

Exert from "A book of house plans"

To design a small country house possessing artistic and economic features, the construction of which may be accomplished for a minimum amount, is not among the simplest problems of the architectural profession. The most satisfactory solutions are arrived at by a process of elimination, resulting in a compact plan possessing the essential requirements of the average home-builder, and arranged in such a manner that the total area is proportionately divided to best suit the uses for which each unit of the plan is intended.

The houses shown on the following pages have been carefully designed to meet the requirements of the average family desiring a house of moderate size and pleasing appearance. They are taken from the actual working drawings or from houses already erected. The aim of the authors has been to emphasize the really essential features and eliminate all that might be considered superfluous or not consistent in a house of moderate cost. Simplicity of plan and exterior treatment means economy but not necessarily ugliness. The success of an architectural design, in a building of any description depends principally upon its proportion, scale and fenestration, and no amount of elaboration can atone for a poorly proportioned building. Bearing all this in mind, we have planned our houses, knowing that the people who will live in them will prefer to have their rooms as large as possible for the price they pay and to have the construction and materials of the best throughout.

We know that buildings cost so much per cubic foot or square foot of ground area. When we attempt to build a small or medium-sized house with extra rooms, such as libraries, reception rooms, large halls or billiard-rooms, we must do one of two things: either reduce the size of all the rooms, or count on poor workmanship and cheap materials. As the ground area is limited, these additions must necessarily occupy part of the space that should be devoted to the more important rooms. The average person certainly cares more for a house of fewer well proportioned, livable rooms, of good materials and well built, than for a house cut up into small or irregular rooms and poorly constructed. Aside from the general proportion of the various rooms in relation to each other, another vital problem in house planning is proper circulation, which is the result of the correct position of the important rooms in relation to each other. The solution of this phase of small house planning is far more difficult than in the larger type, where passages may be introduced to bring about direct communication between various parts of the house without seeming inconsistent or extravagant.

It will be seen by examining the following plans that the problem of good circulation has been carefully considered. Aside from a few designs of an exceptional type (in every case the smaller and more compact examples), it is apparent that the living-rooms are well protected against intrusion from the service quarters, except as may be required in the performance of the usual domestic duties.

The living-room and dining-room are either intercommunicating or are connected by means of the main hall, an arrangement many people prefer, largely because it eliminates the noise and disturbance incidental to clearing the table and arranging the dining-room after meals, though with suitable doors, glazed or otherwise, and proper draperies between these rooms where they adjoin, this inconvenience is reduced to the minimum.

The economical arrangement of the second floor has been considered quite as carefully as the first, the corners of the house having been utilized as far as possible for sleeping-rooms, thus insuring crossventilation and the greatest degree of comfort in warm weather.

The closet space in connection with each room is ample. The baths and linen closets are conveniently located, and in every case the space occupied by halls is a very small percentage of the total area. Where it is desired that certain sleeping-rooms should be larger than shown, it will be found in a majority of these plans that by omitting a partition between two of the smaller rooms this result may easily be obtained.

STYLE

The accompanying illustrations clearly show that the collection of houses contained in this book embraces a great variety of styles; in fact there are no two designs that conflict in any way. In every case unlimited care has been devoted to accurately interpreting the style represented. All of the details have been well studied, much more time having been devoted to each house than would have been possible in the cases of individual clients. The requirements of home-builders are so diversified, and local conditions governing building sites so extreme, that a great range of style is necessary for the success of a book of this type. A Southern Colonial house, for example, would not appear to advantage on the shores of a lake, with a wild, rugged, natural setting; neither could a Swiss chalet be appropriately situated along the main street of a thriving town; but reverse this order and it will be seen that both of these houses will accept their environment in a most natural and graceful manner.

The English half-timber and plain stucco houses have probably a greater range of adaptability than most of the other examples. Not only are they suitable, because of their distinctive characteristics and pleasing composition, to occupy ordinary building lots in the residential sections of smaller cities, as well as in suburban communities, but they are also designed with the idea of filling the requirements of a prospective home-builder who seeks the seclusion of a

larger estate, where the possibilities of well-conceived landscape effects will prove a most appropriate and desirable setting as well as greatly emphasizing their attractive features.

The Colonial houses, as well as the American cottage type (or free translation of the Colonial) are always appropriate as country or village residences, and, when properly executed, possess a charm which appeals to every home-lover. A sufficient diversity of designs in this type have been included to enable the most fastidious to make a selection.

The Italian villa and the Spanish Mission house are worthy of special comment. The examples included accurately portray the spirit and architectural characteristics of their respective styles. It will be seen from the illustrations following that these houses possess decided individuality, and for one who wishes to depart from the rather hackneyed models, more attractive results than are afforded by these designs would be difficult to obtain.

The working drawings of each house may be obtained as shown, but the authors advise prospective builders that if the positions of the building sites necessitate a reversal of the plans, they should so instruct their contractors. In most localities, one side of the living-room should face south, as generally the prevailing winds in warm weather are from this quarter, and one side of the dining-room should face east so that in winter this room receives the morning sun. In summer the sun is so high by breakfast time that it does not shine directly into the room. A dining-room with west windows is not a pleasant room. In summer the hot afternoon sun streams through these windows and makes it very uncomfortable for those at the table. In winter the sun has long been down by dinner time.

The plans admit of many changes which in no way affect the final result. In one or two of the houses an extra bathroom could easily be obtained by partitioning off the rear hall, and in most of the houses additional rooms are possible in the attic.

The success of the average home depends not so much upon the attractiveness of the preliminary sketches as upon the amount of study devoted to the drawings from which the house is actually erected. The care with which materials are selected, the size, arrangement and treatment of windows, the overhang of eaves, the choice of hardware, the exterior and interior trim, the proportions of archways and door openings—in fact every detail necessary for the completion of the house, must be carefully considered to produce the best possible results. The authors of this work, realizing the importance of detail in the execution of these designs, have devoted much time and study to each house, and feel assured that in every case where the drawings are accurately followed the results will be eminently satisfactory.

A number of the designs included in this series have found favor with the home-builder even before the actual publication of this book, and such examples as are sufficiently far advanced at the time this volume goes to press will be illustrated by photographs, even though the planting, grading and other desirable settings, as well as the softening effect of occupancy, are missing.

There is probably no one feature of a house that bears so conspicuously important a relationship to both the exterior and interior as does the treatment of windows. The windows in a majority of the homes are shown divided into lights by sash-bars. This undoubtedly gives a richness, sparkle and scale obtainable in no other way. Many people, however, object to this treatment and the bars may be left out. This division into lights is absolutely necessary in the English half-timber and Colonial designs. It is so characteristic of these styles that if omitted the appearance of the houses would suffer greatly. A compromise is to divide only the upper half of double-hung windows and leave the lower half clear glass.

Where perspective drawings are shown, great care has been taken to make them accurate. They show exactly how the houses look from the points at which the perspectives are taken, and are absolutely reliable as to heights and sizes of windows, porches, doors, etc. In each case where casement windows are shown the double-hung type may be substituted, or vice versa. All changes should be settled upon with the builder before a contract is signed, and incorporated in the specifications, which are drawn with optional clauses, the clauses not required being crossed out.

The materials specified are first-class throughout, but here again an option is allowed the home-builder. The most desirable is specified first and optional clauses follow. Shingles may replace clapboards and siding, or the reverse. Foundation walls may be of stone, brick or concrete, depending upon which is the cheapest in the locality where the house is to be built. Stucco probably gives the best results on a masonry wall such as terra cotta blocks, brick or stone, but when so used great care must be taken to thoroughly wet down the walls before applying the stucco. If used on frame, satisfactory work will be obtained by following the specifications closely.

The fireplaces are designed to burn either wood or coal; if the latter, a coal-grate is placed in the opening and the ash-chutes to the cellar do away with carrying ashes through the house.

In the matter of stock hardware it is safe to say that a large percentage of this material on the market to-day is not entirely satisfactory in either design

or workmanship. At the same time there is enough that is good to fit the requirements of each house in this series, and the acquirement of appropriate material is simply a question of individual selection.

The subject of lighting fixtures is somewhat more difficult because of the greater range in price. An allowance may be made in the specification to cover this item, but it is advisable that each prospective builder should personally choose the fixtures that are to be used in his house, the variation in cost being a matter of adjustment between the owner and the contractor.

Plumbing fixtures form another item in which the range of selection is very great, and they surely merit the careful consideration of the owner.

The subject of interior finish and decoration is of such unlimited scope, especially when it embraces twenty-one distinctly different houses, that the authors would prefer to advise each prospective homebuilder as to the treatment of the house he may select to build, if such advice is desired.

About the Author

Learn to draw house plans and other types of drafting in a virtual classroom on the internet called 101 Info Dot Org at <http://101info.org>

Source: <http://draftingservice.us>