



Carpenter Gothic

The Gothic Style in architecture was conceived and developed in Europe during the middle ages. It consisted entirely of stone masonry construction. Gothic Revival Style was developed by architects of the nineteenth century who studied the original designs for magnificent cathedrals and simplified and adapted the details to create simpler smaller buildings. Further simplification of Gothic Details for use in wood frame house construction by enterprising carpenters was the driving force of the style that became known as Carpenter Gothic. It flourished in America from 1840-1890.

The main elements of the Carpenter Gothic style include: ornamental trim boards, steeply pitched roofs and an unbalanced asymmetrical design. One story porches were also a common element. Another common element was vertical board and batten siding, using the home's siding to emphasize the vertical dimension so favored in the Gothic Style.

The original Gothic Style was so prolific and wide spread that there were hundreds of sources for the carpenters to choose from for inspiration. In many cases a just a few details like an arched entry door or a specially trimmed porch post could add enough interest to create a truly unique home that was affordable on a modest budget. Very simple designs that would have been otherwise unremarkable were given design appeal with the addition of a Gothic porch. Decorating the eaves with richly carved trim boards was also a favorite device used by skilled carpenters.

In New England, Carpenter Gothic homes can be seen in almost any neighborhood that features historic homes. They tend to be singular examples standing by themselves. What we can learn by studying them is the beauty to be achieved with strict adherence to a single style and how creative adaptation of original details can lead to magnificent results.

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