

PRESERVATION NEWSLETTER

ARCHITECTURAL STYLES: GREEK REVIVAL



A NATIONAL STYLE

The **Greek Revival Style** developed across America in the early 1800s, when the nation was still young and working to establish itself on the international stage. While Greek Revival architecture was also used in Europe at this time, it was not as widely embraced as it was in America. Many in America saw their young nation as a natural descendant of ancient Greece, the birthplace of democracy, and the widespread use of Greek Revival architecture in America was a reflection of this notion. While earlier American styles referenced classical architecture in design elements, the reference to ancient Greek buildings at this time was much more deliberate and sometimes included the exact replication of Greek temples. In Greek Revival architecture, a building with a front-gabled roof form with full width colonnaded porch is often called “temple-form” as it resembles a miniature Greek temple. The Greek Revival Style was utilized for all building types including private homes, churches, and government buildings and was most popular in America from the 1820s to the 1860s.

GREEK REVIVAL ELEMENTS

- Gable or hip roof with low pitch
- Wide trim and cornice under roof
- Entry porch with prominent columns and unadorned frieze
- Facade symmetry
- Porch often includes a classical pediment above
- Elaborate door surround, often the most decorative element
- Simple windows commonly with 6/6 pane configuration

Due to the common misconception that ancient Greek temples were historically white, Greek Revival houses in America were often painted white.

THE AMERICAN ARCHITECT

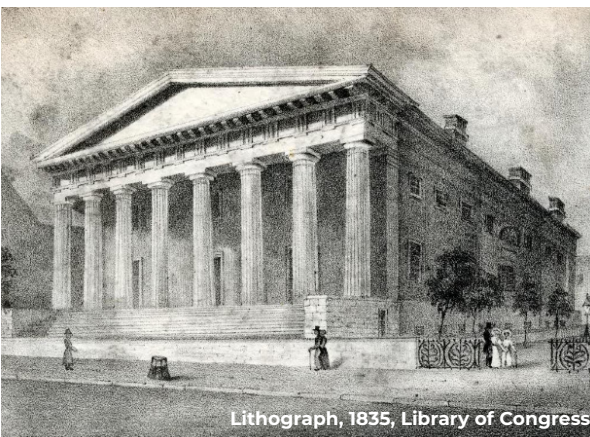
One of the most prominent architects of the early to mid 1800s to fully embrace the Greek Revival Style was famous South Carolinian, Robert Mills (1781-1855). One of the first *American born* architects, Robert Mills was born and classically trained in Charleston, South Carolina. Likely best known locally as the architect of the “Robert Mills House”, Robert Mills’ projects stretched far beyond the Carolinas. Nationally, he is possibly best recognized for his design of the Washington Monument, an obelisk that is influenced by the later Romantic style of Egyptian Revival architecture.

A contemporary of classicists James Hoban (architect of the White House) and Thomas Jefferson, Mills also worked under Benjamin Henry Latrobe, the second Architect of the Capitol and proponent of Greek Revival Style in America. Mills, like his contemporaries, was well known for using classical precedent in his designs which resulted in timeless architecture. From the Monumental Church in Richmond, VA to the wings of Independence Hall in Philadelphia, PA to the Fireproof Building of Charleston, SC, Mills’ skill exhibited in his over 50 major works is evident in their lasting functionality and aesthetic appeal over the past two centuries.



1846 lithograph of the proposed Washington Monument, designed by Robert Mills, Library of Congress

FAMOUS EXAMPLES OF GREEK REVIVAL IN AMERICA



Lithograph, 1835, Library of Congress

The Second Bank of the United States,
Philadelphia, Pennsylvania
Architect: William Strickland
Constructed: 1819-1824
Greek Precedent: The Parthenon

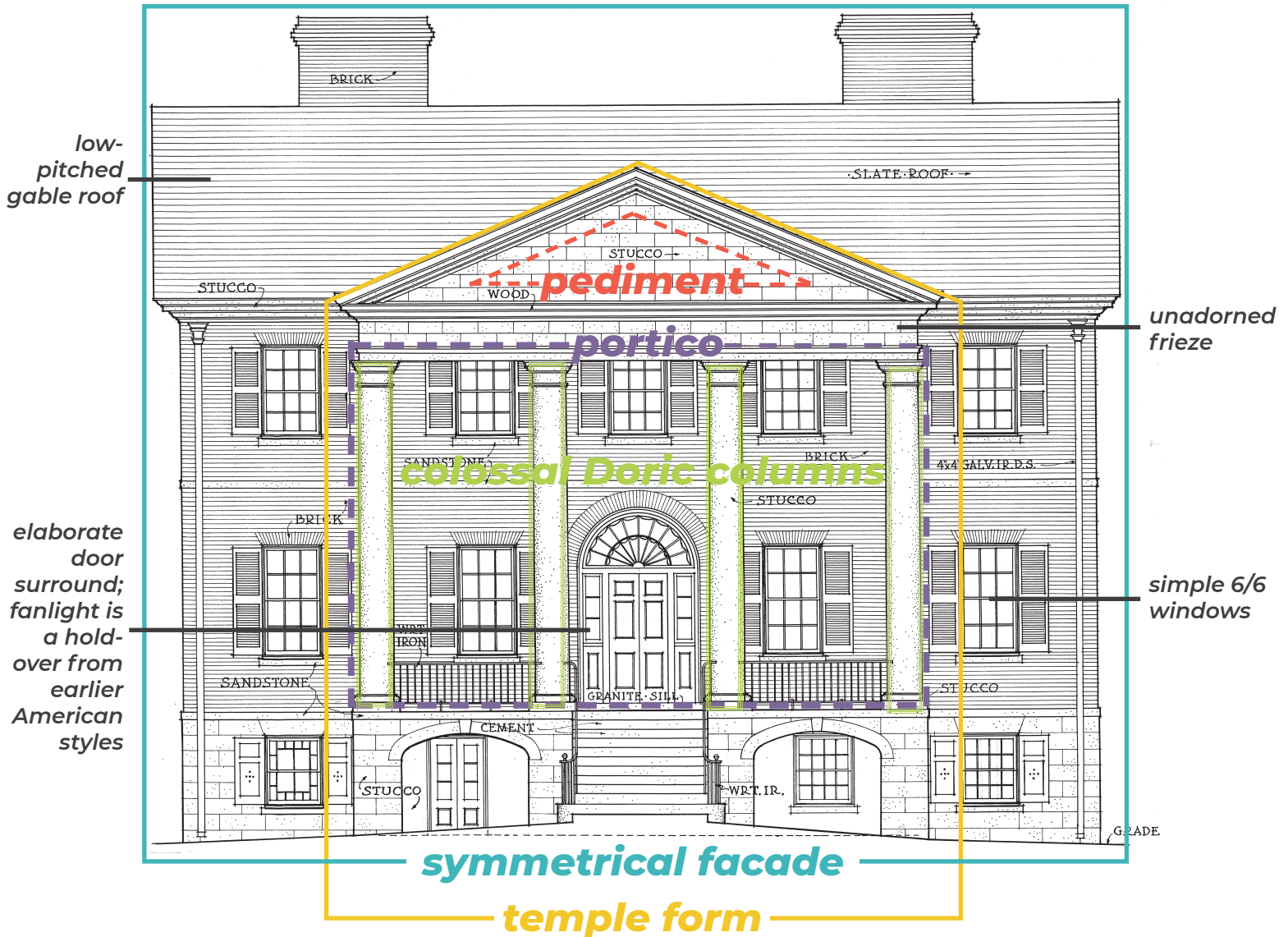
One of the first true examples of Greek Revival in America.



Photograph, 1880s, Library of Congress

U.S. Treasury Building, Washington, D.C.
Primary Architect: Robert Mills
Constructed: 1836-1869
Greek Precedent: North Porch of the Erechtheion

PIECES AND PARTS



DeBruhl-Marshall House, HABS drawing, Library of Congress

GREEK REVIVAL VOCABULARY

PEDIMENT: a triangular upper part of the front of a building, common with the classical style of architecture, typically above/being supported by columns

PORTICO: a structure of a roof and equally spaced supporting columns. Often creates a porch for a building

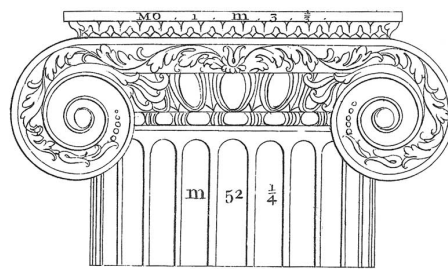
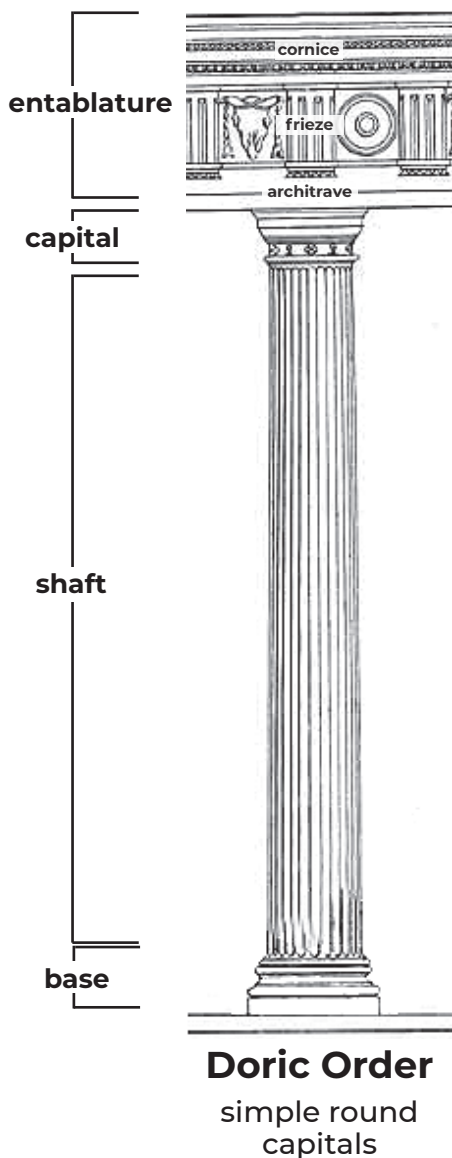
BROKEN PEDIMENT: a pediment with a gap at its apex (highest point)

COLOSSAL ORDER: also called the “Giant Order” and has columns that span multiple stories of a structure

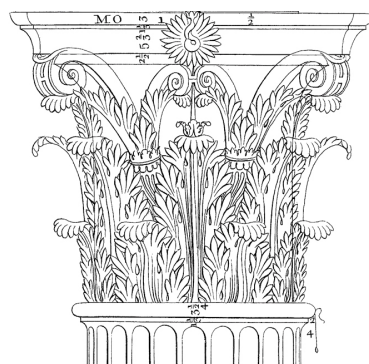
PILASTER: a square engaged column that projects slightly from a wall

CLASSICAL GREEK ORDERS

An **Order** is a fundamental unit of design in classical architecture which includes a column and its base, shaft, capital, and entablature. The ancient Greeks developed the original three orders: Doric, Ionic, and Corinthian. Ancient Romans added two additional orders: Tuscan and Composite. While classical examples used only round columns, Greek Revival architecture often uses square columns and/or incorporates elements of the Roman orders into the design. Pilasters were also often used in Greek Revival architecture, occasionally placed evenly across a facade instead of free-standing columns. Pilasters would also be detailed in the style of one of the classical orders.



Ionic Order
ornamented twin spiral scrolls (also known as volutes) at the capitals



Corinthian Order
capitals are decorated elaborately with acanthus leaves and volutes

GREEK REVIVAL VOCABULARY

CAPITAL: the top of a column; the ornament of the capital defines the order of the column

ENTASIS: convex curvature of column shafts to compensate for the visual illusion that straight columns appear too thin or concave

FLUTED COLUMNS: columns with shallow, vertical grooves carved into their shafts

ENTABLATURE: the horizontal part of a classical order above the column; consists of the architrave, frieze, and cornice

FRIEZE: middle section of the entablature, often decorated

GREEK REVIVAL IN COLUMBIA

CALDWELL-BOYLSTON HOUSE



The Caldwell-Boylston house, now used as the welcome center on the northern grounds of the Governor's Mansion, was built in 1825 by John Caldwell, a Columbia banker. Governor Chamberlain bought the home during his administration and installed the iron fence that can still be seen today surrounding the grounds. The home's second namesake, Sarah Porter Boylston, is known for growing the home's extensive gardens, which she tended in the 53 years she lived on the property. This three-story Greek Revival house features four Doric columns on the first and second floor porches. The entry features rectangular sidelights and transom and the house includes 6/6 windows throughout. The overall symmetry of the house as well as the ornamented pediment are also characteristics of the Greek Revival Style.

THE ROBERT MILLS HOUSE

The house known today as the Robert Mills House was designed by Mills in 1823 for successful British merchant, Ainsley Hall, and his family. Ainsley Hall's death prior to the construction of the house resulted in the Hall family never living in the house. In fact, the house was never used as a private residence and instead housed religious institutions for years including the Presbyterian Theological Seminary and Columbia Bible College. The house itself is a wonderful example of Greek Revival architecture, which Robert Mills utilized often throughout his career. Greek Revival influence is seen in the home's front temple form portico with four colossal Ionic columns at the front of the home.



We Are Columbia

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