

ANTIQUE HOME

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Spanish Revival Architecture of the 20th Century

Informal eclectic style is fanciful and romantic



The romantic Spanish Revival style—or alternately Spanish Eclectic—refers to the architectural style that was built from about 1915 to about 1940. Like [Mission Revival](#), Spanish Revival was influenced by Spanish Colonial architecture of earlier centuries. Unlike its immediate predecessor, Mission, Spanish Revival was more ornate with stylistic detail apparent in both large features and small, such as intricately patterned tilework and wrought iron hardware.

After the Panama-California Exposition in 1915, the Spanish Revival style caught hold. The growth of California and the film industry during the 1920s and 1930s facilitated the dissemination of the Spanish Revival style. Though it is a prominent housing style in the Southwest US as well as Florida and Texas, it is less common in Northern states.

Spanish Revival is an extremely eclectic style. Many Mediterranean touches are combined to create an exotic, but harmonious appearance. Influences include Spanish Baroque, Moorish, and Gothic elements. Tile roofs and stucco exteriors are characteristic with half rounded doors and windows. Elaborate tilework, applied relief ornamentation, and wrought iron grillwork is used to create frames around doorways and windows, and is used widely as decorative accents

throughout the house. Towers and columns are often seen as are balustrades, cantelivered balconies, covered porches, and arcaded walkways. Front entrances were often highly ornamented and many were balanced by a commanding triple-arched focal window.

The Monterey style is a later (1925-1955) two-story adaptation of Spanish Revival style combined with features of the Colonial Revival. It's primary distinguishing characteristic is its prominent second-story cantilevered balcony that often runs the length of the front of the house.

General Characteristics

The following are typical features of Spanish Revival houses:

- Asymmetrical
 - Low-pitched flat, gable, or hip roof, typically with no overhang
 - Tile roof
 - Half round arches, doors, and windows
 - Stucco over adobe brick, or adobe brick exterior walls
 - Plaster interior walls
 - Ornate tile, wrought iron, and wood work
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Architectural Styles of America and Europe

Spanish Revival



Southern California, demonstrating the typical features of the style: unframed, round-arch windows, stucco wall cladding, tile roof with no overhanging eaves, decorative tile ornament, and asymmetrical floor plan.

PERIOD OF POPULARITY: Roughly 1890s – 1929 (prior to the Great Depression)

INTRODUCTION TO REVIVAL STYLES: Each revival style identifies specifically with an architecture of an earlier time and place, especially those related to early American or European precedents. Several popular revival styles are included on this blog, though other, less popular revival styles also appeared. To classify this grouping of architectural styles presents a challenge, as one could argue that many earlier Victorian styles were similarly revivalist. In fact, one publication includes several revival styles within the larger category of Victorian architecture (Cunliffe, et. al. 2010). The concept of “period styles” has also been adopted by some writers (including this one), though it was an early 20th century term used by non-professionals to romanticize the past. On the flip side are the architectural historians who prefer the more academic “Age of eclecticism” or “Eclectic Era,” which is an important concept to provide historical context here. The Eclectic Era, however, includes both revival and early modern styles that competed ideologically and appeared nearly simultaneously before the Great Depression. For purposes here, then, “revival styles” seems most appropriate, adapted widely across America for use in middle-class homes, wealthy country houses, commercial buildings, early skyscrapers, and civic buildings. Though overlapping with the more picturesque Victorian era, these styles largely gained popularity during the first two decades of the 20th century and heavily influenced our residential and commercial landscapes.

During this time (mostly between 1900 and 1929), accuracy of styles became important once again, unlike Queen Anne style, which borrowed from a variety of sources. Most Important, revival styles look to the past for inspiration. The trend toward revivalist architecture gained momentum from the 1893 Chicago World’s Fair, the *Columbian Exposition*, where historical interpretations of European styles were encouraged. Simultaneous to the rise of revivalist architecture, the modern era saw its beginnings with architects who were instead looking to the future, not to the past, with more progressive, modernist styles. Thus defines the Eclectic Movement of the early 20th century, which consisted of a simultaneous and perhaps competing

interest in both modern and historic architectural traditions. This variety, or eclecticism, provided for one of the most diverse and colorful periods for architecture and urban design in American history, when almost anyone with at least a middle-class income could choose from one of a dozen or more styles for their home.

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND AND FEATURES: Spanish revival (also referred to as Spanish eclectic) was inspired by the architecture of Spain and Latin America, emphasizing their rich stylistic details. Due to the early influence of New Spain in the Southwest and Southeast, the style is rare outside the Southwest, Texas and Florida. Typical features include a low-pitched roof with little or no eave overhang, a red-tiled roof, perhaps a prominent rounded arch over a door, window or porch, a stucco wall surface, and usually an asymmetrical façade.

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Beverly Hills, CA. This example includes a round, medieval-type tower and a projecting, second-story porch, along with the more typical stucco cladding and tile roof.



Long Beach, CA. An excellent residential example of the style, with low-pitched roof, no overhanging eaves, occasional round-arched openings, tile roof, stucco surface, and asymmetrical facade.