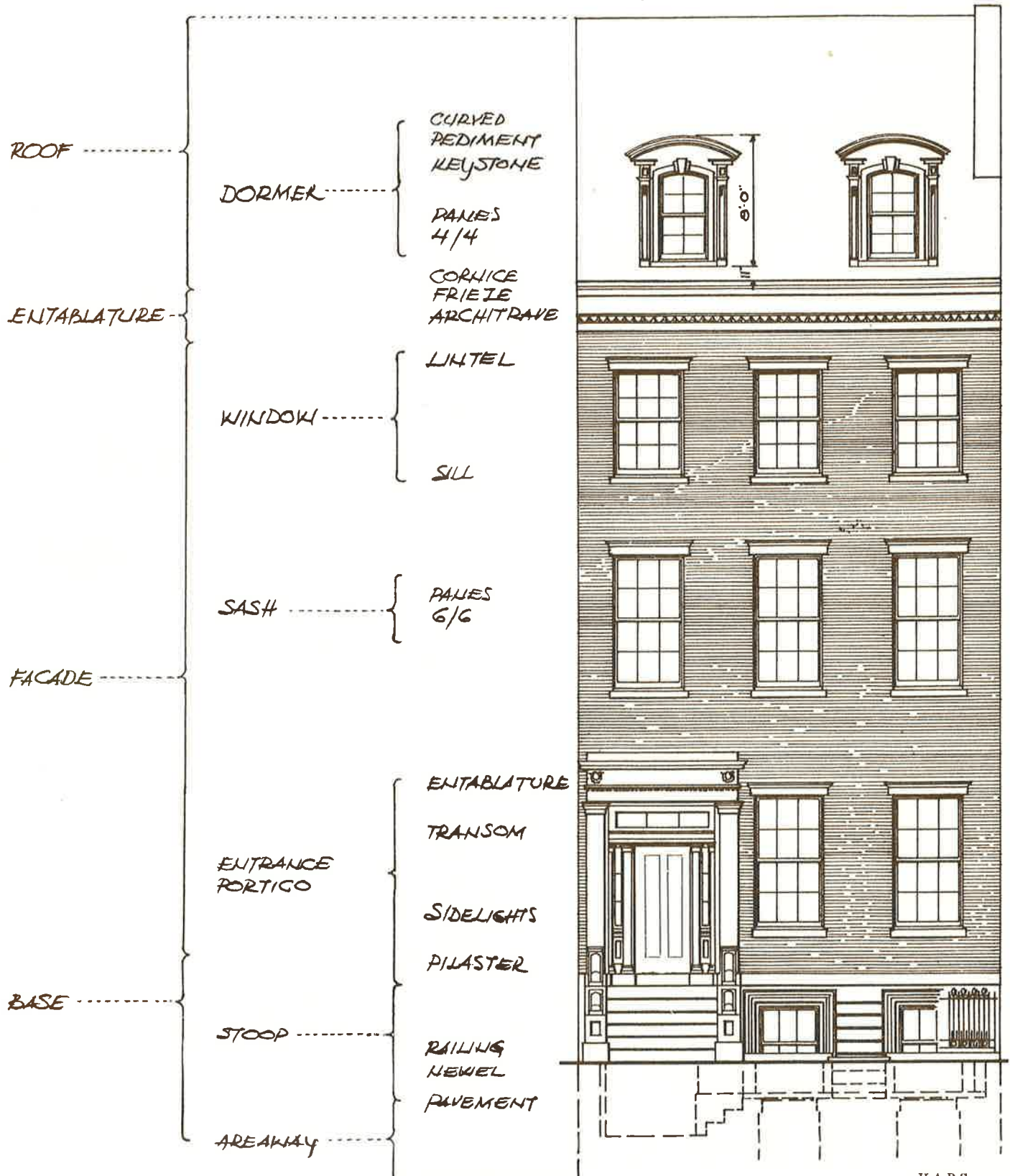


*Nineteenth Century
Dwelling Houses
of Greenwich Village*

Association of Village Homeowners
Landmarks Committee

Looking at City Houses: a diagram of their details



H.A.B.S.

The meaning of Greenwich Village in the New York cityscape

New York has been called a nineteenth-century city. The row house developed here during those years is praised as unique by authorities and prized by present-day families for its utility and grace. New York builders and architects produced successful plans for narrow plots by building higher and deeper, avoiding a cramped effect by skillful proportion of space. Even when shared as apartments, the New York house of the last century is eminently livable.

In Greenwich Village stands both the earliest and the largest group of such houses extant—more than 1,400 of them over one hundred years old. Extensively restored and fully used, they line intimate, tree-shaded streets. Many streets toward the west are angled to follow old property surveys and predate the 1811 grid pattern for Manhattan. The human scale, the warm charm of these homes are cherished by their residents and neighbors. Village houses, no less than the art and commerce centered here, are a cynosure for countless visitors yearly.

This booklet may help the public to enjoy more knowingly the rich variety of Village facades. In single blocks, *e.g.*, the renowned West Tenth Street off Fifth Avenue, the styles of different decades stand harmoniously together—much as in Rome, survivals of different centuries enhance one another. Village dwellings exemplify each major style from the end of the eighteenth century to the twentieth, and the transitions between them. Elsewhere in Manhattan this history in comparable detail has vanished forever.

Village houses long escaped replacement by big buildings, even after the Village became a crossroad of transit, largely because depressions and wars tended to limit investment on the scale that did transform lower Fifth Avenue. Instead, smaller new buildings and ingenious alterations made for a lively, cosmopolitan quarter, keeping the old structures alive.

After 1950, some—rich in beauty and historic association—were demolished, despite community

protest. Now, under the New York Landmarks Preservation Law of 1965, real protection can come: the official designation of The Greenwich Village Historic District of April 29, 1969 has added sixty-five more square blocks to the four already protected as The King-Charlton-Van Dam Street and The Macdougall-Sullivan Gardens Historic Districts (1966 and 1967).

This booklet grew from an intention to make explicit the value of Greenwich Village dwellings to the City and the Nation by using invaluable architectural drawings done in the 1930's for the Works Progress Administration, the *Historic American Buildings Survey* and the *Index of American Design*. It had inestimable encouragement and review by two authorities: Regina Kellerman, secretary, N. Y. Chapter, Society of Architectural Historians, who gave unstintingly of her scholarship and insights, and Professor James Grote VanDerpool, first director of the New York City Landmarks Preservation Commission, which amassed a unique body of historic fact from public real-estate tax records on every Greenwich Village building. Commissioner Evelyn Haynes also gave knowledgeable support.

The booklet is an effort of the Association of Village Homeowners to deepen general appreciation of their irreplaceable homes. This was an Association purpose from its founding in 1960, which brought together resident owners whose devotion to Village houses keeps them standing. Among us, Mrs. Philip Wittenberg has earned enduring gratitude for sustained leadership in preservation.

Greenwich Village
May 1968, October 1969

Verna Small

Usual details found in any city house are charted opposite. Practice in comparing them soon brings skill in distinguishing the marks of style and period. The pleasure of it has been known to change a casual stroller into a buildings buff. The information listed in References on page 11 may help correct a common error in restoration: forcing a false "colonial" look on buildings rich in their own nineteenth-century distinction.

Federal houses, small and early

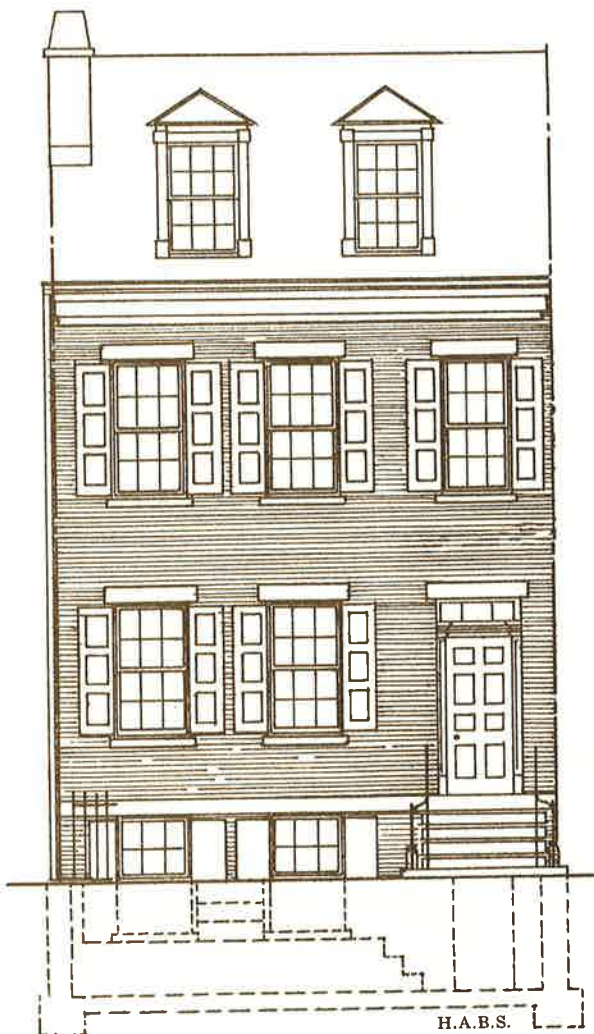
Just one Village house is known to be earlier than 1800: a farmhouse finished in 1799. In 1836, the house was given a brick front, and in 1928 studios were added to the top, but its original gambrel roofline and clapboard siding can be seen at the southwest corner of Bedford and Commerce Streets.

Other small buildings encountered with pleasure in the west and south streets of the Village date mostly from the 1820's when they formed part of a quiet country community. In style they are usually Federal, a name given to designs derived from the Late Georgian style and executed in America after the Revolution. Today's Village miraculously counts 200 Federal dwellings, some modest, some decidedly mansions. They are largely the work of masons and carpenters, firmly directed by the remarkable builders' guidebooks of the time. The Federal style, which persisted in New York until about 1835, is described by Ada Louise Huxtable in *Classic New York* as refined and decorous, "the architecture of good breeding and good manners."

Federal houses are generally of red brick, often laid in Flemish bond (showing alternately a long side and a short side of the bricks) and originally finished with paint and carefully drawn mortar lines. In their delicate wood and iron detailing, they preserve the touch of the master craftsman. The entrance, flush with the facade, is enriched with restrained ornament derived from English adaptations of classic models. Even a modest house may have colonettes in the doorframe, or an arched doorway. The more elaborate have small but free-standing columns, often fluted, with Doric or Ionic capitals. Great beauty survives in sidelights and transoms with either leading or intricate wood muntins.

The stoop to the parlor-floor entrance is low, usually brownstone, like the lintels. The shape of lintels may hint at age. Those about 1800, as at 70 Bedford Street, may have a single or double keystone, and are splayed or angled at the ends.

Facades are all shown in the same scale, to emphasize the important size-differences between styles.



In the 1820's, flat rectangular lintels are usual, but some have a molded panel with decorated corner blocks. Doors are designed with six, seven, or eight panels. Windows are double-hung, panes small, and arranged six-over-six. Some houses have the horsewalk, a narrow entry at street level, serving as a passage to rear stables, as at 131 Charles Street, built in 1834.

The Federal house at 4 Grove Street (1833-34) opposite, is representative of the small dwelling in this style. The work of James N. Wells, a builder-architect who designed the nearby St. Luke's Chapel block, it has the usual two full stories above a basement entered from beneath the stoop, steep pitched roof, and attic with dormers. Many such roofs were later raised to make three full stories, with new windows matching those below.

The doorway of 8 Grove Street (1829) top, right, with the usual low flight of steps, has fluted wood pilasters supporting a crowning cornice. Lintels are stone, above windows originally equipped with shutters, as shown. Generally, shutters on the ground floor were paneled, those above, louvered.

The mantel from 24 Commerce Street (1821) center, right, in wood, is an especially graceful Federal example, with carved center and terminal panels and moldings of characteristic delicacy.

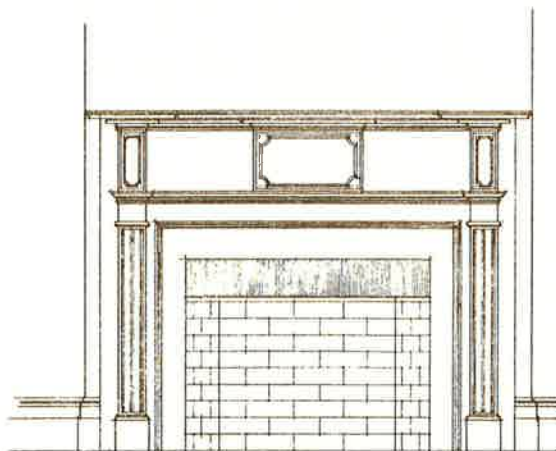
The exterior iron railing, below, right, of the Federal period, is typical of the lacey, intricate iron, wrought rather than cast, used so effectively at this time.

Among other small houses still notably expressive of the Federal style are 23 Van Dam Street (1833), and 18 and 20 Christopher Street (1827).

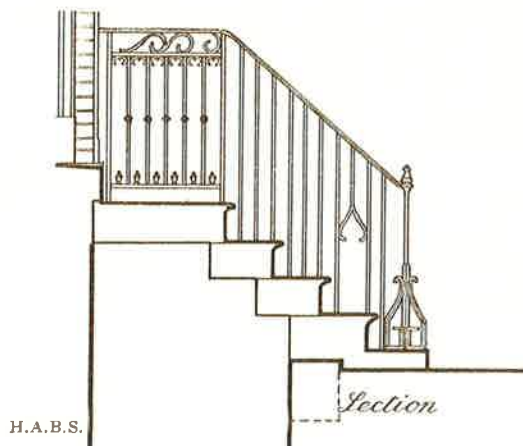
Note: Here, as for all styles, examples were chosen among many possibilities for their retention of original character and for their diverse locations throughout Greenwich Village.



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I.A.D.



Grander Federal houses

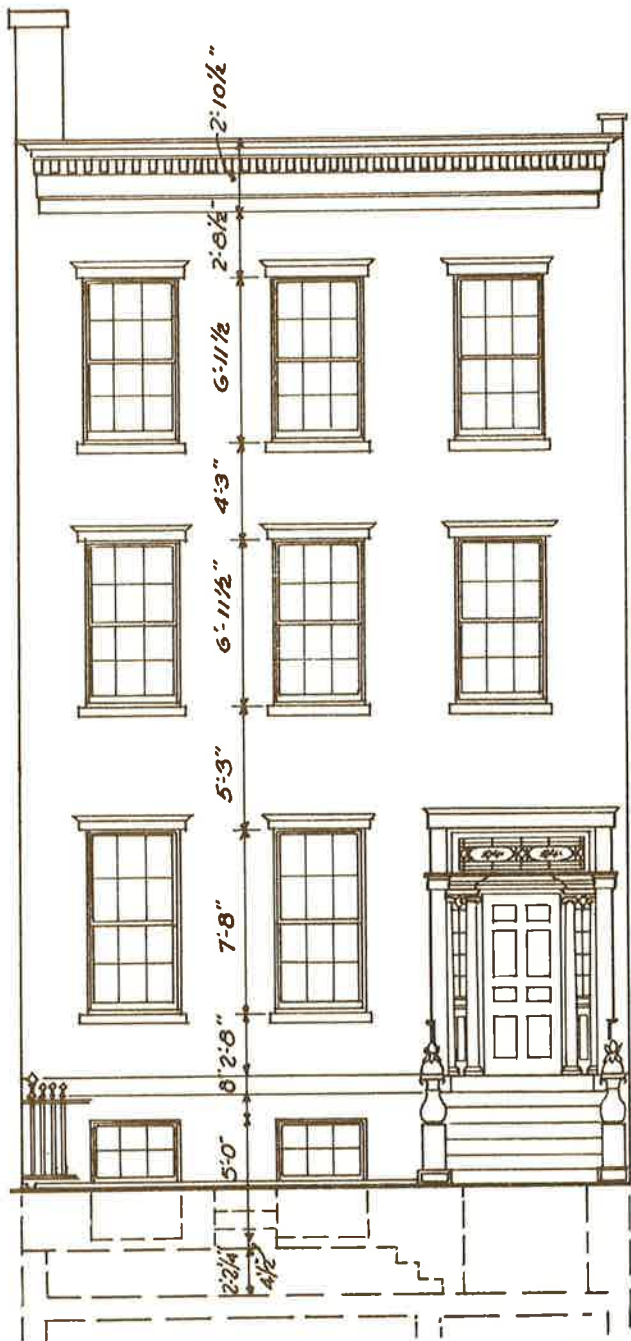
The Federal house at 37 Charlton Street, left, is an imposing one. It was first built in 1827 by John Gridley, a carpenter, and rebuilt in 1829 after a fire. The third story was added still later. Such houses are spacious, this one being twenty-five feet wide. Entrances are treated more elaborately, and interiors have especially elegant wood and plaster work. Here an outstanding entrance is achieved by graceful use of the Ionic order and handsome, carefully worked leaded design in the transom.

The sliding doors of 37 Charlton Street, top, right, separating the front and back rooms of the parlor floor, are a major decorative feature. Eight panels are deeply inset in each. They are flanked by classic pilasters and above them, the crowning member of the door enframingent is enriched with deeply carved panels and connecting sculptural detail. The acorn relief employed here is a theme almost unique to the New York region, used well into the Greek Revival period. Some Federal houses have folding parlor doors, earlier than these sliding ones on tracks, which, when folded back, cover recessed cabinets or closets between the rooms.

The wrought iron railings of 37 Charlton Street, center, right, are a striking example of the elaborate but always delicate Federal craft, with curved and caged newels.

The doorway at 59 Morton Street (1828) bottom, right, is appropriately stately for a most imposing residence in the Federal style, built with a third full story. The doorway is considered by James Grote VanDerpool to be one of the handsomest in the City. It is richly detailed, with slender Ionic columns and leaded lights. Its arch, like the lintels, is executed in marble, with panels repeated in each, producing a pleasing unity.

Another imposing Federal mansion at 45 Grove Street (1830-31), while now much modified, is still a striking nineteenth-century structure with much of its spectacular interior intact. Originally free-standing with extensive grounds, it had two full stories and new parlor windows



H.A.B.S.

added in 1869. Still another big Federal house is 20 Washington Square North (1828). Its facade was widened over the old carriage way in the 1860's, and a story added in the 1880's.

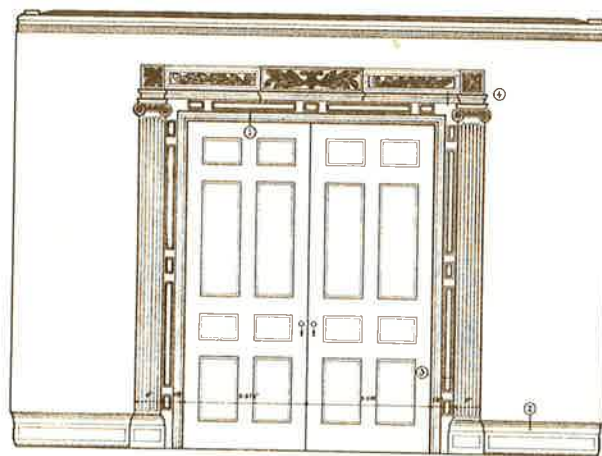
Just east of Greenwich Village, the Tredwell House (1831-32), 29 East Fourth Street, has a basically Federal exterior, but its interior reflects in a striking manner the transition to the coming heavier and more stately style: the Greek Revival. Known as "The Old Merchant's House," it retains much of its nineteenth-century furnishings, and is open to the public as a house museum at certain hours.

Greek Revival houses, after 1830

The next measured drawing, on page 6, shows the "modern style," as Greek Revival was called by about 1835. Although dwellings are still of brick with stone trim, the whole scale is larger, the details more restrained and lithic. Of commanding interest is the treatment of the doorway, often now set within a stately, well-proportioned portico. Roofs are flattened, with small attic windows replacing dormers, sometimes in a frieze.

The Greek Revival style coincided with the development of architecture as a profession. Now, design adds polish to the tradition of the earlier carpenter-builders. Benjamin Latrobe, one of the style's great advocates, urged *use, not ornament*, as its keynote. Sometimes more Roman than Greek in feeling, houses share with public buildings a certain monumental effect, expressed in large, smooth surfaces, simplicity and severity. This strength is admitted even by a critic who found the style "bald," mourning for earlier, lighter ornament.

Many factors contributed to this indigenous American manner of building. The newly uncovered archeological remains at Pompeii and Heraculaneum led to heightened interest in classic originals as opposed to adaptations. The Greek War of Independence also stirred a deep sympathy in Americans, and the rage for things



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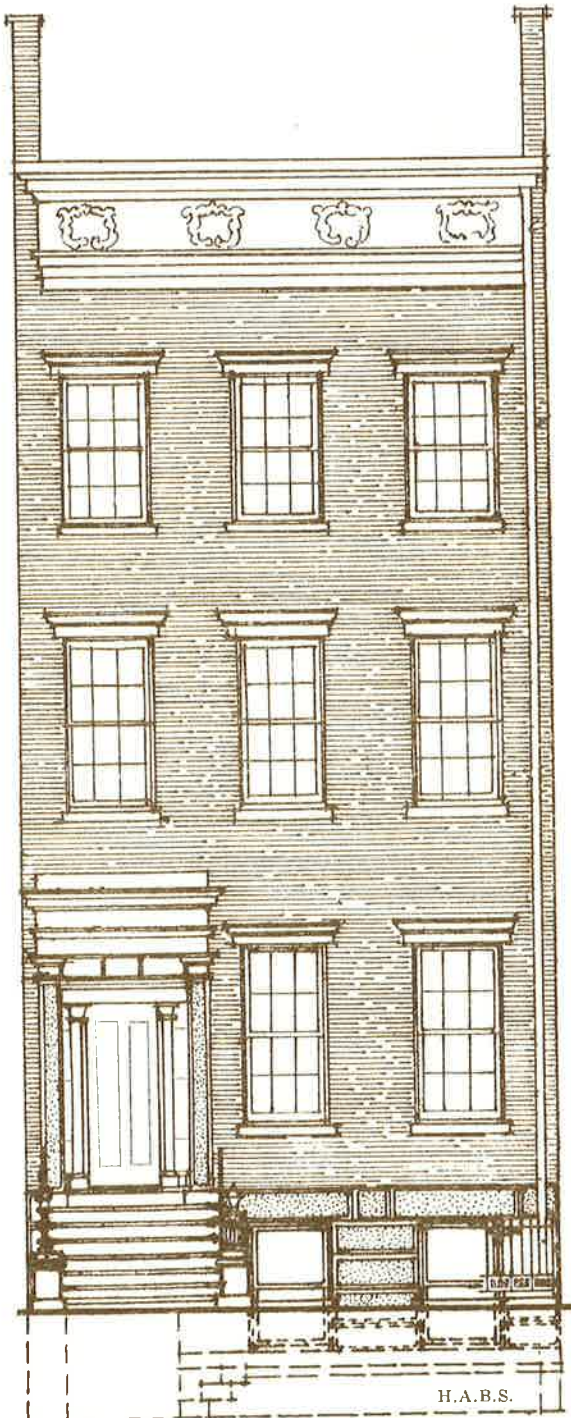
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Greek became a nationwide enthusiasm, witness Athens, Troy, Ypsilanti, U.S.A. Equally important, powerful machinery for the working of wood and metal was developed, facilitating the execution of striking architectural elements. In fashion-conscious New York, the style became so pervasive that an English visitor of 1834 wrote that everything here was a Greek Temple, even to the "privies in the back court."

In the Village now stand well over 700 Greek Revival dwellings. A few are mansions, but more are just substantial homes, often built as speculations in the northward sweep of the City and reflecting its increasing prosperity. Those of mansion size, such as the famed "Row" on the eastern side of Washington Square North (1831-33), have as their hallmark a single pair of freestanding columns flanking the entrance and supporting a straight entablature above, the whole framing a deeply recessed doorway. Here, the basements, porticos, stoops and lintels (now invariably molded at the top) are of marble. In later examples on the block to the west (1836-38), and on East Ninth Street off Fifth Avenue (1840's), corresponding details are of brownstone.

Simpler but closely related facades are to be found everywhere in the Village. In handsome, dignified rows, they predominate in many blocks, such as West Eleventh Street off Fifth Avenue (1840's).

The Greek Revival house at 132 West Fourth Street (1836-39), left, is twenty-two feet wide. Built of brick over a rusticated brownstone basement, it has the now-usual three full stories with small attic windows above. Originally, as shown, they formed an integral part of the frieze. They are framed in laurel wreaths (usually of cast iron), adding a particularly graceful and classic look to the design of the entire entablature. In other windows, six-over-six panes are still commonly used, but in instances where parlor windows extend to the floor, six-over-nine panes are the rule.



The Greek Revival doorway, top right, shows the monumental effect created by this style in standard homes of the day. Behind a flat entablature resting on massive pilasters of brownstone, the door itself, often with two vertical panels, is now recessed. Surrounding details are sometimes richly decorative, but sidelights and transoms are now quite plain.

The iron cresting from an 1830's railing on Washington Square, center, right, is in the anthemion pattern, a favorite of the Greek Revival period. Many variations are to be found, along with the Greek fret or "key" motif. These ornaments are of cast iron joined to wrought iron railings. Iron balconies, almost always cast, or guard railings are placed across full-length parlor windows.

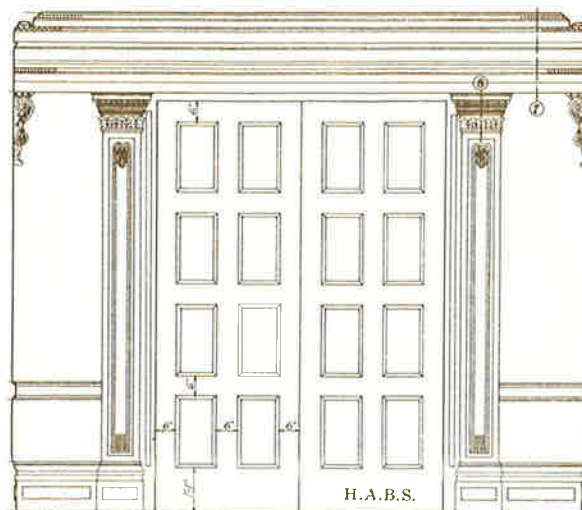
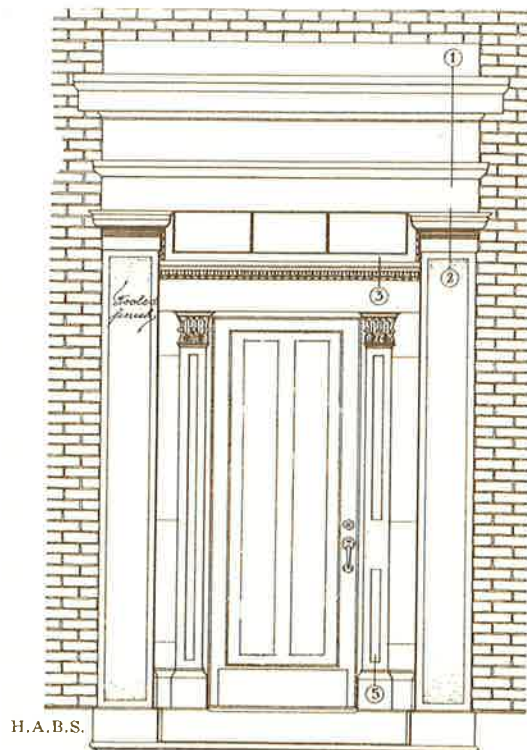
The sliding doors of 132 West Fourth Street, bottom, right, dominate the wall between the front and back rooms on the parlor floor. Ceilings may be fourteen feet high, rarely less than eleven feet. This dimension permits freestanding Ionic or even Corinthian columns, with an entablature carried all around the room. Corners, as here, are accented with consoles. Mantels in principal rooms are usually black marble.

Other Greek Revival examples: 23 East Eleventh Street (1844), an almost unchanged expression of the style in its full phase of development; 14 Grove Street (1839-40), a straightforward example of an average house; 130 Bank Street (1837) and its neighbors, typifying the transition from the Federal to the Greek Revival; 24 to 34 Bethune Street (1845) representing the modest row like many on West Twelfth, Jane, and Horatio Streets west of Hudson.

Anglo-Italianate houses:

The Brownstones, after 1850

Most of the special heritage of Greenwich Village is in Federal and Greek Revival buildings—styles that have not survived comparably in other districts. But the Village also retains over 400



houses of the next great style, Anglo-Italianate. Its forms are derived from the Renaissance palazzo as distilled in English interpretations, rather than from the Greek temple. This manner of building became the Brownstone House that swept over Manhattan and beyond. Brownstone gave its name to an era, and became a persistent, if often inaccurate, popular term for any Gotham townhouse.

The Anglo-Italianate style begins in three-story houses like those of the Greek Revival, built of pressed brick, but with increasingly elaborate brownstone trim. Early examples make up the fine row from 4 through 16 St. Luke's Place (1851-53). Here, basements are higher than ever, entrance stairs now wider and even more impressive. Massive pediments with ornamental consoles appear over doorways with arched openings. Doors themselves are now double, with heavy panels. Early houses place pediments over parlor windows, leaving molded lintels above. By the 1850's, glass is manufactured in panes large enough to permit two-over-two patterns in double-hung sash, and other variations, such as French doors with transoms on the parlor floor level. (From the mid-century, technology permits the manufacture of iron cornices and lintels resembling stone. Original elements should be distinguished from inferior sheet metal replacements, later often used as inexpensive refurbishings.)

The Anglo-Italianate house at 59 Charles Street (1867), left, is drawn from a photograph, but in the same scale as the other facades. Part brick, it has large bow-shaped hoods over slightly arched windows and door. The one-over-one window panes are like the originals, now made of plate glass. Cast iron railings have become great balustrades, treated to look like brownstone. The roof cornice is conspicuously heavy, with brackets of complex design.

At 76 Perry Street is an all-brownstone facade, in the form that moved uptown. Here, windows



are enframed in stone moldings, with prominent sills supported by brackets. An outstanding example of an Anglo-Italianate doorway, with foliated stone consoles is 47 Fifth Avenue, the Salmagundi Club (1852-53), sole survivor of the Avenue's brownstone mansions. Its public rooms, notable for beauty of detail, can be visited.

A handsome variation of the style has its entry at street level, sometimes called the English-basement house. Together, they form terrace rows, like that from 20 to 38 West Tenth Street, (1855-56), with heavily rusticated brownstone masonry on the first story and smooth ashlar above. Doorways are almost always arched, as here, and may be hooded as well. Other such rows are 19 to 23 West Ninth Street (1855) and 46-52 Morton Street (1854).

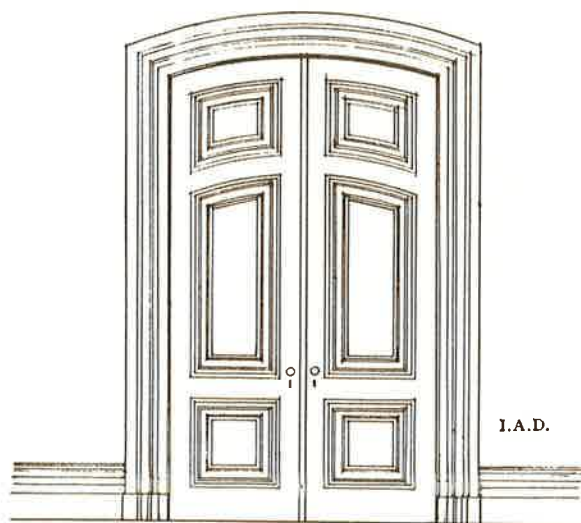
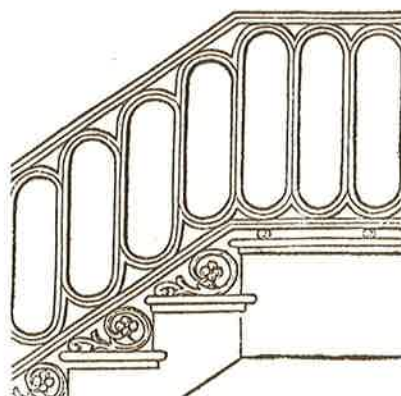
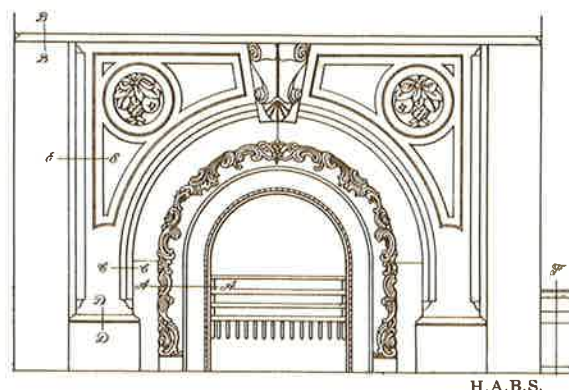
The 1854 parlor mantel from the demolished Rhinelander Gardens, top, right, was of marble. The arched opening, keystone element and circular panels are favorite mid-century devices. Many Federal and Greek Revival houses have these curvilinear mantels added as modernizations.

The 1850's cast iron railing, center, right, is typical of the period. Ornamental detail in stone, wood, iron or plaster, whether interior or exterior, departs from classic precedent. It seeks an inventive richness, yet preserves formality.

Double doors at 129 East Tenth Street (1854-55), bottom, right, are typically arched and heavily enframed. Circular and elliptical shapes often predominate in panels. Moldings are of massive scale, with proportions of stone even when executed in walnut or other wood.

Other Revival Styles

The tapestry of today's Greenwich Village is enriched by examples of the other Revival styles developed by architects as the century unfolded. By mid-century an intellectual curiosity with respect to styles from remote times and places, part, perhaps, of the pervasive Romantic spirit



of the times, produced buildings infused with varied design themes—Gothic, Romanesque, Second Empire, Oriental, and sometimes a creative eclectic blending of several. Gothic Revival is expressed completely in the stone parish house of the Church of the Ascension (1839-42) at 7 West Tenth Street. Richard Upjohn here used the Tudor arch, labels (or hood-moulds) to shed rain over the windows, and Gothic tracery. But traces of Gothic are seen by the trained eye on Greek Revival and other facades: windows arched at 73 Macdougall Street, doors and iron at 133 and 135 West Twelfth Street. Romanesque, used for many handsome commercial buildings, survives in a dwelling row at 243 to 247 Waverly Place (1888), a Second Empire mansard roof at 70 Perry Street (1868). The Orient shaped the unique facades at 7 and 9 East Tenth Street (1887-88). Regina Kellerman has traced the creators of these arresting buildings. Lockwood DeForest, leader in the crafts movement, eminent painter, and orientalist, had the teakwood facade of No. 7, his home and studio, custom-carved to his designs in India. (With Louis Tiffany, he had in 1880 been founder of the Society of Associated Artists, later the Tiffany Studios.) Next door at 9 East Tenth, William H. Russell of the famed firm of Renwick, Aspenwall, and Russell, used the carved teak elements in “an eight-family house, with a common dining room,” called the Ava apartments.



Vernacular buildings

Many Village structures—a number of them from the 1850's—sought no style, but rather plain utility. The charm of their straightforward simplicity survives, for example, at 129 Bank Street (1855). Certain Village by-ways are part of the vernacular building of the mid-century; Grove Court (1853-54), Patchin Place (1848), Milligan Place (1852). The related buildings near the last two enclaves, with shopfronts along the Avenue of the Americas and West Tenth Street, go back to 1835-36.

Buildings combining shops and residence are very much a part of historic Greenwich Village; early ones are reminders that this alone among the City's present districts is a survival of a once independent community, with its own commerce and services. Bleecker Street from Hudson Street south to Charles Street, largely from the 1850's, with earlier examples farther south, is rich in such buildings. Many still have their original graceful shop windows, framed or supported with wood or iron columns of distinctive light design. They serve the present as they did the nineteenth-century City.

Like their neighbors of the various historic styles, these too, still offer their users "commodity, firmness, and delight"—the qualities that have been, since Vitruvius set them down, and before, the goals of building well. Nineteenth-century Greenwich Village was built well.

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Drawings of Greenwich Village Dwelling Houses

Historic American Buildings Survey blueprints of Greenwich Village houses owned by the Avery Architectural Library of Columbia University (copies in the Association of Village Homeowners Reference Archive) :

61 Washington Square South (9 sheets),
Survey #NY 447

132 West Fourth Street (10 sheets)
Survey #NY 448

116 West Eleventh Street (10 sheets),
Survey #NY 451

John V. Gridley House, 37 Charlton Street
(6 sheets), Survey #441

4 to 10 Grove Street (7 sheets),
Survey #NY 449

John Hazlet House, 204 West 13th Street
(3 sheets), Survey #NY 444

48 and 50 King Street (8 sheets),
Survey #4-20

8 Washington Square North (10 sheets),
Survey #4-16

Seabury Tredwell House (Old Merchant's
House), 29 East Fourth Street (9 sheets),
Survey #NY 440

Measured drawings of the H.A.B.S. can be ordered
from the Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.
20540, at 25 cents a sheet.

Index of American Design drawings in the collec-
tion of Avery Architectural Library include origi-
nal plans and renderings of the following houses :

- 17 Commerce Street
- 129 East Tenth Street
- 24 Commerce Street
- 59 Morton Street
- 9 Washington Square North
- 11 Washington Square North

The Association of Village Homeowners Reference
Archive includes copies of the following individual
items :

- 17 Commerce Street—rendering of front
entryway and iron railings
- 129 East Tenth Street—plan of sliding doors
and curved hinged doors
- 24 Commerce Street—plan for facade and
fireplace
- 59 Morton Street—plan of front entryway
- 9 Washington Square North—three plans of
exterior and interior details

Historic Districts of the Area



The Historic Districts of the area, designated under the New York City Landmarks Preservation Law of 1965. (Some exteriors mentioned in the text are marked ■.)

Greenwich Village Historic District (April, 1969)



Macdougall-Sullivan Gardens Historic District (August, 1967)



Charlton-King-Van Dam Historic District (August, 1966)



TEXT

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The Bulmer typeface, designed about 1800, is used for the headings of this pamphlet. They were handset by William R. Scott.

The cover photograph of The Greek Revival portico of 5 Washington Square (1833) is donated by John Barrington Bayley.