

# ARCHITECT ROMAN

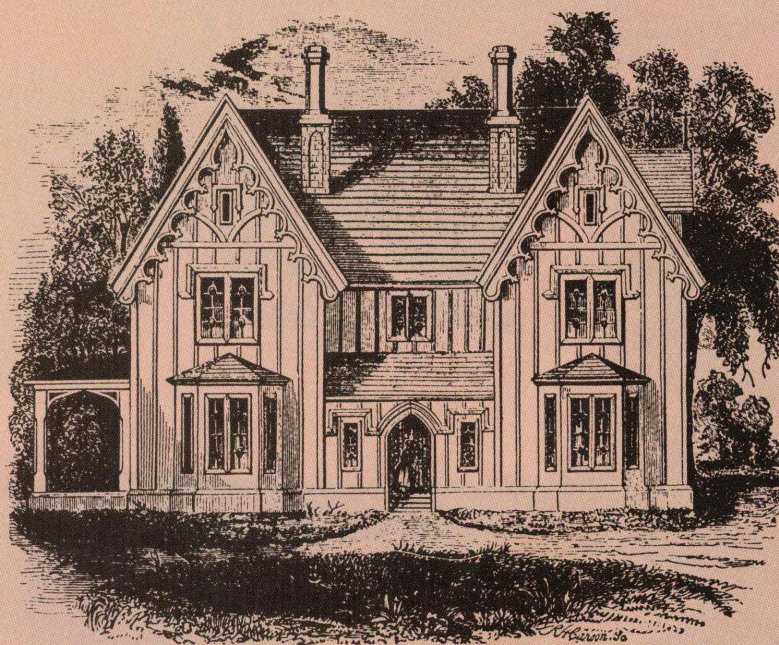
In the mid-1800s, A.J. Davis and A. J. Downing created houses of unabashed sentiment and woodland charm—preserved for us in their popular pattern books



ANDREW JACKSON DOWNING (1815–52): Landscape designer, writer and arbiter of taste, Downing (above) believed the right design could guarantee the good life.



ALEXANDER JACKSON DAVIS (1803–92): A superb draftsman, Davis (right) rendered Downing's passion into Gothic Revival house plans.



Mary  
Downing  
Fraleigh's  
Relative.

Andrew Jackson  
Downing

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It was the mid-1800s, and American Romanticism reigned. While Hudson River painters worshiped the wilderness, Henry David Thoreau preached a return to nature and Walt Whitman exalted the common man, two architects, Andrew Jackson Downing and Alexander Jackson Davis, had a vision for the American home. Borrowing from European architecture—Gothic, Italianate and Swiss—they forged a purely American style, incorporating bay windows, ornamental trim, wide verandas, and rooms open to the outdoors. Popularized through pattern books full of drawings, floor plans and friendly advice, the pair's appealing designs gave the American middle class a model for home, not just a house.

Downing, who actually built very few houses, came to architecture by way of landscape design. A Newburgh, N.Y., nurseryman, he landscaped local estates in the naturalistic English style. In 1838, Downing built himself a much-admired Gothic villa tucked into a woody setting—and soon was designing houses as well as grounds. By 1842, he began to hone his ideas in his first book on architecture, *Cottage Residences*.

A visionary but hardly a draftsman, Downing relied on other architects to supply drawings and designs, particular-

**BAY WINDOWS AND HIGH GABLES**—in infinite combinations—sprang up everywhere during the Victorian era as the Gothic Revival designs in Downing's books became popular (left).