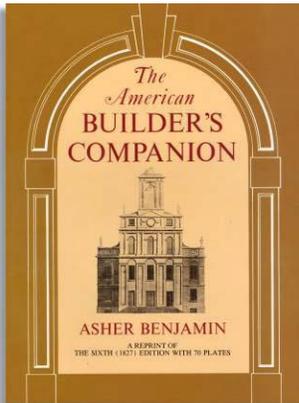


History of the Pattern Book



Page from the *Ten Books on Architecture* by Vitruvius



Cover of *The American Builder's Companion* by Asher Benjamin

The tradition of pattern books as planning and design tools can be traced to first-century Rome. In his *Ten Books on Architecture*, Roman architect Vitruvius not only standardized the planning and construction of military camps and towns throughout the Roman Empire, but codified the correct use of architectural orders for *columns*, *entablatures* and entranceways. In doing so, Vitruvius provided the first top-to-bottom view of the planning and building process, and created a framework for practical instruction and dialogue that has spanned centuries.

Early American craftsmen had ready access to a variety of pattern books. These early resources ranged from large, expensive, theoretical treatises on classicism, to less expensive, pocket-sized pamphlets with selected designs and specifications for tradesmen. Pattern books provided examples of architectural designs, with how-to illustrations of cottages, villas, and most known architectural styles from Classical to Renaissance. Many of these publications descended from English pattern books, and included carpenter's manuals, plan books, and catalogs for building products that continued to flood the American colonies and states from the eighteenth century through the end of the nineteenth century.

In addition to available high style reference material, practical publications in the form of builder's companions or carpenter's manuals were published in the 1800s by American builders and architects. Examples include Asher Benjamin's *American Builder's Companion* (1806); Owen Biddle's *The Young Carpenter's Assistant* (1805); and Minard Lafever's *The Modern Builder's Guide* (1833).

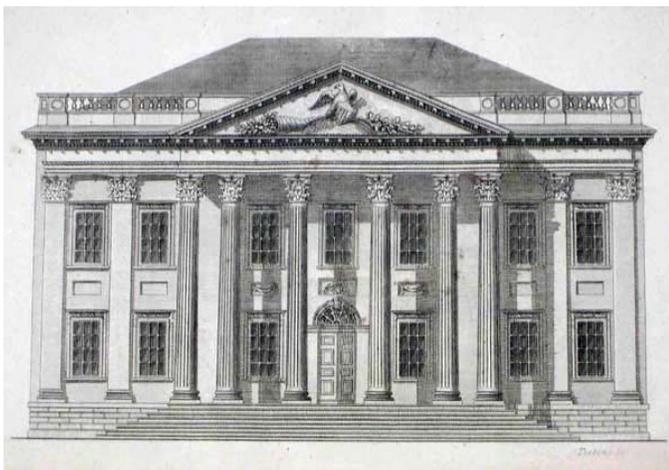
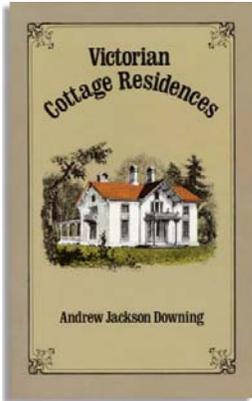


Plate of the Bank of the United States from Owen Biddle's *The Young Carpenter's Assistant*



Front Elevation for a Country Residence from Lafever's *The Modern Builder's Guide*



Cover of *Victorian Cottage Residences* by Downing and Davis

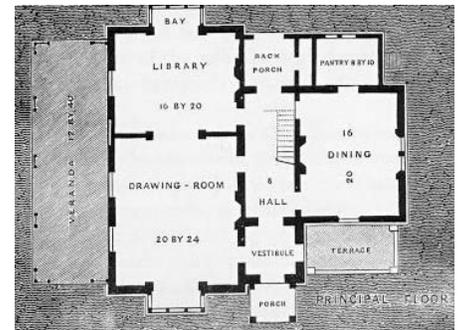
American architects Alexander Jackson Davis and Andrew Jackson Downing began publishing books that introduced various up-and-coming nineteenth-century Romantic styles and building designs. In 1837, Davis published his only pattern book, *Rural Residences*. For the first time in America, a complete illustration of a house with key details was presented, along with elevations and plans. Downing published many 'architectural advice' books including *A Treatise on the Theory and Practice of Landscape Gardening* (1841), which initiated the domestic house pattern book. In 1842, Downing and Davis collaborated on *Victorian Cottage Residences*, which addressed the importance of color, irregularity and variety in residential design. The publications of Downing and Davis also were significant for the fact that they targeted owners and patrons, as well as builders.



Design II: Cottage in the Rural Gothic Style from *Cottage Residences*



Design VI: Villa in the Italian Style from *Cottage Residences*



Principle Floor Plan of the Villa in the Italian Style from *Cottage Residences*

The Vallonia was a model found between 1927 and 1932 in the Sears, Roebuck and Co. catalogue.

By the late nineteenth century, industrialization had created a large, hard-working American middle class that needed affordable housing to raise families. By the early twentieth century, traditional pattern books had been replaced by mail-order catalogs of house plans whose factory-cut components could be purchased and shipped directly to the builder's site by rail or truck. Companies such as Aladdin Houses, Sears, Roebuck & Co., and Montgomery Ward responded to this market by turning out kit houses by the box car. The City of Roanoke was a beneficiary of this early catalog trend, as evidenced by its stock of American Foursquare and Bungalows that were assembled from kits.

Cover of *Sears, Roebuck and Co. catalogue.*

