



Architecture of the Old South: Greek Revival & Romantic

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Architecture of the Old South: Greek Revival & Romantic and its companion volume, Architecture of the Old South: Colonial & Federal, are the climax of some twenty years of exploration, research and writing. Buildings are three-dimensional history books that reflect the comings and goings, successes and failures, aspirations and follies of real people. Virginia was the oldest, most populous and richest colony in the South, with early architecture of unsurpassed elegance and variety. Maryland, thanks to an early start and the successful cultivation of tobacco, produced colonial architecture second only to Virginia and South Carolina, the rich rice colony.

Meanwhile, North Carolina, with treacherous coasts, poor harbors and shallow rivers, was slow to prosper and remained isolated. Georgia, the last and poorest of the English colonies, struggled from insecurity and near collapse till the 1760's and, like North Carolina, remained sparsely settled, poor and undeveloped till after the Revolution. Louisiana, the former colony of France, continued to be dominated by French culture, French language and French laws long after it was sold to the United States in 1803.

In the 1760's Virginians and Carolinians, moving into the uplands and already pressing against the mountains, began exploring Tennessee and Kentucky. After the Revolution, this wave of transcontinental migration was renewed, not only to Tennessee and Kentucky, but also to northeastern and coastal Georgia and, leapfrogging lands in the Mississippi Territory still occupied by the Indians, to the banks of the lower Mississippi river.

Georgia and North Carolina enjoyed their greatest prosperity during the heyday of the Greek Revival. Mississippi and Alabama, the two states carved from the historic Mississippi Territory, were settled by a third wave of immigration in the 1830's that produced a surprising variety and quality of buildings in the relatively brief period before the Civil War.

These books try to explore Southern architecture beyond the clichs. The great buildings of the Old South were created by outsiders and newcomers, especially New Englanders, whose contributions to Southern society and culture have been long underestimated. Thus, these historic buildings show how the South participated far more fully in the mainstream of American life before the Civil War than has been generally appreciated.

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