

the new american arc

turnstyle
architecture
brings a
historical flavor
to well-
designed
homes

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Figure 1

So much traditional architecture has pervaded our residential communities over the last century that often one house seems to blend into another, one neighborhood into the next. Yet, just when we think we've seen it all, a new spin on a

traditional theme comes along that captures the attention and engages the viewer with a fresh interpretation of historic style.

The emerging trend of using historic references in a contemporary way is creating a new American-style

architecture with its roots deeply embedded in history. I have discovered three homes that, by putting their own unique spin on a historic style, have taken traditional architecture to a new level, one in which historic themes are restyled and reinterpreted



Figure 3

HOUSTON HOUSE & HOME



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to become what is now popularly known as “turnstyle architecture.”

This fresh, bold interpretation derives its energy and excitement from old-world favorites like English Tudor and Elizabethan architecture, as well as popular medieval French styles such as French Normandy. By combining and contrasting 17th- and early 18th-century American architecture (which is derived from these English and French prototypes) with traditional residential styles of today, a distinctly new American architecture emerges.

A FRESH AMERICAN INTERPRETATION

One articulate house (figure 1) sets itself apart from the rest of the traditional homes in its Tanglewood neighborhood by its charming and candid interpretation of 17th-century American architecture modeled after an early English prototype. On this unusual and enchanting façade can be seen the

On this asymmetrical residence, however, its central placement anchors the first of two telescoping brick gables superimposed against the contrasting two-story horizontal façade. In 17th-century America, a typical two-story wood home would slope to one story in the back, creating a style known as “saltbox.” By creatively placing their classic Georgian front door surround within a simple, saltbox gable, Mansell Builders gave homeowners Susan and Lance Johnson a timeless turnstyle home that blends the best of two enduring American building traditions.

The Johnsons also wisely chose to accent the windows with 17th-century-style wood plank shutters and selected a brick and wood siding color combination that gives the house an aged appearance.

What is also important to note is that the sequence of three telescoping (receding) sections on the home’s façade not only add character and architectural interest, but also create interesting spatial relationships within the house. They greatly increase the character and visual interest in the interior of a home.

In 17th-century America, as a family grew and expanded, additional rooms often would be added to the house. Thus, typical 17th-century-style homes would often have differing design styles combined with two or three different building materials added to a home over a period of years. This unique mixture of design styles and building materials is what characterizes this house, making it so charming and timeless.

DECIDEDLY ENGLISH TUDOR

In the second turnstyle adaptation, (figure 3), we see another two-story gable of contrasting material sweeping down to one story and dramatically dominating the front façade. This rambling architectural style, punctuated by a steeply pitched front facing gable, is decidedly English Tudor. This style is accompanied by a characteristic chimney capped with the medieval Tudor motif of double-flue chimney pots (figure 4). The unusual architectural coloration is inspired from country French. Elegant in its simpli-city, this home is



Figure 2

vestiges of pre-colonial America, playfully mixed with dignified early Georgian-style elements. At the entrance, a classically inspired stone reveal surrounds a traditional six-panel beveled-glass door and transom (figure 2).

This signature Georgian element is typically positioned in the center of a traditional, symmetrical façade.





Figure 4

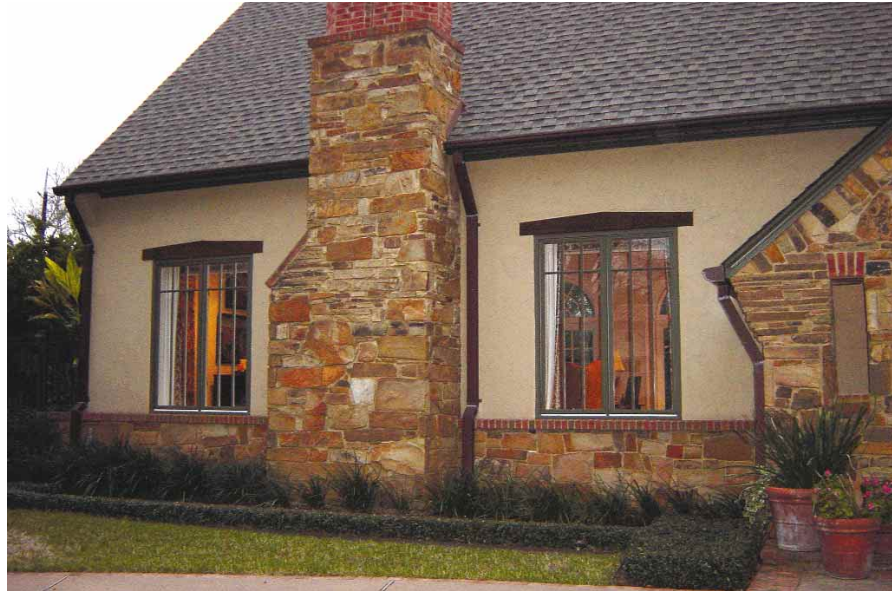


Figure 5



Figure 6



Figure 7

more contemporary in spirit than the previous example, yet retains strong historic elements that add charisma and mystique. It is an undeniable, dramatic presence in its Houston neighborhood.

The owners, Dick Martin and Mary Chavanne, along with their interior designer, Daily Howard, drove through well-established sections of town, carefully studying English and French country-style houses. They, along with their architect, Brent Nyquist of Atticas Architects, selected the best defining features of both historic styles. In addition to wanting their house to have a unique architectural style, the homeowners requested that the house be warm and inviting, be well-suited to the lot, and have the appearance of age.

To fulfill this requirement, Alabama Wister stone was selected to fill the two-story gable. Next, they selected the color of the brick for detailing on the chimney, around the windows, and for the archivolt (a series of receding brick arches) at the entrance surround. They next chose the stucco color and, finally, the paint color.

Other charming, historically inspired features that make this house so appealing are its understated yet distinctive windows. Flanking the sides of the chimney are two tall casement windows with slightly shaped, contrasting wood lintels that stand out against the stucco surface (figure 5). In the stone gable are three narrow, vertical windows reminiscent of the English medieval period, accompanied by a commanding bay window of the same heritage

(figure 6). A bit of the French influence can be seen by the singular window piercing the roofline over the porte-cochere (figure 7).

Stepping through the archivolt and into the cozy entrance vestibule, one is met by another brick arch surrounding the heavily paneled, custom front door. An arched transom brings light into the foyer.

Once again, the juxtaposition of contrasting materials creates a masterful architectural showcase and serves to define and refine this stunning turnstyle residence. It is truly a mark of successful design when a house only five years old exudes the enviable qualities of age and timelessness which its owners so desired.

FRENCH MEDIEVAL INSPIRATION
The last example of an unusual turnstyle residence can be seen in

figure 8. This home has several stylized French medieval elements, most noticeably the dominating corner turret, with its three narrow, vertically ascending windows. The interplay of contrasting rusticated stone, smooth stucco and weathered wood combined with a rambling, undulating façade make this home quaint and charming. Upon approaching the house, this design detective was taken by a feeling of going back in time to a small European village.

Another unusual, stylized feature on this home is the diagonally placed square tower entrance (figure 9). The two-story tower combines the look of 17th-century American architecture with the feel of a European castle. The rustic arched front door and well-scaled coach lanterns welcome you to the tower. A wooden bench





Figure 8, above. Figure 9, left.

changing, ever-fluctuating marketplace, and gives its owners comfort, livability and style for years to come. These beautifully fulfill those requirements, and will enjoy a long-lasting heritage with their current owners. These homes evoke a sense of history, proving the timelessness of a design that is rare and worthy of distinction. ■

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to the left of the door invites you to sit and stay a while (figure 10).

To the right of the entrance tower is a second-story fixed French door with an arched transom above. This design feature creates a playful eyebrow arch in the roofline, while the iron railing in front of the window suggests a second-story balcony (figure 11).

Other charming, European-stylized features are the wood shutters, which are secured to the house by curved iron anchors, contrasting brick lintels above the windows, and delightful window boxes overflowing with greenery on the first-floor windows. Once again, the choice of rustic stone combined with a weathered wood and stucco paint color creates an aged and timeless appearance for a house not yet a year old.

Building historically inspired turnstyle residences creates architecture with a timeless look, architecture that will site well with the landscape, that retains its value in an ever-



Figure 10, below. Figure 11, right

