

## FLORAL PARK ARCHITECTURE

# MONTEPEY REVIVAL

BY DAVID KO



*The Bryte House, built at 1812 N. Heliotrope Drive by Honer, Herzig & Farney in 1934, is a classic example of Monterey Revival style architecture.*

When many envision the standard built environment of “Old California,” they think of the romanticized haciendas and ranchos, gracious buildings with ample verandas, spreading eaves, and mellow adobe walls. They think of the Monterey Colonial-style house, set in a shaded garden with bougainvilleas climbing the walls, overlooking a spread of arid ranch land. It was this romanticism and pastoral idealism depicted in the majority of early 20th-century writing about California and its architecture. This notion reflects the intrigue that Californians had at that time, particularly in the 1920s and 1930s, with recreat-

ing the richness of old Spanish California in Floral Park. It was a mixture of California’s scenic beauty. Rather, a luxurious lifestyle and rich cultural history directly resulted in the revival of the Monterey Colonial style, commonly called the Monterey Revival style Colonial style would not have exhibited.

Monterey Colonial Revival one of the few styles born in America. In the early 18th century, Californians blended Spanish colonial and New England colonial styles into something new. These buildings were two stories, built of adobe, and featured prominent second-story balconies or two-story front porches. This became the Monterey style named

for Monterey, California where it is most prevalent. California architect Roland E. Coate, Sr. was crucial in promoting the revival in the 1920s and 1930s. The style remains most in California and Texas and is characterized by a prominent second story balcony, simplified roof, clean design and long, double-hung casement windows.

Monterey Colonial homes are distinctive in style, easily recognizable and embody a timeless character. The restraint use of architectural ornamentations and its purity of form are the hallmarks. Though the homes appear simplistic, well-balanced, and proportioned, the design required creative organization of various size

sits on precise spacings of cantilever beams. This style was not only aesthetically demanding, but it also expressed the structural system as an integral part of the facade composition.

Even though they often add the word Colonial to Monterey architecture, the exteriors of Monterey houses contain surprisingly few English details. A nod to New England Colonial homes, though, can be seen in their symmetrical facades. The interior is a different story entirely. The layout of the Monterey home is nearly identical to that of a Colonial, which was revolutionary in California at the time. Houses there were typically laid out similarly to Mexican adobes. In Floral Park, builders built various Monterey Colonial homes primarily in the English Colonial genre ranging from the purist created by Floral Park developer Alison Honer, where the facade exhibits perfect symmetry, and the front door, dead center. The asymmetrical composition also exists with primary importance placed on floor plans, the exterior became secondary with multiple roofs, and the front door became a less prominent feature.

Numerous Spanish-style homes in Floral Park exhibit smaller upper-story decks, typically considered a secondary or tertiary facade element absent of traditional English Colonial details but have Spanish influences through the choice of construction materials. Typically, the walls were adobe, and always the roofs were finished with Spanish tiles. Decorating with ceramic or hand-painted tiles was also common. As the balcony deck length appeared less than half the width of the home,



*TOP: known in Spanish as Don Tomás Larkin, Thomas Larkin was an American diplomat and businessman. He served as the only U.S. consul to Alta California during the Mexican era and was covertly involved in U.S. plans to annex California from Mexico. Following the American Conquest of California and the end of the Mexican-American War, Larkin was a delegate to the Monterey Constitutional Convention in 1849 and a signatory of the Constitution of California. BOTTOM: Larkin House in Monterey, California. A National Historic Landmark, the house is a two-story mud adobe brick home built during Monterey's Mexican period by Thomas O. Larkin. In the 1830s, the Larkin House became the prototype of Monterey Colonial architecture.*

many misquoted this as Monterey Colonial.

Monterey Colonial architecture was an indigenous vernacular of California. Its birthplace, Monterey, had not yet been annexed to the United States when the popularity of this style flourished. Many significant historical, political, cultural, and social events shaped and honed the evolution of its characteristic. Ironically, besides the success of this style lies a story of the contrary. Its creator Thomas Larkin failed in numerous over-saturated business ventures on

the east coast and then embarked on the new frontier to pioneer one-of-a-kind business opportunities.

Although half a century passed after the declaration of independence from the motherland, American cravings for luxury goods still heavily depended on the British imports of high-quality luxury goods from the Far East. The compounded cost was astronomical for the Chinese silk, fabric, tea, spices, and porcelain. The imported goods had to travel three-quarters of the globe, then be imported to England before making their way into the docks of New York. Decidedly to cut off the middleman, America set her eyes on the active seaport of Monterey,

then still a territory of Mexico with a flourishing and only busy route to the Orient across the Pacific Ocean to the southern provinces of Canton where the harbor, near the Pearl River Delta strategically positioned by the imperialist's thousands of miles south from the capital of Peking in Northern China, the Forbidden City, fearful of foreign invasion by sea. Monterey was initially the only port of entry for all taxable goods in California.

Once Larkin arrived in California, his luck began to change. He became a merchant, then financier, and later a confidant of California officials and United States Consul to Mexican California. He not only exerted significant influence on the political history of California, but he also influenced the development of Californian adobe buildings. His house became a gathering place for Americans, as well as the government headquarters and the center of the social life of Monterey. Monterey was the Mexican capital of California from 1826 until the

American occupation in 1847. The sole seaport to the Orient and the discovery of gold galvanized America's vested interest in California.

Larkin designed his two-story house to accommodate both a home and a store. His family lived on the upper level, operated a store below, and used it as government headquarters. Among his many other roles, Larkin was a builder. He was not a builder by trade but by entrepreneurship. The evolution of the Monterey Colonial style reflected various events in Larkin's life. Before he arrived in California in 1832, Larkin spent his early life on the East Coast, grew up in Massachusetts, close to Boston, and was undoubtedly familiar with the New England Colonial styles of the area. If not well versed in their more technical aspects, he was at least familiar with their aesthetics: formal, symmetrical facades, classical details, red brick, clapboards, hipped roofs, and so on.

In 1821, Larkin left New England for the South. Already involved with mercantilism, he went to Wilmington, North Carolina, to establish himself as a businessman and met with little success. While in the region, he traveled to Charleston, South Carolina as well. This city, so well known for its verandah-style architecture, may have had a subliminal impact on Larkin's later



*Monterey Revival style captures a romanticized vision of early Alta California often portrayed in Western films of the 1920s and '30s.*

building pursuits in the West.

Some Monterey homes have French influence coming from the time Larkin spent traveling down south for business. Like the Creole homes native to Louisiana, Monterey homes have an upper and lower balcony. Both typically feature trims in wrought iron, as well. Monterey homes also tend to include French doors.

On his first arrival in Monterey, there were no hotels to house travelers. He and his future wife stayed

with a friend in his traditional California home; The property at the time boasted a modest but traditional one-story adobe house. The single-story adobe structures, built from sun-dried bricks made from local earth, were reinforced with straws not only solid and thick intentionally to defend and resist blunt force or fireball attacks by native tribes but also highly resistant to the regional earthquake. The raw and primitive ground-hugging nature of the defensible structures had only small shuttered paneless window openings far from the highly evolved east coast Colonial architecture. This extended stay with the friend and a short rental of a Mexican adobe gave Larkin great familiarity with the forms of native California architecture, combined with his earlier experiences in the South, would culminate in the styling of Larkin's residence and influence the fashion of building in Monterey forever afterward.

The first two-story structure came about through a functional necessity. In the 1830s, beginning with the government Custom-house and then the Larkin House became the prototype of Monterey Colonial architecture. Demand for hotel lodging of foreign dignitaries and guests in the capital prompted an urgently needed expansion to the original single-story Custom House.

The Monterey style is an American style with origins in Spanish Colonial Revival, New England Colonial and Caribbean architecture. The original Monterey style dates back to the 1800s in California and is characterized by:



**PROMINENT BALCONY**

The full-width, cantilevered, upper story balcony is crucial to the style



**SIMPLE ROOF FORMS**

Low-pitched roofs may be covered in clay tile or wood shingle and cover the balcony.



**LONG WINDOWS**

Long, double-hung or casement windows reach to the ground on one or both stories..



**CLEAN, SIMPLE DESIGN**

The style's simple forms and bare walls feature few elaborations



1907 Heliotrope Drive



2340 North Park



2103 N. Flower Street

A second-story addition with an outside staircase up to the exterior balcony to access numerous second-story rooms. Accommodation above the street not only ensured foreign guests' safety but also buffered the sleeping quarters from street noise and smell. America's merchant ships not only transported luxury goods but also brought newly contracted indentured Chinese workers from the Canton provinces to work in agriculture, gold mining, fisheries, domestic household, and the transcontinental railroad. Lodging continued to be a brisk business to house the new arrivals at Monterey.

Monterey Colonial buildings mixed New England and Southwestern building techniques. They were constructed with wooden frames and mud bricks to make leaner, sturdier adobe buildings than ones made primarily from mud and straw. The more excellent stability of Monterey buildings--compared to single-story adobes--allows for a large second-story and long covered porch. The covered second-story verandah patio was a necessary feature to provide not only thermal comfort to the upper story rooms by pulling the cooler air

from outside and then drawing it into the house, but the upper patio also shielded the lower level adobe façade and walls of the house from rainwater damage and erosion. By adopting an east coast building form to available California materials, adobe, and redwood, Larkin created a style that synthesized elements of two very different cultures, that of the Spanish and Mexican colonists and the American colonial moving into California.

Larkins' success with Chinese imports undercut the competition on the East Coast. Cost-effective measures resulted from the shortest sea route and generated profitable revenue in fare tickets for Chinese coming to America on the same cargo ships. He quickly became a leading and affluent businessman in Monterey, developing an important commercial and trading business along the coast. As the most successful merchant in Mexican California, Larkin exported dried seafood and grain to China and imported various goods selling items such as cloth, clothing, furniture, china goods, pottery, farming implements, sugar, spices, and rice. He opened his first store of many stores in Monterey in 1834 and, in the same

year, began construction on his first house.

Larkin followed a traditional Massachusetts model as the basis for the design but had to adapt this model to available construction materials. When he could not obtain enough redwood locally to construct a building entirely of wood, Larkin incorporated local adobe building techniques into his design. By blending the architectural styles, Larkin created a structure with a lighter shell of adobe bricks. This more delicate shell made it easier to construct structural openings (windows, doors, etc.) than had previously been possible in traditional Spanish and Mexican adobe buildings where the adobe material predominated. He limited the use of wood, a scarce resource in the area. The construction crew was not carpenters, but artisans from the ship-repaired trade focused on wood cladding, durability, watertight, and finishes rather than complex building structural forms. The limited use of wood only at high-profile locations became the style's hallmark, typically the embellished wood door and window surrounds, shutters, fireplace mantle and trims, porches, upper-level verandahs, and second-story



2111 N. Flower Street



1916 Greenleaf Street



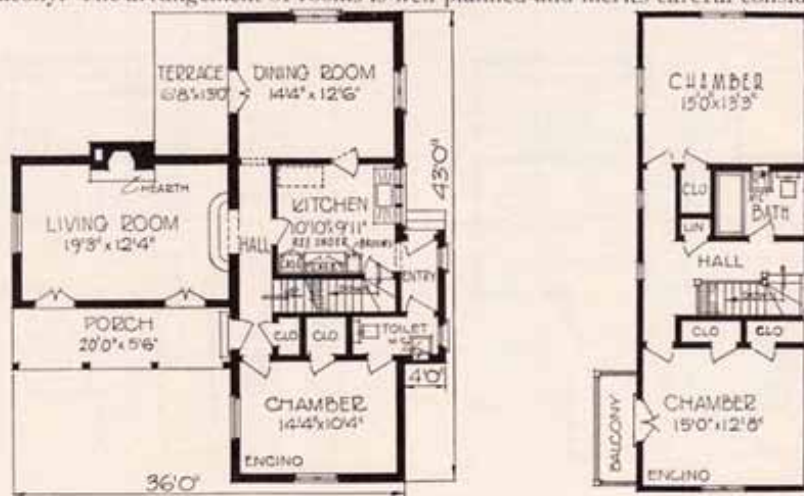
2461 Riverside Drive



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### The ENCINO

STUCCO on structural clay tile and a clay tile roof add much to the exterior appearance of this home with its inviting porch, its splendid arrangement of windows, and attractive balcony. The arrangement of rooms is well planned and merits careful consideration.



Floorplan for an Ecclectic Monterey Spanish Revival home featuring two stories and wood balconies.

wood paneled wall and railing.

The Larkin House marks a turning point in the development of California adobe buildings. The distinctive broad roof that overhangs the second-floor windows and the second-story balcony is stylish and practical and became the standard for adobe buildings of the period.

Monterey Revival style was rarely made of adobe and wood frames

as the Monterey Colonial style was. These were primitive materials quickly and affordably replaced by wood platform framing or sometimes brick construction. As a result, exterior walls exhibited more diverse finishes. Lap siding became prevalent in the Monterey Revival. The 1933 Long Beach earthquake prompted wood-framed houses instead of genuine adobe brick construction susceptible

to cracking and settling.

Another Monterey Revival distinction where the first and second stories would be differentiated from each other by different types of siding. Wood upper story over lower story brick or plaster was a popular combination. As in the Monterey Colonial style, paired windows and doors were standard. Shutters were also a typical decorative feature, though they were aesthetic rather than functional. The full-width, cantilevered, upper-story balcony (or two-story porch) is crucial to the style. Balconies are usually simple wood constructions. Double-hung or casement windows reach the ground on one or both stories. Windows have simple, colonial surrounds. If any Low pitched roofs in clay tile or wood shingle. The principle roof usually encompasses the second-story balcony. The style's simple forms and bare walls feature few elaborations.

Floral Park is a collection of diverse patchwork of architectural styles. The stitch that held together many unrelated vernaculars is the transitional style of the Monterey Revival. It drew lineage from the Spanish adobe and then cross-pollinated the East Coast Colonial. This "hybrid" the forefather of Floral Park recognized and strategically built between one side, enclaves of Spanish homes, and the other, Colonial houses. The result was a seamless transition of a fascinating and eclectic mix of architecture.