Grant Wood and the After-Life of Victorian Architecture

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Andrew Jackson Downing (1815-1852)

Design II from Downing’s *Cottage Residences*, 1842
Wood, *Sketch for House in “American Gothic,”* 1930 (oil on paperboard)
Grant Wood, *American Gothic*, 1930
John Reichard House, East of Knoxville, Marion County, Iowa, c. 1865
(photographed for HABS in 1976 before demolition)
Downing’s legacy in 20th-century American art
Walker Evans, *Gothic Gate Cottage Near Poughkeepsie, New York, 1930-31* (gelatin silver print, J. Paul Getty Museum)
Rains, Winds and Time
Erode a ‘Saved’ Pink Cottage

BY RICHARD SEVERO

GARRISON, N.Y., March 31—It was the

tiny simple things of life that attracted

Andrew Jackson Downing: Tuscan villas,

Venetian palaces, Gothic castles and most

importantly, people rich enough to afford

them.

Indeed, America’s foremost landscape archi-
cect of the 19th century said he wanted

nothing more for his Hudson Valley archi-
tecture than “grass grown into a smoothness

like velvet, gravel walks...firm, dry and clean,

...the most perfect order and neatness

throughout,” and perhaps a raised staircase

to the second floor “where a charming

view itself, in bird’s-eye view of the sur-

rounding country is obtained.”

Thus, it is possible that Downing would not

be entirely pleased with what has happened

to the gatekeeper’s cottage he designed for

an estate that used to exist on the south side

of Poughkeepsie, about 10 miles north of here.

The pink stucco cottage, with its 12 gables,

clustered colonnades and scrollwork trim, was

condemned to accommodate the widening of

Route 9 in 1961, but saved from the junk

heap by Benjamin West Frazier, a man who

has dedicated a goodly part of his 60 years

in saving and restoring old houses, including

the restoration of Boscobel, which overlooks

the Hudson here.

The hard question now, 15 years later, is

whether the cottage will yet end up as rubble,

or even worse, has it become rubble already?

The struggle to save the pink house, as the

cottage is known, began late in 1960, when

Mr. Frazier received a telephone call from a

friend in Poughkeepsie, warning about the

imminent demolition, and Mr. Frazier decided

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Walker Evans, *Gothic Gate Cottage Near Poughkeepsie, New York, 1930-31* (gelatin silver print, J. Paul Getty Museum)
Edward Hopper, *House by the Railroad*, 1925

Walker Evans, *Folk Victorian House with Jigsaw Ornament Gables and Porch*, Nyack, New York, 1930-1 (glass negative, Metropolitan Museum of Art)
Walker Evans, *Wooden Gothic House, Massachusetts*, 1930-1, gelatin silver print, J. Paul Getty Museum
Walker Evans, *Gothic House, Somerville, Massachusetts*, 1931 (gelatin silver print, J. Paul Getty Museum)

Grant Wood,
American Gothic,
1930
Grant Wood, *Yellow Doorway, St. Émilion (Porte de Cloître de l’Église Collégiale)*, 1924

Grant Wood, *The Barred Door, Chancelade (La Porte Barrée, Chancelade)*, 1926
Grant Wood, 
*American Gothic*,
1930
THE SHINGLE STYLE
and
THE STICK STYLE
REVISED EDITION

Architectural Theory and Design
from Downing to the Origins of Wright

Vincent J. Scully, Jr.

A View of Victorian America
By John Maass

THE GINGERBREAD AGE
Santa’s house, Cooperstown, New York