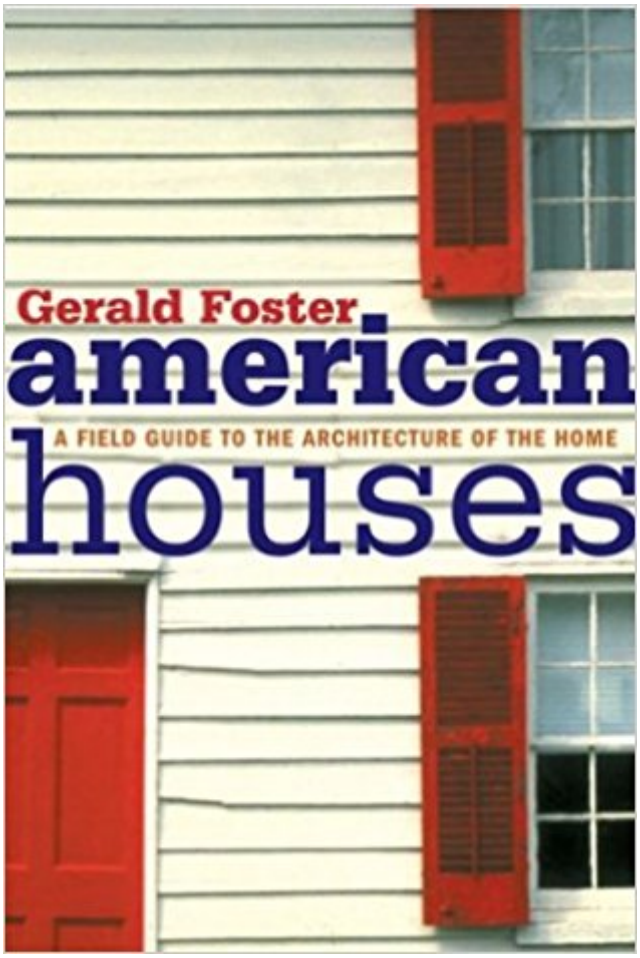
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American Houses: A Field Guide To The Architecture Of The Home



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Synopsis

American Houses is a historical guide to the architecture of the American home. While other architectural field guides show only faÃƒÂ§ades, this book includes floor plans, showing how the form of a house arises from its function. Photographs and drawings of exteriors illustrate the significant field marks of each style and help pinpoint the key elements that can identify a house even when it has been remodeled beyond recognition. Beautifully illustrated, clearly written, and impeccably researched, American Houses is an essential reference for anyone interested in the history of American residential architecture.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

While the U.S. boasts many great public buildings, designed by architects both homegrown and imported, Foster’s operating premise is that most of America’s vital and expressive architectural tradition has been a domestic one. The great breadth of this tradition—from Monticello through "Early Louisiana Shotgun" to Frank Lloyd Wright—is immaculately and exhaustively described by Foster, a teacher and former partner of Walter Gropius’s Architects Collaborative. The book’s three extensive sections ("Colonial Traditions," "19th-Century Styles" and "20th-Century Revivals and Innovations") offer not only a visual primer on virtually every important strain of American home building but also extensive and useful annotation on their social and aesthetic backgrounds. The author’s numerous drawings are models of clarity. It is useful to have the characteristics of such familiar styles as Gothic Revival and Mission so clearly delineated, and less well-known styles are amply explored. The author of two previous Field Guides, on trains and airplanes, Foster clearly

intends this book to be used rather than consulted, to be thrown in the car or jammed in a shoulder bag rather than put on a shelf. While Foster is no Tom Wolfe–style polemicist, he is not afraid to be critical when it aids understanding. And more through implication than direct statement, Foster considers the vernacular tradition he describes as belonging to a quickly receding past, one that this book will do much to help preserve. Copyright Ã Â© Reed Business Information, a division of Reed Elsevier Inc. All rights reserved. --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

"For armchair architectural historians and students of American architecture, this book is a gem." Library Journal

The floor plans included in this book were helpful in understanding the relationships between the exterior elevations and interior spaces.The historical use of space as illustrated and the relationship of functions to architectural forms was well documented.More elaboration on architectural details as pertain to style would have given this a fifth star. Hopefully the next edition will explore this further..

I first checked this book out of the UCLA Arts+Architecture library and after reviewing it I decided I needed to add it to my personal library. And I did.It will be one of the basic resources for compiling the State Historic Structures Report required for the Los Angeles Mills Act application process.

This book made me look at the houses all around me differently. I now feel I have a basis of knowlege that I didn’t have before.

Good book

The author is the illustrator as well, and his pen and ink renditions are museum worthy. As an artist, and not an academic, his approach is informal and slightly irreverent.The book’s emphasis is on the Colonial era, whose styles he divides into New England, Hudson River, Mid-Atlantic, Chesapeake, Southern, French and Spanish. He then sums up the 19th century styles, predominantly Greek Revival, Italianate, Queen Anne and other late Victorian styles, and ends with the Colonial Revival, Bungalow, and Prairie styles (originated in Illinois, the Prairie State).He points out some styles were revived exclusively for the mansions of the turn-of-the-century industrial barons. He has not much to say about more recent houses, only mentioning the International Style, but overall it is still a good book.

There is a great tradition in the United States of Field Guides to American Domestic Architecture. Almost all of the Guides break down into two camps. The first group are the Guides that illustrate architectural styles through the use of photographs. The second group of Guides show styles through the use of black and white line drawings. Of the two camps, I prefer line drawings because they allow the reader to focus on the mulitple architectural details that come together to form an architectural style.Gerald Foster's "American Houses" is a good example of the line drawing style of Field Guide. Gerald Foster is a competent artist in what I call the illustrator school of architectural drawings. He took highly detailed drawings from the Historic Architectural Building Survey (HABS)and rotated the drawings so as to center on a corner view. Hovering below the corner view is a representative floor plan.The drawings are competent and pleasant to look at but where Foster falls short in my estimation is the sheer repetive nature of his drawings. Almost all of the drawings are from this same corner view and after a while the view becomes monotonous. A more imaginative artist would have shown buildings from different angles. A good artist can bend static buildings and provide new insights into their construction.The drawings are competent and George Foster has done enough homework in order to do a good job of describing the different styles. Its a good Guide and if this is your fist Field Guide, you will be very happy with it. However, there are better examples of Architectural Field Guides. For this line drawing style of Field Guide, I would recommend Lester Walker's "American Home" and "The Visual Dictionary to American Architecture." The illustrations in these books are both more exciting and educational.

Brilliantly researched, "Gerry" Foster manages to build the houses he describes in our minds through his illustrative diction and syntax. With its diagrams and managable set up, this book is a treat for all those who aspire to understand what goes into the frame work of an American home. For those who have read Foster's Field Guide to Trains, I assure you will agree with me when I say that I look forward to more works by this highly talented painter, architect, author, and father. I had the pleasure of recently meeting with his daughter, Shelby Foster, who only confirmed my belief in her father's intelligence, as she was able, eager, and willing to discuss the behind the pages research that went in to this wonderful read. We, the readers, can only hope that her upcoming novel contains as much information seamlessly weaved with a powerful narrative voice as her father's works. In all, a must read for any student, formal or unformal, of modern day American homes, and their history.

This book is a great overview of American architecture. It is entertaining for the non-architect but full of detail and histry for those who already have a lot of knowledge of the subject matter. Foster has obviously spent considerable time and energy researching his material. The floorplans are informative and help the reader to visualize a certain style and to understand the practical forces that shaped each architectural style. A must read for anyone with an interest in American architectural history!

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