

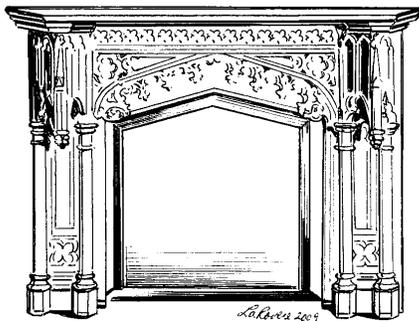


New York Row Houses: Gothic Revival Style



The Gothic Revival Style has often been branded as dark and vampiresque, when actually the style was inspired by forms in nature and ecclesiastical influences. In the United States Gothic Revival style can be found frequently in 19th Century Cathedral construction. Homes and estates built in the style during the mid-Nineteenth Century are slightly less common. In New York City the style evolved simultaneous to the Greek revival period, and combined the Classic forms of the Greek Revival Period with Gothic elements such as elaborate wood work and plasterwork resembling the interiors of European Cathedrals. In New York City townhouses, the style was freely interchanged with the Greek Revival style. Unlike Gothic Style estates such as Lyndhurst Estate in Tarrytown New York or the Wedding Cake House in Kennebunkport, Maine it is rare to find a purely Gothic Revival home in New York City.

As with most periods, the style could most immediately be discerned by the mantel. Gothic Revival fireplace mantels were generally made of black or white marble. The mantel mouth contained design elements such as a pointed arch, elaborately carved trefoils and figures of saints. Since carved marble mantels were quite costly, Greek Revival mantels with a rectangular mantel shelf and flat pilasters were often used to save costs. Simpler mantels



Bibliography:

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incorporated Gothic motifs in the cast iron grates over the fire place openings.

As on the exterior doorframe, the interior doorway frames typically contained the pointed arch form with slender colonettes rising to either a horizontal hood mold or a low Tudor Arch. Doors often had inset panels also in the form of an arch. Doorway moldings were intricately carved as the interior wood was much easier to carve. Curvilinear gingerbread trim along the eaves could be found around doorway frames.

Parlor ceiling moldings consisted of a cover form edged by two plain moldings. As the

Italianate style gained prevalence, elaborate foliate cornices became popular. Plaster chandelier rounds were made up of trefoils and quatrefoils. Ceilings might be wood beamed, travested by ribs running down and resting on brackets to convey the idea of vertical support. Beamed ceilings were uncommon in New York row houses due to the relative narrowness of the houses. This type of ceiling treatment was generally reserved for country manors.

Other interesting features of the period included floors which were hard surface such as flagstone, tile or dark stained hardwood. Windows often contained stained glass or wrought iron patters with clear glass reflecting designs of stained glass windows. At times walls contained murals with stenciled heraldic designs or heavy wood paneling.

The style was short lived in New York due to the constraints of building in this style in smaller structures. Americans had very little attachment to medieval history and architecture inspired by this style. Both the Gothic Revival and Greek Revival styles faded out of vogue fairly quickly as the taste for ostentatious interiors by the city's nouveaux riche gravitated to the eclectic Italianate style. Yet elements of style continued to manifest themselves in both Victorian architecture and Arts and Crafts in the late 19th Century.

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