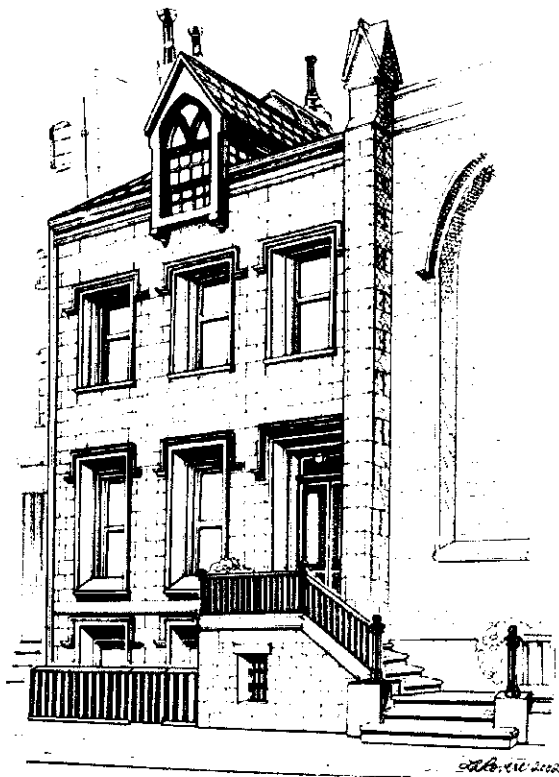


New York Row Houses: The Gothic Revival Style

The Gothic Revival Style emerged in the 1840's closely following the Greek Revival style. The style was a crucial turning point in New York City's architectural history. Introducing novel architectural elements that would be elaborated upon further during the Italianate period in the 1850's. The Gothic Revival style never achieved the same level of popularity as the Greek Revival or Italianate style due to the narrowness of city lots. Key components of the style such as asymmetrical massing and gabled rooflines were difficult to achieve on restrictive city lots.

While the Greek Revival period recalled Ancient Greece, the Gothic Revival style recalled the pious middle ages. It drew on the architectural elements of Gothic churches and cathedrals such as darkly colored building materials and rich ornament. Throughout the country, the style quickly replaced edifices built in the "heathen classical tradition". In New York, the first most prominent example to exhibit the style was Trinity Church, with its elaborate tracery, arched vaults, flying buttresses and medieval inspired sculpture. It was also one of the first churches to utilize the costly process of a fully brownstoned façade. As the style became the norm for religious edifices, its influence spread to row house building.

Front doorways, sills and window lintels took on several forms. Either rectangular or arched, they often protruded and possessed "hood molds". In lieu of a flat edge, these hood molds often employed Tudor arch molds at each end. Many of the more elaborate arched doorways featured an additional, horizontal "hood mold". The triangular space between the arched hood and the rectangular hood contained elaborate carvings of the Gothic motif, "trefoil," a three-sided leaf shape resembling a clover leaf shape. An extremely costly



process, carving elaborate Gothic ornament into stone was reserved for only the most expensive row houses.

Though most Gothic Revival row houses employed either a simple Greek Revival cornice or an elaborate Italianate cornice supported by brackets, a few examples of Gothic style which do exist most commonly featured a pointed arch motif or a repeating trefoil pattern carved in wood. A remaining example of this type of Gothic cornice can be found at 20 West 16th Street.

Most ironwork from the period has vanished due to disrepair and wartime scraping efforts. Prior to their dismantling in the 1950's, the three-story tall

porches of the Rhinelander Gardens at 102-106 West 11th Street displayed the finest Gothic Revival style ironwork in the city. A few houses in Brooklyn Heights and Cobble Hill still retain the Gothic Revival iron work, displaying repeating pointed arch patterns on stair rails and fences, and quatrefoil designs on balconies.

The finest examples of Gothic Revival dwellings in Manhattan which remain today are rectories of churches built in the 1840's and 1850's. A wonderful example can be found as part of the Church of the Assumption, at 7 West 10th Street. Completed in 1841, this row house demonstrates key elements of the style such as the arched dormer windows, a large chimney and the asymmetrically massed brownstone façade. Other examples include 114 Waverly Place and The Grace Church School and Rectory at Broadway and East 10th Street.

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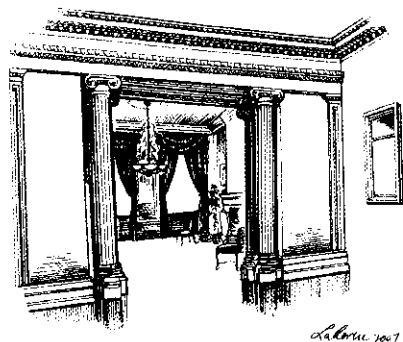
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New York Row Houses: Greek Revival Interiors

The Greek Revival Style in architecture was a culmination of interest in Classical Antiquities which emerged in New York during the middle of the 18th century. Increased interest in classical building was mainly influenced by two factors: Archeological discoveries from the excavation of Pompeii and Herculaneum during the mid 18th century as well as America's identification with the principles of Ancient Greek democracy. The enthusiasm for this period of western history propelled the trend in Greek Revival architecture and spread nationwide with American cities taking on ancient Greek names such as Ithaca, Athens, Sparta and Troy.

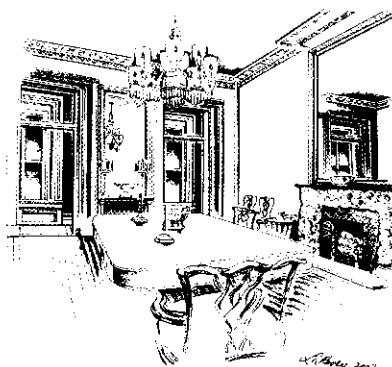
Greek Revival homes added a new level of comfort and grandeur to townhouse construction. The basic floor plan was the same as in Federal Style homes, however Greek Revival homes became larger. The width increased from seventeen or eighteen feet to twenty or twenty one feet on average. The layout remained the same with a ground floor dining room in the front facing the street and a kitchen in the back looking out to the garden.



The ceiling height of the ground floor increased from 7 1/2 to 8 or 9 feet. This raised the parlor level further from the street while ceilings on the parlor level rose to 11 or 12 feet. In grander homes, ceilings soared to heights of up to 14 feet. Ceilings were decorated with simple molding or two moldings which enclosed a rounded cove. A heavily sculptured centerpiece varied from a simple circular molding to very stylized foliate forms that extended from a central rosette to an outer edge. Moldings were either plain or elaborate arrangements of circular and polygonal forms within each other.

Inside walls were plaster and painted a light color that descended into simple baseboards. Chair rails at waist height replaced wainscoting and paneling. Floors were either oak or pine wood planks finished in a light color.

The parlor doors were the most elaborate feature of the homes, utilizing rich woods such as Mahogany and Rosewood. By the late 1820's these intricately carved doors rolled on metal tracks allowing them to slide into the walls. One deeply set panel ran the full length of the door with applied classical Greek detail such as the anthemion. A horizontal entablature over the door also displayed the anthemion, or other classic



Greek ornamentation such as the Greek Key, several rows of egg-and-dart, or dentilated moldings. Ionic columns decorated the enframement of the doors and separated the two parlors.

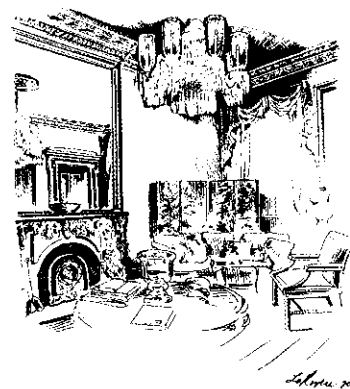
The fireplace mantels were massive with designs resembling the usual doorway motifs. Mantels in finer homes had columns or caryatids rather than flat pilasters. Preferred materials on the parlor level were black marble veined with gold or yellow and gold.

In occasional homes, French doors led from the splendid back parlor to an open or windowed porch known as the tea room.

The stairs which previously ran along one side of the house with windows at each half landing were moved to the center of the house where natural light cascaded down from a large oval skylight in the roof. Plaster work surrounding the molding was decorated with detail such as egg and dart.

Upper floors retained the same layout as Federal period homes. The increased width of the house allowed the rooms to feel more spacious. Between the two main chambers of the upper floors, fitted closets and drawers were added. The scale and level of finishes diminished on the upper floors which were usually private family quarters. Fireplaces on upper floors typically had simply painted wood mantels. The most elaborate details and materials were saved for the parlor floor where entertaining took place.

An additional change in townhouse construction came with the increasing competition among New York's socially elite of the 1830's & 40's. This created an environment where architects were challenged to build elaborate showy parlors while keeping cost as a consideration. This led to the innovative use of less expensive yet high quality machine made ornament. Handsome ceiling plasterwork was often machine made rather than hand crafted. Paper Mache or stucco was used instead of plaster to reduce costs. Factory made cast iron replaced hand wrought iron for outside stoop railings and araway fencing.



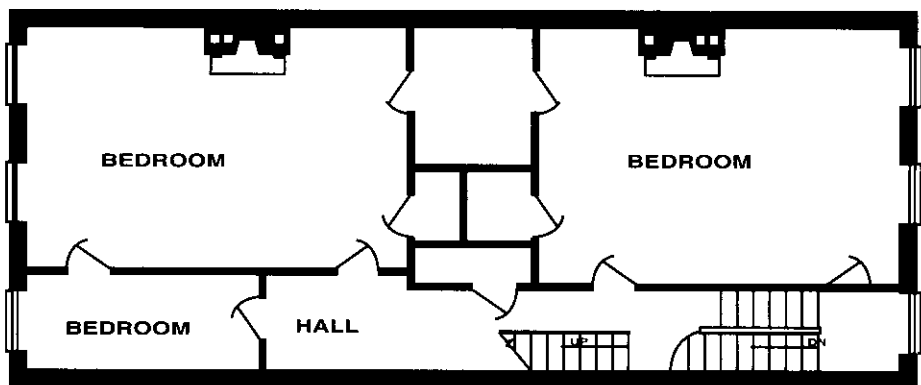
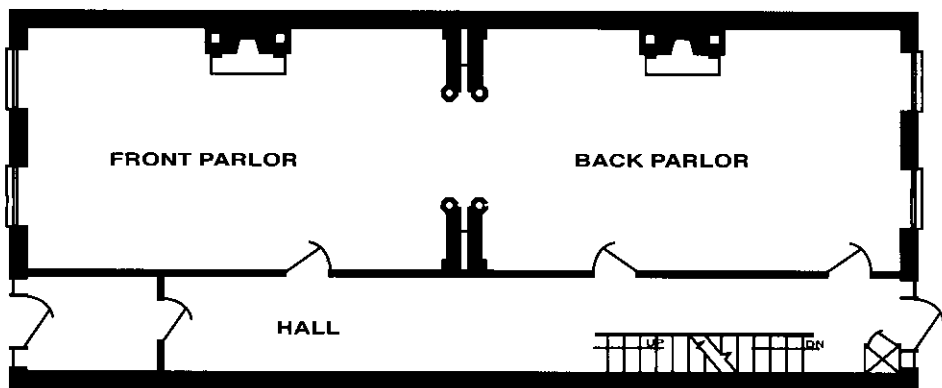
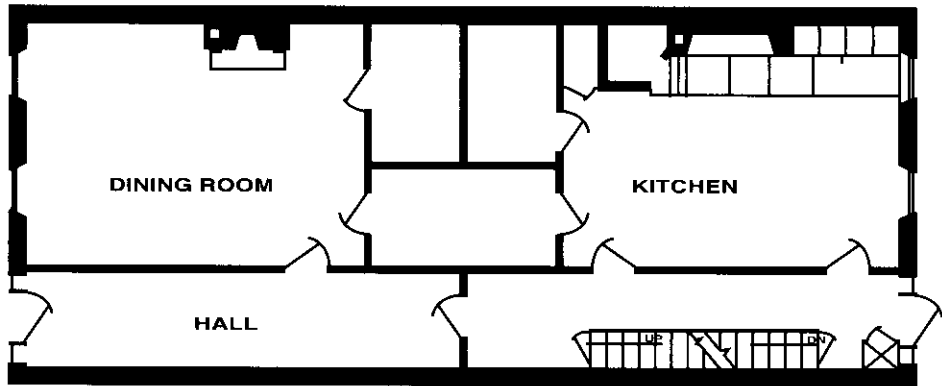
The best example of Greek Revival architecture can be found at 29 East 4th Street, at the Scabury Tredwell House. Built in 1831, it is a transitional house utilizing elements from both the Federal and Greek Revival styles. It was purchased in 1835 by the merchant Scabury Tredwell and is currently a museum maintaining the interior treatment and furnishings original to the period. Another model example of the period is the Andrew S. Norwood House, which can be found at 241 West 14th Street. This exceptional 30 ft. wide house possesses some of the more unusual proportions and remarkable craftsmanship of the Greek Revival and Italianate periods.

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Tatiana Comes, Vice President

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New York Row Houses: Greek Revival Facades

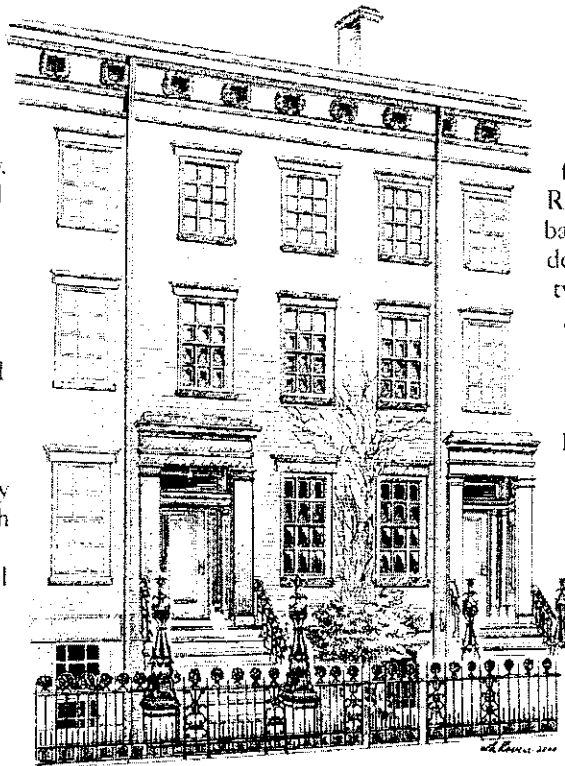
The Greek Revival style emerged in the early 1830's in New York. The earliest examples of the style can be seen on East 4th Street, west of Broadway. Of the lovely row which had existed there, the only remaining house is the Seabury Treadwell House, now known as The Merchant House. While the Federal style offered pleasing proportions and handsome, modest ornament, the Greek Revival style, in its association with Ancient Greece, sought to evoke a greater dignity and drama.

Federal house bricks were usually laid in the Flemish bond style, which alternates the long side and the end of the brick, while the Greek Revival Running bond style utilized lamp-black in the mortar to minimize the joints between the brick. This technique was used to create the impression of one large, smooth expanse of the row house facade.

To further enhance the impression of grandeur, rectangular window lintels and sills were typically simple and spare in ornament, often almost flush with the facade.

The sole characteristic of the Greek Revival facade, which broke the planar unity of the house, was the monumental door enframement and rich ornament on the stoop iron work. The "Grecian Doorway", characteristic of the early Greek Revival period, consisted of fluted Doric columns on each side of the door together with pilasters supporting a flat entablature. Recessed doorways emerged, further enhancing the monumentality of the facade and providing shelter. Where the Federal door was multi-paneled, the Greek Revival door offered a plain rectangular transom above a single-paneled door. Sidelights were most common, with simple glass panes separated by wood mutin bars.

Most frequently seen Greek motifs were fret (Greek Key), Acanthus Leaf and Anthemion, used to decorate door



frames, columns and wrought iron fences. The most beautiful of the wrought iron work can be seen on the parlor window balconies, a feature introduced during the Greek Revival period. Though few of these balconies remain, due in large part to decay and wartime scrap metal drives, two windowed balconies at 110 2nd Avenue are prime examples.

Unlike the roof of a Federal house, which was A-frame, the Greek Revival roof was slightly pitched, allowing for an attic with small windows often decorated with cast iron laurel wreaths.

Cornice treatments consisted of a flat, horizontal board called "fascia" across the full width of the house. Above the fascia, decorative moldings such as the dentil, egg and dart or leaf and tongue moldings were used.

Cost-cutting deviations emerged as the style gained popularity. White marble columns were replaced by brownstone by the 1840's, as dark colors became fashionable. Traditional pediments replaced doric columns as the style became mainstream. Unfortunately, the "cheapening" of the style was in large part the cause of its decline. By the late 1840's, when the Romantic Movement took hold, the architectural restraint of Greek Revival gave way to the desire for asymmetry and rich ornamentation. Examples of this transition emerged in details such as elaborate wrought iron work in the verandas at number 3 and 4 Gramercy Park West as well as the newel posts in the Cushman Row house depicted above.

The facades of 13 red brick houses on Washington Square Park are the purest examples of early Greek Revival style. Other wonderful examples are at 20-26 Willow Street in Brooklyn Heights, Colonnade Row on Lafayette Place, of which only four remain, as well as Cushman Row, West 20th Street between 9th and 10th Avenues.

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