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Greek revival architectural facades

Miranda Offen

1063 Erie Station Road. 1979. Chalk on newsprint, 17 x 17".

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GREEK REVIVAL ARCHITECTURAL FACADES

by

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PREFACE

These writings and paintings should serve as an elegy to a dead architectural style through a dedication to accurately portray the Greek Revival movement. It is important to record this so that it will not be forgotten and lost. The paintings make judgments based on images, and document the dignity, pride, and mobility of a grand movement. Through various angles of view, the paintings show the style, revealing the architecture's static, timeless, serene and tranquil stature.

Art extends impressions to show the spirit, as well as beauty and details of the style. Going further than accurate presentation of architecture, we must seek the heart of the structure; we must strive for a true appreciation of the Grecian Revival architecture and its times. In this way, we may encourage more restoration and preservation of this uniquely American style. This paper is an attempt to heighten the awareness of the Greek Revival Style through an accurate and pictorial evocation of its charms.

CHAPTER I: THE AWAKENING

Introduction

Beginning about 1820, the Greek revival in architecture still participated in the neoclassic style to some extent, borrowing from and continuing its movement. Yet it was more interested in a past style and movement with its specific ideas and attitudes. This classicism suggested a reasoning, order, steadfastness, and morality, while the architecture itself displayed a simple, neat, and energetic honor. These attitudes which continued throughout the Greek Revival became more complicated, showing the many differing dispositions of the new society that became America. Though it became a common style of architecture in a large region, Greek Revival implied varying things to a varied people.

> "To the abolitionist it signified democratic humanitarianism, and to the slaveholder a rationalization for slavery. The industrialist of the North could plan a textile town in which the mansion on the hill and the houses of his workers were all in the Greek mode. For the freeholder of the frontier it was the mark of civilization. But for all, whether conscious of the symbolic value or not, it was unquestionably American building. Never before or since has its ubiquity been equaled."[1]

The Greek forms were used with equal vigor from the large city building to the modest carpentry counterparts in small settlements. The versatility of the style was as comfortable with the carpenter and the simple lines of his wood as it was with the architect who studied the ancient styles and rendered them to every intricate detail of his drawings. Never before in American history had there been such a movement toward rationality and organization in architectural style.

> "The significance of the Greek Revival in architecture can easily be distorted by too close a focus on its stylistic complexities or by moral or aesthetic judgments about revivalism in general. Arguments about the validity of revivalism are pertinent, but they can obscure its cultural relevance to the Jacksonian Era and its technological contributions to American architecture."[2]

At this time there was much work for the architect who had to design for a young emerging nation. This was a "challenge...to build for a new kind of life" in his chosen mode which, in this case, was the Greek.[3]

Although it all began with the Roman influence that still affected it throughout, the Greek Revival was still primarily a revival of the classic of ancient Greek architecture.[4] Generally, nineteenth century architecture applies styles of the past to its buildings. Architectural style here seems to be defined as "the continuous use of a group of forms and shapes for the construction and decoration of buildings in more or less the same manner over an extended period of time."[5] As in England in the late 1700's, the style of architecture in America did not need to be practical; it was a romantic adventure that varied "often to the point of exoticism. English, French, and German architects had catered willingly to a demand for buildings intended to excite the imagination by constructing architectural glimpses so to speak, of the past or physically distant."[6]

Greek forms were used for all kinds of building needs, and builders from professional architects to local carpenters referred to the available handbooks (mostly during the period between 1825 and 1835--its high point).[7] As the country was gaining momentum, The Greek Revival was a

middle American form that generally spanned the years 1820-1860. These were times when governmental strides were being taken, and scientific and territorial prospects were being sought and profited from. There was much optimism in this young, hopeful phase of prosperity that resulted in intellectual progress in education and the arts. Emerson described the times in these words:

> "Our day of dependence, our long apprenticeship to the learning of other lands, draws to a close. The millions that around us are rushing into life cannot always be fed on the sere remains of foreign harvests. Events and actions arise, that must be sung... . There are creative manners, there are creative actions and creative words... indicative of no customer authority, but swinging spontaneous from the mind's own sense of good and fair."[8]

With all these changes and advancements, an expression in architecture was needed for this new kind of life. Thus, the designers fulfilled these demands with plans of different space organizations and refined structures. The term "Revival" cannot be said to be entirely accurate for this style since it only revived the decoration of the classic Greek detail. Talbot Hamlin comments: "In all other respects it was typical of America. Never before or since has there been less influence from Europe."[9]

An American Architecture

Although architects copied the forms and details of the classic Greeks, new details and designs became merely classic in spirit and very different from the original. American craftsmen developed plans for differing localities and climates and used various new materials that became available during this country's industrialization. Therefore, Greek Revival architecture is an American style that, as Carl Schmidt, a Rochester, New York authority on Greek Revival architecture, points out, "possesses the qualities of good planning, intelligent use of materials, interesting compositions, and inventiveness of detail. The style suffers because of a bad name; it would be more appropriate to call it 'American Classic,' because it is the classic spirit as interpreted by the American people."[10]

The Federal style was replaced at this time by the Greek Revival's classic forms that were seen as more imposing and monumental, because the Federal style may have been too familiar. The more ornamental Greek style against the reserved Federal style attempted an "epic grandeur."[11] Milton Brown suggests that Greek Revival is a thoroughly American style even though the basis was foreign. Americans were looking for an identity, and the Grecian expression in art was what they desired. The society preferred a revival of a culture that had gone before with similar interests and functions rather than a new and modern invention. A form of romanticism, it showed the society's doubts about the future of a new country and a greater interest in history and the past. "One could

borrow, not only from classical antiquity but from any time or place, whatever was pertinent to the present. Antiquity in itself took on a new cachet."[12]

This architectural development had no European influence. An expression peculiar only to this country, it was a national style unlike any domestic European architecture. Greek Revival has a charm that is most unusual when coupled with its obvious stately character. Fiske Kimball suggests that the strides in American society at this time was paralleled by an architectural period of creativity as well: "American domestic architecture made its independent contribution to universal development. Whatever may be thought, there can be no doubt that it endowed America with an architectural tradition unsurpassed in the qualities of monumentality and dignity."[13] Most definitely, the status of the Greek Revival developed in this country as a thoroughly American expression:

> "But a revolt against neoclassicism was stirring among the second generation of artists and architects, a significant circumstance that revealed the divided character of American culture. The fervent search for an American style, the scramble for individuality, the discovery of Nature as a superior source of inspiration, the compulsion of a young culture to break with the past--all these led American cultural life of this period into a perplexing dilemma. Artists, architects, and writers were influenced by a steady tension between the necessity for tradition and the necessity of creating a 'native' art, the need to initiate and the need to express an American style. Two very powerful forces--cultural nationalism and romanticism--were to alter significantly the form and content of what was created in the early years of the Republic."[14]

Greek Revival Begins and Develops

The time span of Greek Revival is broadly from 1795 to 1850, beginning in Europe where there was only mild interest in the style. Europeans only felt the style was usable for public buildings, since they seemed compelled to reproduce the Greek details accurately, and were uninterested in the style for domestic architecture. Warmth and creativity were absent in the European varieties. Americans were inspired by the Greek forms.[15] Homes were built to resemble Greek temples, and many new developments in domestic architecture were attempted.[16]

Many varying factors contributed to the development of Greek Revival architecture in the United States:

1. European architects excavated and studied the Greek ruins and wrote popular books about their research.[17]
2. Poetry was written about the Greeks.[18] There was a growing awareness of culture and aesthetics, and knowledge of classical myths, art and literature.[19]
3. There was an increased interest in Greek art and artifacts that were moved to Europe.[20]
4. Americans sympathized with the Greek revolution against the Turks. Greek names were given to some of America's newer towns and villages.[21]
5. It was considered very scholarly to study the Greek language at universities.[22] Also, Roman and Greek authors were studied with emphasis on classical Latin.[23]

6. The culture, ideals, character, and economic state of America at that time was favorable to this new style. There was a desire for beauty and a pride in artistic achievement, and a feeling of wealth.[24]

Talbot Hamlin states: "It was as if man in America, around 1820, had rediscovered his five senses...; had suddenly discovered that it was better to see and hear beautiful things than ugly ones; had in a word, waked up from a nightmare."[25]

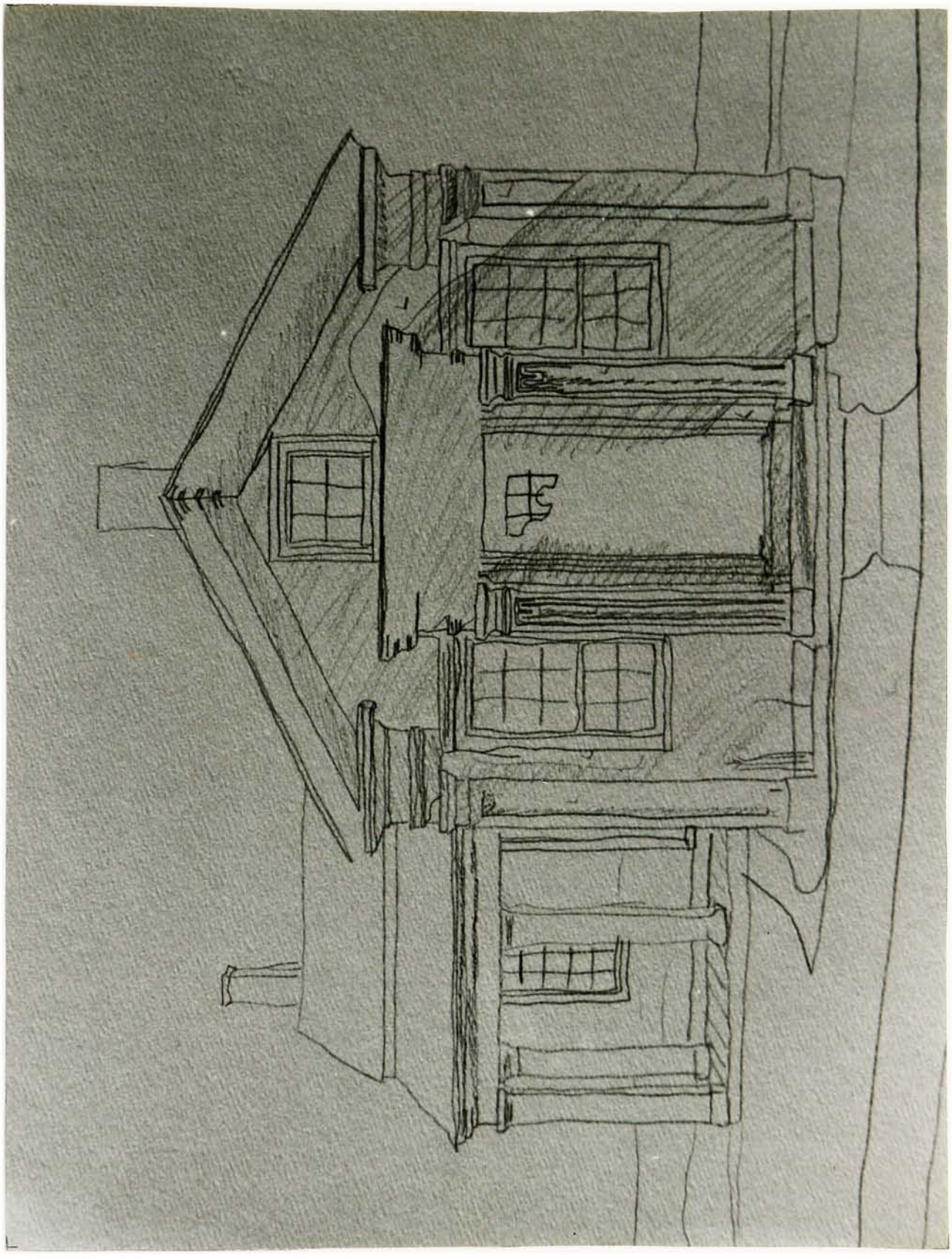
Since the Renaissance, classical antiquity was idealized throughout the world. It was not until the new discoveries of Pompeii and Herculanium that the classical ideal was reborn. "The classic world thus became, first, an inspiration; second, a refuge; third, a sort of marvelous vision of a Golden Age."[26] The people of America thought that there was a definite parallel between classical antiquity and the bright future of our new Repulbic. Like the Greeks, a democracy was desired, and the "harmony and proportions of neoclassicism in the nation's buildings could give an impression of order, logic, and stability."[27]

Books were published about the Roman ruins by scholars studying in Rome or by the excavators themselves, beginning in Europe and spreading to America after the Revolution. Thomas Jefferson enabled the spread and development of this style to begin in the United States. He wanted a style that expressed the new Republic displaying an independence from England. Carl Schmidt states that "...instead of receiving our architectural influences by way of England, we were now receiving our inspiration directly from Roman models."[28] James Stuart and Nicholas

Revett published The Antiquities of Athens (1762-1816) that was on the shelves of the Philadelphia library by 1770, and a copy in the possession of Jefferson.[29]

> "Endorsed by such a national hero as President Jefferson, the classical revival was partially a reaction of the new Republic against cultural dominance by older, aristocratic English tastes and traditions. Just as the adoption of trousers, replacing satin breeches, symbolized democratic sympathies at the time, so the Athenian image became American."[30]

The Greek and Roman ancient classical made the replacement urged by the leaders of America. The country was then free architecturally with the death of colonial disposition. The cause of this developed from a negative attitude of hatred for England and a positive attitude of an idealization of the classic world. Jefferson (and Washington) encouraged the Washington, D.C. architecture to be based on the Roman and Greek styles after his 20 year experimentation with the style on his own home, Monticello, and his French residency that led to an interest in the Roman ruins there.[31]



The Print Shop. 1979. Pencil drawing, 12 x 15".

Architects and Craftsmen

The Roman interest started by Jefferson later developed into a use of the Greek order by others and "...so was Thomas Jefferson the father of the Classic Revival in America...the first great American architect."[32] While Jefferson was interested in Roman ruins in southern France, Benjamin Latrobe, an early nineteenth century architect, was inspired by classical Greece.[33] Latrobe was inspired and developed his style in England, and he later applied it to his American practice.[34] Living from 1764 to 1820, Latrobe did not coldly borrow from Greek archaeology, but his style possessed an original, simple dignity that was functional and open, since he worked from his memory of the classic style.[35]

Architects, trained in Europe, were partial to the Greek, not the Romans, yet many Roman and Greek motifs were combined within the same building. Architects Robert Mills and William Strickland, after understanding the Greek principles, started to develop their own variations. The finely developed plans they designed were well built structures using details and forms of the Greeks.[36]

Strickland (1788-1854), a pupil of Latrobe, began as an engineer, stage designer, and architect of public buildings. Mills was not hampered by conventional classical designs, but created heavy structural masonry without ornaments or details. "In the final analysis, Mills will be remembered for his 'artistic declaration of independence' which almost defied the spirit of the Greek revival, when he asserted: 'I say to our artists study your country's tastes and requirements, and make

classic ground here for your art. Go not to the old world for your examples. We have entered a new era in the history of the world; it is our destiny to lead, not be be led. Our vast country is before us and our motto 'excelsior.'"[37]

Between 1820 and 1830, many rich, educated, and well-traveled men readily studied architecture and influenced the common man. Population growth was high at this time, housing was in demand, and land and homes could be owned by anyone. This demand brought many amateur architects and craftsmen into the building of homes and public buildings. They used builder's handbooks as a reference and varied the Greek forms and details. Sidelights and other adoptions did not exist in classical Greece, but the architects used some of these post-colonial details, adjusting them to fit the Greek style. "These are the men who gave life to the Greek Revival and developed a distinct style of architecture in the United States... . They looked upon the classic Greek forms as a source of inspiration."[38]

Many Greek Revival buildings and homes still stand, showing that the architects and craftsmen took great pride in their work, using the best of the new materials and techniques. Much experimenting was done with the use of new methods such as iron. Architects from Europe were replaced by educated American apprentices--the only means of learning the profession. Instead of traveling abroad for information, these men were inspired by ideas in books. Carpenters used these architectural books or referred to architects for their information for plans and drawings. Architects were in the practice of supplying drawings for a fee. At first working for the contractor, by the 1830's the architect

worked for the client directly by preparing plans and drawings to be used by the builder. By the 1840's, offices behaved more like today's architectural firms.

> "What the ablest architects had in common was a dedication to a functioning architecture; one which considered requirements, site, cost, technology, materials, and efficiency. Whatever one may think of the columns or crockets, the level of building, design, and craftsmanship were exemplary at least until the 1850's when expanding industrialism, speculation, and exploitation began to transform objectives and standards."[39]

The amateur architects were such very able and highly skilled craftsmen, thoroughly self-taught in their field, that they should be considered as important as professionals. These men were unable to be advised professionally in the country areas, and, therefore, they copied from books and buildings already in existence. Through their "lack of knowledge," the style was unique, becoming an "American independent expression of the Greek Revival."[40]

Builders and patrons were influenced by various books beginning with The Antiquities of Athens by Stuart and Revett, Englishmen writing about the ancient ruins. Also introduced in America were The Practical House Carpenter (1830) by Asher Benjamin, and The Beauties of Modern Architecture (1835) by Minard Lafever, which displayed creative classical basis.[41] Builders Assistant (1818-1821) by Haviland, the first carpenter's handbook using Greek details, helped to speed the influence of the Greek Revival. Most Greek Revival houses were based upon the work of these and other authors.[42]

> "Architects' and builders' handbooks, newly founded museums, and the advent of photography helped disseminate this new knowledge, and a classical revival was born."[43]

Greek Revival Ends

Books written by A.T. Downing on homes, plans of practical designs, and design theories were appealing to the new businessmen and rising industrial society, and were, therefore, believed by some to have swayed opinion against the Greek Revival style. As those who went before him, Downing looked for an American architecture that was convenient, new, sanitarily arranged, with heating in a centralized plan. The people quickly picked up on these new ideas, devoted themselves to these new ideas and proceeded to set aside Greek Revival. Abilities of the architects began to decline in the use of new designs. Downing stated in his Landscape Gardening Architecture (1844):

> "The most common form for an American villa is a pseudo-Greek temple; that is, a rectangular oblong building, with the chimney tops concealed, if possible, and instead of a pretty and comfortable porch, veranda, or piazza, four, six or eight lofty wooden columns are seen supporting a portico, so high as neither to afford an agreeable promenade, nor a sufficient shelter from sun and rain...it is greatly inferior to the Gothic and its modifications in fitness, including under that head all the comforts and conveniences of country life."[44]

The momentum of the Greek Revival had slowed by the mid-forties due to the supposed restrictions of the style. Too binding were the designs of columns, solid white surfaces and the varied and beautiful romance of the classical. An eclecticism evolved with these continual critical attitudes of classical forms that were not precisely "correct," and from the fact that perhaps the classical was not practical for all kinds of structures as had been believed. Borrowing from the past was not a truthful American architecture. Its basis was questioned. A fad,

it was believed, at its best, decorating with a sense of grandeur "producing facades as false as the philosophy that instigated them, but at its best producing a high order, functional in intention, inventive in conception, refined in aesthetic expression, and skillful in execution... a way that resulted in buildings of honest and solid worth."[45]

According to Talbot Hamlin, there are four reasons for the close of the Greek Revival:

1. The style's basis became its weakness. Developing from a previous style, it forced some to feel restricted by correctness and expense while the Gothic style afforded inexpensive materials and practices.
2. There was a cultural shift with new wealth, industry, science, resources, transportation, and the new rich.
3. Next came a Renaissance influence.
4. There was more demand for cheap housing after the country's expansion, by immigrants from Europe, and by the Civil War.[46]

> "Never before or since, I believe, has there been a period when the general level of excellence was so high in American architecture, when the ideal was so constant and its varying expressions so harmonious, when the towns and villages, large and small, had in them so much of unostentatious unity and loveliness as during the forty years from 1820 to the Civil War."[47]

CHAPTER II: PAINTING

Painting During the Greek Revival Period

> "Romanticism thus favors the revival not of one style, but of a potentially unlimited number of styles. Revivals, in fact--the rediscovery and utilization of forms hitherto neglected or disliked--became a stylistic principle: The 'style' of Romanticism in art... ."[1]
>
> H.W. Janson

Painters too were inspired by the classical world since the art of the Greeks and Romans meant perfection and represented a culture. The "grand style" of the classical was expressed by West, Peale, Trumbull, and Stuart. Based on English styles and an artificial fad, the style they practiced was yet true and straightforward. Authenticity and non-idealization was portrayed. Romanticism was devoted to the individual experience, emotional importance, and a worthiness of the common man. "Thus painters and writers turned to the study of the simple, the humble, the familiar in human life."[2]

In Romanticism, the ideal was sought while there was a desire for the real. It is at once emotional and vague, yet striving for the precision of reality. These contrasts are apparent in the free use of paint in an emotional, expressive manner, and yet in a very precise portrayal of definite details. This longing for the past, and an excitement with the unknown, became a vehicle for moralizing. They felt that art must indicate a moral message as well as being beautiful and pleasant, as exemplified by genre works and Coles' civilization and life series. Green states that "to draw a line between 'real' and 'ideal' romanticism

is to risk the danger of all generalities, for often in the same artist real and ideal appear in various combinations, and religious or moralizing subjects are realized in a meticulous technique."[3]

Genre painting of the romantic movement realistically rendered human interest stories and idealized ordinary occurrences. "Far from being crude or uncomplimentary these mellow scenes reflected the rise of the common man and his popular art--an art of enthusiasm and delight, of humor and graceful style, of observation and affection, of vivid expression and subtle luminosity, of a romantic realism so simple and transparent as to seem artless."[4]

About 1830, Allston and Audubon, and later Cole, Durand, Catlin, Quidor, and Kensett, began painting nature scenes of the pure land. Called the Hudson River School of Painting, they devoted their works to the landscapes around the Hudson river and the mountains of New England. Nature was glorified and overwhelming.[5]

Everywhere landscape painting became popular, especially in the United States, due to the vast lands and attitudes of patriotism and self-worth. Some Hudson River School artists were self-taught, such as Doughty, Cole, and Durand. American artists painted the vastness in panoramic style to show the country's size and to educate. In Emerson's essay, Art,

> "...he asks the landscape artist to omit the details and to give us only the spirit instead--'the suggestion of a fairer creation than we know.' Resolving the dualism he says: 'There are two powers of the imagination, one that of knowing the symbolic character of things and treating them as representative, and the other is practicing the tenaciousness of the image, cleaving into it, letting it not go...(making it) as palpable and objective as the ground on which (the poet) stands.'"[6]

The Hudson River School, begun by Durand and Cole, was a very American style. Although it was not grand, it "showed a perception, technical ability, and capacity to express an original and native spirit which was without precedent in American art."[7]

Between 1825 and 1835, painters were interested in themes and forms of the classic in many differing ways. During this time such classic painters as Thomas Sully, Samuel F.B. Morse, Chester Harding, and John Neagle were at their height of popularity. Using past symbolism and allusion, Morse applied a definite American classicism with no symbols of the Greek. Sully's work is reminiscent of eighteenth century classicism, and Neagle and Harding are like builders of the classical revival. Using the ideals of American life, they applied the "principles of classical art--definition, precision, commensuration, self-containment."[8]

Howard Major discussed what happened in painting toward the end of this period: "As this scientific and industrial movement gained its full momentum about 1850, and creative minds were turned in its direction the arts waned and the Greek Revival drew to a close... ."[9] The intense struggle for individual grandeur was thus set aside by further industrial discoveries. The same discoveries that helped the development of the Greek Revival and the Romantic Movement, had, therefore, hastened its end.

Sheeler, Demuth, Hopper, Burchfield

Some modern painters dealt with architectural subjects, and many found it was interesting in abstract terms. They found the essence of the structures by simplification and color purity. Also, the personality of the structures that was implied by its occupants was displayed, and some perhaps painted in order to leave a record of a place.

Sheeler dealt with a precision. The geometry in his industrial structures was hard-edged, cleanly surfaced, and textured, and his paintings were similar to the landscapes of the 1600's. Mechanically detailed shapes and forms was the style with which he portrayed architectural elements. Sheeler's factories were painted similar to the manner in which he approached farmhouses and other rural homes. His way of seeing the American landscape, and his methods of setting this down in precision, is a contemporary statement based on an old-fashioned viewpoint. Sheeler developed from abstract toward the detailed precise style in order to "...realize the uniqueness of things as ends in themselves..."[10]

Then Sheeler reverted back to abstraction because factories lent themselves to an abstraction better than the entire view. Green states that "...the geometric aspect of abstraction, not the Fauve or expressionist variety--was the principle abstract ingredient, finding fertile ground in what may be thought of as an unconscious revival of certain stylistic characteristics of American mid-nineteenth century painting, seen most clearly in luminism (...a style distinguished by certain formal characteristics as well as by a certain treatment of light)...gives the

attention to the precisely rectilinear and planometric, shares the same concern with detail, and possesses a very similar static mood."[11] The precisionists' light is not identical to the luminists, but the still transparency is alike. Cubism was an influence to Sheeler, and he once said, "...pictures realistically conceived might have an underlying abstract structure."[12]

Demuth's subjects were similar to Sheeler's, but with a style using cubist planes and futuristic directional fracturing lines. Demuth's renditions were "a thoroughly native manifestation of American Art."[13] Demuth's buildings were made to seem more important by giving them their own abstract beauty.[14]

Edward Hopper's subjects of houses were both romantic and realistic. His flexible geometric style held in forms and visions are said to be of a lonely mood in American terms.[15] The subtle compositional strength of his works of towns' buildings, while being still and simple yet holding an impersonal painterly quality, are casual yet grandiose. Considering himself a realist, Hopper tried to develop "the most exact transcription possible of my intimate impressions of nature."[16] Showing a simple classicism in his House by the Railroad, 1925, the work shows an abandonment of the structure brought about by the railroad itself.

> "His work is consistent in its lack of obvious emotion, its restraint, and its impersonality, for it is as basically classical in feeling as his ordered composition is in form. He is not picturesque or descriptive...yet his work is permeated by an intangible quality which is finally emotional--for all its restraint."[17]

Charles Burchfield, like Hopper, painted American structures.

Burchfield's intent differed slightly in his more romantic attitudes, straightforward designs, and attempts at presenting a message. His structures were used to present forms so his details of architecture are more vague and lit uncertainly. His style reminds one of the very direction that Greek Revival architecture took and the developments toward Romanticism in painting. This attitude has allowed him to pursue many avenues of style and subject. "The romantic attitude is far less restricting than the classical, and in Burchfield's case its lures have led in many directions, from the almost out-and-out expressionism of his youthful work, through the social commentary of his middle years, to the frank nature worship of his latest paintings."[18]

CHAPTER III. RECORDING THE STYLE

The structural details of the Greek Revival style were varied and widespread. The homes that were chosen for paintings were used because they each displayed varying details of the style, showing developments through the years, and because they were of particular personal interest--to record historic importance and out of deep admiration of the beauty of its designs.

The Print Shop

Now located at the Genesee Country Museum in Mumford, New York, this building was originally in Caledonia, New York. At the museum the two portions of this structure make up the print shop and bookbindery. It is an L-shaped structure--the front main part is Greek Revival from about 1840, while the back portion was built about 1820.[1] This seems to be a typical addition plan springing from the developing society; that is, the adding on, and sometimes renovating, in the Greek Revival style. Very often the back portion was the older part, and the new, more imposing front was added later as finances grew and the country became more wealthy. "Frequently but one traverse wing was added indicating the freedom of the designer from the shackles of the style; but the result was unbalanced, showed an unfinished composition, and was not satisfactory."[2]

The formal language of the Greek Revival was neat and simple in form and surfaces used by architects, but was quite well used by the tendencies of the joiner and carpenter.[3] "Restraint, a sense of geometric proportions,

The Print Shop. 1979. Acrylic on canvas, 20 x 30".

and a feeling for flat surfaces characterize the Greek Revival, both professional and vernacular."[4]

The Print Shop like many other Greek Revival buildings used a wide variety of decorative mouldings. With the use of cornices, pilasters, columns, window trim, and entrances, the great volumes were alleviated. Decorative details, as in the Print Shop, developed with mouldings, gave these buildings their charm. Carl Schmidt states that mouldings are to buildings what technique is to art.[5] Beginning in the classic Greek, the mouldings later were redesigned to accommodate the use of wood and altered in adding more details. "Building was a living art at that time and permitted a freedom within the limits of reason of which the craftsmen took advantage. They developed an architectural style distinctly American."[6]

In the smaller structures, like the Print Shop, the use of stock mouldings that were manufactured was widespread. A builder/craftsman could be recognized by his moulding style, because he used the same sets of plans in all buildings. The mouldings used were varied in classic feelings, and the builder knew of "interesting profiles, because effects are caused by highlights, shades, shadows, and similar effects that can be obtained by different profiles. Although there is an endless variety of mouldings in the varied localities, they were able to give their architectural designs a classical character and spirit."[7]

Elijah Little House

Elijah Little began as a Henrietta, New York teacher in 1812, and then served many varying Henrietta governmental positions. His home is now the Andrews Real Estate office.[8]

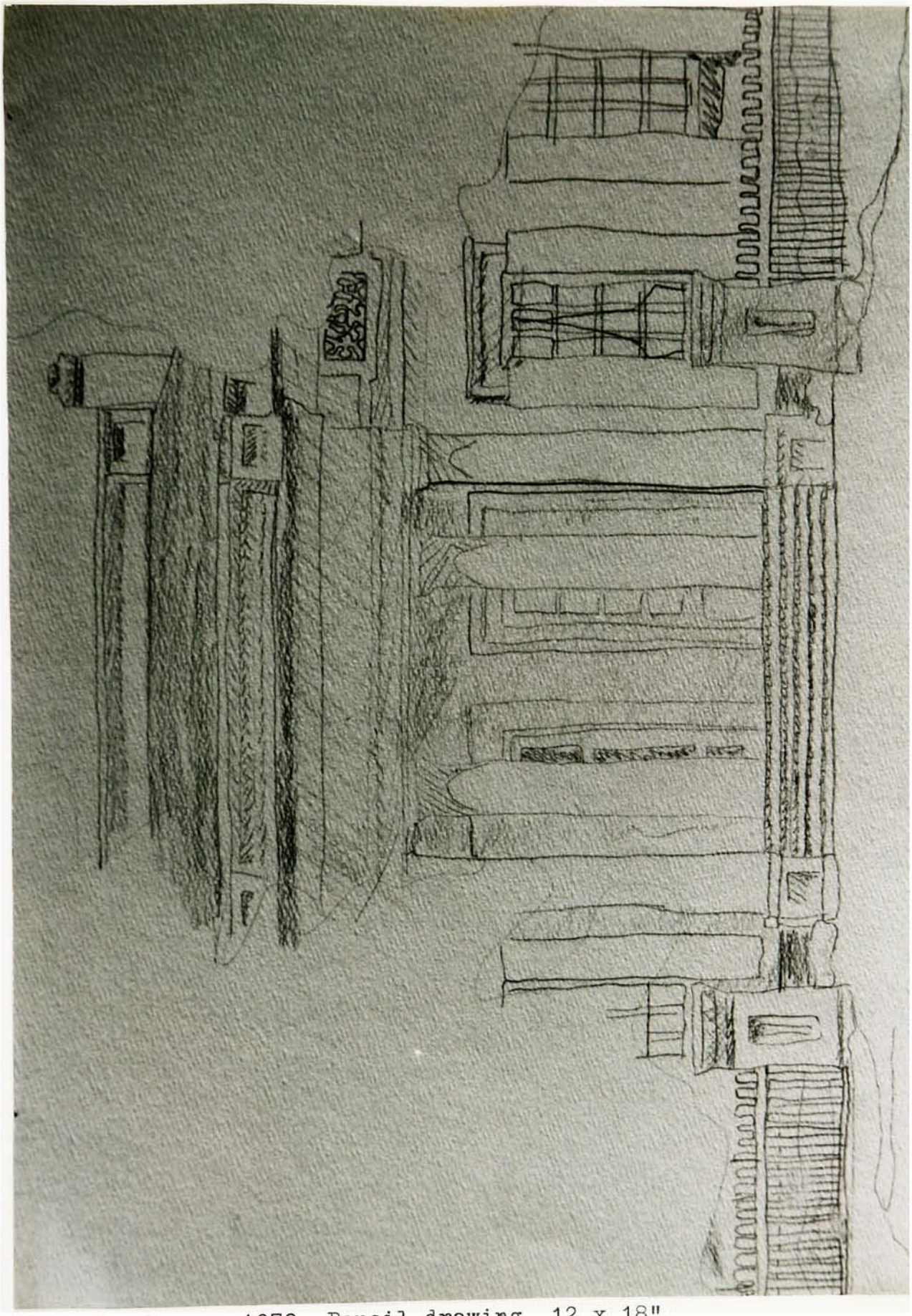
Builders during the Greek Revival made the entrances more important in order to alleviate the box-like problem of the structure, and these became an individualizing item for the house. The entrance overwhelms the design of the structure and shows its character. Many builders added porches between 1785 and 1840, and it became a very American feature. In the beginnings of the style there were heavy columns, pilasters, and entablatures like the classic Greek. Yet later, though still tall, they became thin showing the wood's characteristics. Many times proportions and entablature details differed, while mouldings, dentils, triglyphs, and mutules were omitted. The variations made the designs lighter and simpler.

> "The types of entrances range from simple enframements, as in the Dorr-Scott-Meyer House in Scottsville and the Shaw House in Rochester, to elaborate porches as in the Turner House in Mendon Center and the Child House in Rochester."[9]

The Elijah Little house should be preserved as a home of an early town teacher. Against the mass of the structure can be seen the Doric column and pilaster porch, and a suggestion of the mouldings along the top and gable end of the house as in a pediment. This is an early Greek Revival home as indicated by its almost Federal style overlap except for the porch and mouldings that indicate the classical.

In this simple Greek Revival presentation, the tree branches that

Elijah Little House. 1979. Acrylic on canvas, 34 x 39".



Elihu Kirby House. 1979. Pencil drawing, 12 x 18".

enclosed the house and obstructed full view of the house have been treated as blank "unfinished" canvas spaces, adding a form of relief from the strong horizontal and vertical lines. This same treatment can be seen in the sketch of the Elihu Kirby house done prior to this painting

1063 Erie Station Road

This home, probably built around 1830, is a beautiful, unique example because of its strong volume that characterizes the Greek Revival and its unusual reddish roof. Located in Henrietta, New York, it also possesses a very charming indented side porch probably added at a later date. It has fluted Doric columns, and pilasters at the entrance and corners of the house. The sidelights with square transom along the doorway are inherited from the preceding Federal style. Doors were often framed with architectural features and topped by square, eliptical, or circular transoms, and at times were surrounded by square antae and columns on line with these sidelights. The Doric order was first popular, the Ionic followed, giving way to the more elaborate Corinthian column.[10]

The pilasters or antae were popular details with a cornice on the sides, and completing this was a transom sash on top or sidelights. With the increase in time came the increase in window areas. "The close, heavy horizontal shadow lines from the narrow clapboards contrasted delightfully with the wide plain surfaces of the pilasters, friezes, and the facias of the cornice mouldings."[11]

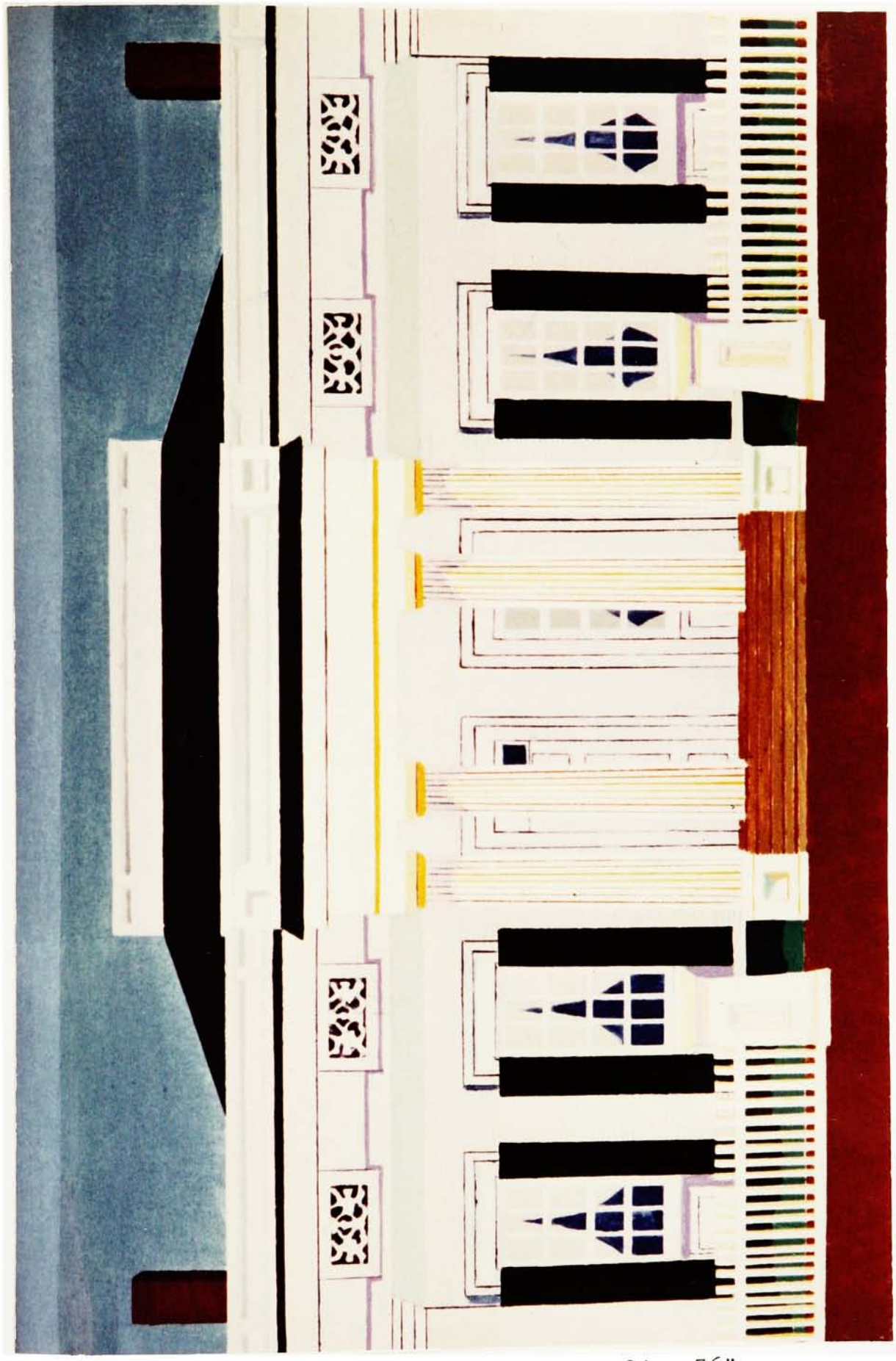
1063 Erie Station Road. 1979. Acrylic on canvas, 30 x 36".

Elihu Kirby House

This home is most unusual in that it is perfectly square, and each side is nearly identical to the facade, reinforcing the importance of symmetry. The grounds are also of the Greek Revival period in every detail. Pictorial preservation became important after it was learned that this home once stood on the corner of East Henrietta Road and Lehigh Station Road in Henrietta, New York, and was originally built by Elihu Kirby, an early town storekeeper.[12] The home had been moved and restored in 1956 to 22 Stoney Clover Lane in Pittsford, New York, and dates back to 1840 when the Greek Revival in the Rochester area was at its high point.[13]

The beautiful second story grill windows were a new addition during this period. Since there was a wide entablature under the eaves around the whole building, this "frieze" area left the possibility of a narrow window area in order to ventilate and light the attic areas, and thus make it more useful. "To make this small, shallow window seem part of, and decoration of, the frieze, either a cast iron or carved wood grille was fitted flush with the face of the frieze."[14]

Narrow clapboards are three inches exposed and thick at the bottom to cast a heavy shadow. Beautiful contrasts are achieved by various mouldings and decorative Greek details that form highlights and shadows. The facade has Doric columns on the projecting porch, pilasters on each corner of the house, and a three member entablature. The casings and shutters of the windows go to the ground with a panel of wood under the windows.[15]



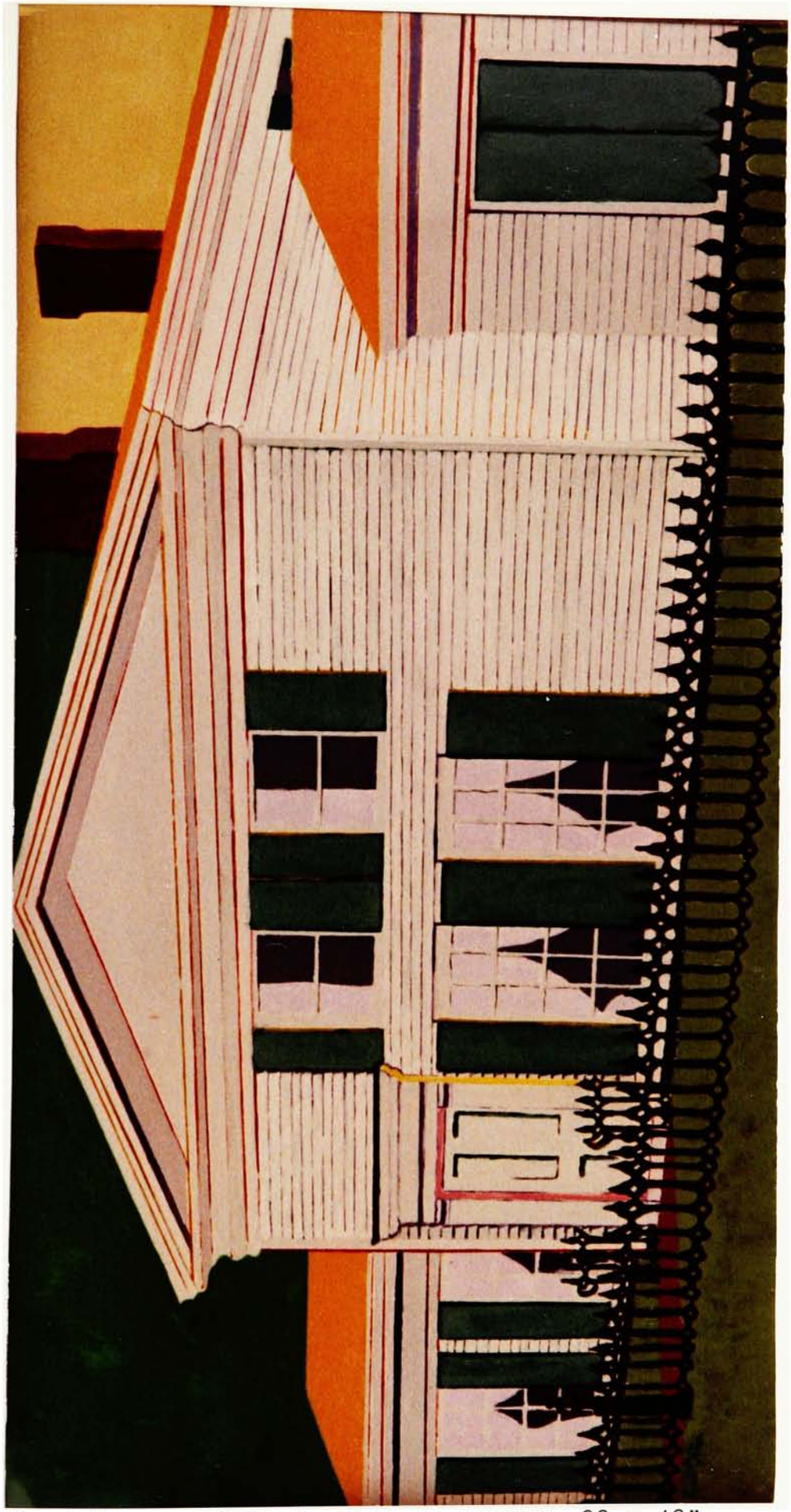
Elihu Kirby House. 1979. Acrylic on canvas, 24 x 36".

> "The architects or master builders of...the Elihu Kirby House...were all thoroughly familiar with the principles of classic design as interpreted in the various handbooks, but how varied are the plans and designs. Not one of these plans or motifs were copied direct from any handbook. The work of these master builders indicates an inventiveness of detail and a development in planning and designing that obviously characterizes only the work of skilled designers."[16]

Schmidt-Gent House

Located at 10 Rochester Street, Scottsville, New York, the Schmidt-Gent House is nearly symmetrical with shadow casting modeled cornices and mouldings, large windows, metal fence (implying Gothic Revival) and triangular front pediment. Upstate New York at the time of the Greek Revival was opening the area with the Erie Canal and turnpikes to enable further settlements. The front part of the house was built around 1850, while the back part dates around 1830. Carl Schmidt, an architectural historian, was a former resident in this house.[17]

When there was no colonnade, as in this case, pilasters were added to the entrance, and a pediment and entablature added, extending around the structure. A later development was the right angle wings along the main rectangular axis that at times had porches.[18] This was considered the basic temple style, except with the addition of a columned portico, taken from the Greek temple type. Having many variations, the temple form had a main pediment with wings that were one-story in symmetrical form, a pediment above two-story wings, or just a portico added to a main structure, similar to the late Georgian homes. These different styles had variations that indicated how adaptable the style was to many concerns. The Greek Revival took on many shapes and combinations.



Schmidt-Gent House. 1979. Acrylic on canvas, 22 x 42".

> "From a purely architectural view, the most interesting and pliable was the one-story wing type, in which the interplay of cubical volumes on several levels and crossing wings offered a great variety of compositional effects. Many of the finest Greek Revival houses fall within this category. Some were the result of renovation in an effort to give a 'modern' Greek look to older structures... ." [19]

Many times in the striving for classical symmetry, conveniences and planning were secondary. The side-wing arrangement, however, lent itself to many arrangements, and it was very prominent in the North so that this new design gave a new flexibility to the problem. The use of cast iron became heavily pronounced in the use for capitals, columns, trellises, railings, window grilles, and others, "became common features and were probably the most delightful artistic expression of the nineteenth century." [20] Although not a new invention, it gained popularity due to its useful characteristics and cheapness for "the vase shaped finials surmounting the standards of the wrought-iron railings." [21] It was the industrial revolution that had enhanced the use of cast iron products by 1860: "The cast-iron work in the first sixty years of the nineteenth century is not only the most artistic expression of the century, but an expression that will stand comparison in the entire field of American decorative arts." [22]

CHAPTER IV. THE MEANING OF GRECIAN REVIVAL TODAY

> "...with different influences but equally out of American conditions, out of American materials and ways of work, out of the very texture of American democracy, created a living architecture."[1]

Today there is much disagreement between those who think that architecture should be completely modern and new, and others who feel that study of traditional forms is needed. William Kaelber feels that it is important to have a historical architectural basis before beginning the buildings of the future. Even though modern architecture has made great strides to do away with unnecessary details, it is important to record the Greek Revival style. The Greek Revival period was a time of leisure and dignity and the homes reflected this attitude, but "the past had much to offer that is good, even though our present day speeded-up, automobile, airplane and machine age requires a different approach and solution in architectural design."[2]

We must gather and preserve examples of the Greek Revival architecture, both pictorially and in restoration, and save it from the danger of destruction. It has been only recently that we have become aware of the possible vanishing style and appreciate it as a style of our early country. The old "Carpenter's Classic" should be an authentic American architecture.[3] "The forms of the 'Greek Revival' are no longer applicable, but the capacity to solve problems with originality, ingenuity, and taste will endure and inspire the architecture..." of today.[4]

The Greek Revival is indeed a lost architectural style, a style which has been touched on here by demonstrating a few of its typical variations. The influences of architects, their followers, and the carpenters' handbooks that were carried everywhere made the style consistent, and produced a national style that "...will stimulate... (the reader) to the discovery and appreciation of buildings in his own vicinity or in other areas where his curiosity might lead him."[5]

Footnotes

Chapter I:

[1]Milton W. Brown, American Art to 1900: Painting, Sculpture, Architecture (New York: Harry N. Abrams, Inc., 1977), p. 231.

[2]Milton W. Brown, American Art to 1900: Painting, Sculpture, Architecture, p. 231.

[3]Brown, p. 231.

[4]Howard Major, The Domestic Architecture of the Early American Republic, The Greek Revival (Philadelphia: J.B. Lippincott Company, 1926), p. 4.

[5]Wendell D. Garrett, et al., The Arts in America, The Nineteenth Century (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1969), p. 42.

[6]Wendell D. Garrett, et al., The Arts in America, The Nineteenth Century, p. 42.

[7]Garrett, p. 207.

[8]Talbot Hamlin, Greek Revival in America (New York: Oxford University Press, 1944), pp. xv-xvi.

[9]Talbot Hamlin, Greek Revival in America, pp. xvi-xvii.

[10]Carl F. Schmidt, Greek Revival Architecture in the Rochester Area (Scottsville, New York: By the Author, 1946), pp. 8-9.

[11]Paul Malo, Landmarks of Rochester and Monroe County: A Guide to Neighborhoods and Villages (Syracuse, New York: Syracuse University Press, 1974), p. 9.

[12]Brown, p. 233.

[13]Howard Major, The Domestic Architecture of the Early American Republic, The Greek Revival, pp. 11-14.

[14]Garrett, p. 4.

[15]Carl F. Schmidt, Greek Revival Architecture in the Rochester Area, pp. 12-13.

[16]Major, p. 27.

[17]Schmidt, p. 14.

[18]Ibid.

[19]"Campbell-Whittlesey House," The Landmark Society of Western New York, pp. 3-4.

[20]Schmidt, p. 14

[21]Ibid.

[22]Ibid., p. 15.

[23]Hamlin, p. 316.

[24]Ibid., pp. 315, 326.

[25]Ibid., p. 318.

[26]Ibid., pp. 4-6.

[27]Garrett, p. 3.

[28]Schmidt, p. 16.

[29]Brown, p. 233.

[30]Paul Malo, Landmarks of Rochester and Monroe County: A Guide to Neighborhoods and Villages, p. 9.

[31]Hamlin, pp. 3, 17.

[32]Major, pp. 17, 27.

[33]Garrett, p. 4.

[34]Major, p. 36.

[35]George M. Cohen, A History of American Art (New York: Dell Publishing Co., Inc., 1971), p. 48.

[36]Schmidt, pp. 19-23.

[37]George M. Cohen, A History of American Art, pp. 48-51.

[38]Schmidt, pp. 25-27.

[39]Brown, pp. 231-232.

[40]Major, pp. 38-42.

[41]"Campbell-Whittlesey House," The Landmark Society of Western New York, p. 4.

[42]Samuel M. Green, American Art: A Historical Survey, (New York: The Ronald Press Company, 1966), pp. 183-184.

[43]"Greenfield Village - Showcase of American Design," Colonial Homes, Spring-Summer 1977, p. 109.

[44]Schmidt, pp. 36-39.

[45]Brown, p. 269.

[46]Hamlin, pp. 330-336.

[47]Ibid., p. 319.

Chapter II:

[1]H. W. Janson, History of Art (New York: Harry N. Abrams, 1965), p. 454.

[2]Garrett, pp. 4, 23.

[3]Samuel M. Green, American Art: A Historical Survey, pp. 239-241.

[4]Garrett, p. 24.

[5]Ibid., p. 23.

[6]Green, pp. 241-249.

[7]Hamlin, p. xvi.

[8]Garrett, p. 207.

[9]Major, p. 78.

[10]Green, p. 538.

[11]Ibid., pp. 537-538.

[12]Ibid., p. 538.

[13]Ibid., p. 540.

[14]H. H. Arnason, History of Modern Art: Painting - Sculpture - Architecture, (New York: Harry N. Abrams), p. 415.

[15]Ibid., p. 429.

[16]Green, pp. 542-543.

[17]Ibid., p. 543.

[18]Ibid., pp. 545-547.

Chapter III:

[1]The Genesee Country Museum, Mumford, New York, (Mumford, New York: The Genesee Country Museum, 1978), p. 23.

[2]Major, p. 60.

[3]Green, p. 213.

[4]Ibid., p. 185.

[5]Schmidt, p. 80.

[6]Ibid., pp. 82-84.

[7]Ibid., pp. 86-88.

[8]Eleanor C. Kalsbeck, Henrietta Heritage (By the Author, 1977), p. 49.

[9]Schmidt, pp. 52-53.

[10]Major, pp. 64, 70.

[11]Schmidt, pp. 57, 65-67.

[12]Eleanor C. Kalsbeck, Henrietta Heritage, p. 90.

[13]Malo, p. 8.

[14]Major, p. 63.

[15]Schmidt, pp. 167-168.

[16]Ibid., p. 93.

[17]Malo, pp. 201-203.

[18]Schmidt, p. 31.

[19]Brown, pp. 255-258.

[20]Major, pp. 53-60.

[21]Ibid., p. 75.

[22]Ibid., p. 77.

Chapter IV:

[1]Hamlin, p. 45.

[2]Schmidt, pp. 6-7.

[3]Major, pp. 7-8.

[4]Hamlin, pp. xvii-xviii.

[5]Green, p. 209.

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