

## Luther Briggs and The Picturesque Pattern Books

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A new generation of American architectural pattern books began to appear in the 1840's, epitomized by A. J. Downing's *Cottage Residences* of 1842 and *Architecture of Country Houses* of 1850. The preceding type of books, by such authors as Asher Benjamin and Minard Lafever, was addressed to an audience of builders and architects. Those books placed considerable emphasis on technical problems of construction and on instruction in the "correct" use of Federal, and later Greek Revival decoration. Downing's books, and many others like them, supplanted the Greek Revival with a myriad of picturesque styles — "Rural Gothic," "Pointed," "Bracketed," "Italian," "Swiss," "Tudor," "Rhenish," and others — which generally employed irregular massing and decorative elements drawn from historic European styles. Consisting largely of attractive perspective views of houses in suburban and rural settings, with descriptions of their architectural and domestic virtues, the new pattern books were addressed directly to the residential client.

For architects trained in the Greek Revival style, the popularity of these books and the ideas they propounded must have initially posed a problem, but the books also offered them a source for learning the new styles. An examination of the work of a young Boston architect, Luther Briggs, in the 1840's and 1850's demonstrates the method by which at least one trained architect used the picturesque pattern books to master the new

styles for the growing residential architecture clientele. A comparison of Briggs's drawings and buildings to several pattern book designs shows how he progressed from close copying, to combining and adapting, to producing his own picturesque designs.

Luther Briggs, Jr. was born in Pembroke, Massachusetts in 1822, son of a shipbuilder and descendent of generations of shipwrights.<sup>1</sup> That family tradition ended with young Luther, who was sent to private school in Pembroke and then to Hanover Academy. He taught school for a time before 1839, when he went to work in the office of one of the leading architects and engineers in Boston, Captain Alexander Parris,<sup>2</sup> whose wife was Luther's aunt.<sup>3</sup>

Parris (1780-1852) had also taught school in Pembroke as a young man.<sup>4</sup> He had started his architectural career in Maine, designing several buildings in the Federal style, before serving as an engineer in the War of 1812. He settled in Boston after the war, and helped introduce there the forms and motifs of the Greek Revival style, with such buildings as St. Paul's Church of 1819, which still stands on Tremont Street.<sup>5</sup> Parris continued to work as an engineer as well, providing combined architectural and engineering services to such clients as the federal government at the Navy Shipyard in Charlestown.

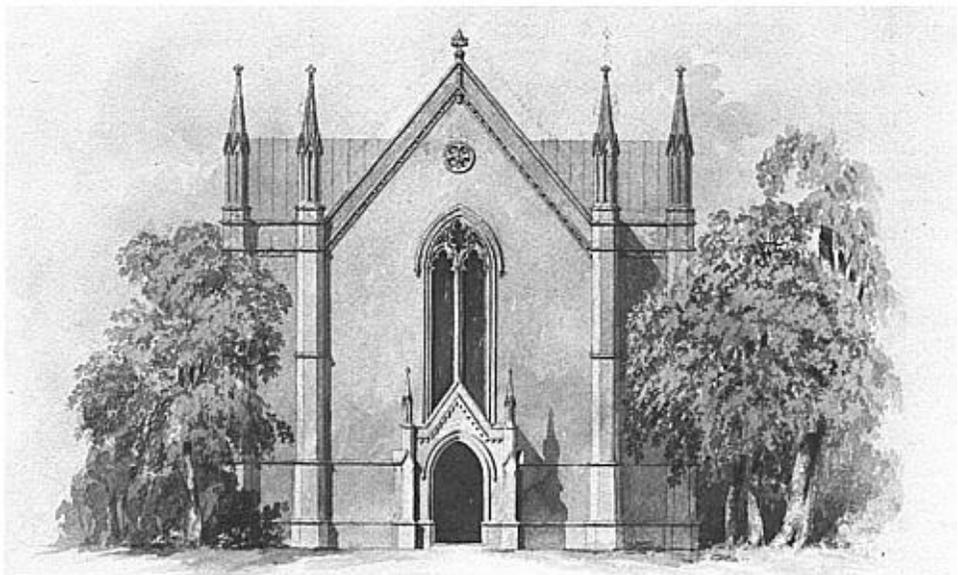
When Briggs later cited Parris as the instructor for his "technological education,"<sup>6</sup> he may have been implying that

whatever stylistic lessons he had learned in that office were soon outmoded. In the late 1830's and early 1840's when Briggs was serving as a draftsman in his uncle's office, and in fact to the end of Parris' career, the older architect's designs remained essentially Greek Revival. Parris' designs for residences and for public buildings, such as Quincy Market, were well proportioned and restrained, while his commercial buildings, such as the Faneuil Hall Markets and Commercial Wharf, and military/industrial buildings such as those at the Charlestown Navy Shipyard were even more severe.

About 1842, Briggs left Parris' office and went to work for Boston architect Gridley J. F. Bryant as a draftsman.<sup>7</sup> Bryant was only twenty four at the time, and had not yet established his later position of preeminence among Boston commercial architects. Bryant's early ca-

reer needs additional study, but presumably Briggs worked largely on civic and commercial projects while in Bryant's office, probably similar in style to the granite structures Bryant designed a few years later such as the Boston City Jail (Charles Street Jail) of 1848, the Deer Island Almshouse of 1849, and the State Street Block of 1858.

One project that came out of Bryant's office during Briggs's term there that was closer stylistically to what the young draftsman would later explore in his own practice was a design for a small, Gothic chapel, dated November 1, 1843 (Figure 1). The drawing was submitted to a design competition for a chapel for Mount Auburn Cemetery in Watertown, Mass.<sup>8</sup> While Gothic churches had been rather common in Boston for some time before 1843, Bryant's competition drawings would have brought Briggs directly into



**FIG. 1. FRONT ELEVATION OF A CHAPEL FOR MOUNT AUBURN CEMETERY, Watertown, Massachusetts. Detail of a drawing submitted by G. J. F. Bryant to a design competition in 1843. (Photo SPNEA.)**

contact with an architectural style that was gaining in popularity for domestic, as well as ecclesiastic architecture, and was quite different from most of what he had seen in Parris' and Bryant's offices.

In the spring of 1844 Briggs consulted with his father and his uncle Parris about leaving Bryant's office and establishing his own architectural practice. Both evidently approved, though the elder Briggs offered this fatherly advice in a letter to Luther:

If you leave Mr. Bryant do every thing [in] your power to part on friendly terms till [sic] him that nothing but a hope of bettering your situation induces you to leave him for I think you cannot be but sensible that he has been of advantage to you. And he may be in future.<sup>9</sup>

"Luther Briggs, Jr., architect" first appears in the *Boston Directory* in 1844, in partnership with Joseph Howard. Their partnership was brief, as Howard appears in the directories only in 1844 and 1845, and little is known about him. A high spirited, sophomoric letter he sent to Briggs from Nashua, New Hampshire in April of 1843, while Luther was working for Bryant, indicates that Howard was familiar with Bryant and his office, suggesting that perhaps Howard had been another of Bryant's draftsmen.<sup>10</sup>

Several drawings survive that are attributed to the brief period of Briggs's and Howard's partnership. All are competently drawn and nicely colored with washes, and all represent buildings of the Greek Revival style (Figure 2). Although these drawings are usually associated with Howard, it seems likely that Briggs, based on his training and experience with Parris and Bryant, would have begun his practice employing the same established Greek Revival motifs and forms as his early partner.

Although it is known that Briggs gained some commissions for commercial buildings in downtown Boston, and applied his

engineering skills to such projects as a beacon on Cape Ann<sup>11</sup> and factories at Salem, Rockport, and elsewhere,<sup>12</sup> another architectural market was blossoming just at the time Briggs opened his practice for which he was less well prepared. Commuter rail lines were being built outward from Boston, and around their stations suburban residential developments were burgeoning. One such line, the Old Colony Railroad, began carrying passengers between Boston and Plymouth in November, 1845,<sup>13</sup> connecting the area where Briggs grew up, and where his family ties remained, to the location of his new office and practice. A vast new market for domestic architectural services was opening, but Briggs would attract few suburban readers of *Downing* with the style he had learned from Parris. For the new market and its new taste, Briggs followed the clients and turned to the pattern books.

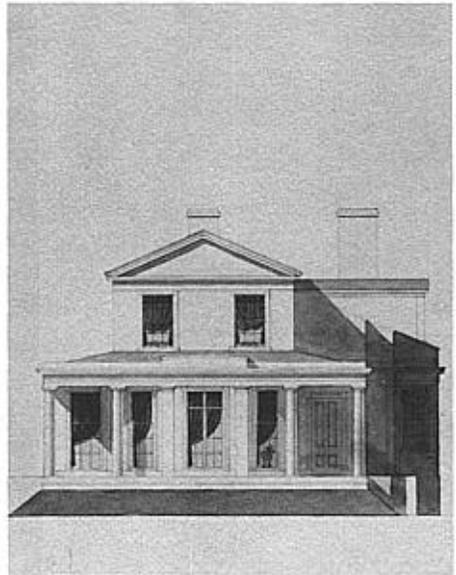


FIG. 2. ELEVATION FOR A COTTAGE IN THE GREEK REVIVAL STYLE, attributed to the firm of Luther Briggs and Joseph Howard, c. 1844-1846. (Photo SPNEA.)

The first known contact between Luther Briggs and the new picturesque architectural pattern books involves a pair of drawings depicting elevations (Figure 3) and plans for a modest house. Both are inscribed "L. Briggs Jr. Architect, No. 4 Court Street, Boston." Although the drawings are undated, it is known that Briggs occupied an office at that address for a relatively brief period, from 1846 to 1852.<sup>14</sup>

Briggs's cottage is clearly related to a pair of designs in A. J. Downing's *Cottage Residences* of 1842. The drawings are most directly based on Downing's Design #4,\* "An Ornamental Farm House" (Figure 4), but draw certain elements from Design #2, "A Cottage in the English or Rural Gothic Style" (Figure 5). The two Downing designs are essentially variations on a single theme, with #2 representing the more elaborate version, both in structure, with the hip roof, balcony, and bay window, and in decoration. Design #4 would be less expensive to build, employing simpler decoration on a simpler structure. Downing preferred this consistency of structure and ornament, but Briggs chose to combine the simpler structural features of Design #4 with some of the more elaborate decorative details of #2.

The Briggs cottage derives the major components of its exterior composition — the main block of the house with a gable roof parallel to the front plane, the rear ell, the simple, single-story front piazza — quite directly from Design #4. Both #2 and #4 display a prominent facade gable

with a decorated verge board, a three part vertical division of the facade, and the suggestion of masonry construction, all of which Briggs adopts. Although he follows Design #4 in some smaller details, such as the use of rectangular, rather than diamond window panes, Briggs draws upon Design #2 for several decorative elements. His cottage displays labels or drip moldings over the doors and windows, twisted chimney pots, and tracery arches in the main facade gable window, all details used in Design #2 but not in #4.

Several areas of Briggs's design that depart from both models further illustrate the architect's wedding of a simple structure with elaborate ornament. Briggs eliminates the two second-story windows from the front of the house, but extends the verge board decoration of the facade gable over all the eaves of the house, adds small decorative windows to the peaks of each gable, and replaces the front door and first-story windows with French doors.<sup>15</sup>

It is not clear whether Briggs designed the cottage to meet the specific needs of an actual client, but it is apparent that his reliance on the Downing plans stopped with the exterior. Briggs's plan divides the first floor of the front of the house into only two rooms, with no hall or vestibule, stairs, or bedrooms in that part of the house (Figure 6). As in the Downing plans, the Briggs kitchen is in the ell, but his plan shows none of the small service rooms which Downing strongly favored.

In the "Rural Gothic" cottage example, Briggs adapted two pattern book designs to achieve a structurally simple, decoratively ornate house. This combination of sources into a single design, along with his divergence from the pattern book plans for the interior arrangement, established Briggs's basic method of using the books. In this first case, it seems likely that the architect was practicing the adaptation of pattern book models to his

\*As design numbers vary among the different editions of Downing's and Calvert Vaux's pattern books, all the design numbers referred to in this article correspond to those in the most readily available modern reprint editions—Dover Publications' *Architecture of Country Houses* (1969) and *Villas and Cottages* (1970) and Library of Victorian Culture's *Cottage Residences* (1967).

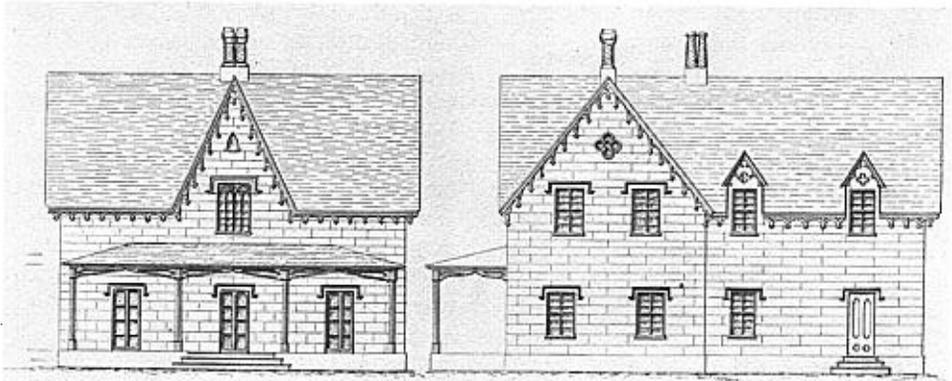


FIG. 3. ELEVATIONS FOR A GOTHIC COTTAGE, by Luther Briggs, c. 1846-1852. (Photo SPNEA.)

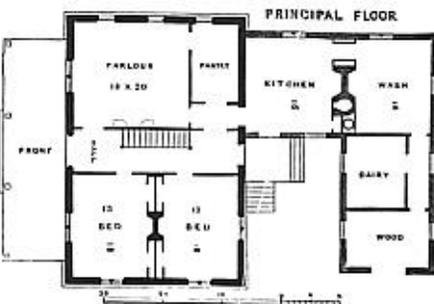


FIG. 4. DESIGN IV, "AN ORNAMENTAL FARM HOUSE," from A. J. Downing's *Cottage Residences*, 1842. (Photo SPNEA.)

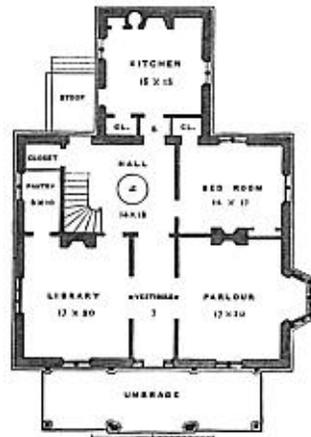


FIG. 5. DESIGN II, "A COTTAGE IN THE ENGLISH OR RURAL GOTHIC STYLE," from A. J. Downing's *Cottage Residences*, 1842. (Photo SPNEA.)

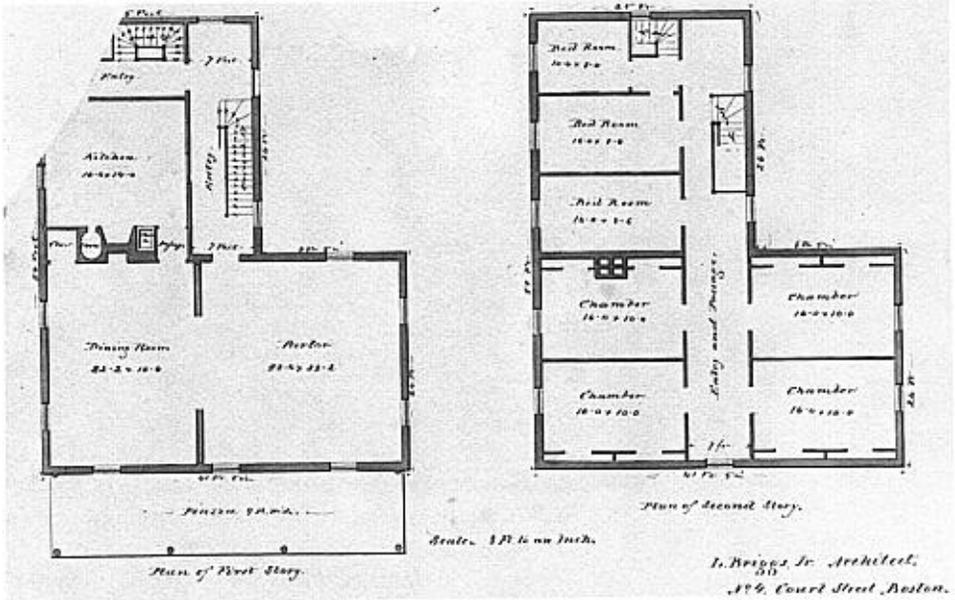


FIG. 6. FLOOR PLANS FOR BRIGGS'S GOTHIC COTTAGE, c. 1846-1852. (Photo SPNEA.)

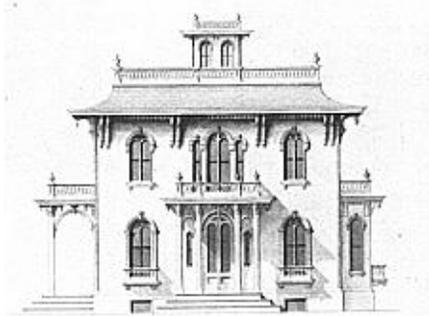


FIG. 7. FRONT ELEVATION OF A HOUSE FOR CHARLES JENKINS, by Luther Briggs, 1855. The house still stands at 23 Park Street in Dorchester, Mass. (Photo SPNEA.)

own ideas. In the next episode an actual building was involved.

Briggs spent the years between 1852 and 1855 working on government contracts. During that period he also moved to Dorchester, into a neighborhood on the Old Colony Railroad (O.C.R.R.).<sup>16</sup> Around 1855 he began to gain residential commissions, and in the next few years his most intensive use of the pattern books seems to have occurred.

In his first few designs from that period — a house (Figure 7) for Charles Jenkins

at Harrison Square, Dorchester (another neighborhood around an O.C.R.R. station); a Baptist church in Abington, Massachusetts (again on the O.C.R.R. line); a house for Thomas Dwight on Nahant, Massachusetts; and a design for Liberia College in Africa — Briggs employed a symmetrical facade and nearly cubic massing, decorated with more up-to-date details, generally of an Italianate type. In late 1856 and early 1857, however, he designed a much more irregular, picturesque house that was built

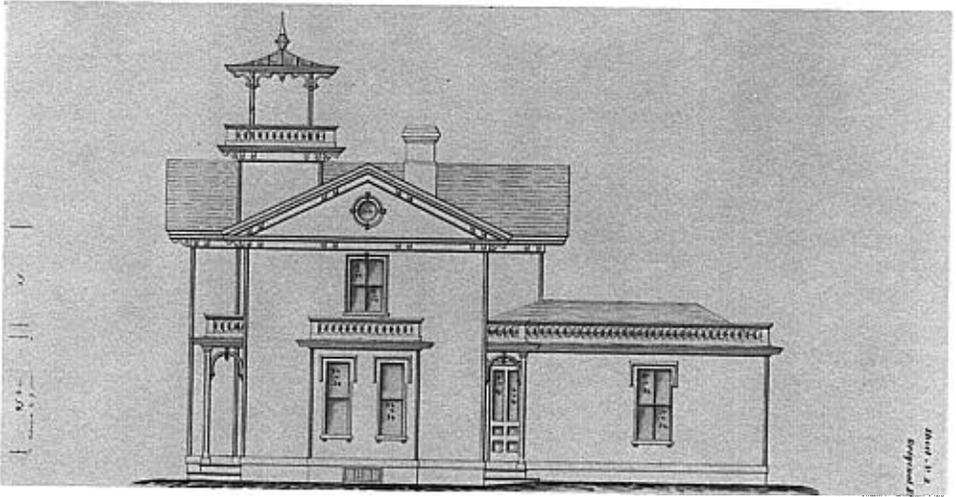


FIG. 8. SIDE ELEVATION OF A HOUSE FOR EPHRAIM MERRIAM, by Luther Briggs, 1856. (Photo SPNEA.)

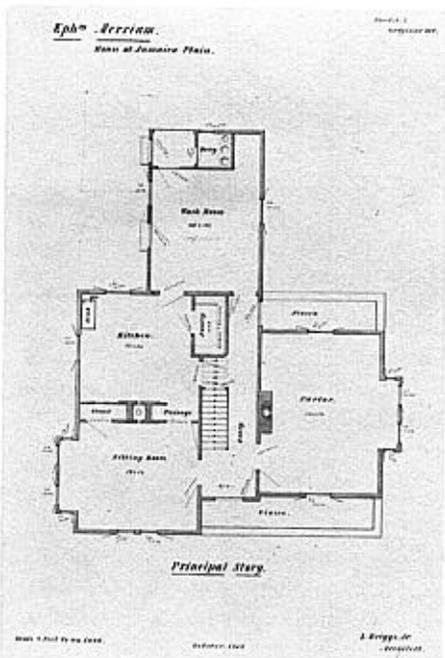


FIG. 9. PLAN OF THE PRINCIPAL FLOOR OF THE MERRIAM HOUSE, by Luther Briggs, 1856. (Photo SPNEA.)

in Jamaica Plain for a grocer, Ephraim Merriam.

The house no longer stands, and only one elevation drawing, a side view, still survives (Figure 8). Combined with a first-floor plan (Figure 9), however, the front facade of the house can be envisioned, with a central tower positioned in the corner formed by two gable roofed sections set perpendicular to one another. The gable of the left section faces forward, while on the right the roof ridge is parallel to the front plane of the house. The tower appears to consist of four stories, open at the top level, sheltered by a low pitched, concave curved roof.

Briggs could have adapted the Italianate form and decoration of this design, with its low pitched gables, balustrades, en-framed windows and horizontally banded chimney caps from any of several designs in Downing's *Cottage Residences* or his *Architecture of Country Houses* of 1850. Both Design #6 in *Cottage Residences* and #22 in *Country Houses* [See Figure 24.] show the same basic massing as the Merriam house, with a central tower between perpendicular sections of the

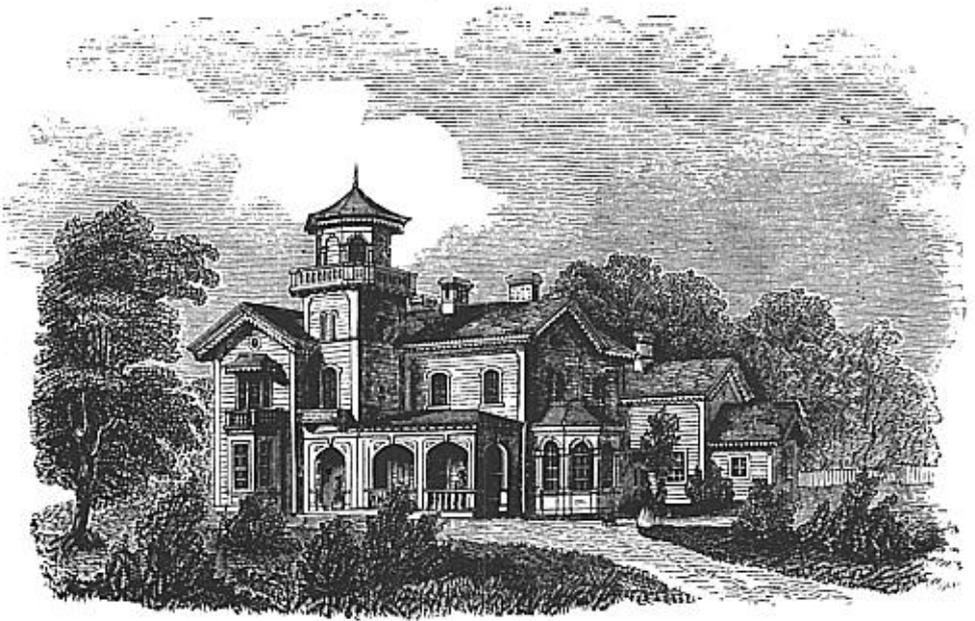


FIG. 10. DESIGN 13, from Calvert Vaux's *Villas and Cottages*, 1857. Vaux states the house was built for a Mr. Rogers of Ravenswood, Long Island. (Photo SPNEA.)

house, but otherwise are only generally similar to the Merriam design. A design in Calvert Vaux's *Villas and Cottages* (Figure 10), another popular pattern book, more closely resembles the Merriam design, particularly in the form of the tower. However, the Vaux book was not published until 1857, after Briggs had begun the Merriam design. What is striking about this project is how much more closely the Briggs design resembles this whole group of pattern book designs than it does his own immediately preceding work.

Whatever relationship there might have been between Briggs's Merriam house and Vaux's Design #13 (perhaps through some other common source), Briggs's attention was focused on the pattern books, for later in 1857 he was involved in

his most ambitious use of the books. Between October 1857 and January 1858, Briggs designed a residence for James F. Bigelow, a wealthy shoe manufacturer, to be built in East Abington (now Rockland), Massachusetts. Included in the drawings for the project are five alternate facade designs, several of which relate closely to pattern books sources. As only two of the front elevation drawings are dated, the five cannot be set in chronological order with certainty, but perhaps the first facade proposal was the one inscribed "Cottage Villa in the 'Rhenish Picturesque' Style" (Figure 11).

Similar designs appear in the pattern books already discussed. Design #14 in *Cottage Residences* (which did not appear in the 1842 edition but was published in subsequent editions before 1857) is de-

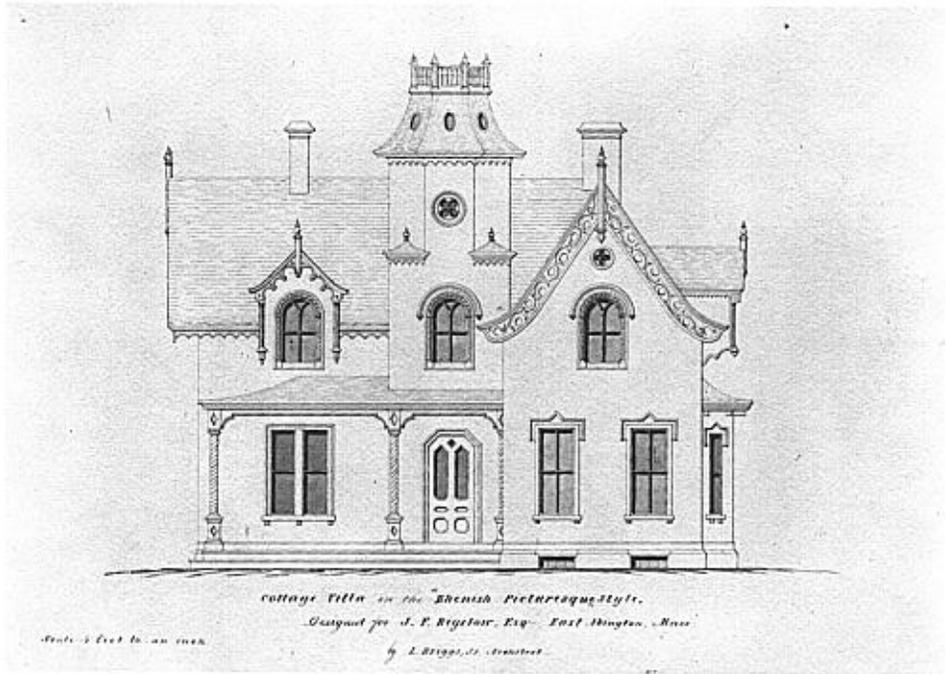


FIG. 11. "RHENISH" VERSION OF THE FRONT ELEVATION OF A HOUSE FOR JAMES F. BIGELOW, by Luther Briggs, 1857-1858. (Photo SPNEA.)



FIG. 12. DESIGN XIV, from A. J. Downing's *Cottage Residences*. (Photo SPNEA.)

scribed by Downing as an example of the "Rhine Style" (Figure 12). The building consists of two gabled sections arranged in an L-shaped plan, with a central tower at the front of the house, at the junction of the two main sections. The roofs of the house display a slight concave curve at the eaves, and the forward facing gable, on the left side of the facade, has a highly ornamented verge board. The central tower, containing the entrance, is flanked on the right by a one story porch, and capped above the third story by a tall, steeply pitched concave roof.

Design #26 in Vaux's *Villas and Cot-*

tages of 1857 shows a very similar house, described as built near Worcester, Massachusetts. A service wing has been incorporated into the plan, on the left side of the house, and the detail of the decoration altered, largely in keeping with the use of wood, rather than stone construction as in the Downing example. In general, however, the two designs are quite similar, perhaps indicating that the Worcester house was based on the Downing illustration.

Briggs's Rhenish facade might have been based on either of these designs, with a shifting of the front-facing gable from the left to the right, and alterations in the roof of the tower. However, Downing's *Architecture of Country Houses* includes a design (perhaps derived from *Cottage Residences* #14) that is closer in several details to the Briggs design. (See cover.)

The relationship of the components of the facade in the *Country Houses* design is quite different from the earlier Downing and later Vaux designs, and from Briggs's Rhenish design. The front-facing gable is placed near the center of the composition, and contains the front entrance, while the tower is placed off-center, near the left side of the front. Briggs did not adopt this massing, retaining instead the format he had used in the Merriam House and had seen reenforced in the other two pattern book Rhenish designs, but he borrowed several details quite directly from the *Country Houses* version. Most prominent among them is the decorative verge board with pendant and finial of the front gable, which Briggs copied closely. He also followed the placement and much of the decoration of the two small dormers that straddle the eaves, one above the porch and one on the side of the house opposite the porch. The enframements of the three right hand windows of the first floor of the Briggs design appear to be adaptations for

wooden construction of the form of the stone lintel over the first floor window in the tower of the Downing design.

The Downing villa employs twisted columns on the porch and flanking the entrance and the balcony above it, and the text describing the design illustrates twisted column forms and praises their beauty and domestic appropriateness. The Briggs drawing incorporates this element, as freestanding columns to support the porch roof, and as engaged columns at the second story windows and dormers. The form of the chimney caps in the Briggs design also follows Downing's example.

Even Briggs's inscription on the drawing, "Cottage Villa in the 'Rhenish Picturesque' Style," seems to reflect his use of the *Country Houses* book, and specifically Design #32. While Downing differentiates between the cottage and the villa according to the number of servants required for their operation,<sup>17</sup> he labels a few of the designs in the 1850 book as "Cottage-Villas," such as #24 and #25. Downing's description of Design #32 refers several times to the design's style being that of the Rhine region, and his title for the design is "A Lake or River Villa for a Picturesque Site." As Briggs had adopted Downing's composite title "Cottage-Villa" to describe the Bigelow design, he combined the author's style designation and design title to label the Bigelow facade "Rhenish Picturesque."

One element of Briggs's Rhenish facade appears to have been drawn from another design in *Country Houses*, "A Villa in the Norman Style." A view of the front elevation of the house (Figure 13) shows an arched door flanked by twisted columns, with the arch itself decorated by a zig-zag pattern, topped with a drip molding. The three second-floor windows of Briggs's Rhenish facade are very similar in outline and decoration to the Downing doorway.

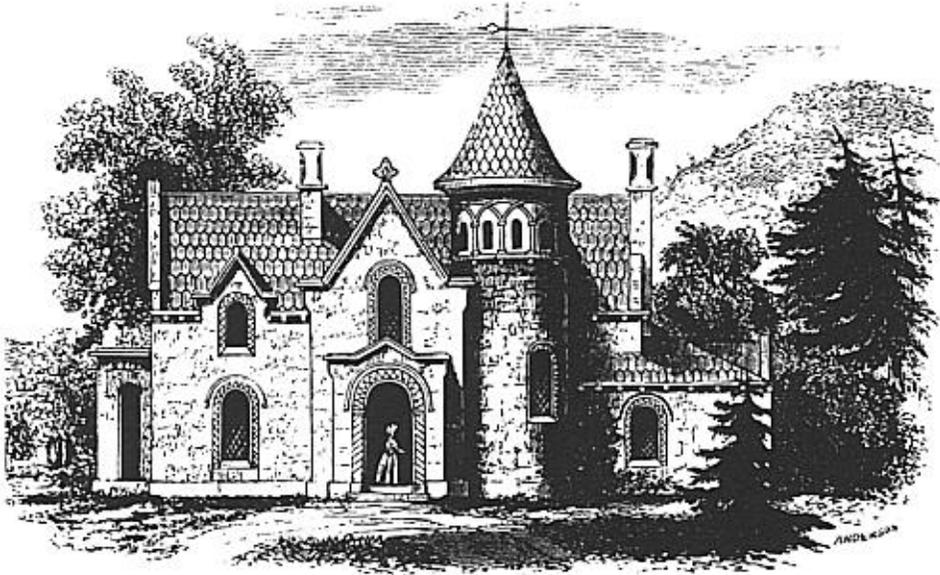


FIG. 13. "VILLA IN THE NORMAN STYLE," DESIGN XXI from A. J. Downing's *Architecture of Country Houses*, 1850. (Photo SPNEA.)

James Bigelow may have been a difficult client to please, or perhaps he shared Briggs's interest in the client-oriented pattern books and suggested various designs and details for the architect to incorporate into his plans. In any case, Briggs prepared four more drawings for the Bigelow facade. The earlier of the two dated front elevation drawings, the one of November 1857, shows a proposed facade for the Bigelow House in what Downing would have called the "Rural Gothic Style," as displayed in *Cottage Residences* #2 or *Country Houses* #29. The chimney tops in the Briggs drawing (Figure 14) are a familiar Downing form, and the decoration of the veranda, especially in the elements that form the pointed arches, is similar to that of the porch in *Cottage Residences* #2. (See Figure 5.)

However, a comparison of Briggs's Gothic facade with the 1846-1852 elevations for the cottage (Figure 3) demonstrates how much Briggs's confidence and competence, both as a draftsman and as a designer, had increased. By 1857, the elements of this kind of Gothic design were presumably fully incorporated into Briggs's decorative vocabulary, eliminating his need for direct reference to specific pattern book sources.

A third drawing of a front elevation for the Bigelow House appears to be an exploration of a less expensive expression of the Gothic style. The elevation is essentially a simpler version of the towered Gothic proposal, with the tower reduced, virtually to the point of being a large dormer (Figure 15).

A fourth design for the Bigelow facade

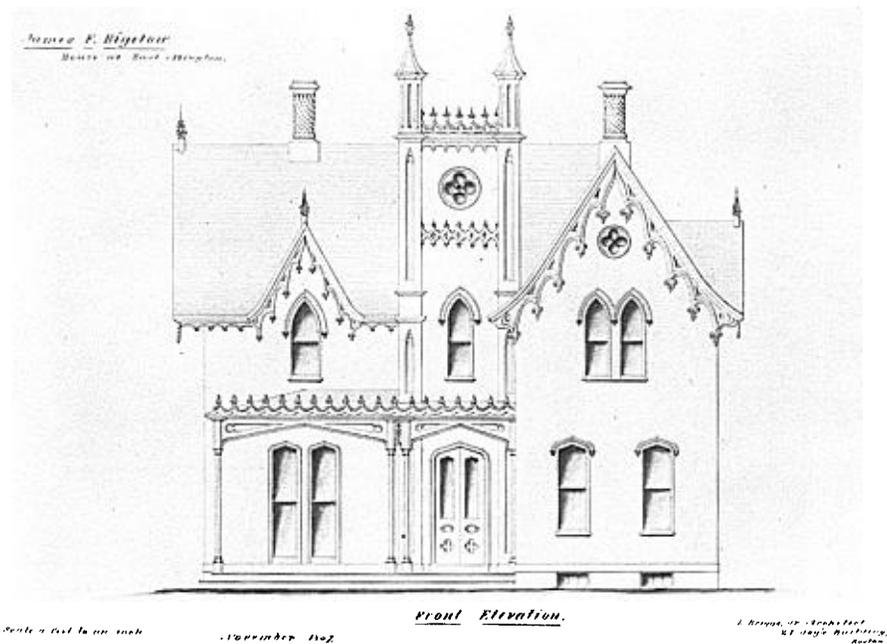


FIG. 14. "TOWERED GOTHIC" VERSION OF THE FRONT ELEVATION FOR BIGELOW'S HOUSE, by Luther Briggs, November, 1857. (Photo SPNEA.)

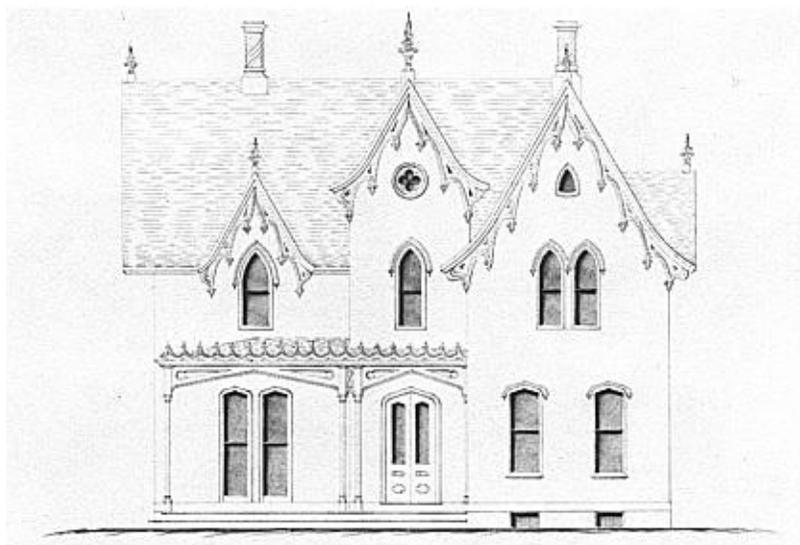


FIG. 15. "GOTHIC" VERSION OF THE FRONT ELEVATION FOR BIGELOW'S HOUSE, by Luther Briggs, 1857-1858. (Photo SPNEA.)

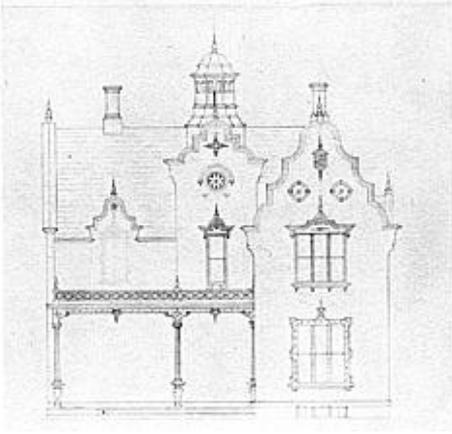


FIG. 16. "FLEMISH" VERSION OF THE FRONT ELEVATION FOR BIGELOW'S HOUSE, by Luther Briggs, 1857-1858. (Photo SPNEA.)

is drawn in pencil, and was never completed. It has no inscription, but by size and massing of the facade can be identified as a Bigelow study (Figure 16). None of the Downing designs in *Cottage Residences* or *Country Houses* employ this kind of Flemish-type gable, but two designs in Vaux's *Villas and Cottages*, #30 and #37, do display it. Design #37 (Figure 17) shows several sizes and forms of these gables which Briggs could have adapted to his Flemish facade.

Design #37 also includes a tower with a recessed, octagonal top story and an ogee curved roof. A comparison of this tower with the tower of the "Rhenish Picturesque" facade suggests a possible source for that element. The Rhenish tower, a consistent element of the two Downing and one Vaux Rhenish designs, is altered by Briggs. Like the tower of Vaux's Design #37, Briggs's Rhenish tower rises to an octagonal top floor, capped with an eight sided roof pierced with small windows. The tower might have first attracted Briggs to Design #37, later leading him to attempt the Flemish facade, or the Flemish design may represent an early, unsuccessful attempt to solve the problem of the Bigelow facade, that was rejected except for the form of the tower.

The final Bigelow facade drawing is dated January, 1858, as late a date as any of the eighteen Bigelow project drawings (Figure 18). The Tudor style of the facade is reminiscent of several designs in Downing's books. Among them is Design #21 in *Country Houses* (Figure 13), which is mentioned above in reference to the second-story windows of the Rhenish facade, and the chimneys shown in #21 do resemble the form of those in Briggs's Tudor design. However, Design #31 of the same book seems a more likely source of several details of the Briggs Tudor facade (Figure 19). The second-story window on the right side of the facade in

FIG. 17. DESIGN 37, from Calvert Vaux's *Villas and Cottages*, 1857. (Photo SPNEA.)



James F. Bigelow  
Dweller of New Brighton.

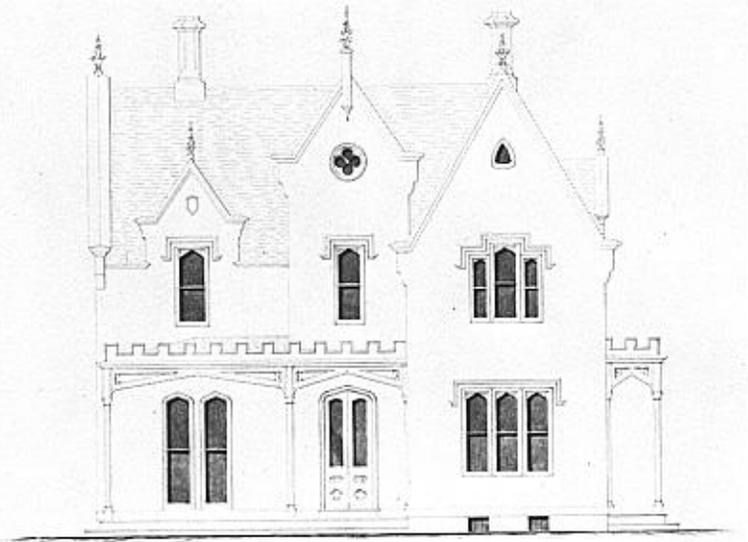


FIG. 18. "TUDOR" VERSION OF THE FRONT ELEVATION FOR BIGELOW'S HOUSE, by Luther Briggs, January, 1858. (Photo SPNEA.)

the Briggs design closely resembles the second-story side windows of the Downing house, and most of the rest of the Briggs windows are derived from this form. The shield decoration of the small dormer, the forms of the finials, the small decorative window in the central gable, the shape of the entrance, and the posts and arches of the veranda all seem adapted by Briggs from this source.

The suggestions that a hard-to-please client, and conflicting desires for grandeur and economy played roles in the designing of five facades are supported by the



FIG. 19. "VILLA IN THE POINTED STYLE," DESIGN XXXI from A. J. Downing's *Architecture of Country Houses*, 1850. (Photo SPNEA.)



FIG. 20. RESIDENCE OF J. F. BIGELOW, as built in East Abington (now Rockland), Massachusetts, 1858. Wood engraving published in Benj. Hobart's *History of the Town of Abington*, 1866. (Courtesy of Mugar Library, Boston University.)

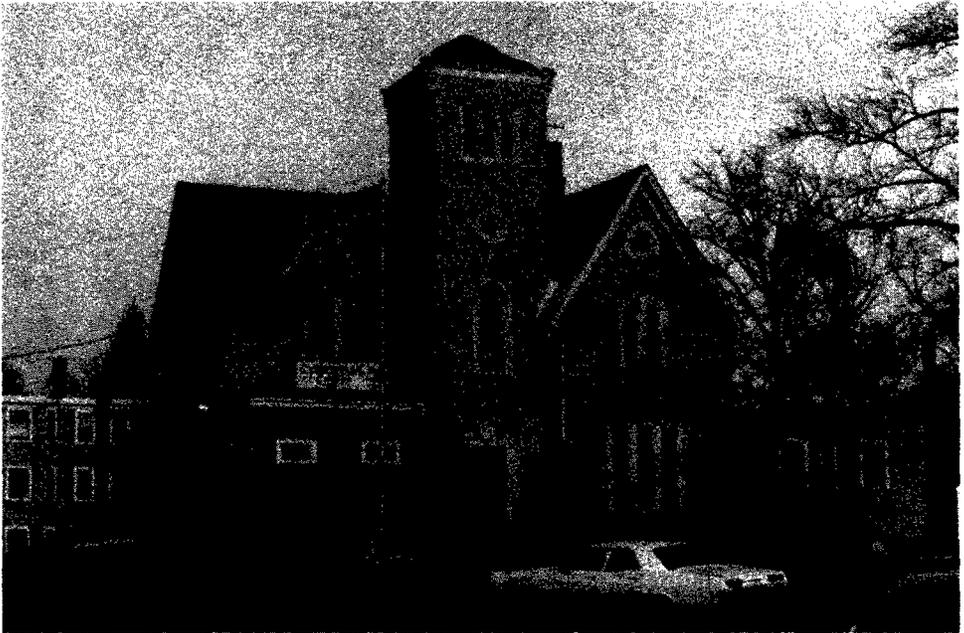


FIG. 21. JAMES F. BIGELOW HOUSE in 1977, Rockland, Massachusetts. (Photo by author.)

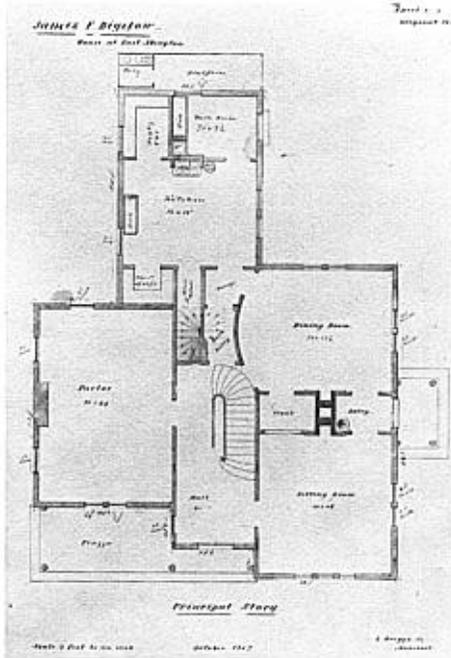


FIG. 22. PLAN OF THE PRINCIPAL FLOOR OF THE BIGELOW HOUSE, by Luther Briggs, October, 1857. (Photo SPNEA.)

form of the house as it was built (Figures 20 and 21). The later dated drawing, in the Tudor style, is closest of the five to the actual house, indicating that Briggs finally found a design that Bigelow would accept. The drawing is the simplest of the five in ornamentation, and has no tall tower. The house as built includes a four story tower, yet otherwise generally follows the Tudor drawing, apparently representing the final compromise of economy and grandeur. Other differences between the drawing and the house appear in the forms of most of the windows, the size and decoration of the porches, and the lack of finials on the house. A major shift in the appearance of the facade occurs with the termination of the front veranda at the side of the tower, emphasizing the form of the tower and drawing more attention to the entrance. The entrance is further accentuated by

the placement of a small balcony at the window just above it, a feature that appears in the Downing and Vaux Rhenish designs, but in none of the Briggs facade drawings.

The Bigelow project represents Briggs's most extensive use of the pattern books. The five facade drawings employ four diverse styles, and incorporate elements from at least four, and perhaps several more pattern book designs. Even more than in the cottage example, Briggs adapts the borrowed elements to his own decorative purposes, often combining portions of quite different designs into a single facade. As in the cottage example, the floor plan of the Bigelow house does not copy any of the plans of the designs from which the decorative elements were drawn, but rather is apparently based on the needs of the particular client (Figure 22). In fact, the drawing of the floor plan is dated October, 1857, before either of the dated facades, indicating that the interior arrangement of the house was established months before the external arrangement was determined.

One final feature of the Bigelow house episode involves not Briggs's use of the pattern books, but a pattern book's use of Briggs's work. In 1863 *Holly's Country Seats* was published in New York, the work of architect Henry Hudson Holly. Among the designs #10 is particularly interesting, for in plan and perspective view it bears strong resemblance to the Bigelow house. What is especially striking about the Holly design is that it seems to combine elements of the Tudor elevation drawing and the Bigelow house as it was actually built (Figure 23).

The Holly design resembles the Briggs Tudor drawing in the basic arrangement and proportion of the facade, in the general form of the windows and the labels above them, in the decoration of the porch, and in the use of finials. Holly



DESIGN, No 10.

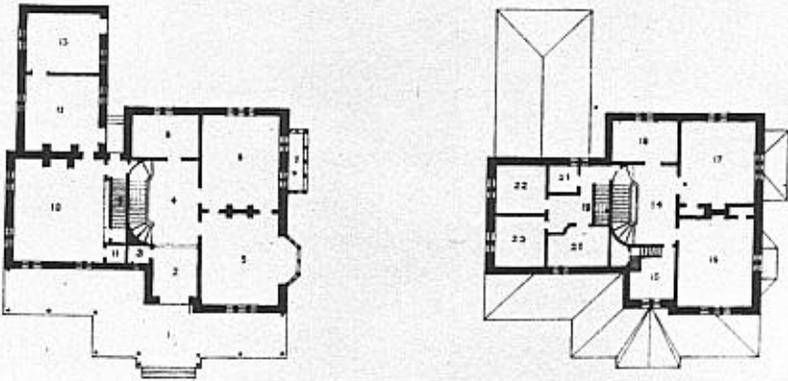


FIG. 23. DESIGN NO. 10, from Henry Hudson Holly's *Holly's Country Seats*, 1863. (Courtesy of Boston Public Library.)

omits the crenelation over the porches shown in the Tudor drawing, which was also omitted from the Bigelow house as built. Holly does, however, retain crenelation over the bay windows he places on the right side of his house. The other major element in which Holly follows the actual house, rather than the drawing, is in the use of a full, four story tower, although he tops it with the roof from the drawing, not from the house.

A comparison of the Holly and Bigelow floor plans reveals similarity in the basic division of the interior space. Although the main stair is shifted in Holly to the left side of the hall, and the service wing is shifted to the left side of the back of the main block of the house, the arrangement of the rooms is generally consistent between the two.

The relationship of the Holly house to Briggs is perplexing. The book was not published until 1863, but the author states in a preface dated January 1, 1863 that the work was fully prepared for the press two years before, when its publication was delayed by the outbreak of the Civil War. In the description of Design #10, Holly refers to the illustration as depicting a house he designed and built for J. D. Bedford at Nyack on the Hudson. The Bigelow house was apparently built in 1858, the Holly-Bedford house by 1861.

That the influence could have flowed from Holly to Briggs does not seem possible in this case. The Bigelow house clearly grew out of the five drawing series of facades, employing pattern books for decorative elements but displaying characteristic Briggs massing and independence of interior arrangement. The Holly design's similarity to both Briggs's Tudor drawing and Bigelow's house indicates his work postdated that whole project. Holly combined and adapted the exterior elements, but unlike Briggs he largely copied the interior arrangement as well.

A possible link between Briggs and Holly is Paul Schulze, who drew the lithographs for Holly's books.<sup>18</sup> Schulze was listed in the Boston directories in 1850 as Paul Schultze, and every year after that through 1858 as Schulze, architect. He was a German immigrant, and designed two buildings for Harvard University, both built in 1857, in a South German Romanesque style.<sup>19</sup> If Briggs's interest in historic European styles was increasing at this time, as reflected in his Bigelow project, Romanesque buildings by a local architect might have been particularly interesting to him. No documentary connection between the two architects has been found, but both Briggs and Schulze maintained downtown Boston offices and it seems likely that they would have at least known of each other. In any case, Schulze left Boston after 1858, the year the Bigelow house was built, and by 1861 had completed Holly's lithographic stones. The appearance in Holly's work of a house so similar to Briggs's design and to the actual Bigelow residence suggests that Schulze brought more to Holly than skills in lithography.

A house Briggs designed in 1859 for Horace Abercrombie of Braintree, Massachusetts (Figure 24) shows a final example of Briggs's use of the pattern books. The design resembles #22 from Downing's *Architecture of Country Houses* in several features, particularly in overall massing, and in the placement and general types of the windows (Figure 25). However, Briggs was presumably designing for wooden construction, rather than the stone of Downing's example. He takes advantage of the greater ease and economy of wooden construction by stretching the tower an extra floor in height, adding another bay window, and making the decoration considerably more elaborate. Only in the quoins and the pilastered,

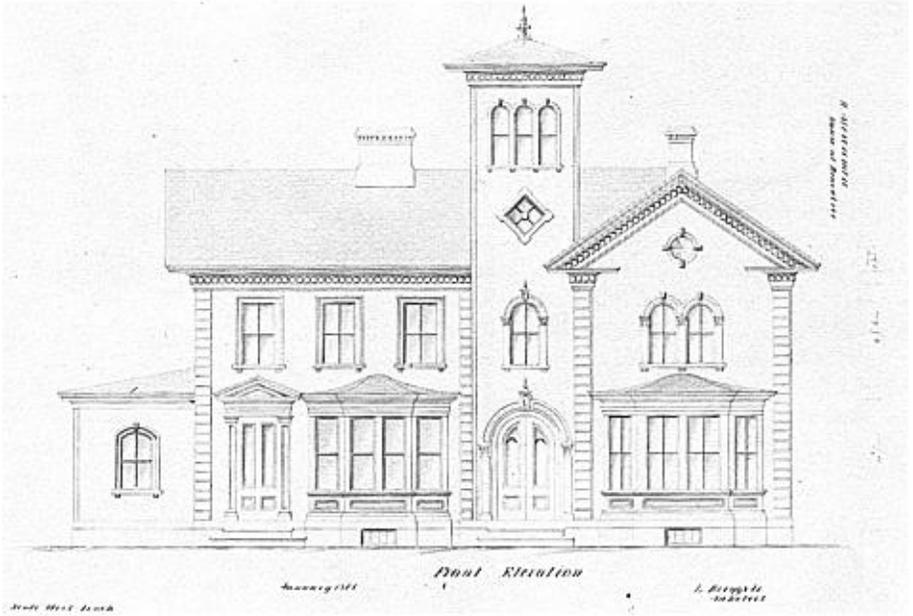


FIG. 24. FRONT ELEVATION OF A HOUSE FOR HORACE ABERCROMBIE, by Luther Briggs, January, 1860. (Photo SPNEA.)

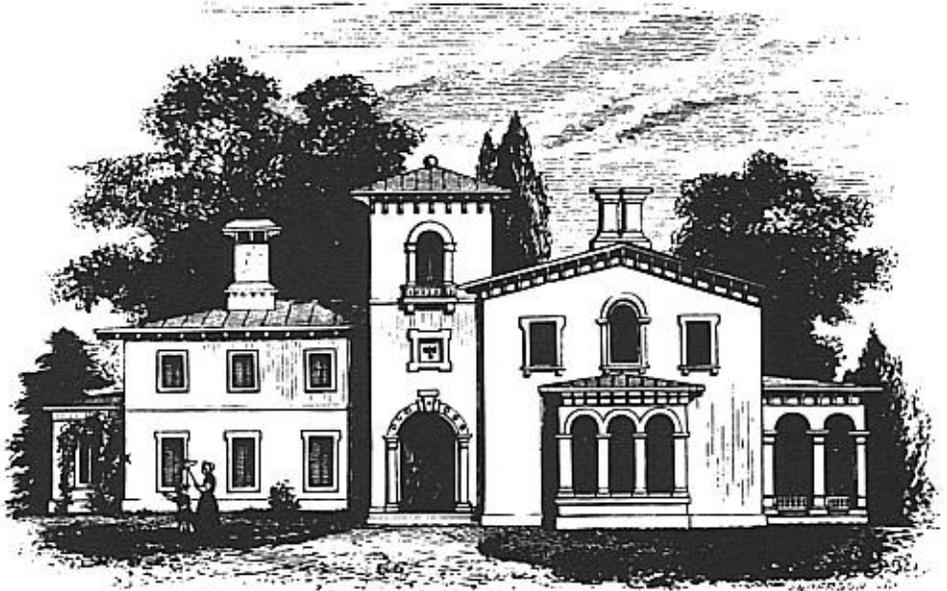


FIG. 25. "VILLA IN THE ITALIAN STYLE," DESIGN XXII from A. J. Downing's *Architecture of Country Houses*, 1850.

pedimented doorframe to the right do these added ornaments hark back to Briggs's earlier training, the rest are variations of common pattern book decorations.

With the Abercrombie project, the examples of direct reliance by Briggs on pattern books end. Some elements of his later designs are reminiscent of specific pattern book sources, but the minor role such elements play, and the overall confidence of his handling of decoration suggest that Briggs had fully assimilated the forms and motifs of the pattern book styles into his architectural vocabulary.

The known examples of Briggs's use of architectural pattern books as sources for his designs span thirteen years early in his career. (Briggs carried on an active practice into the 1880's, and worked as a consulting architect until his death in 1905.) The "Rural Gothic" cottage case represents Briggs's closest copying of a published design, but demonstrates as well his readiness to combine elements from more than one source, his willingness to modify the published designs to fit his own decorative and structural goals, and the independence of his interior design. With the Merriam project Briggs began designing pattern book-like houses for his residential clients.

The Bigelow project combined Briggs's most varied single series of exterior designs with his most extensive use of pattern book sources. With the interior arrangement of the house and the general exterior massing already established, Briggs turned to Downing and Vaux for general styles and specific decorative elements, combining and adapting their designs and adding his own elements.

Briggs's training as an engineer, as a draftsman, and as a competent structural architect apparently was thorough, but probably prepared him little for the shift in taste in domestic architecture from the Greek Revival to the eclectic, picturesque styles that coincided with the beginning of his practice. In the late 1840's or early 1850's Briggs turned to Downing to update his designs. By the time of the Bigelow project, he was able to confidently apply a variety of stylish exteriors to a basic design, freely combining and adapting elements from several different published sources. For Briggs, the picturesque pattern books were tools for mastering a new taste, and once he had mastered it, his direct use of the published designs ended.

## NOTES

<sup>1</sup> Lloyd Vernon Briggs, *History and Genealogy of the Briggs Family* (Boston: Charles Goodspeed and Company, 1938), V. 1, p. 390; V. 2, p. 583.

<sup>2</sup> "Luther Briggs," obituary in *1906 Annual Report of the Massachusetts Charitable Mechanic Society*.

<sup>3</sup> L. V. Briggs, *op. cit.*, v. 2, p. 583.

<sup>4</sup> Allen Johnson, ed., *Dictionary of American Biography* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1964), V. 7, part 1.

<sup>5</sup> Talbot Hamlin, *Greek Revival Architecture in America* (New York: Dover Publications, Inc., 1964), pp. 99-100.

<sup>6</sup> "Luther Briggs, Architect, Engineer & Surveyor . . ." Broadside advertisement; (Boston: 1870); collection of the Pembroke Historical Society.

<sup>7</sup> Charitable Mechanic Society, *op. cit.*, p. 51.

<sup>8</sup> S.P.N.E.A. has several drawings from that competition, including ones signed by R. Bond and Ammi B. Young. All depict small, Gothic chapels.

<sup>9</sup> Letter from Luther Briggs, Pembroke, to L. Briggs, Jr., Boston, May 25, 1844; collection of the Pembroke Historical Society.

<sup>10</sup> Letter from Joseph C. Howard, Nashua, (N.H.?), to L. Briggs, Jr., c/o Capt. Parris, Boston, April 25, 1845; collection of the Pembroke Historical Society.

<sup>11</sup> Charitable Mechanic Society, *op. cit.*, p. 51.

<sup>12</sup> "Luther Briggs . . ." broadside, *op. cit.*

<sup>13</sup> *Boston Directory*, 1848-1849, p. 46.

<sup>14</sup> *Boston Directories*, 1846-1852.

<sup>15</sup> Briggs might have adopted the French doors from the John Angier House in Medford, Mass., built from A. J. Davis designs in 1842. Downing depended heavily on Davis for architectural ideas and actual designs, and Designs #2 and #4 are derived from Davis plans like the Angier House.

<sup>16</sup> Charitable Mechanic Society, *op. cit.*, p. 51.

<sup>17</sup> A. J. Downing, *Architecture of Country Houses* (New York: Dover Publications, Inc., 1964; reprint of 1850 D. Appleton and Co., New York publication), p. 257.

<sup>18</sup> Henry H. Holly, *Holly's Country Seats* (New York: 1863), preface.

<sup>19</sup> Henry R. Hitchcock, *Architecture of H. H. Richardson and His Time* (Cambridge: The MIT Press, 1966), p. 22.