Queen Anne style, were born out of the English Arts and Crafts movement of the 1870s. The so-called Craftsman bungalow took the original Arts and Crafts ideal of natural materials, hand craftsmanship, harmony with surrounding landscape, and general unpretentiousness and turned it toward the development of a distinctly American house-type that spread quickly throughout the country from its California birthplace.

The Prairie Style, on the other hand, was Frank Lloyd Wright’s own personal reformulation of the same Arts and Crafts ideal on the prairies of the Midwest. Between 1900 and 1930, the Craftsman bungalow broadly impacted Alabama architecture and, indeed, became the predominant middle-class urban and smalltown house type. Prairie style buildings occur much less often in Alabama, but are readily identified by their clean-lined rectilinearity and low, sweeping eaves.



Left: Prairie-style house (circa 1915), Gadsden. Right: Craftsman-style bungalow (circa 1910), Birmingham.

**Early Twentieth Century Academic Eclecticism (approximately 1910 to 1940)**

Architectural eclecticism - the practice of drawing from a wide array of sources and traditions - clearly did not die with the close of the Victorian era. But a significant shift did gradually begin: from a borrowing that was freewheeling and only partially understood to a knowing reinterpretation of the source traditions, based on a more sophisticated understanding of them. This was true whether the particular tradition happened to be neoclassical, colonial, Gothic, English Tudor, or Spanish. Both architectural periodicals and popular magazines like the *American Home* and *Ladies Home Journal* influenced this shift through numerous articles treating actual historical building types, as well as modern buildings smoothly adapted from historical prototypes.

Buildings reflecting this shift - be they an imitation Tudor manor house, a neo-Gothic church, an imitation Federal-period dwelling, or a Spanish-style “hacienda” - can normally be identified by their urbane handling of details and their skillful manipulation of scale so as to accommodate a new function without destroying the genuine historical mood such a building purports to convey. Buildings drawing upon classical precedent during this period likewise tended to turn away from the Renaissance-inspired forms of the Beaux Arts and toward the ancient Greek and Roman versions themselves. Leading Alabama architects of this movement included the firm of Warren, Knight and Davis in Birmingham and Frank Lockwood of Montgomery.



Academic Eclecticism in Alabama. Right: Flowers Hall, Huntingdon College (1910), Montgomery.



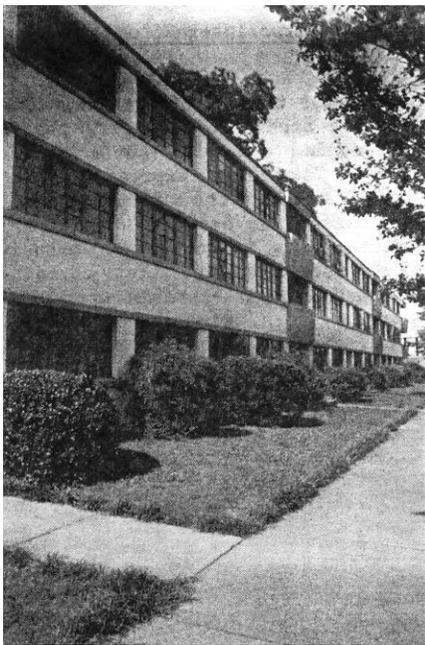
Residential examples of early twentieth century architectural eclecticism in the state. “Tudor” and “Spanish Colonial” houses (circa 1925-1930), Gadsden.

**Modernistic Trends: Art Deco/Art Moderne/International (approximately 1925 to 1960)**

Growing out of a conscious attempt to cast off entirely or to highly stylize any allusions to the architectural past, the Art Deco, Art Moderne, and International styles all made their appearance in Alabama between the World Wars. They were expressed primarily in commercial and business-related architecture from skyscrapers to automobile dealerships, though residential architecture, too, did not entirely escape. All three trends share in common an emphasis upon a streamlined appearance and sleek functionalism. Yet certain nuances distinguish each of them: in Art Deco, an emphasis upon zigzags and other geometrical decorations about doors, windows, and rooflines; in Art Moderne, a proclivity for rounded corners, glass brick, and horizontal windows; and in the International style, a radical stripping away of any applied decorative detail whatsoever, combined with a starkly rectilinear treatment of both the building itself and of door and window openings.



Art Deco-style East Clinton School (1938), Huntsville (photo courtesy Linda Bayer).



Modernistic trends in Alabama. Left: International-style apartment complex (1948), Montgomery. Right: Art Moderne-style building (circa 1945), Foley.