

Architectural Design:

COLONIAL REVIVAL STYLE IN CHEVY CHASE VILLAGE



Photography By: Bruce Wentworth, AIA

Colonial Revival is the single most popular architectural style in the United States in great part because of its richly varied vocabulary and inherent eloquence. Architectural historians date the Colonial Style from 1880 – 1955. The name of the style reflects Americans' late 19th century fascination with homes built by the early English and Dutch settlers, an affection that intensified during the patriotic World War I and II years before peaking in the mid-1950s. Colonial Revival is essentially a mixture of the styles, all uniquely American. Roof forms, such as gabled, hipped, and gambrel roofs (Dutch Colonials having gambrel roofs) identifies the diversity of Colonial Revival and allows a greater degree of adaptation when remodeling than do the more rigidly defined architectural styles.

About one quarter of the Washington, DC area Colonial Revival homes are detached, two story houses with a center hall and simple gable roof. A good example of a center hall Colonial Revival stands at 7 Magnolia Parkway in Chevy Chase, Maryland. Another one-quarter or so feature hip roofs that slope on four sides. The larger Colonial Revival house often has an asymmetrical façade in order to accommodate a garage or porch. The effect is a more complicated but interesting roof form, and roughly 10 percent of Colonial Revival homes are designed this way. The remaining subtypes feature variation of the primary roof forms.

Colonial Revival homes built in the first wave of construction, that is, between

1880 and 1945, tend to be architect designed and often bear interesting architectural details fashioned from highly durable materials. The so-called Neo-Colonials, built in the movement's second wave from 1945 on, dominate many of our newer suburbs; they tend to be plainer, less detailed, and more assembled than crafted. Neo-Colonials reflect the common practice of constructing a brick facade on a structure otherwise wrapped in aluminum or vinyl siding.

Clapboard and shingle were often used in the Colonial Revival, but brick is the preferred material. This is especially true for homes built after 1920 when brick veneer construction made using brick more affordable. A fine example of Colonial Revival architecture executed in brick and stone is the Woodrow Wilson house at 2340 S Street NW, Washington, DC, designed by architect Waddy Wood, and built in 1915. An attractive brick Colonial Revival, built in the 1920s – 1930s, can be seen at 3917 Oliver Street in Chevy Chase Village.

Gable roofs are the typical roof form found in Colonial Revival homes followed by gambrel and hip roofs. An excellent example of a Colonial Revival with a front-facing gambrel roof (ca. 1900) is found at 3225 Highland Place, NW, Washington, DC, in Cleveland Park. And a lovely gambrel roof, Dutch Colonial home, can be found at 15 West Irving Street. Slate roofing shingles were commonly used until WWII when

asphalt shingles began to replace slate because of cost. Occasionally, portions of the home's roof will have metal standing-seam or flat-seam metal roofing when high cost was not an issue.

Windows are designed simply, although never reproducing the original tiny-paned Colonial Style primarily because by then, glass manufacturers had learned how to produce larger window panes that were too convenient and functional to ignore. Thus, most windows in the Neo-Colonial are rectangular with double-hung sashes, each one consisting of six, eight, nine, or even twelve panes. Multi-pane sashes with only a single sheet of glass serving as the lower pane are also common.

Colonial Revivals frequently present a notable decorative entrance. This may consist of a paneled front door flanked by sidelights, a broken pediment over the door, a modest portico with columns, and perhaps a pediment supported by pilasters. The Chevy Chase Village home at 1 East Kirke Street is grand clapboard Colonial Revival with a handsome entry porch; fluted columns support a well-proportioned entablature and graceful curved roof.

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