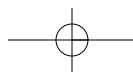
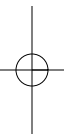


Creating Your
ARCHITECTURAL STYLE





"Residential architecture is the index of the affluence of every civilization."

George Hopkins, Architect

Creating Your
ARCHITECTURAL STYLE

DESIGNING AND BUILDING A FINE HOME

George D. Hopkins, Jr., Ph.D.
Architect



PELICAN PUBLISHING COMPANY

Gretna 2009

Copyright © 2009
By George D. Hopkins, Jr.
All rights reserved

The word "Pelican" and the depiction of a pelican are trademarks
of Pelican Publishing Company, Inc., and are registered in the
U.S. Patent and Trademark Office.

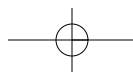
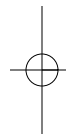
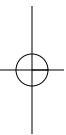
ISBN 978-1-58980-719-8

Printed in China

Published by Pelican Publishing Company, Inc.
1000 Burmaster Street, Gretna, Louisiana 70053



This book is dedicated to my parents from whom I inherited my mother's determination and my father's ingenuity. Their love and steadfast support in the face of adversity helped me develop the confidence to pursue my dreams.



Contents



Foreword.....	9
Introduction.....	13
PLANNING YOUR STYLE	
Deciding to Build a New Home	19
Making Design Decisions	25
The Design Process	33
Your Lifestyle and Home Layout.....	37
CREATING THE DESIGN	
The Conceptual Design	43
Selecting Your Architectural Style.....	49
Relating the Style and Floor Plan	57
ARCHITECTURAL STYLES	
Overview of American Styles.....	67
Colonial Architecture	73
French Colonial.....	75
English Colonial.....	76
Dutch Colonial	77
Spanish Colonial and Revival Styles.....	78
Colonial Revival	81
Georgian Architecture	83
Regional Georgian Styles	85
West Indies Style.....	86
Federal Style.....	89
Greek Revival.....	90
Southern Plantations.....	93
Italian Architecture	97
Italian Renaissance Revival.....	98
Italian Villa Style.....	101
Italianate Architecture	102
The Victorian Period.....	105
French Architecture	109
Second Empire.....	110
French Normandy	113
French Provincial.....	114
Beaux Arts Style	117
Neoclassical Architecture.....	119
Mediterranean Style.....	123
Modern to Contemporary Architecture	125

CREATING ROOMS

Creating Rooms129
 The Kitchen133
 The Dining Room147
 The Great Room157
 The Master Bedroom Suite165
 The Library, Study and Home Office177
 Pavilions, Gazebos and Cabañas183
 The Wine Cellar191

DESIGN ELEMENTS

Design Elements197
 Porches and Verandas199
 Windows203
 Doors207
 Staircases211
 Cabinetry and Millwork217
 Fireplaces and Chimneys221
 Porticos225
 Ironwork229
 Ceilings233
 Roofs235
 Dormer Windows239
 Swimming Pools243
 Fountains249
 Walls, Fences and Gates251

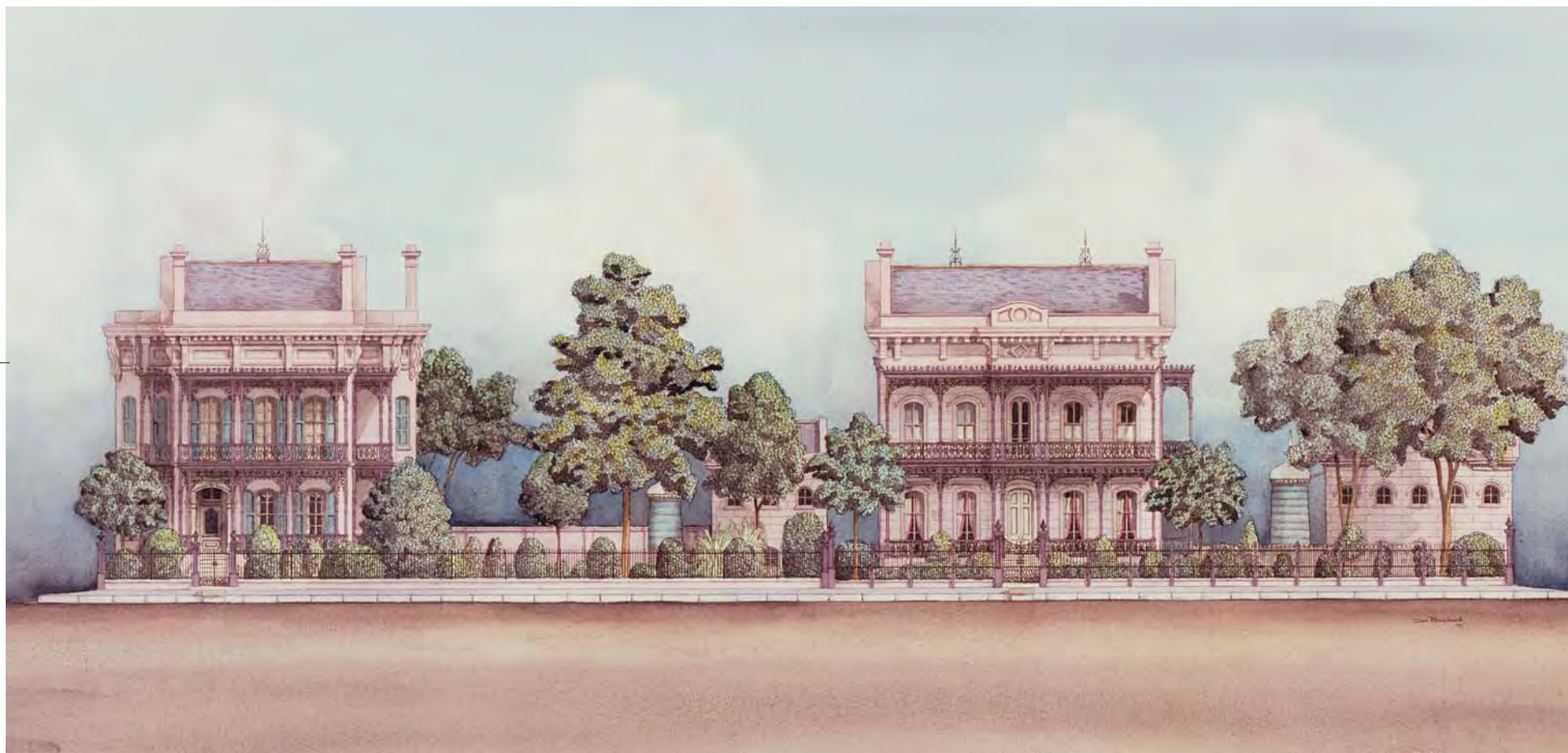
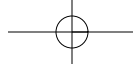
THE DESIGN TEAM

The Design Team257
 The Architect259
 The Structural Engineer267
 The Interior Designer271
 The Landscape Architect283
 The General Contractor289

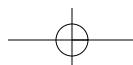
APPENDIX

Glossary299
 Bibliography332
 Acknowledgments336





1300 block of First Street in the Garden District of New Orleans



Foreword

GEORGE HOPKINS AND THE AMERICAN HOME

Over a career spanning more than three decades, the New Orleans-based architect George Denègre Hopkins, Jr. has designed some 1,100 private homes from New York to Texas. Hopkins has indicated that since early childhood his sole ambition was to become an architect and design fine homes. Yet his professional route was not direct. Along the way he successfully advanced the concept of a major transportation corridor in New Orleans stretching from the Mississippi River Bridge to the Audubon Zoo. His doctoral dissertation at Tulane's School of Architecture focused on the adaptive reuse of historic buildings and touched upon everything from functionally obsolete warehouses to older housing stock in myriad styles.

In the end, Hopkins' direction evolved naturally from his own life. He was raised in the fabled Garden District, which remains to this day a living encyclopedia of American architectural styles in the nineteenth century. Even as a boy, Hopkins could admire the grand spaces, elegant proportions, and intriguing design elements of his family's home and those nearby. At the same time, he could readily see that those beautiful structures no longer accommodated the way people actually lived. Families had new interests and needs. Technology had opened new horizons. By the time he began his architectural studies, George Hopkins seemed to be facing a choice: either embrace the new and reject the rich heritage of style or adhere loyally to some classic prototypes and run the risk of turning into a dry antiquarian, out of touch with contemporary life.

Architects had been wrestling with this problem for more than a century, with all the polemics that seem to accompany debates within the profession. In Louisiana, in the 1960s and 70s both camps had distinguished representatives. Leading those who turned their backs on the traditional "styles" and focused instead on modernism was the firm of Curtis and Davis. In fact, Nathaniel "Buster" Curtis was a next door neighbor of Hopkins and became a lifelong friend of the younger architect. Aligned on the side of traditionalism was the Baton Rouge-based architect A. Hays Town, who began a distinguished career designing private homes at age sixty. His meticulous evocations of classic Louisiana architecture dazzled the public and opened people's eyes to much that had been forgotten. Hopkins still reveres Town, just as he respects the achievements of the firm of Curtis and Davis. But in the end, he did not embrace either of their approaches. More precisely, he took what he found best in each, rejecting the rest; he then combined these and then added a third element of his own.

Through Buster Curtis he came to appreciate how a contemporary architect is able to translate the demands of modern life styles into comfortable and workable dwellings. Hays Town enabled him to appreciate the mastery that comes from a deep knowledge of the design elements of early styles. Hopkins concentrates on both sides of the equation, bringing to bear a social scientist's eagerness to identify and accommodate his clients' life styles and a virtuoso's knowledge of the major architectural styles to which Americans are drawn.

For George Hopkins, the choice of a style is not the beginning point for architecture and still less an end in itself. This selection can be made only when the patron has described the spaces to be included and their relative locations within the home. This may in turn be shaped by family composition, life style, ambition, available resources, or any combination of such factors. The results may be bland or wildly idiosyncratic, but the challenge is always the same: to translate real needs and wishes into practical functions and then to embody those functions in technologically up-to-date layouts and workable designs that are rendered coherent by a pleasing style.

Hopkins views the recent flood of American “McMansions” with a curious blend of disappointment and forbearance. Disappointment - because he sees that most designers of such dwellings have, at best, a sketchy knowledge of the elements of classic styles. Forbearance - because he knows how hard it is to meet patrons’ real needs while avoiding visual chaos. In the end, his approach recalls that of the great nineteenth century French Beaux Arts designers. Unlike some “purists,” he gladly works in a variety of styles, approaches each with the respect it is due, and avoids mixing them. The breadth of Hopkins’ palette of styles is the third element of his approach, and it derives both from his own broad sympathies and his patrons’ diverse tastes.

Bluntly, then, the subject of this book is as much the men and women who set out to build a home for themselves as it is architecture per se. Clearly, the architect must bring to his task a keen knowledge of the cultural environment, social habits, and even the psychology of each of his patrons. This comes naturally to Hopkins. Quiet, but extremely observant, he has a novelist’s ability to find the right pungent phrase to express what he hears or sees. At

the same time, he has a rare capacity to empathize with his patron and help them express their feelings in terms of architecture.

This is a highly informative book, rich in uplifting insights, practical suggestions, and sober guidance. The splendid photographs, many of them by the architect himself, bring reality to the most arcane ideas and provide a kind of second text that amplifies and clarifies Hopkins’ overall presentation. Here, then, is a book that enables the would-be home builder to understand his or her own wants and to come to grips with the endless issues that lurk along the winding path that leads from the initial impulse to their final realization in bricks and mortar.

One might be tempted to exclaim, “What an original idea!” But for all its innovations and insights, this book is by no means unprecedented. In fact, it occupies an honorable place in a great American tradition stretching from at least the 1830s to the present. The core of this tradition has been for architects to write books that help prosperous Americans express themselves through the design of their homes. Among the first to do this was New York-born Minard Lefever, who published no fewer than five “pattern books” between 1833 and 1850. However, Lefever addressed himself mainly to builders, not patrons. By contrast, Alexander Jackson Downing’s books on Cottages and Residences (1844) and The Architecture of Country Houses (1850) were unabashedly intended to sidestep the architect and speak directly to the patron. They were hugely successful, as can be seen in the thousands of nineteenth century houses from coast to coast that were based on Downing’s designs.

Other such books followed in quick succession. In 1851 Samuel Sloan, in Philadelphia, turned out two volume *On Modern Architecture*, which in turn inspired a Britisher, Calvert Vaux, to produce a widely read book, *Villas and Cottages* in 1857. Even as the Civil War was raging, one Henry Hudson Holly published *Holly's Country Seats*, presumably on the assumption that the war would end soon and prosperous Americans would return once more to the serious business of making homes for themselves.

Holly's book raises a question that is equally relevant to George Hopkins' book today: Is this endless concern for building homes for themselves a specific preoccupation of the rich? Why should anyone wish to perpetuate this tradition in a democratic age, especially when much of the world is mired in a deep economic slump? It is true that Vaux's extremely popular book on villas and cottages appeared just as the American economy was sinking under one of the first global financial panics, from which it fully emerged only with the outbreak of the Civil War, four years later. Not everyone who read Vaux's book could afford to build, but it helped thousands to crystallize their dreams of new ways to live that combined city and countryside, work and nature. Similarly, Holly encouraged his readers to dream at a time of national suffering. Who knows the extent to which such dreams, nurtured amidst extreme hardship, helped give rise to the enormous economic boom that blossomed after the surrender at Appomattox?

The desire to imagine for themselves an ideal home or residence is one of the constants of human civilization. It is reflected in the villas of ancient Romans, the palaces of Umayyid caliphs, medieval fortresses, Renaissance palazzos, nineteenth century country estates, and the many residences that Frank Lloyd Wright designed for friends and neighbors in Oak Park and River Forest, Illinois. This desire seems particularly strong in democratic societies, and for an obvious reason. In democratic societies, as Alexis de Tocqueville noted, people fashion themselves, adopting ideals, values, and life styles on the basis of personal choice rather than tradition. The more prosperous the democracy, the more one might expect this basic urge to manifest itself.

And so we open this beautiful volume by George Hopkins. It can be leafed through, skimmed, read carefully but selectively, or pored over from beginning to end, with every approach rewarding the reader with understanding and pleasure. Those contemplating building a residence for themselves and their families will find countless practical tips herein. Those only dreaming of doing so will have their appetites whetted and their capacity for moving from dream to reality heightened. And those who have no desire at all to shackle themselves with a permanent residence of the sort discussed here, will take pleasure in the many intriguing insights Hopkins provides on the mores and values of the era in which we live.

S. Frederick Starr



Introduction

The complex process of planning and designing a new home is a daunting assignment for even the best-educated layperson. *Creating Your Architectural Style* levels the playing field and eliminates uncertainty about designing and building a new residence. Each chapter of this book is systematically organized to serve as both a framework for the planning process and a ready reference to resolve vexing issues. These insights will enable the reader to understand and orchestrate the task of designing and building a new home with the skill of an experienced project manager; acquire a complete understanding of the roles and responsibilities of each member of the design and construction team; gain the ability to describe the preferred design elements with the correct terminology; and identify the special features of your chosen architectural style or select the eclectic elements that combine to create your own personal style.

This book answers myriad questions posed by clients for whom we designed fine homes. Esoteric architectural terms and references to historical styles can be intimidating. Engineering components of the structural design and methods of construction are baffling. *Creating Your Architectural Style* addresses the division of responsibilities and sequencing of professional consultants including the architect, structural engineer, interior designer, landscape architect and a variety of specialists. Among these are kitchen planners, sound and video technicians, home theater designers, lighting consultants, security and special electronics experts.

During their travels to France, the owners of this manor house scoured the countryside for decorative design elements to embellish their new home. A guide led them to out-of-the-way warehouses from which they acquired gas lanterns, antique entrance doors, ironwork and furnishings. Even the casement windows are authentic, having been purchased from a French manufacturer.

There is an old expression, "They just don't build homes today as well as they used to." This is simply not true. Revolutionary advances in construction technology and upscale architectural design components are being incorporated into today's fine homes. Carefully engineered residences are being constructed that offer superior structural integrity with designs for sturdy foundations and framing to withstand storm force winds and other natural disasters. There have been remarkable accomplishments in interior environmental control, home automation, new materials requiring less maintenance and the development of every imaginable household fixture and appliance. Interest in the creative design of elegant homes is also stimulated by the Internet and monthly publications featuring exquisite photographs of magnificent residences built around the world. There are entire cable networks dedicated to residential design and building. *Creating Your Architectural Style* synthesizes and navigates a wealth of information to achieve all of your design objectives.

The key ingredients to the creation of a fabulous new home are time, talent and resources. This book will help you identify the roles and responsibilities of design team resources. It will also guide you through the construction process, helping to prevent costly mistakes and achieve superior results. If properly managed, creating your new home will be one of your most rewarding experiences. *Creating Your Architectural Style* will empower you to design your dream home as a reflection of your personal style.

Preferences for individual design elements are formed over a lifetime of aesthetic experiences. Thus, you have probably acquired or developed a personal inventory of design concepts and ideas that you wish to incorporate into your own special home. A client once expressed frustration at being unable to conceptually amalgamate the scores of ideas that she wanted to integrate into the layout for her new home. My response put her at ease by comparing the design requirements for her home to a 300-piece jigsaw puzzle piled in the middle of a table. Just as the first task with the puzzle is to sort the pieces of similar color, we must group spaces within a home into zones. The process for developing a floor plan is very similar to combining the partially assembled clusters of parts into the picture that appears when the puzzle is completed.

Over the past thirty-five years, it has been my professional responsibility to explain how to design fine homes to clients from a wide variety of geographic locations and to answer a multitude of questions on this subject. While each home that we design is uniquely tailored to our clients' individual needs and requirements, the process to achieve their architectural goals has been amazingly similar. *Creating Your Architectural Style* describes the basic issues that must be addressed when designing your home and how the parts of the puzzle fit together.

My confidence that this process will lead to a happy conclusion is reinforced by a casual, but telling, comment by another client whose home was under construction. As we were getting out of the car to inspect the newly framed walls, I asked if she would like for me to bring the plans. She said, "When we finished the drawings I could walk through this house in my sleep. I don't need the plans anymore because I know every inch of the layout." When we completed construction, she said that she wouldn't change a thing! This was certainly a rewarding measure of a successful design process.

The purpose of this book is to provide a thorough explanation of the process required to design fine homes. *Creating Your Architectural Style* is arranged in a fashion that will serve as a guide to organizing the approach to designing your home and as an informational resource defining architectural terms and describing residential styles.



Glistening at dusk, the porte-cochere and leaded glass doors illuminate the entrance to a new residence appointed with rusticated arches below a stone balustrade on the façade. Dormer windows open from guest suites on the second floor to a large front balcony.