

**A6352      Pattern Books and Builder's Books      1.5 points**

Tuesday, 2-4 pm      Starting October 21, through December 2, 2014

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How did Americans understand what was fashionable or technologically up-to-date when commissioning and building their homes, houses of worship, and commercial buildings before glossy shelter magazines and HGTV?

The transmission of architectural ideas through publications has a long and important tradition in American building practice. Pattern books are the center of much of the country's vernacular built environment. Pattern books from the late 18<sup>th</sup> to the latter 19<sup>th</sup> century offered views of building plans and elevations for emulation, but they also reveal a developing view of suburbia and of urban living. Published images created a sense of "American" architecture out of the disparate building traditions of settlers from several places in Europe. The industrial revolution enabled more people to afford to build a new house, and their choices were expanded by the introduction of factory-made parts for buildings. Improvements in publishing and transportation resulted in the distribution of thousands of mass-market pattern books to every part of the country. Through these publications, both professional and amateur architects could reach a broad audience, and there is definitive evidence on the American landscape that the pattern books did influence both carpenter-builders and their middle-class clients.

This course will use the unparalleled resources of Avery Library's Rare Books collection to help students learn about the major American pattern books and periodicals of the 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries. Students will learn the important trends in pattern books, learn to closely read source materials as a research tool, and identify major trends in style and technology promoted through pattern books for buildings in the American vernacular landscape.

### **Class Schedule**

October 21, 2014 - Introduction

Introduction to pattern books and their role in American building over time, in particular the pre-Civil War authors of the Romantic Revival styles and the proliferation of pattern books after the Civil War. The 20<sup>th</sup> century evolution from an illustrated guide of designs for emulation to a catalog for house plans, and parts will be examined in a lecture.

Read: Smeins, Linda. *Building an American Identity: Pattern Book Homes and Communities, 1870-1900*. Alta Mira Press, 1999.

October 28, 2014- - *Class to be held in Avery Library; Archives Collection lecture room.*

The pattern books that made a mark on American building practice will be viewed in their original form. Class will review use of primary source materials, and draw attention to the details of the publications.

**Assignment 1:** Choose one pattern book, any period, any author, and review it closely.

Write an essay describing the book, paying attention to the following questions:

- Who is the author? Who is the intended audience?
- What does the book reveal about society's expectations for who will occupy the buildings shown?
- What does the book reveal about the communities where it will be used?

This is an exercise in close reading, close looking, and reflection. You do not need to research, what, if anything, others have said about this book and its author, though you are welcome to do so. What do YOU learn from it and how does it illustrate one aspect (or many) of American architecture? Your thoughts should form a coherent narrative.

**It is due to me as a pdf file no later than Sunday, November 9, at noon.**

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November 4, 2014 - No class – Election Day.

November 11, 2014 - Periodicals and building design

Late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> century architectural information from periodicals.

The interplay of pattern books and periodicals, and of architectural information in other cultural sources.

Sources to study: *Godey's Lady's Book; Scientific American; The American Agriculturalist; American Architect & Building; Ladies Home Journal* (all on-line)

November 18, 2014 - Kit Houses from the early 20<sup>th</sup> century

Sources to study: Catalogs for Sears, Montgomery Ward, and Aladdin Builders

Read: Reiff, Daniel D. ***Houses from Books: Treatises, Pattern Books, and Catalogs in American Architecture 1738-1950.*** Penn State University Press, 2000. Focus on the latter chapters on the “Kit Houses”.

**Assignment 2:** From the vast number of pattern books and builder's books produced in the United States through the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries, create an annotated list of the “Top Ten” books, explaining why you included each one. Make sure to cite specific author, title, and edition, and note if the edition you have chosen differs from others in the authors' output. You create the “Top Ten” category – best overall descriptions of American architecture; most innovative pattern books ; most widely reprinted in their time, (and therefore probably most used); most helpful

text; best illustrations – you choose. Your well-reasoned essay is due to me via e-mail as a pdf file **no later than 5:00 on Friday, December 5.**

November 25, 2014 – Mass publishing and architecture in the 20<sup>th</sup> century

The 20<sup>th</sup> century vernacular – the role of the FHA, advertising, and mass-market developers.

Sources to study: catalogs for Lustron, Forest Products Laboratories literature, FHA- materials.

December 2, 2014 - Summary

Discuss among the class the “top 10” pattern books you would recommend to your classmates who haven’t taken the class.

Review (via slide) images of buildings – can you identify the pattern book that spawned these designs?

## Readings

You will be required to use the pattern books and builders books in the Avery Library collection. The collection at Avery is outstanding and the librarians are waiting to help you – please follow protocol for use of the Rare Book room and allow yourself and the librarians time to locate books. There are also many pattern books available as reprints on the shelves for easier access, but don’t deny yourself the pleasure of getting into the originals!

The following books on the topics of pattern books are good studies. Please read (all are on reserve) for the class.

Hitchcock, Henry-Russell. *American Architectural Books*. University of Minnesota Press, Third Revised Edition, 1946.

O’Gorman, James, and Haferepe, Kenneth, editors. *American Architects & Their Books, 1840-1915*. University of Massachusetts Press, 2007.

Smeins, Linda. *Building an American Identity: Pattern Book Homes and Communities, 1870-1900*. Alta Mira Press, 1999.

Reiff, Daniel D. *Houses from Books: Treatises, Pattern Books, and Catalogs in American Architecture 1738-1950*. Penn State University Press, 2000.

Many American patternbooks have been re-issued in conveniently sized and low-cost paperback editions. You should be able to find them through Amazon at several price points. They span decades of design, and different viewpoints of what architecture should be.

Dover Publications have been a leader in issuing reprints of pattern books, but there are other publishers as well. You can build your library by looking at the Dover website:

<http://store.doverpublications.com/by-subject-architecture--interior-design--period-style-1.html>

There is no apparent order to the way the books are listed, but it's a fun site to browse, and there are more here than through Amazon.

Mitchell's Publications also has a convenient listing of architectural books in reprint, arranged chronologically: <http://www.mitchellspublications.com/ur/ah/chr.htm>

This is by no means a complete list, but it's a convenient way to see things by decade.