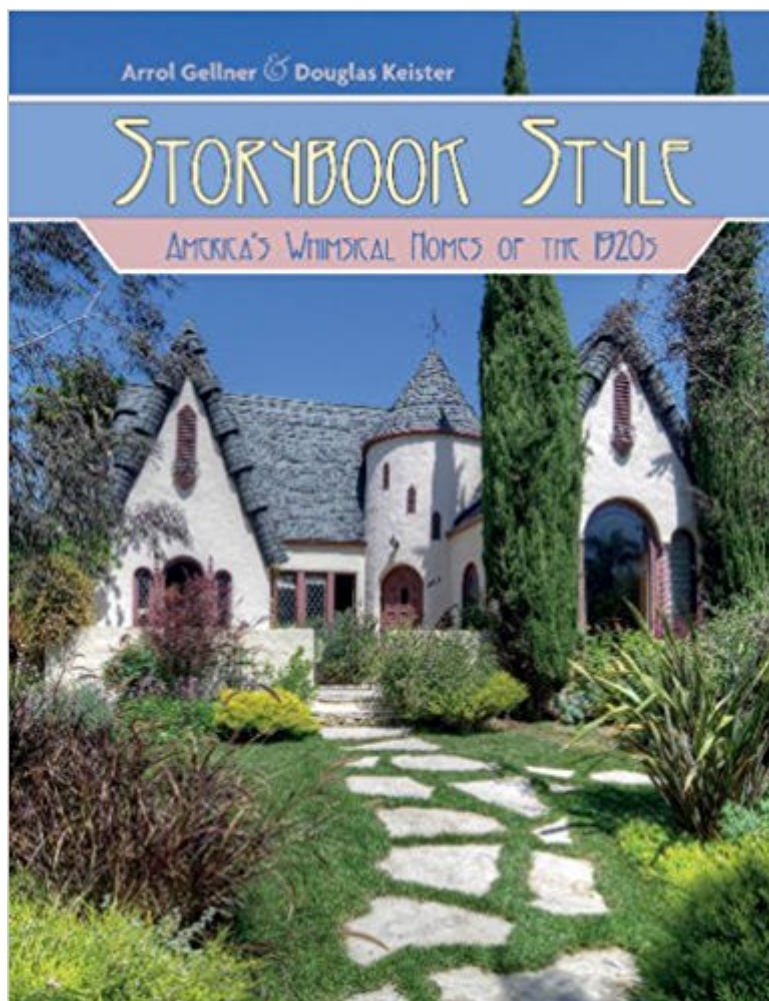


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Storybook Style: America's Whimsical Homes Of The 1920s



Synopsis

Storybook style, fairy tale, Disneyesque, Hansel and Gretel—these are all synonyms for what is surely the most delightful residential style of the twentieth century. With their romantic evocation of faraway lands and eras, storybook homes were created by architects and builders with a flair for theater, a love of fine craftsmanship, and above all a sense of humor—attributes that make them especially endearing to the jaded modern eye. The storybook style was born on the backlots of Hollywood in the 1920s, where brilliant set designers first learned to evoke the exotic architecture of medieval Europe and the Middle East. Movie-going Americans became fascinated with these settings, and architects and builders were quick to capitalize on this enthusiasm. The whimsical style soon spread from coast to coast, and the unforgettable results are portrayed here.

Book Information

Hardcover: 176 pages

Publisher: Schiffer; 2 edition (July 28, 2017)

Language: English

ISBN-10: 076435308X

ISBN-13: 978-0764353086

Product Dimensions: 8.7 x 0.8 x 11.1 inches

Shipping Weight: 2.5 pounds (View shipping rates and policies)

Average Customer Review: 5.0 out of 5 stars 1 customer review

Best Sellers Rank: #165,119 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #140 in [Books > Arts &](#)

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Customer Reviews

Arrol Gellner is a practicing architect, long-time syndicated columnist, and author of three books on architecture. He writes the popular blog Architext. Douglas Keister has authored or co-authored over three dozen books on historic architecture, including a landmark series on bungalows.

Storybook Style is an alternate history of California. It uses architecture to evidence the influences both internal (the Spanish) and external (Medieval) and of course Hollywood that together to make southern half of the state the hodgepodge of styles, attention seeking devices and creativity that can still be seen today. The authors trace the evolution of style from the Spanish through the big

developers, notably Hollywoodland, and the near impossibility of storybook style today, with all the codes and regulations that stifle such offbeat construction. Since the region was chock full of highly skilled carpenters, employed by the film studios to create phony architecture from all over the world and ages, the storybook style used them to jumble false elements of French, Italian and English architecture from the Norman through the Tudor and into the Renaissance. This is a complex matrix that can really confuse a viewer, and was used to that effect. Turrets with escalating windows did not contain expected stairways, but turned out to be simple closets. Receding stucco that exposed stone underneath was applied that way for effect. Stone steps that are actually solid concrete, but scored, stamped and textured. And roofs. It seems to be mostly about roofs, with built-in sags, undulating waves, catslide steep descents, and thatch. The other signature elements are phony half timbers, rounded front doors, and turrets. The effect is eye-catching in a sea of conformity. Interestingly, the homes are not 8000 sq ft Hollywood McMansions, but 1800 sq ft bungalows with small rooms and low ceilings. The biggest and most common trompe-l'œil is to make the building seem larger than it really is. The style spread via some individuals to farther reaches, notably Hawaii, British Columbia and Kentucky, where the examples are exceptional if not unique. The bulk of them are in California. This is a great, fun book, with a lot of character itself. There are fairytale drop caps, different color texts for different purposes, and of course gorgeous images of outrageous homes. David Wineberg

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