

How immigration and industrialization affected post-civil war architecture in ame...

[Art & Culture](#), [Artists](#)



Running Head: Effects of immigration on post civil war architecture in

America How Immigration affected post civil war architecture in America

In the early 19th century, American architecture was a mixture of cribbed styles and European architecture. It is only until the end of the century that America began embracing the idea of having their own unique architectural style. It is then that American architecture started new trends and building buildings that could be emulated all over the world. American architecture arguably started picking up in originality, style and uniqueness towards the end of the century or after the civil war. Before this, American architecture consisted of copied styles from Europe and Greece. American architecture was also largely dependent on English design books, a few prestigious technical schools and master builders who had immigrated during the old and new wars. The only buildings that showcased great architectural designs were churches such as the Cambridge and Kings Chapel and private homes (Secler, 2006).

After the civil war America also underwent a transformation of the American life due to immigration and industrialization. It is this transformation that inspired a sense of historical consciousness in the American people which necessitated the development of architecture that would be unique to the Americans (Conn & Page, 2003). After the civil war, only two thirds of the Architects in America were native born. A large percentage of them came from Germany and Ireland. The designers and craftsmen during this period were foreign born. In the last half of the nineteenth century the Irish dominated the building industry. They had perfected their skills in carpentry and bricklaying. Most of the Irish in this sector later transformed themselves

into builders and contractors.

In Chicago, half the population was foreign born with a large number of them being Germans who penetrated into almost all Chicago architectural firms as architects and draftsmen. The German architects are hailed for their technological contributions to American architecture. In New York German firms such as Werner and Windolph, Albert F Doench were among the most prominent architectural firms in the area. Other migrant architects included Jewish architects from Central Europe such as Dankmar Adler, Leopold Eidlitz and his brother Marc Eidlitz one of the most prominent builders in New York (Elliot, 2003).

In addition to these was also the immigration of new professional architects who being no longer inspired by the ancient historical designs in Europe were looking for inspiration for contemporary work in other countries. It is no wonder therefore that the building styles adopted by the Americans after the civil war were inspired by the developments of architecture in other countries. During this period for example, the French in the rebuilding of their cities had adopted new elaborate styles such as those used in the building of wide boulevards and national monuments like the new Louvre. The high mansard roofs, elaborate stone dormers, rows of arches and double columns, rich sculptural decoration of the Louvre became the key components of the second empire model the main American building style after the civil war (Hayward & Shivers, 2004).

The first major building to adopt the second empire style was the Corcoran Gallery in Washington DC. This building set the style for most post civil war public buildings and made the second empire style closely associated with

the public architecture of the Grant administration. The major practitioner of this style in the post civil war period was Alfred B Mullet the then supervising architect of the treasury. Domestic architecture in this style is however difficult to identify as the mansard roof can be placed on any house to create a contemporary design without any innovations in plan and ornament (Poppeliers & Chambers, 2003). Other styles influenced by immigration where such as the Gothic and neo-Gothic style and the Greek revival styles.

References:

Conn, S., & Page, M. (2003). Building the American Nation: Americans write about their

Architecture , their cities and their landscape. Pennsylvania: University of Pennsylvania.

Elliot, C. D. (2003). The American Architecture from the colonial period to the present.

McFarland.

Hayward, M. E., & Shivers, F. J. (2004). The architecture of Baltimore; An illustrated history.

JHU Press.

Poppeliers, J. C., & Chambers, A. S. (2003). What style is it: A guide to American Architecture.

John Wiley and sons.

Secler, R. f. (2006). Civil War America, 1850 -1875. Infobase Publishing.