



# ARCHITECTURE

EHLINGER & ASSOCIATES

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## SEASONS GREETINGS

The staff of Ehlinger & Associates extend Seasons Greetings to all of our friends who receive the Newsletter. Merry Christmas, Happy Hanukah and Happy New Year!

## CATHEDRAL AND CAMPANILE, PISA, ITALY

The complex of buildings at Pisa, consisting of the Cathedral, Campanile (bell tower, eg.: "the leaning tower of.."), Baptistery, and Campo Santo (literally: "field of saints", or the graveyard) is one of the most famous in the world. Unfortunately, the fame to the lay person derives solely from the leaning tower, and not from the fact that this is one of the most visually and spatially powerful, coherent and consistent architectural complexes ever designed and built.

This issue's limited edition signed print by Ladd Ehlinger features the Cathedral and the Campanile to the rear. The Baptistery is in the foreground and the Campo Santo is to the left, both out of the view from the southwest.

The Cathedral (1063-1118 & 1261-72) is one of the finest of the Romanesque period. It is of a Basilican plan, being cross shaped, with an elliptical dome at the crossing of the nave and

transepts. The nave is composed of long rows of columns, connected by arches, double aisles, and roofed by a timber roof. The transepts each have an apse (circular shaped space) at their ends, which was an advance in design at the time, as does the sanctuary.

The facades of the building provide the interest to the viewer by their general proportions, the delicateness of the ornamentation, the relief of the open arcade tiers at the upper stories of the front facade in contrast to the engaged arcade at the bottom and on the other facades, and the clarity of the colors of the white and red marble in stark contrast to the treeless and shrubless green grass of the field upon which the whole complex is grounded. These design features were maintained in the succeeding buildings that followed the Cathedral, and thus lend an extraordinary consistency to the whole, while reinforcing the design of the Cathedral.

The Campanile (1174-1271) is circular in plan and is eight stories tall. Like the front facade of the Cathedral, each story is an open encircling arcade, tiered one above the other to the belfry, which was added in 1350.

The Campanile is 52' in diameter, is a little over 151' high to the floor of the belfry, and leans approximately 14'. The inclination of the tower began during construction, causing the builders to attempt to compensate for it by shortening the height of the arcades on the high side (away from the direction it was starting to lean), which gives a banana like curve to the cylindrical form. Each year, the tower continues to lean more and more, causing much consternation and gambling about when it will finally fall over, and prompting various engineering studies and schemes of how to prevent the inevitable collapse.

The Baptistery is also circular in plan and is surmounted by a conical dome. Originally, it was Romanesque in style, with circular arches above columns encircling the building, but was remodeled in the 14th century when Gothic arches were added to the facade and the

semi-circular dome was added to the conical dome, disguising the shape. However the colors and delicacy were maintained throughout the remodeling.

At the time this complex was built, Pisa was a great commercial and naval power, rivaling Venice and Genoa. Pisa took the lead in the crusades, fighting and defeating the Moslems in several wars in the 11th century. The decline of Pisa began at the end of the 13th century, but they have maintained this complex throughout the centuries since, thereby making it one of the purest architectural wonders able to be seen to this day.

## THE GREAT STYLES OF AMERICAN HOUSE DESIGN

Over the centuries, since the first settlers arrived, there have been many developments and changes in the styles of domestic architecture, each of which was influenced by the rage in Europe at the time.

Apart from the home designs of the original inhabitants of the continent (cliff-dwellings, teepees, igloos, etc.) no uniquely American house design was developed until the late 19th Century, i.e. designs of Frank Lloyd Wright or the American Prairie Style home designs.

The early colonists were in a hurry to provide shelter. They only had the skills of the workmen at hand and some remembrances of the styles of their native country.

Skilled craftsmen and model home designs were not available nor were the early settlers in any financial position to hop off their boats and start building mansions.

The typical home of the early settler could be described as plain; foursquare constructed of stone, logs, adobe; one or two rooms with a center chimney; plain door and window trim; vertical boards for doors; and with the foundation at floor level.

As immigrants poured into America from 1700-1800, house design became an architectural melting pot of colonial styles: French, Dutch, Spanish, West

Indian, Moravian, Irish, English, Swiss, Scotch, Quaker, etc.

When the colonies began to prosper, architects, carpentry guide books, and craftsmen arrived with the latest European fads in house and garden design.

For over 200 years (1700-1900) the details, proportions and external adornments of the American home was primarily influenced from abroad.

The earliest design rage to sweep the colonies (beginning 1720's) consisted of certain rules of proportion and ornamental design known today as the Georgian style.

The style was influenced by renewed interest in the architecture of the Renaissance and was extremely popular in England at the time.

All attention was given to the "feel" of the classical. If marble was unavailable, or too expensive, wood would be painted to look like marble. Or if cornerstones were not available, wooden blocks would be covered with stucco and made to look just like real granite.

The Georgian tradition was earmarked by well balanced and symmetrical facades, built on high foundations, with imposing entrances with paneled doors and glass lites on the sides or in transoms or fan lights above.

The style followed strict classical Renaissance proportions and ornamental details and often included adaptations such as quoins, engaged columns, brick or stone belt courses at second-floor lines, and doorways surmounted by Palladian windows.

After the American Revolution, the Georgian style experienced a subtle shift to the more severely classical Federalist style. The recent excavations at Pompeii had gained the attention and fantasy of the European designers.

Since the architecture of the Renaissance grew out of the rediscovery of ancient Rome and the rebirth of classicism, it would be natural that the Renaissance influence of the Georgian style would be very similar to the more austere Roman influence of the Federalist style.

In the 1780's the Georgian and Federalists styles gave way to another new rage: the Greek Revival, and that in turn gave way to the Gothic influence of the Victorian period (19th Century).

The Greek Revival and Victorian will be the subject of future newsletters.

