Dutch, Huguenot Influences

The houses built by Dutch colonists during the 17th and early 18th centuries are the only examples of Dutch architecture in North America. Furnishings, such as Peter Bronck’s brick house (1663) in Croton-on-Hudson, feature distinctive pitched roofs with gable ends, prominent roof dormers, and gabled chimneys.

After the English took charge of the colony in 1664, Dutch building traditions continued and can still be seen at the Mabee Farm Homestead (1798) in Beacon and the Lydia Van Alen House (1727) in Kinderhook.

The French Huguenots who emigrated to the banks of the Wallkill Creek and continued and can still be seen at the Mabee Farm Homestead (1798) in Beacon and the Lydia Van Alen House (1727) in Kinderhook.

During the first half of the 19th century, Northern European and medieval building traditions with those of their Dutch neighbors. Huguenot Street, arguably the oldest street in America with its original buildings, includes three with fieldstone construction and using the French Huguenot fireplace.

Today, the legacy of the Dutch colonial vernacular is large also in more contemporary buildings, many of which were influenced by Frank Lloyd Wright and the American School. FDR’s house at Hyde Park, patron of native architectural commissions and using historical models for new designs, helped to preserve this important architectural tradition in the Hudson River Valley.

Origns of the Great Estates

As second- and third-generation colonists became more prosperous, many early landholdings expanded. Frederic, Philipps, a Dutch carpenter who migrated in the 1630s, successfully acquired a large amount of land and two small sites, the Lower Mills in Verplanck and the Upper Mills on the Pocantico River in the village of Sleepy Hollow. The core of Philipps Manor dates back to the 1690s, but its transformation into a country estate began under Frederic Philipps’ III, who remodeled it into a Georgian-style mansion in the 1740s.

Further up the river, Robert Livingston acquired a royal patent for a vast tract of land in Columbia County, and one of his sons built a Georgian-style country house he named Clermont.

Carpenter Gothic: an American Church Style

By mid-century, the romantic ideals of Downing and Davis were common knowledge, and the board-and-batten church had become the natural style for Gothic revival church architecture in America. The light and vertical wooden buildings stood in sharp contrast to the heavy stone Gothic structures of England.

The architect Richard Upjohn earned a reputation as the most talented designer of board-and-batten churches. Upjohn was so busy by the 1840s that he published Upjohn’s Rural Architecture, which included “do-it-yourself” church plans. A typical example of his work, St. Luke’s Chapel (1847) in Claverack, displays the full core and intricate woodwork characteristics of the style, an important contribution to the history of American architecture.

Residential Architecture: the Cottage and the Villa

During the last third of the 19th century, American architects experimented with a range of styles, and it is during this period of colonialism that the valley’s most substantial and permanent buildings were created. Sunnyside, a “cottage” in Tarrytown, was where Washington Irving lived in the 1830s, evoking this romantic spirit with a combination of Dutch, Scottish, and Spanish architecture.

Famed among professional architects was Albany-born Stephen A. Denison, a young New Yorker who was a partner in the country’s first architectural firm: Town and Davis. By 1865, Davis had completed the Custom House in New York City and the Greek Revival Dutch Reformed Church in Newburgh. He also received a commission for a Hudson River estate, the Kastel in Tarrytown.

The Knoll was considered the first picturesque villa in America, and in the 1860s, it became the heart of Lyndhurst, a much larger, more spectacular residence.

It was through the commission for the nearby cottage that Davis met landscape architect Andrew Jackson Downing. Together, Davis and Downing were responsible for developing the two key building types that would define the nation’s residential architecture: the cottage and the villa. The traditional style was an answer to the popular demand for a new type of architecture, particularly because it was adaptable to a range of incomes.

In this period, Davis introduced this new, romantic style in his landmark book, Rural Architecture, which included the Billops waterfront cottage, the first published example of a board and batten cottage in America. Over the next 30 years, Davis’ picturesque ideals were interpreted for the public in Downing’s widely distributed books, Cottage Residences and The Architecture of Country Houses. When Davis remodeled Montgomery Place, the Federal-style estate in Ammendaun—on Hudson, Downing served as an advisor on the grounds and gardens.

As tastes changed during the 1840s, accomplished architect Calvert Vaux and Richard Upjohn were called upon to remodel and adapt Federal-style houses into more fashionable Italianate or Tuscan villas. Davis worked with Samuel F. B. Morse to create Locust Grove in Poughkeepsie, while Upjohn remodeled Lindenwood, a Greek revival mansion in Kinderhook commissioned by President Martin Van Buren.

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The Hudson River Valley National Heritage Area is a federally funded program created by Congress in 1994. The mission of the Heritage Area is to recognize, preserve, protect, and interpret the region's cultural and natural resources. The Heritage Area and the National Park Service funded the production of this map and guide. Please send your comments or map revision suggestions to: Historic Hudson River Valley, 125 Grand St., Albany, NY 12210; email: hv.sigma@nps.gov; website: www.hudsonheritagearea.org.

New York State Capitol, Albany, 518-474-2419—This palatial building is a combination of popular architectural features of the 19th century and Renaissance. Three prominent designers—L. Henry, Henry Richardson, and Less Perry—played a significant role in the building's design. Over three decades of construction, the building suffered from financial and political difficulties and the struggles of architectural collaboration. Richardson, with his assistant Stanford White, designed the restored Senate Chamber. The result was a magnificent interior that Richardson described as representing “secularity and quietness.” (NHL)

Albany City Hall, 24 Eagle St., Albany, 518-434-3800—Gothic revival church designed by Richard Upjohn in 1833. (NHL)

St. Peter’s Protestant Episcopal Church, 170 South St., Albany, 518-434-0232—Greek revival church designed by Richard Upjohn in 1833. (NHL)


Ten Broeck Mansion, 3 Ten Broeck Place, Albany, 518-434-9622—19th-century federal townhouse of General Abraham Ten Broeck. It exhibits the Beaux Arts style in its symmetrical, heavy ornamentation, and interior decoration. Most of the original furnishings and designed interiors remain intact. (NHL)

Home of Franklin D. Roosevelt (Springwood), Albany Post Road (U.S. 9), south of Hyde Park, 1-800-IRON-95—In 1913 FDR renovated the family house in which he had been born into a Georgian or Colonial revival style mansion befitting his presidential aspirations. He also expressed his love of architecture and the local Dutch colonial style through his attempts to restore and preserve the old and new buildings in his native community. (NHL)

Olana State Historic Site, 3350 State Rd. 9G, Hudson, 518-821-8205—Frances E. Church and the architect Calvert Vaux collaborated on the design for the Persian-style cas-tle of Olana, Church’s estate overlooking the Hudson River. The mansion is a composite of classic, Gothic, and Shinto architectural elements and includes a studio where Church painted. (NHL)

Hudson River State Hospital U.S. 3—Poughkeepsie—Designed by Frederick Wightman with landscape architect Calvert Vaux and Frederick Laid Outhwaite. The hospital is now being rezoned for residential use. (NHS)

Vassar College, Main Building, Poughkeepsie, 845-437-7000—Designed by architect James Renwick, Jr., in 1862, the college’s main building is an early example of the Mansard style in America. (NHL)

Locke House, 32 South Rd. (U.S. 9), Poughkeepsie, 845-437-8850—18th-century stone house and tavern (NHL)

Marvel House, 145 Stockbridge Rd., Poughkeepsie, 845-437-8850—18th-century stone house and tavern (NHL)

Howland Library, 464 Grand St., Troy, 518-272-7232—19th-century Federal-style townhouse with decorative white marble cornice. (NHS)

James Vanderpoel House, Route 3, Kinderhook, 518-786-9250—19th-century Federal-style mansion with Ellipsoidal Doric marble columns flanking the entrance. (NHL)

Lyndhurst, 625 South Broadway Tarrytown, 914-631-9481—Alexander Jackson Davis’ most famous early work in the valley was the Knoll, a Gothic Revival estate. Completed in 1842, the Knoll introduced a new kind of picturesque architecture to the region. In the 1860s Davis expanded the mansion with an architecturally bold and dramatically inflated style. In 1956, the house was purchased by the National Park Service, which restored and reopened the house for public use in 1962. (NHL)

Washington Irving’s Sunnyside, West Sunnyside Lane off U.S. 9, Irvington, 914-631-2600—the 1830s, the house serves as the headquarters of the generic River House in America. (NHS)

George Washington’s Headquarters, at 26 Witherspoon St., Princeton, 609-924-8204—1783, 1784, and 1785, the headquarters of the Continental Army resided in Nassau Hall on Princeton University’s campus. (NHL)


Ironworks State Historic Park, New Paltz, 845-255-1640—Arguably the oldest continually inhabited town in America (NHS)

Van Cortlandt Manor, South Broadway Dr., Croton-on-Hudson, 914-621-8200, 18th-century stone house and tavern. (NHL)

Kykuit, U.S. 9, Sleepy Hollow, 914-631-4651—1905, 1906, John D. Rockefeller Sr. had this two-story, four-generation family house of four generations of Rockefeller (NHL)

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