

Style Guide for Dummies



Colonial Homes

1600-1820

- French Colonial
- Georgian Colonial
- Spanish Colonial

When North America was colonized, European settlers brought building traditions from their home countries. Houses built along the northeastern coast, where the British settled, are quite different from those built by French colonists in the Mississippi Valley and Spanish colonists in Florida and California.

German, Dutch, Swiss, and other Europeans also brought their own special traditions. Between 1600 and 1800, European styles adapted to meet the challenges posed by the climate and landscape of the new country. Using locally available materials and borrowing building techniques from Native Americans, the colonists developed not one, but many, uniquely American styles.

Colonial style homes will have many of these features:

- Square, symmetrical shape
- Paneled front door at center
- Decorative crown over front door
- Flattened columns on each side of door
- Paired chimneys
- Medium pitched roof
- Minimal roof overhang

French Colonial Style

French Colonial was one of four unique architectural styles that developed during the colonial period in what would become the United States.

French colonists in the Mississippi Valley built houses especially suited to the climate of their new home. Designed for the hot, wet climate of the Louisiana territory, houses were built in the French style. Surviving structures can be best seen in New Orleans and in rural Louisiana along the Mississippi River. The plantation houses are timber framed structures featuring tall and steeply pitched hipped roofs characteristic of rural French manor houses. They are adapted to the sub-tropical Louisiana in two ways: the main living area, built of heavy interlocked timbers, was built on a very tall brick foundation to protect the house from the periodical river flooding; and, the houses were usually surrounded by wide porches, or galleries, to provide refreshingly cool yet sheltered outdoor living during the summer months. Characteristic are extensive porches and no halls. They are graced with French doors from every room to the porch.



- Tall and steeply pitched hipped roofs
- Thin wooden columns
- Wide porches
- Exterior porches instead of interior hallways
- Doors with many small panes of glass

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Georgian Colonial Style



A style of architecture governed by strict rules of symmetry and balance, inspired by Greco-Roman classicism. First popular during the reigns of George I through IV (1714 - 1830); revived at the close of the nineteenth century.

Georgian Colonial became the rave in New England and the Southern colonies during the 1700's. Stately and symmetrical, these homes imitated the larger, more elaborate Georgian homes which were being built in England. But the genesis of the style goes back much farther. During the reign of King George I in the early 1700's, and King George III later in the century, Britons drew inspiration from the Italian Renaissance and from ancient Greece and Rome.

Spacious and comfortable, Georgian Colonial architecture reflected the rising ambition of a new country. It was the preferred housing style of the prosperous, and its features were reflected in the design of more humble dwellings.

Spanish Colonial Style



The Spanish Colonial Style dominated in the early Spanish colonies of North and South America, as well as in the Philippines. It is marked by the contrast between the simple, solid construction demanded by the new environment and the Baroque ornamentation exported from Spain.



It's hard to know what to call the style. Spanish-inspired homes built in the first decades of the 20th century are usually described as Spanish Colonial Revival, suggesting that they borrow ideas from early settlers. However, these homes might also be called Hispanic or Mediterranean. And, because these homes often combine many different styles, some use the term Spanish Eclectic.

