

City of Jacksonville

Historic Preservation Commission

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Online Sources for Old-House Research

Old House Journal Online has great tips... this article by Eric Smith helps with on-line research.

The latest wave of online resources is making it easier to find great restoration advice. Here are some of the best places to search and how to get the results you want.

Written source materials from the time your house was built—how-to books, decorating magazines, local newspapers—have that same power, but until recently, anything that was out of print (which was almost everything) lay buried deep in libraries and historic societies or hidden in used bookstores.

But thanks to the heroic efforts of a small army of librarians, archivists, programmers, and scanner operators, those source materials—millions of original books, periodicals, and newspapers from the 19th and 20th centuries (and earlier)—are now available online exactly as they were first printed, including a treasure trove of information about architecture, decorating, woodworking, landscaping, and other old-house subjects.

All of these historic resources are available at no cost, courtesy of online archives that scan books by the ton; convert the old print to searchable, digitized text; and store them for posterity, with public domain material available for reading or downloading. The largest of these archives are Google Books, HathiTrust, the Internet Archive, and the Library of Congress' Chronicling America project.

Google pioneered industrial-scale book scanning, and much of the content in HathiTrust and Internet Archive was originally scanned by Google, which means there's considerable duplication. However, searching all three archives is definitely worthwhile: Identical keyword searches on the three sites can produce different results, and the same book may appear as a better-preserved version or later edition on one site versus the other. The archives also use different interfaces: Books on Google are read by scrolling, with live links in the table of contents. HathiTrust books give you a choice of clicking an arrow, scrolling, flipping, or looking at page thumbnails. Internet Archive has the best reading experience, with an almost full-screen interface that allows you to either flip pages or jump ahead to specific pages using a slider along the bottom. The default choice at all sites is the scanned version of the original, not the often-garbled digital version.

On all of the sites, books that are public domain (printed before the current cutoff date of 1923 or not copyrighted) can be read online, downloaded, and printed out or saved

as high-quality PDFs. Copyrighted books are cataloged on Google and HathiTrust and can be searched and sometimes sampled, but must be purchased or borrowed at a library. You also can download e-book versions from Google or Internet Archive (you'll find many of them already on your Nook or Kindle if you search for free books), but unlike computers, e-readers don't easily display original text pages. Instead, they show plain-text versions created by optical character recognition programs, which, while searchable, often garble words and drop images, especially in older books.

Each archive has a slightly different search function, but all have common elements and are fairly intuitive to use. Since HathiTrust and Internet Archive search by title and subject, use general terms like "carpentry" or "house furnishings" instead of specific ones like "porch railings" or "tin ceiling." On Google Books, which searches the full text of the book, you can use either. (HathiTrust also offers the option of full-text search.) The key to finding useful information in the archives is to narrow the search to books published within a range of years.

Search similar words or phrases; for instance, "house furnishings" and "home furnishings" will produce different results. Use period language for searches—"parlor" instead of "living room," "porch" instead of "deck," "cellar" instead of "basement." If you find one good title, check the other archives for similar titles. It's also fruitful to search authors and publishers.

Once you've located a good book or article, you can either bookmark it, download a PDF, print it out, or, if you've registered with the site, add it to your online collection. Even if the book you want is not viewable, HathiTrust and Google both have links to the nearest libraries that have it. HathiTrust and Chronicling America also give you the option of downloading single-page PDFs. If you just need a printout of a plan or photo, enlarge the page (if necessary) on your computer screen, then capture the image and save it to your desktop. (On a Mac, hit Command+Shift+4 and then drag the cursor over the area you want, or use the Alt + Printscreen (PrtSc) keys on a PC.)

All of the archives offer abundant possibilities for hours or even days of pleasurable research. With just a few clicks, you can find out how your house was built and what it might have looked like when it was new—and suddenly, that long-vanished world begins to come alive again.

What Style is Your House?

Arts & Crafts (1895-1935)

Informal yet eminently cultured, the Arts & Crafts movement served to influence a range of house styles.

The Arts and Crafts movement was also a reaction against the eclectic 'over-decorated' aesthetic of the Victorian era. The Arts & Crafts was a revolt against bad taste that Arts & Crafts devotees believed was embodied in the flood of poorly designed, carelessly made, overly decorated, useless household goods lacking beauty and utility.

For many old-house observers, Arts & Crafts may be one of the most confusing architectural styles. What does an Arts & Crafts-style house look like anyway? Is it a Craftsman bungalow, a Foursquare with bracketed eaves, a quaint cottage, or perhaps an architect-designed Prairie house? Yes.

Arts & Crafts isn't really a single style; it's an intellectual approach to many styles. Practically the only common factors to be found in all Arts & Crafts houses are those that encourage an informal but cultured lifestyle: an open floor plan; natural materials such as stone, brick, and wood; airy, light-filled rooms that encourage interaction with the outdoors; and the tasteful arrangement of a few well-designed, decorative, and useful objects.

The biggest promoter of the American Arts & Crafts movement, however, was an erstwhile furniture-maker named Gustav Stickley. From 1900 until 1916, Stickley's hugely popular magazine, *The Craftsman*, encouraged readers to build, furnish, and decorate their own homes using Arts & Crafts principles. Simple furnishings from the Stickley factories were featured in the magazine's pages, which also provided free designs for Craftsman houses. This, of course, inspired countless bungalows and Foursquares that still dot the streets of suburbs around the country... so much so that the words "Craftsman" and "bungalow" are now inextricably linked in the old-house lexicon. Stickley was no purist, but he urged the use of handmade decorations, from pottery to silver to textiles—even made by the homeowners themselves.

Common architectural features

- Low-pitched roof lines, gabled or hipped roof
- Deeply overhanging eaves
- Exposed rafters or decorative brackets under eaves
- Front porch beneath extension of main roof
- Tapered, square columns supporting roof
- 4-over-1 or 6-over-1 double-hung windows
- Frank Lloyd Wright design motifs
- Hand-crafted stone or woodwork
- Mixed materials throughout structure



Several developments in the American domestic architecture of the period are traceable not only to changes in taste and style but also to the shift from the upper- to middle-class patronage. The American Victorian typically took the form of a two-story square house with a hip roof disguised behind a variety of two-storied bays, with an assortment of gables as well as octagonal or round turrets and wraparound porches presenting a complex facade. Typically, the basic square house was also complemented by a back wing complete with its own entrances, and a stairwell that housed the kitchen, pantries, and scullery on the first floor and the servants' quarters on the second. Fitted

with inferior-quality woodwork and hardware, and noticeably smaller bedrooms and lower ceiling heights, the Victorian kitchen-servants' wing embodied the aristocratic class distinctions of the Old World. With the large bays, turrets, and rear wing removed, the front porch simplified, and the ceilings lowered somewhat, it is not difficult to see how the American Foursquare developed from the common American Queen Anne. The middle-class housewife of the era would not have domestic servants (at least not live-in ones) and would be doing much if not all of the housework herself, as well as watching the

children. These added roles made it important that the kitchen be integrated into the main house with easy sight lines to the common areas of the main floor (the dining and living rooms) as well as to the back yard. Commonly, the butler's pantry of the Victorian Era was replaced with dining room cabinetry

that often consisted of "built-ins", which gave home designers the opportunity to incorporate wood and glass craftsmanship into the public aspects of the home.

Another common design development arising from the class-shift of the time was the built-in "breakfast nook" in the kitchen. The Victorian kitchen of the previous era was separated from the family view and daily routine. It typically had a work table (having the equivalent purpose of the modern countertop) at which the servants would eat after the family meal was served and the kitchen tidied. The Victorian kitchen had no "proper" place for a family member to sit, eat, or do anything else. Again, as the housewife of the Craftsman era was now preparing the family meals, the Victorian kitchen gave way to one designed as the heart of the family's daily life. The breakfast nook often placed under a window or in its own bay provided a place for the family to gather at any time of the day or evening, particularly while food was being prepared.

"What Style is Your House?" was a regular feature of early HPC Newsletters; some information in these articles may have already been published or compiled from other sources like Old House Journal online, Wikipedia, and about.com as well as from our recent Historic Resources Survey of the Jacksonville Historic.