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AMERICAN ARCHITECTURE BEFORE 1876

A4341 Fall 2007

Andrew S. Dolkart

Aliza Ross, Teaching Assistant

Office Hours: Wednesday 12:45-2:30 (Note: on some days I may be a little late since my morning class will often be meeting in the field and it may take a bit of time to get back to Columbia). My hidden office is located on the third floor of Buell Hall inside the offices of the Buell Center for American Architecture (immediately to the left at the top of the stairs). My office is straight ahead after you enter the Buell Center. If I am meeting with someone else you can sit in one of the chairs in the Buell Center, but please do not disturb their work.

Objectives of the Class

This class will explore American architecture from the first buildings erected by Europeans in the early seventeenth century through c. 1876. 1876 is a convenient cutoff date, since this was the year that the country celebrated the centennial of the Declaration of Independence with a great exhibition in Philadelphia. However, we will not be bound firmly to this date. In class, we will examine the iconic architectural monuments erected during this period, ranging from surviving colonial homes to the works of architects such as Peter Harrison, Charles Bulfinch, Thomas Jefferson, Benjamin Henry Latrobe, John Mills, A. J. Davis, Richard Upjohn, Frank Furness, and Henry Hobson Richardson. We will also explore lesser known and vernacular buildings reflecting both folk traditions and the spread of architectural ideas from centers of innovation into small towns and rural landscapes. We will review the evolving forms and styles of architecture and the ideas behind developments in American design, discussing the impact of the ideas of such designers and theoreticians as Frederick Law Olmsted, Andrew Jackson Downing, and Richard Morris Hunt. Class lectures will be supplemented with visits to the rare books and architectural drawings collections at Avery and by two walking tour in New York City.

Requirements

1. Research Paper.

Topic Due: October 11 (at the latest)

Paper Due: November 15

Each student will prepare a 12-15 page paper on a topic relating to some aspect of American architecture before 1876. You can choose any topic that interests you, so long as I have approved it. You can focus on a building or group of buildings, on a building material, on the development of a building type or style, on the work of a particular architect, on architecture in a particular locale, on the restoration of a particular building, etc. What you must do, is analyze your topic within the larger framework of the architecture of America. Your paper will not simply be a description of the topic chosen, but must place this material within a larger context.

This is an academic paper and will include:

- a full bibliography of all sources (published and archival) consulted
- full end notes or footnotes (notes with author's name and page number, placed within the body of the text are not acceptable)
- appropriate illustrations with the source of each noted

2. House Museums and Museum Interiors Presentations – To Be Announced

3. Final Exam (optional for Pass/Fail students; required for other students). The exam is required of all students who need a letter grade. If you are taking the class pass/fail or if you are enrolled in the School of Architecture where all classes are high pass-pass-low pass-fail, the exam is also optional; however, the highest grade that you can receive without taking the exam is a pass.

4. Readings. The basic text for the class will be Leland Roth, *American Architecture: A History*. I have ordered copies of this book from Labyrinth Books on West 112th Street between Broadway and Amsterdam Avenue.

Additional readings will be assigned for each class. I have tried to limit the readings so that each of you has time to complete all of the assigned pages. I will also add suggested readings or notable books and articles on specific topics.

5. Attendance. Your attendance is expected at each class and the TA will be taking attendance.

American Architecture Before 1876

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Schedule (subject to change)

Class I: September 6. Introduction;
Spanish, French, and Dutch Colonial Architecture

Class II: September 13. Early Architecture of the English Colonies

Class III: September 20. The Triumph of Georgian Classicism

Class IV: September 27. Neo-Classical Architecture I: The Federal Style

Class V: October 4. Architectural Pattern Books and Hand Books (Meet in Avery Library seminar room – go downstairs, turn left and walk into Art History books stacks – follow the purple floor to Avery Archives). Class will be split into two groups – beginning at 10:30 and 11:45.

Class VI: October 11. Neo-Classicism II: Rational Design and the Greek Revival

Class VII: October 18. American Utopias?: Prisons, Religious Communities, and Mill Towns

Class VIII: October 25. Downing, Davis and the Romantic Picturesque vs New Technologies and New Forms in American Architecture

One evening during the week of October 29th, students will present house museum findings

Class IX: November 1. Central Park Tour (Meet at the General Sherman statue on Fifth Avenue north of 59th Street at 11:30).

Class X: November 8. Eclecticism After the Civil War

Class XI: November 15. New Roads: Hunt, Furness, Richardson and the American Aesthetic

Class XII: November 29. No class (Avery Library drawings collection visit will be scheduled for another time)

Class XIII: Dec. 6. New York City as a Case Study: Greenwich Village Tour (Meet at the northeast corner of Sixth Avenue and West 10th Street) at 11:30.

Final date to be announced

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Readings

When possible, the readings have been put online and can be accessed through Course Works. For copyright reasons, only small portions of books can be put online. Thus, for books where more than one chapter has been assigned, you will have to use the actual book. Books are on reserve in Avery Library. I have noted which books are on line. Note, that for reasons unknown to me, the library often lists on line material by chapter name and not by book title (the library has promised to change this system), so check carefully.

Class I. Introduction; Architecture of the Spanish, French, and Dutch Colonies

Roth, pp. 39-49

Suggested Reading

The most complete analysis of Spanish Colonial Architecture is James Early, *Presidio, Mission, and Pueblo: Spanish Architecture and Urbanism in the United States* (Dallas: SMU Press, 2004; on line). Early discusses the cultural background as well as each individual building and its restoration. See, for example, his discussions of Mission Purísima Concepcion and Mission San José in Texas (pp. 105-121) and San Xavier del Bac in Arizona (pp. 144-153).

A good introduction to Dutch Colonial Architecture is presented in Roderic H. Blackburn, *Dutch Colonial Homes in America* (New York: Rizzoli, 2002) which, despite its name, deals with houses and barns. The section entitled “Evolution of the Dutch House” (pp. 31-51; on line) is quite good. Book has superb photographs by Geoffrey Gross and Susan Piatt.

Class II. Early Architecture in the English Colonies

Roth, pp. 50-67

William Pierson, *American Buildings and Their Architects: The Colonial and Neo-Classical Styles*, pp. 34-45 (a subtle interpretation of St. Luke’s Church, Virginia; on line)

Deborah Dupony, *The Parson Capen House* (photocopy on reserve)

Dell Upton, “Vernacular Domestic Architecture in Eighteenth-Century Virginia, *Winterthur Portfolio* 17 (Summer-Autumn 1982), 95-119. e journal

Suggested Reading:

Fiske Kimball, *Domestic Architecture of the American Colonies and the Early Republic* (1922; reprinted by Dover, 1966). A classic work on early American architecture.

Hugh Morrison, *Early American Architecture From the First Colonial Settlements to the National Period* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1952). This is the first serious survey of early American architecture. Although some of the information is out-of-date, it is a book with which all scholars should be familiar.

If you are interested in the dendrochronological dating of early houses check out

<http://users.ox.ac.uk/~arch0050/bostonsum.html>

If you are interested in the issue of slavery and the southern plantation house, Stratford Hall in Virginia has an excellent website (www.stratfordhall.org). The “plantation life” and “slavery” sections are worth reading.

For a more general discussion of slavery in both the south and the north, including New England and New Amsterdam, see the brilliant book, Ira Berlin, *Many Thousands Gone: The First Two Centuries of Slavery in America* (Cambridge: Belknap Press, 1998) available as an ebook or on Butler and Barnard reserves).

Class III. The Triumph of Georgian Classicism

Roth, pp. 69-105

John Reps, *The Making of Urban America* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1965). Read the chapter on New England (chapter 5 “New Towns in a New England”) and the section of the chapter 6 (William Penn and the Planning of Philadelphia”) (both sections on line).

Suggested Reading:

Reps, chapter on Tidewater Virginia (chapter 3).

Class IV. Neo-Classical Architecture I: The Federal Style

Roth, pp. 107-120, 126-130, 137-149

Richard J. Betts, “The Woodlands,” *Winterthur Portfolio* 14 (Autumn 1979), 213-230. (On reserve). e journal

Pierson, *American Buildings and Their Architects*, pp. 221-28 (on McIntire; “Saamuel McIntyre, Wood Carver”); pp. 248-256 (“Massachusetts State House”); and pp. 268-285 (“An American Masterpiece: The Lancaster Meetinghouse”) on line

Herman, Bernard L., *Town House: Architecture and Material Life in the Early American City, 1780-1830* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina, 2005) chapter 4, “The Servant’s Quarter,” pp. 119-154 (on line) – a brilliant analysis of the relationship between master and slave spaces in Charleston, South Carolina.

Suggested Readings

Harold Kirker, *The Architecture of Charles Bulfinch* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1969). You might browse through this book and read the short entries of buildings of interest – State House, Tontine, Otis Houses, etc.

Class V. Architectural Pattern Books and Handbooks

H. A. Park, *A List of Architectural Books Available in America Before the Revolution* (LA: Hennessy & Ingalls, 1973). Shelved in Avery Reference AZ200 P211

Asher Benjamin, *The Architect or Practical House Carpenter* (1830, reprinted Dover, 1988).

William Halfpenny, *Practical Architecture* (1730, reprinted B. Blom, 1968)

James Gibbs, *A Book of Architecture* (1728, reprinted, B. Blom, 1968)

Suggested Reading:

Jack Quinan, "Asher Benjamin and American Architecture," *Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians* 38 (October 1979), 244-253. e journal

Dell Upton, "Pattern Books and Professionalism: Aspects of the Transformation of Domestic Architecture in America, 1800-1860," *Winterthur Portfolio* 19 (Summer-Autumn 1984), 107-145. e journal

Class VI. Neo-Classical Architecture II: Rational Design and the Greek Revival

Roth, pp. 121-126, 130-137, 151-170

E. Barksdale Maynard, *Architecture in the United States 1800-1850* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2002; on line), pp. 219-279 ("Greek Revival & Beyond"). A major reappraisal of early 19th-century American architecture. on line

Suggested Reading

Richard Guy Wilson and Sara A. Butler, *The Campus Guide: University of Virginia* (NY: Princeton Architectural Press, 1999), pp. 23-28; plus pp. 29-53 (this is an excellent account of Thomas Jefferson's design for the University of Virginia)

Talbot Hamlin, *Greek Revival Architecture in America* (NY: Oxford University Press, 1944). A classic early work on American architecture; now, perhaps, out of date, but a major statement about American design.

John M. Byran, *America's First Architect: Robert Mills* (New York: Princeton Architectural, 2001). Look through this excellent book, especially section about Mills as a national designer.

Class VII: American Utopias?

Dolores Hayden, *Seven American Utopias: The Architecture of Communitarian Socialism, 1790-1975* (MIT Press, 1976; on line), chapter 4 (on the Shakers)

Norman Johnston, *Eastern State Penitentiary: Crucible of Good Intentions* (Philadelphia Museum of Art, 1994), pp. 31-67.

Pierson, *American Buildings and Their Architects: Technology and the Picturesque The Corporate and the Early Gothic Styles* pp. 70-81 ("The Early Nineteenth-Century Industrial Community: Harrisville, N. H." on line)

Class VIII: Downing, Davis and the Romantic Picturesque/New Forms and New Technologies

Andrew Jackson Downing, *The Architecture of Country Houses* (1850; reprinted by Dover, 1969 and others). Read preface, Section 1, "The Real Meaning of Architecture," pp. 1-38. I suggest that you also read "What a Cottage Should Be," pp. 39-48; "What a Farm-House Should Be," pp. 135-142; and "What a Country House of Villa Should Be," pp. 257-270.

Also read one or two of the building descriptions in each of the three sections, and look at the engravings. Downing is the most important theoretical figure in mid-19th-century American architecture. I found the full text at the following web site:

<http://www.hti.umich.edu/cgi/t/text/text-idx?c=moa&idno=ADQ1020.0001.001&view=toc>

David Schuyler, *The New Urban Landscape: The Redefinition of City Form in Nineteenth-Century America* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1986; on line), Chapter 8: "Urban Decentralization and the Domestic Landscape, pp. 149-166.

Badger, Daniel D., *Badger's Illustrate Catalogue of Cast-Iron Architecture* (1981 Dover reprint of 1875 *Illustrations of Iron Architecture Made by The Architectural Iron Works of the City of New York*), read introduction by Margot Gayle and flip through the catalogue paying close attention to the small scenes in the frontispiece.

Jay Shockley and Susan Tunick, "The Cooper Union Building and Architectural Terra Cotta," *Winterthur Portfolio* 39 (Winter 2004): 207-227 (on line)

Curran, Kathleen, "The German *Rundbogenstil* and Reflections on the American Round-Arched Style," *Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians* 47 (December 1988), 351-373. e journal.

Suggested Reading

For background on the Gothic Revival:

William Pierson, *American Architects and Their Buildings: Technology and the Picturesque*, pp. 149-158; 177-184 ("St. Mary's, Burlington, New Jersey") on line

Class IX: Central Park

Bruce Kelly, "Art of the Olmsted Landscape, in *Art of the Olmsted Landscape* (New York City Landmarks Preservation Commission, 1981), pp. 5-72. Heavily illustrated introduction to Olmsted's ideas.

David Schuyler, *The New Urban Landscape: The Redefinition of City Form in Nineteenth-Century America* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1986), Chapters 6 and 7, pp. 101-146. This book has an excellent discussion of Central Park (chapter 5) which you may wish to read; these two chapters deal with the influence of Central Park in other cities.

Suggested Reading:

Roy Rosenzweig and Elizabeth Blackmar, *The Park and the People: A History of Central Park* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1992). A brilliant social history of the park's design and use.

CLASS X: Eclecticism After the Civil War

Roth, 211-220

Guter, Robert P. And Janet W. Foster, *Building By the Book: Pattern-Book Architecture in New Jersey* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1992), chapter 3 in part, pp. 105-114, 122-135 (on line). Good introduction to vernacular architecture based on pattern-book models.

Carter, Thomas, "Folk Design in Utah Architecture, 1849-1890," in Thomas Carter, ed., *Images of an American Land: Vernacular Architecture in the Western United States* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1997), 41-60 (on line). Vernacular forms moving west, written by a leading expert in vernacular architecture in the west.

CLASS XI: New Roads: Hunt, Furness, Richardson and the American Aesthetic

Roth, 220-226, 235-260

Landau, Sarah Bradford, "Richard Morris Hunt, the Continental Picturesque, and the 'Stick Style,'" *Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians* 42 (October 1983): 272-289 (ejournal). Ground-breaking article on French influence on American wood architecture.

Michael J. Lewis, *Frank Furness: Architecture and the Violent Mind* (New York: W. W. Norton, 2001), 91-103 (on line)

Ochsner, Jeffrey Karl and Thomas C. Hubka, H. H. Richardson: The Design of the William Watts Sherman House," *Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians* 51 (June 1992): 121-145 (ejournal). Detailed investigation of sources of this influential house.

Recommended Reading:

Mariana Griswold Van Rensselaer, *Henry Hobson Richardson and His Works* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin & Co., 1888; reprinted, New York: Dover, 1969). First monograph on an American architect, written shortly after Richardson's death.