

# Colonial Revival Homes All Around Us in Montclair

CONTRIBUTED BY HELEN FALLON, TRUSTEE, MONTCLAIR HISTORY CENTER

**W**HAT'S THE MOST UBIQUITOUS architectural style in Montclair? It must be Colonial Revival, which refers, not surprisingly, to the revival all things colonial, including original Georgian and

Federal prototypes of the 1700s. The American Field Guide to American Houses states that Colonial Revival was the most predominant style in the United States in the first half of the 20th century, and a drive through Montclair readily affirms that statistic.

Colonial Revival's roots can be traced back to the Philadelphia exhibition in 1876, the celebration of America's centennial. Colonial Revival architecture has been popular for a very long time – officially from 1880 into the 1960s—but we can even see very recent examples of it. Given its duration, there are many subtypes in the genre, and, as with other popular styles such as Tudor Revival and Queen Anne, homeowners and designers regularly combined details from multiple architectural styles.

In its simplest terms, a Colonial Revival home is most often a two-story, rectangular box with either a side gable or hipped roof and symmetrical design features. A one-story wing is common.

## ■ ICONIC DETAILS OF A COLONIAL REVIVAL HOME INCLUDE:

**Entrances** that are often elaborate, with sidelights running the length of the door on each side of it; there may also be a fanlight above the door. The pediment (the triangular or curved shape above the door or dormer windows) on the revival interpretation is often “broken.” Substantial porticos are also seen, supported by columns.



This 1940s interpretation of the now includes a one-story overhang, the attached garage, and masonry façade. The sidelights on either side of the front door are true to classic Colonial Revival



The gambrel roof of The George places it in the Dutch Colonial Revival subtype. The elaborate front portico supported by columns, dentils at the cornice line, windows groupings, and dormers with pronounced pediments are classic revival elements.

**Cornices**, the molding below the roof line, are often decorated with tooth-like dentils or modillions, which are similar to but more prominent than dentils.

**Windows** are usually double-hung. Unlike the singular windows in original Georgian or Federal homes, windows in the Colonial Revivals are often paired, grouped or in triplets. Palladian



The Anchorage, a private residence, is a gracious example of Colonial Revival architectural style, drawing specifically from original Georgian prototypes. The elaborate front entry features a prominent broken pediment. Dentils are seen at the cornice and in the front entry structure.

windows are seen but are not exclusive to Colonial Revival.

## ■ SUBTYPES OF COLONIAL REVIVAL ARCHITECTURAL STYLE ABOUND, AND INCLUDE:

**Dutch Colonial** is a common subtype of Colonial Revival and it is readily found throughout Montclair. It is identified by its gambrel roof: a shallower roof slope above a steeper roof slope. An entire floor can be tucked into the steep roof.

**The Cape Cod** subtype peaked in popularity in the 1940s. These homes are loosely patterned after the one-story, early wooden houses of eastern Massachusetts with the addition of

accentuated front doors, often including a pediment and fanlight.

**The Second-story Overhang** is another subtype, most popular from the 1930s-1950s. These homes often have masonry-veneered first stories.

By the 1940s, Colonial Revival homes usually incorporated an attached garage, acknowledging the prevalence of the family car.

Colonial Revivals come in all sizes and are found throughout Montclair, from large estates to cozy smaller homes. ■



This Cape Cod is true to its Colonial Revival style, with dormers, paired windows, and a central chimney. The pedimented front door even features a transom window reminiscent of a fanlight.